

The Tadpole

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

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Hi Ex Welhamites,

This is our second issue in as many years! Well, it's a beginning and we all know well that Welhamites are all too familiar with modest beginnings!

We may start small—but here I tend to agree with the cliché that one must learn to crawl before one walks, or in our case, flies!

This past year hasn't seen very much happen within the WGAA itself. But we've been busy trying to create a network. That in itself is an exhausting task.

We began with a heroic attempt to gather information for an alumni directory, but had to give up half way through, simply because the person employed solely for the task of information gathering received absolutely no support from our vast alumni body.

Her calls went un an-

swered, several times she was put on hold and many times cut off half way through!

This letter of mine is aimed at getting a strong alumni network in place. We need to interface, we need to let each other know what we are doing and where we are.

It's a changing world out there, Welhamites will need support in the form of counseling, job searches, transfers from one city to another, and most of all in times of distress. Knowing there is an alumni body 'out there', to get in touch with will be a huge comfort factor.

In addition, with networking in place, fund-raising too will become easier. And let's not kid ourselves. The School can do with our help in making it the BEST!

Cheers!

Hema Badhwar Mehra



AARTHA SHANTI PHALA VIDYA

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RENUNTED WE STAND! CLASS OF 85

25 YEARS LATER...OCTOBER 2010

When I flew down to Dehradun from London, it had been almost 28 years since I last saw my batch mates. I was nervous. What if we had lost that connect, and I had nothing in common, nothing to say?

But the fears were unfounded. It took 10 minutes to revert to being 15 years old again - the same giggling, the same sense of trust with girls you once had mid-night feasts with and the same ease of sharing secrets, dreams, confidences. It was as if no time had passed. In the women today I could clearly see the teenagers I once knew - no one had really changed. I laughed, got emotional, sentimental, often had a lump in my throat over the smallest thing (eating karhi chawal, revisiting my bed in no. 6!). Most of all, we just seemed to talk incessantly, catching up on all those years apart. It has brought a feeling of belonging and of reconnecting to a part of life I thought was lost forever.

I am so, so, so grateful and glad. A huge thanks to all you mad, nutcase, funny, warm wonderful girls and to Welham.

Richa Bhardwaj Varma W-513, Class of 1985



It was quite incredible to come back to school and meet up with many of so many of my class mates after 27 years: it left me with a high that lasted for weeks! I'm also glad that we were all together when I came back to school - otherwise I wouldn't have known a soul (apart from Ms. Alvia Sen) and would have felt quite odd.

At times, I tear up quite easily, and I was pleasantly surprised to find myself quite dry-eyed through most of my time there. Just when I was thinking I had evolved or something, came Founders' Day, and there we were in the audience, listening to the school choir sing the prayer of St Francis of Assisi - this was the first time I heard it sung. Do you remember Sas reading it out at Assembly? "Lord, make me an instrument of thy peace." That was it! After that, throughout the whole Founders' programme, I sat there with tears rolling down my face. I really felt so PROUD of the school, so proud to be a Welhamite.

Nandita Bhavnani W-486, Class of 1985

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NEWSWORTHY

WHERE THE HEAD IS HELD HIGH!

Laila Tyabji (F-101, Class of 1962) was awarded the Padma Shri this year for her exemplary and pioneering work in securing due recognition for the craft sector. She shares her experience with The Tadpole.

“Getting the news of the Padma Shri on 26th January, I was happy & taken aback in about equal parts at this unexpected honor. In fact, I thought the gentleman from the Home Ministry, who rang me, was someone playing a practical joke! The actual Padma investiture was in April. A most impressive and elevating ceremony, marred only by a sadly unimpressive President! She is kindly and sweet, but not the inspiring role model we hoped for as India’s first woman President. Rashtrapati Bhavan and the Ashoka Hall are almost overpoweringly magnificent spaces, and the fanfare by the buglers, the National Anthem beautifully sung, the Vice President, Prime Minister, Sonia Gandhi and assembled Cabinet as audience, and flanked by the towering and resplendently attired President’s Body Guards, lent the whole proceedings a real aura. One could not help being moved. Nervous too, as one had been warned not to trip on the carpet, not to turn one’s back on the President, to do Namaste to her at three different points as one walked forward, etc etc. Last year someone DID trip, and broke three bones.

