

The Tadpole

W G A A N E W S L E T T E R

OFFICE BEARERS 2012-2014

PRESIDENT :
Hema Badhwar Mehra

VICE PRESIDENT :
Anjali Sapra

TREASURER :
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SUPPORT GROUPS :
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SECRETARY :
Shivani Anand

EVENTS :
Sabina Sharma

THE TADPOLE :
Manvi Sinha Dhillon

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

The Welham Girls Alumni Association has been working tirelessly for the past seven years, since its official birth, to put together a strong network that the alumnae can be justly proud of, and also one that can actively participate in help taking our School forward to its natural place on the leader board for education.



AARTHA SHANTI PHALA VIDYA

This simply cannot happen without the help of the handful that meet regularly and do their utmost to keep the fraternity alive and the Welham spirit soaring. The larger picture in the interest of a strong network tends to get ignored and overlooked. I reiterate that this needs to change if we want to become a strong and focused body with our aims clear and our intent to

achieve the goals we set for ourselves.

The past year's challenges have increased for me. It's not easy to juggle being President of the WGAA, fighting a LOK SABHA Election, managing a family and looking after several dogs and new additions. But then each member of the Committee is a multi tasker, (Welham taught us how to do that!), and somehow we have managed to hold it together. The 'committee' is totally 'committed' to making the WGAA a strong body and we are happy to see some of our efforts rewarded.

While we still have a long road ahead of us, I think we can be justly proud of what we have done so far and I would like to share this with you here.

Hema Badhwar Mehra

WELHAM GIRLS ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

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NETWORKING

We are in the process of setting up a comprehensive Alumnae portal which will be detailed and will amalgamate all the information which we have been struggling to put together. It is a big project but we have Namita Sethi Batch of 1989 to thank for spearheading and taking on this challenge. The Doon School Alumnae has been most helpful in helping us in sharing their vision and ideas. We are in the process of negotiating with the same programmer who has done theirs to build our website. Will keep everyone updated on this project.

However our networking has a long way to go yet in order to become truly effective. The aim is to have city-centric chapters that will be a part of yet independent from the central WGAA. We need a chapter in every major metropolis in and out of the country. These groups need to be able to do the following:

- a. Hold annual get-togethers in order to sustain networking and contact.
- b. Be available for the fresh alumni (or old) that may need assistance in these cities.
- c. Help the WGAA with fund raising efforts where required and keep abreast with WGAA activities.
- d. Keep in touch with the School.

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TADPOLE NIGHT

This has become our annual night! For The Third SUCCESSFUL year Welhamites reunited under the banner of Tadpole Night. This event was started as a simple way of getting together and having a fun night; Tadpole Night has turned into a successful annual event in Delhi. Each year sees us gathering greater numbers and more enthusiasm. The event has taken a life of its own and promises to become more and more entertaining with the passage of years and the innovative ideas of Welhamites. This year we had the event at the QBAR in Malcha Marg. The venue, food and music were excellent and all the girls from different batches had a rocking time. Those who missed it really missed something so let's hope to see you this year.

THE TADPOLE

The latest edition of the Tadpole will be given at the AGM. Those who missed the previous one can also collect it from us. We are a work in progress and with each edition of the Tadpole we feel like our baby is growing and we feel a great sense of pride. Manvi Sinha (Dhillon) has singlehandedly pulled this edition out for us on time. A big thank you to her.

FUND RAISING

THE WELHAM SWIMMING POOL PROJECT

This is where we need all the girls to roll up their sleeves and help us get to work. Having a swimming pool has been a dream in Welham for far too many years, but now girls the reality is here. The old Bulbul Dormitory in No.6 which had become the holding house has been declared unfit for use and is going to be demolished and a beautiful swimming pool arena is to be constructed here. At the AGM Sujata will share with us the designs which the school has come up with. This is the project we have been waiting for and all Exies, young and old, have to plunge in to making this a reality. All suggestions are most welcome.

