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Sydney Bens Gala Dinner Dance

Our committment for 2009

The Sydney Bens are committed to help 46 under-privileged students receive an uninterrupted education at St Benedict's College from Primary School to Tertiary level. These sponsorships would pave the way for these students to receive the high standard of education a leading educational institution such as College can offer. This is where we felt that we can play a vital part in providing these young aspiring students the opportunities we had.

So the Sydney Bens Gala Dinner Dance to be held on Saturday, July 25 is the way we plan to raise funds to do this.

The dance will be held at the Bowman Hall in Blacktown, commencing at 7.00 PM.

You see, the Sydney Bens are committed to this undertaking of assisting these needy students with



scholarships for their entire education. We are depending on EACH and EVERY Old Ben residing in Sydney (and NSW) to support this cause to the hilt. Rest assured, it will not cost the earth for you to support this valuable venture.

Tickets are priced at \$55.00 per person. A sumptuous dinner by Dale Mendis' CATERPLAN with each table of 10 guests will have a bottle of Scotch and two bottles of wine and the

Sydney band BREAKAWAY will be in attendance. There's more, a raft of prizes, raffles and surprises are thrown in for good measure, in the only way the Sydney Bens know how to lavish you with goodies.

That is why we are calling on each and every Old Ben and our ever loyal well-wishers to come on over and make this dance a success. The dollar you spend is going to fulfil the hope of

You can help by just being a guest at the dance or donating prizes. For tickets and any other information on how you can help, please contact:

Ranjith (9630 2070) Anton (9874 6859) Michel (9543 2020) Lionel (9863 2716) Harold (9966 9950) Dan (8824 5080) Prakash (9626 0228) Max (9498 2524) Sherwell (8901 3049) Ronnie (9774 5494) Doug (9894 7449).



Sydney Bens donate \$1000 to fire hero

Sydney Bens have donated \$1000 to help Steve Nash a volunteer firefighter with the Kinglake Country Fire Authority, and his family. Steve lost his home and entire belongings on February 7 in the Victorian bush fire. While his wife and two children were evacuated to the safety of the Central Fire Authority station, Steve was out there helping to

fight the fires ravaging the area. By the time Steve arrived in the fire truck at Kinglake, his house had been destroyed and their belongings were but a blackened pile and twisted metal.

After reading a newspaper article on the plight of the Nash family, the Sydney Bens Committee unanimously decided to assist them.

Sydney Bens semi finalists in "Big Cricket"

A splendid effort by the Sydney Bens cricket team led by Ronnie Almeida saw them emerge second runners-up in the "Big Match" cricket tournament at the Bankstown Oval on April 19.

After easy victories in the preliminary game over St Peters

and Nalanda, the Bens entered the Knockout round to defeat the Southern Districts team easily.

Close finish

The Bens met St Peters in the Semi-Final, but succumbed in a close finish. They were awarded a \$500 cash prize being second runners-up in the competition.

(See Page 4 for detailed scores)



• Victorian bushfire victims Steve Nash, his wife & two children receiving Sydney Ben's cheque from Romesh Velayuthen (left).

Romesh Velayuthen (son of Sydney Bens' President Ranjith & Gnani) who is a Melbourne resident, volunteered to meet the family in Kinglake and make the presentation of the cheque.



SYDNEY BENS' NEWS

Newsletter of the NSW OBA Inc.

**St Benedict's College
OBA (NSW) Inc.
Founded in 1993**

OUR MISSION

*Promote loyalty to and assist
our Alma Mater at all times,
foster social and sporting
interaction among Old Bens
everywhere.*

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Massillamany

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Ronnie Almeida

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Current in Kotahena

2009 Prize giving

Old Bens Dr. Lakshman De Zoysa will be the Chief Guest at this year's College Prize Giving on Saturday July 18, 2009 at the College Hall.

Dr. Lakshman is a Consultant Cardiac Anaesthesiologist who had his entire schooling at St. Benedict's from first grade till he entered Medical College from the University Entrance Class. He then proceeded to England to further his education specialising in Anaesthesiology and acute medicine and obtained the Fellowship of the Royal College of Anaesthetists UK. Following this, he took up Anaesthesia for cardiothoracic surgery and worked as a Senior Registrar at the National Heart Hospital in London, where he had the privilege of working with Sir Magdi Yacoub, the Pioneer Heart Transplant Surgeon in England.

From England he migrated to Canada and worked as a Consultant in the specialty of Anaesthesia and followed the medical education programme of the Harvard Medical School in the USA. Currently Dr Lakshman practices Open heart Surgery in Sri Lanka for six months of the year.

New facility for the kids

'WIZ KIDS' - the newest facility for the St. Benedict's College Primary students was ceremonially declared open on Monday June 15 by Distinguished Old Ben and Vice-Patron OBU Felix Dias.

