

# An Alves Called Johnnie

## My Parish School

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I was born in Chuim. Worse things have happened to Chuim. I spent a year at St Elias. The boys then also wore waistless dresses. It was a handy costume in case of emergencies. I was then admitted to St Andrew's school near the Church. Three years later we were transferred to the new present building (Dugdi School). We were very proud of the building and the vast playgrounds — the talk of the town. Our teacher, the well-known A.C.Pereira, was an expert on lawns and cricket grounds. Ours was the best in town.

**Corporal punishment was the order of the day.** Discipline was good and we respected our teachers. I had a very pretty teacher, Miss Mayrose and she was very popular. One day I said to her: "I love you". I was ten then. She kept me in the penance class. The next day all my friends asked me: "What happened in the penance class? Were you punished?" "I won't tell you", I said, but it pays to advertise.

Damascene Rebello was my friend in school. We were the only two students who could run under the parallel bars without bending. Damascene got prizes in Religion, English, Algebra, Arithmetic, Geometry, History, Geography and Science. I got a prize in Honoris Causa. The same thing happened in St Andrew's Girl's school. Leonildas Pinto de Gama got all the prizes and a pretty girl from Chuim named Barbara, whom I eyed, got the Honoris Causa.

**Every Wednesday the girls from the old building and the Bosco Hall came for visual instructions in our hall. They sat in front and we behind - Fr Henry Remedios' rule.** I got a chance to see Barbara every Wednesday, and one Wednesday she smiled at me. I never missed school on Wednesday after that. Barbara's mother came to know of our Wednesday smiles and she was put in St Theresa's School in Santa Cruz, but love has no bounds and we met under a mango tree. The tree still stands. Barbara eventually became my wife.

I was very good at Elocution. I won the first prize every year from the fourth to the eight standards — that's Matric. St Andrew's in those days used to win all the Inter-school elocution competitions and debates. Mr. John D'souza was my French teacher. After graduating from St. Xavier's I taught French, English and Maths in St. Stanislaus for 16 years. Mr. John D'souza had his first heart attack when he heard this. Fr. Henry was a very strict principal. One day I signed the report of my friend and Fr. Henry beat me black and blue. You can still read his fortune from the marks on my bottom.

One day Mr. Hudson Davis, the inspector of Schools, came to visit us. A big tall Englishman. He asked Damascene "How old are you?" Young Damascene did not understand his accent and boldly replied: "I am very well, thank you, Sir and how are you?" Mr. Davis smiled and patted him on his head.

St Andrew's was very good in sports, dramatics, elocution and other extracurricular activities and in inter-school meets we gave St Stanislaus a run for their money. In both hockey and football, I had a favourite position. I was left out.

The boys of St Stanislaus were very jealous of our standards then, and we were jealous of their friendship with the girls of St Joseph. This made our rivalry greater - sportingly.

**Life was great in St Andrew's those days. I am proud of my Alma Mater. It has produced great men. Most of them have died and I too am not feeling well lately.**

PS: I wrote the above from a request of Fr Rodney, one of my distinguished students. He said: "Johnnie in your article crow about your achievements. People will remember your achievements only by the funeral oration and you will not be able to hear."

It was easy writing the above, as Humility is not my strong point.



— Johnnie Alves