On another note our WeCare continues to support a few old staff members who retired with very small pensions and were found to be living in very sad circumstances. On a sad note we would like to take a moment to remember our old teacher Mrs. Hamida (Hammy) who passed away this year. For the last few years the WeCare fund has been helping her. These old teachers meet us each year when we go back for Founders and it is heartening to see that whatever we are able to do for them manages to bring a smile to their faces. It is not much and we would like to be able to increase the amount that is being paid out to them, but for that we require a fresh input of funds. And on behalf of the WGAA I appeal to all ex Welhamites to come forward to help this worthy cause.

We were also able to help with the treatment of Mr. Manjeet Singh (Manjy Boy). The funds which the girls collected were heartening. We managed to help the family with a whopping amount of Rs.12,70,000 collected in a matter of days. It was sad that Mr. Manjeet Singh did not pull through, but he went surrounded by the love and care that his girls felt for him. A heartfelt thank you to all the girls who contributed. A special mention here needs to be made for Shimona Shahi (Rana) who really spearheaded a Facebook campaign and helped generate extreme passion for our beloved Games Teacher. It makes us proud to be able to help those that cared for us and this spirit really is needed. We need each one of you take responsibility for helping us in raising money for the WeCare Fund. Details are available with Sujata Kulshreshtha, who manages the fund single handedly for the WGAA. It's a lot of work and I would like to extend my thanks to her here.

I appeal to everyone again, to help us with WeCare. This is where your assistance really is needed and we need each one of you to take responsibility for raising money for the WeCare fund.

INTERACTION WITH SCHOOL

The WGAA continues to interact with the School at several levels and we are happy to report that we have been effective on various fronts.

- a. The WGAA co-sponsors the annual Golden Jubilee Inter School Basket Ball match held in March/April each year.
- b. The WGAA also assesses what the School requires by way of upgrades and assists financially with projects. School this year requested an upgrade in the Kitchen equipment and I am happy to report that our suggestion to raise funds for this project was enthusiastically taken up by the batch of 1988, who presented the School with a cheque of TEN LAKHS to commemorate their silver jubilee.

INDUCTION CEREMONY

Our effort at reaching out to create a strong network of ex Welhamites has now taken a new and happy direction. The WGAA has been in touch with School to allow us to interact with the graduating class from School. I am happy to say that this interaction between the Executive Committee of the WGAA and the Graduating Class from School has been included on the School Calendar as an annual feature. We started this ceremony last year where I was the chief guest and Shivani Narain (Anand) handed over the bracelets to the passing out SCs. This year Sujata Kulshreshtha was the chief guest and Shivani was there to hand over the bracelets and welcome the new batch in to the WGAA. We greatly look forward to being a part of this beautiful occasion!

**“CHOOSE TO CHANCE THE RAPIDS AND
DARE TO DANCE THE SKIES.”**

– Hema Badhwar Mehra



ALVIDA MISS HAMIDA

Our Dear Miss Hamida has gone. An era has passed with her passing. In her last years she lived alone in a small place above a shop in Dehradun. The people from whom she rented her rooms looked after her and were very kind to her. On her last day – about a month ago - they met her at breakfast time and when they went in at lunch time, she was gone. She went in peace, without pain.

I first met her in 1959, when she became my Matron. She had joined Welham Girls' High School in 1958, pulled here through her Mehboobia College, Hyderabad, affiliation with Miss Linnell. And here she stayed till she retired. Tall, with her characteristic dark glasses and red lipstick, 'Hammy' as she was affectionately called by the girls, was a pillar of the school in every sense. In the late sixties, the girls often referred to her as "Mein Boli" as she tended to prefix her sentences with this typical Hyderabad phrase. Frank, outspoken, and full of her own type of fun, Miss Hamida brought up generations of Welhamites who will never forget her.