This new facility will be a language room with multimedia and other modern equipment which will help to bring out and develop the creative ability of each student from a very young age.

The Development Fund of the College invested approximately Rs 750,000/- towards this novel project which was a concept and idea of Dr. Suren Peter and Lasanatha Peiris. Dr. Suren himself was involved in designing and completing the construction of the new facility. We sincerely

thank Dr. Suren, Lasantha and the committee of management of the Development Fund for identifying, funding and providing 'WIZ KIDS' to the primary students. Rev. Bro. Director and the Council of Management of the DF would like to invite all of you to be present for the opening on Monday 15th June at 7.45 a.m.

OBU holds AGM

The 105th Annual General Meeting of the Old Boys' Union of St. Benedict's College took place on Sunday 21st June 2009 at the College Hall at 10.30. The AGM was preceded by Holy Mass at 9.30 am, celebrated by Old Ben priests

The following were among those elected to office:

Patron : Most Rt Rev Dr Malcolm Ranjith His Grace the Archbishop of Colombo (Ex Officio). **Vice Patrons:** Rev. Bro. Provincial Visitor and all Past Directors of St Benedict's College; Elmo Perera, Eric Motha, Gamini Kanangara, Felix Dias, Dudley Thambinayagam, Gamini Edirisinghe, Nimal Perera, Neil De Silva, T Easuwaran, J.P Perera.

President: Rev Bro Granville Perera F.S.C. Director St Benedicts College – (Ex Officio)

Vice Presidents: Rev Bro Janaka Fonseka F.S.C. Sub-Director – St Benedict's College – (Ex Officio) Melville Perera, Randolph Perera, Emil Kronamberg, Lalith Madapulli, Gratien Fernando, Ravi Irugalbandara.

Hony General Secretary:

Joachim.Motha **Hony**

Treasurer: Anton Leon **Hony**

Assistant General Secretary:

Darrel Ludowyke **Hony**

Assistant Treasurer: Krishan

Rodrigo. **Hony Assistant**

General Secretary - Membership: Stephen Corerea.

Hony Assistant General

Secretary – Overseas: Patrick

Rodrigo. **Hony Assistant**

General Secretary – Social:

T.Valentine. **Hony Assistant**

General Secretary – Sports:

Stanley Rayer.

COMING EVENTS

• **JULY 25 - Sydney Bens
Gala Dinner Dance**
Bowman Hall, Blacktown.
7.00PM

• **OCTOBER 11 - Sunday**
Annual Bens Challenge
Shield Golf Day. Rosnay Golf
Course, Auburn 7.00 AM.

REMEMBER BENS!

We need you to sell tickets,
look around for
sponsorships & prizes for
raffles & above all, to be
there on the night. Bring all
your friends with you!



Vernon Arnolda – Australia's most senior Old Ben

Was it the thrill of riding motorcycles and driving armoured vehicles that lured Vernon Arnolda into the Armed Forces? Or the macho ideals envisioned at an impressionable age in the College Cadet Corps? Did his passion for Gene Autry, Roy Rogers and Hopalong Cassidy have anything to do with it? Most likely, all of these and more, in some way, aroused the sense of daring and adventure in the young lad blessed with a lot of adrenalin to play with.

No doubt, as evinced in his later life, Vernon had the nous, the guts and the determination to make it to the top in whatever venture he undertook.



Vernon, who notched up a robust 93 on April 16 this year, is the second-most senior Old Ben around, after Terrence Perera (in Sri Lanka) who is 96.

Vernon was born in Pickerings Road just a short sprint away from St Lucia's Cathedral, Good Shepherd Convent and St Benedict's College and was a Kotahena boy through and through. Like many of them, he started his initial schooling at the Convent at five, following it up at St Benedict's three years later.

His first teacher at College was Miss Toussaint and then Miss Moldrich. Then came Brother Francis who taught him in Standard 2. At various times he was also taught by Brothers Rene Albert, Hugh Farrington, Stephen Harding, Ceasar and several other distinguished lay teachers.

Vernon became a boarder at ten. He remembers that he was 'not happy!' in the boarding. Brother Abel was Prefect of the Senior Boarders and Brother Francis was in charge of the Juniors. At dinnertime on his first

night as a boarder, he was seated with all the other juniors, at a table near Brother Abel who sensed that Vernon was not a happy chappie and called him over and gave him an apple. It

was obviously done to ease the pain of a little boy, suddenly finding himself away from the warmth of a happy home only a short trot away.

No matter that his family home was only whistling distance away from the boarding, Vernon was not allowed home on weekends, unless he got a Green Mark in his weekly chart book, showing his progress during the week. Green Marks can be hard things to come by when one's not exactly in tune with one's surroundings... Somehow, Vernon soon managed to go home once a month because his mother intervened with a request to the Boarding Prefect that he be sent home on weekends. Most of all, he loved the freedom that this gave him – he delved into his Cowboy books, which, otherwise, the Brothers in the boarding would have confiscated.