The Padma awards had lost some of their sheen over the years, with some rather obvious politically motivated handouts. But last year the selection system was revamped and most people agreed the 2012 list was on merit. Quite a lot of people I know, and quite a lot of women (Shabana Azmi, Meera Nair, Pepita Seth, Rita Devi, Vidya Daheja, and Geeta Dharmarajan among others) got Padma Awards this year. There was a wonderful tribal woman from Chhatisgarh who, though illiterate herself, has created educational and employment opportunities for hundreds of other tribal women. We were all terribly impressed, not just by her achievements but by her stunning silver jewelry and equally spectacular smile! A couple of the awardees were in wheel chairs and terribly old, getting recognition after a lifetime of dedicated work. The day after the Awards were announced in January, I left for a design and skills training workshop at our Dastkar project in Ranthambore. Sitting amongst the women we have worked with for the last 22 years, I realized all over again that though getting a Padma Shri is lovely, the other joys & rewards of working with crafts & craftspeople far, far outweigh it. I am so lucky to be doing something that is both fun and fulfilling, it seems almost wicked to get an award for it!

But thank you Welham, and all you ex-Welhamites who wrote in to congratulate me. What I learnt from Miss Linnell and school (much of it OUTSIDE the classroom!) has played an important part in the directions my life has taken. It’s been a great journey.”

Laila Tyabji, Chairperson, Dastkar— Society for Crafts & Craftspeople, August 2012

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THE DIASPORA MILESTONES

Where there are Welhamites, there is news. Sharing with you some snippets about what some Exies are doing.



Mrs. Shanti Varma received a Lifetime Achievement Award at the National Conference of the Principals' Progressive Schools' Association, Uttarakhand. Sumer Singh (Principal, Daly College, Indore) and Shomie Das (Former Head Master, The Doon School) also received Lifetime Achievement awards at the same function. Great going Mrs Varma!!!

Aditi Bhowmick (Class of 2012) has won a prestigious Tata Scholarship for undergraduate studies at Cornell University. These are special scholarships instituted by Ratan Tata (Chairman, Tata Group) for his alma mater. The Tata Scholarship Fund supports approximately 20 scholars at any given time and ensures that the very best Indian students have access to Cornell. Aditi, you do Welham proud.

Location: Bundi Fort, Rajasthan. The DM of Bundi is carrying out an inspection at the very top of the fort. Suddenly she spots tadpoles!!! She yells out to the group of girls below. They are Welhamites! That's how **Bundi DM Arti Dogra (H-494, Class of 1996)** bumped into the current Sc and Pre Sc Science group on a school trip. Arti's been with the I.A.S for 6 years and for the last 2.5 years she has served as DM, Bundi. A few weeks ago, the Rajasthan Government recognized Arti as the best collector in the entire state. She received the award from Rajasthan's Chief Minister, Ashok Gehlot, on August 15, 2012.

Roli Singh nee Kachhwaha (0-222, Class of 1986) is serving as Deputy Director at the Lal Bahadur Shastri National Academy of Administration, Mussoorie. Roli says its great to be back where she belongs! For this Rajasthan cadre I.A.S officer (1994 batch), the Mussoorie hills feel like home. Roli says she'd love to see a resurgence of the environmental campaigns that the schools of the Doon valley spearheaded in the 80s. Great suggestion Roli. That's certainly worth acting upon.

*The Welhamite I know is
who knows who she is and
where she comes from. One who
stands rooted in her values but
looks ahead to tomorrow, one
who knows that she has the
power and the ability to face
the world outside. She is
confident and independent.
A go-getter.
An Individual*



*"Help us to keep ourselves
mentally awake and morally
straight, so that we may better
maintain the Honour of our
School..."*