I knew her as a little girl as a colleague of my mother and as my own colleague later on in the mid-eighties. She taught me a lot. On some Sundays, when I was a junior girl at Welham, Miss Hamida would walk me down the quiet, leafy Dalanwala roads to my local guardian's house, holding my hand and speaking to me as we walked along. When I grew up and was to get married, she gave me a notebook in which she had herself written down Hyderabad recipes, telling me that good cooking was the way to a man's heart and she quite despaired of me in the culinary department. When I joined Welham as a young teacher, she taught me the essential secrets of a good House Mistress and Matron. I still remember her clear, bold handwriting and organized way of working.

Miss Hamida had a great sense of humour and was quite capable of laughing even at herself. She regaled us once in the staff room with a description of how she had berated a young man with a string of good Hyderabad expletives because the "kambakht!" had whistled at her as she walked down the road from No. 19. She was not angry with him, she said, gratified that she had been whistled at, but annoyed that he had not surfaced when she was younger.

Miss Hamida last made it to school a few years ago to meet the old girls on Founders' Day at the Principal's Dinner for ex-students. She had fallen some years ago and had broken her hip. After the surgery she had to use a walker. But her spirit remained the same. In her old age, her brother lived with her but he too had passed away recently. In her final years, it was the old girls – most particularly Asha (Khanna) Chaudhry (class of '62) - who looked after Miss Hamida's needs, assisted by the Welham Girls' Alumni Association 'WeCare' Fund. Asha visited her every time she came to Dehradun. We too called up Miss Hamida from time to time from School and it was always good to talk to her.

So many of us shall miss Miss Hamida but we will remember her always with a smile. May her soul rest in peace.

Jyotsna Brar

(Principal, Welham Girls' School)

H-156, Class of 1968

March 2014

Tall, with her characteristic dark glasses and red lipstick, 'Hammy' as she was affectionately called by the girls, was a pillar of the school in every sense.



MISS HAMIDA

MOVIE BUFFS – CATCH A WELHAMITE ON SCREEN !

The film *Ankhon Dekhi* released on March 21, 2014. Film critic Anupama Chopra says it is "a delicate and delightful film about invisible people - those ordinary folk you pass on the street but rarely pay attention to. Writer-director Rajat Kapoor finds beauty and richness in their lives. He constructs a keenly observed portrait of a lower-middle class family in Delhi, how the centre slowly frays and falls apart."

Ex-Welhamite Maya Sarao (F-86, Class of 2003) plays the critically acclaimed role of daughter to the film's central character Bauji. Maya Sarao's performance has won all round praise. The newspaper *Mint* says "Ankhon Dekhi is an enjoyable confection, delivered by an ensemble cast, especially Sarao as Bauji's daughter and the ever-dependable Brijendra Kala as his partner in crime, that brings immense energy and vitality to the show." CNN IBN's Rajeev Masand applauds the character "Rita, played by spirited newcomer Maya Sarao."

Maya showed an early commitment to acting. She is a graduate of The Bristol Old Vic Theatre School in England, where she trained as a professional actor.

Maya's Bollywood foray began when she returned to Mumbai in 2012; her credits include *Patiala House* by Nikhil Advani, *One by Two* by Devika Bhagat and *Ankhon Dekhi* by Rajat Kapoor.

Here's wishing Maya a fabulous innings in cinema. And for the record, there are 3 Welhamites in the Sarao family: Mother Pavane Mann (F-284, Class of 1973) and her two daughters, Rifq Sarao (F-476, Class of 2001) and Maya Sarao (F-86, Class of 2003).

CNN IBN's Rajeev Masand applauds the character "Rita, played by spirited newcomer Maya Sarao."



MAYA SARAO

BACK TO SCHOOL - FROM STUDENT TO STAFF

It's quite astonishing to see how many ex-Welhamites are back at school as staff. We all know of Mrs. Jyotsna (Pandit) Brar who is Principal at Welham and teaches English as well. Keeping her company are SIX other exies on the staff at Welham:

Mrs. Reetika (Khanna) Kapoor (W-427, Class of 1972) is the Public Relations Officer at Welham and is part of the principal's Secretariat.

Mrs. Hina (Dhingra) Agarwal (B-366, Class of 1976) is a Homescience Teacher.

Arundhati (Agnihotri) Shukla (W-558, Class of 1986) is teaching Physics at Welham.

Swati (Jha) Singh (H-127, Class of 1991) teaches History at school.

Roma (Bahuguna) Mamgain (W-528, Class of 1999) is in the Clothing and Hospitality Department.

Aarti Seth (O-2, Class of 1997) teaches English at Welham.

A TALE OF COURAGE

June 2013. A natural catastrophe in Uttarakhand. 6000 people are killed. 100,000 are left stranded. Large parts of Uttarakhand are totally ravaged.

Welhamite Libni Garg (B-770, Class of 2014) was a survivor of the Uttarakhand floods. She was featured in a documentary called HIMALAYAN TSUNAMI on Discovery Channel. The documentary investigated the event and explained to viewers across India 'what really happened'.

An article from The Hindu dated December 23, 2013 captures Libni's story of struggle and survival.

THE HINDU, December 23, 2013

The horsemen refused to take them downhill. So did the porters. They had seen rains in the hills, but this downpour was something else. With no other choice, 16-year-old Libni Garg and family decided to trek down to base camp Gauri Kund from Kedarnath in the state of Uttarakhand. A peaceful pilgrimage suddenly took a different turn on the morning of June 16, 2013. "It was freezing...it rained so much that raincoats were pointless," says Libni, speaking over phone from Dehradun. "We finally managed to hire two porters."

Boulders cracked and trundled past them; bridges collapsed and rains beat against them with a vengeance. Libni and family moved on, desperate to reach safe ground. Once at Rambada, located 7 km from the base, they decided to rest for the night. Little did they know of the danger that awaited them the next morning.

Rains poured all night while they slept fitfully. Libni's family was stranded. "The owner of the lodge in which we stayed was over 70 years old. He told us that not once in his lifetime had he seen floods rise over the first step of the building. But that day, water had reached the fifth step," she recalls. The locals had never experienced such rains — there was chaos everywhere. "We were compelled to walk against the stream back to Kedarnath," says Libni.

It was during this trek that Libni was witness to something she would never forget. A wall of water thundered past them, dragging along houses, utensils, cattle... As thousands lost their lives and everything they held close to the floods, Libni and her family walked on, forcing themselves not to look back. For it was the best they could do for their survival. "I asked my dad where we were going. And he said 'I don't know'," says Libni. "That was when I got really scared."

They reached level ground at last and rested their tired feet when suddenly — "A local shouted 'Run, water!'" They did so without second thought. What followed were long hours of starvation; sleepless nights; and journeys that seemed to have no end or purpose. "Even the food packets the Government dropped from helicopters did not reach us," says Libni. For, they were stranded in the remotest of corners. Help arrived at last on the morning of June 20 — they were airlifted by the Army along with other survivors. For Libni, who studies in a boarding school in Dehradun, the experience taught her the value of life. "I won't take anything for granted," she says. "Problems that seemed big before appear trivial now."

We're On The Web
www.welhamgirlsalumni.com

TILL WE MEET AGAIN

END NOTE

On behalf of the Executive Committee and myself I look forward to an active, happy and inter connected alumni body, helping each other to maintain those bonds that we formed back in School and which we take into the future with us.

Cheers!

Hema Badhwar Mehra
President WGAA

CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS

Contribute to the WeCare initiative by sending a cheque in the name of Welham Girls Alumni Association, and mail it to the address below. Do put your PAN No and contact details (address & cell no) at the back of the cheque. All donations made to the WGAA are exempt from tax u/s 80G(5)(vi) of the Income Tax Act, 1961.

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ONCE A WELHAMITE ALWAYS A WELHAMITE

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We look forward to sharing your stories in our next issue