Grace Mary Linnell

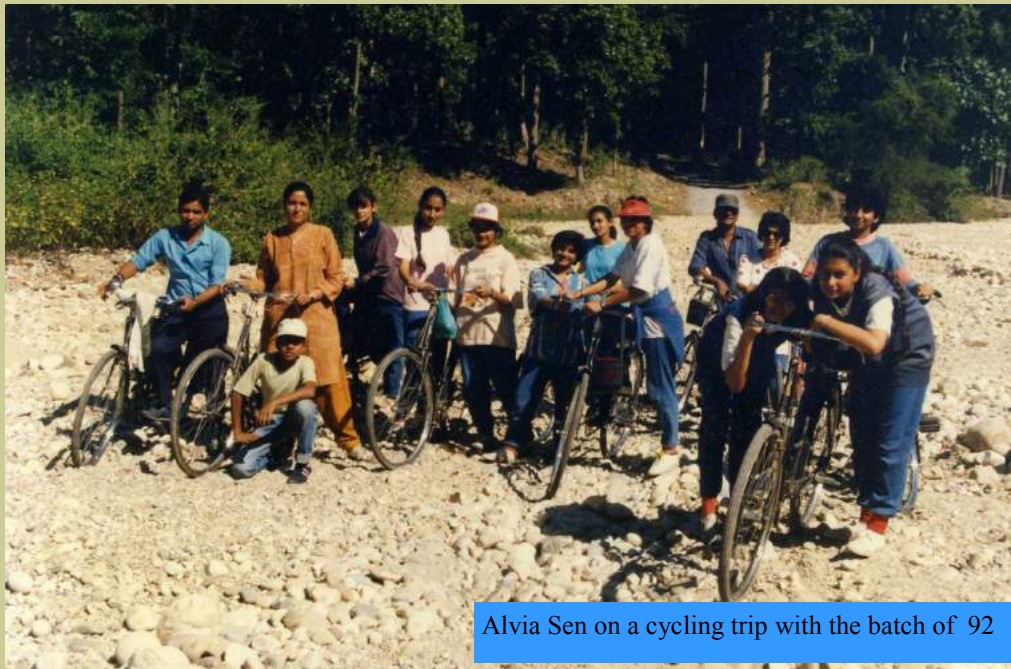
TILL WE MEET AGAIN

TO SIR (MAM) WITH LOVE

August 1, 1978. Alvia Sen's first day as teacher at Welham Girls School. 35 years and thousands of students later, Ms Sen is as energetic and fun-loving as ever. It's hard to believe that she retires in October this year.

Here's our enduring image of Ms Sen in the 80s. A Lambretta. Every hair in place. A smart, crisp sari. If there was a strenuous school trip, you could be sure that Ms Sen would be the teacher in-charge. The Lambretta may have given way to a more sedate 4-wheel drive but the spirit is intact. Right up to 2007, you could spot Ms Sen on her daily 6 kilometer run, up and down Rajpur road - in a Welham track suit, of course!! Ask Ms Sen what she will miss most about Welham. Pat comes the answer. *It's the girls – past and present. The angels, the rascals, each and every one of them – the Welhamites.* She says she considers herself extremely lucky because Welham gave her complete freedom at work - from Miss Srivastava to Mrs Shanti Varma and Mrs Jyotsna Brar.

As Dean of Admissions cum English & History teacher for senior classes, Ms Sen has had a packed schedule in recent years. Post retirement, she has very different plans. She says she might get a new car. Then she'll tank it up and hit the road. Drive through the country. Travel overseas (only by road)! Catch up with friends. That's the plan. A parting shot as she winds up our conversation - *60 is the new 30!!!* Well, live it up, Ms Sen. But Welham and the Welhamites will certainly miss you!



Alvia Sen on a cycling trip with the batch of 92

TRIBUTES

One of my first memories of Ms.Sen is on the field wearing a sari with matching bangles!! As her games Official for three years, from A1s to Scs I have had a nice, long association with Ms.Sen with a very good rapport. She was strict but fun and I will cherish the wonderful memories of IPSC Athletics - especially when Farah and I, as her captains, forced her to buy a "Rani" pink lehriya sari and made sure she wore it for our last Founder's - with matching "Churries"! When my daughter, Nanki, joined school Ms.Sen referred to her as her grand daughter!! That is exactly what I wanted to hear both as a mother and an Exie! Now it is amazing that both Ms.Sen and Nanki are leaving school together. I am sure that she has enriched Nanki's life as she did mine. Here's to you Ms. Sen!

Parveen Kaur 0-393, Class of 1988

TILL WE MEET AGAIN

Ms. Alvia Sen taught me English. I remember her as always dressed up in a sari. Her face would look flushed when she was in the sun and she was one of the tallest teachers in school. She always appeared to be happy. I cannot recall her ever losing her cool. The one thing most of us remember was her commitment to her father. When she spoke of him, she would have a sparkle in her eyes. I cannot imagine her retiring as she always had so much energy. I wish her the very best on her retirement but I am sure she already has many exciting things lined up to do.

Samia Ahsan W-464, Class of 1994

The secret to Ms. Sen's youth is that she was / is naughtier than all of us put together! In school whenever I thought to test the rules she was the one to watch out for, only coz I was sure she knew what we were thinking. Even now, when I enter school after 20 years, as a mother, I feel I am home and the minute I see Ms. Sen who has always had a twinkle in her eye, I feel like I am back in school. Mam I still don't understand why you want to leave You are and always will be an anchor for many batches. Lots of love and many adventures ahead.

Shivani Narain O-97, Class of 1992

Ms Sen was always very approachable, chilled out. More like a friend. Still remember her Lambretta. Her long hair always in a neat bun. Crisp cotton saris. But what I always remember is the fact that her life centered around her father. How many would put their life on stand still to care for their parents?

Kavita Pratap Singh K-523, Class of 1990

CARE FOR THE CAREGIVERS

Contribute to the We-Care initiative by sending a cheque in the name of **Welham Girls Alumni Association**, and mail 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.