All boarders, of whatever religious persuasion, had to attend daily Mass at St Lucia's Cathedral. Vernon's companions among fellow boarders included Ben Motha, Joseph DeVotta, Gerry Muller, Joe Caspersz, Teddy and Harry Benzie, Edward Jayatunge, Walter Masefield, Gregory Fernando, R.L. Perera and

brothers Joe and Wolstan D'Abrera.

Vernon played cricket for College at the age of 12, when he was picked for the Under-16 team. By the time he was 15, he was a regular member in the First XI squad and played under various captains including Terrence Perera. Matches were usually played in Colombo on grounds hired from various clubs as St Benedict's did not have their own playing fields. Games versus schools such as Royal, St Thomas' and St Joseph's were held on the grounds of those respective schools. But the most enjoyable were the ones played against St Anthony's College, which entailed a trip to the Hill Country lasting about three days. Cricket practises took place on the College quadrangle.

Vernon was an accomplished tennis player and also played soccer. He was an athlete in his last two years in College. He shared the Senior Athletics championship cup with two others named de Soysa and Mahendran, as he now recalls. He also represented College in the Schools Athletic Competition run by the Amateur Athletic Association in the Pole Vault clearing 10'4" breaking the All-Ceylon record of 10'2". This was at a time when there were no coaches and Vernon had to teach himself the techniques he required from a book on Pole Vaulting produced by Spaulding of USA.

He was a junior cadet in the College cadet battalion command-ed by Lt. Victor de Silva and moved to senior ranks under Capt. Joachim Mendis who commanded the Senior Cadets. Vernon's career ended in the Ceylon cadet batallion as

(Continued on page 4)

VERNON ARNOLDA...

(Continued from page 3)

Company Sargeant Major of "B" Company comprising of Zahira College, Ananda College, Nalanda College and St Benedict's.

Vernon was a tender 18-year-old when left College in 1934.

He entered Technical College for the BSc (Engineering) degree of the London University



• Surrounded by great grand children (from left) Alexia and Anastasia Dermatis and (front) Bianca Gomes.

and in 1938, he persuaded a few close friends – Bubby Perera, Kingsley Blake, Eric Holdenbottle and Eustace Ebert-to join the Ceylon Army Service Corps together. When the war broke out in 1939 there was conscription and from September of that year, Vernon and his friends became part of the British Army. He won the Best Recruit's Cup that year.

In 1941, Vernon was commissioned as 2nd Lieutenant in the First Coast Regiment of the Ceylon Garrison Artillery and throughout the war, manned 9.2" guns at Galle Face Battery and 6" heavy artillery guns at Rockhouse Battery and Battenberg Battery, and 40mm Anti-aircraft Bofor guns in Colombo and later, similar equipment in Trincomalee. It was at the Rockhouse Battery in Mutwal that he met up with his old friend and cricket captain Terrence Perera. Terrence was a Sergeant at the time and had been given the job of training all the young officers in gun drill, manning of guns and loading of 100 lb shells and firing the guns. Terrence fared so well at his duties that he was soon

made Battery Sergeant Major. With his team of 30 gunners led by Terrence helping him, Vernon with his men later began dismantling the 6' guns and mounting the latest 6" guns in their place – a risky task that lasted 30 days, without a single casualty.

Towards the war's end, Vernon was promoted to Field Officer Rank as a Major. The men were disbanded and soon after Ceylon gained Independence, the Ceylon Army was inaugurated. Because of experience gained in the war years, Vernon was asked to take over all the Artillery equipment in Colombo from the British Army for Ceylon.

When the Ceylon Army became a reality, he received a medal to mark the occasion. When a Volunteer Artillery Unit was formed, Vernon was appointed Commanding Officer with rank of Lieutenant-Colonel. He was then awarded the Efficiency Decoration (ED) pinned on his chest by the then Prime Minister S.W.R.D. Bandaranaike at a special parade held on Echelon Square.

Vernon married Princesse Eugene Thiedeman in 1943 and celebrated their 65th wedding anniversary in September 2008. Vernon and Princesse have two daughters Jeanne and Barbara and one son Darryl (an Old Ben, naturally!) They have six grandchildren and ten great grandchildren.

His favourite pastime was Rifle Shooting at which he has won many trophies and awards, the most cherished of which is the Silver Medal from the National Rifle Association of Great Britain for attaining the Highest Aggregate Score in their annual competition.

Vernon and Princesse migrated to Australia in 2003 and live with Jeanne in Australia's Capital city of Canberra, in the suburb of Monash. Their telephone number is 02-6292 1370. Barbara lives in Geelong, VIC, and Darryl lives in Bankstown, NSW.

Classic Twenty 20 scores

Preliminary games:-

Vs St Peters 30 - Charles Emerson 1 for 3, Roshan Pathinather 1 for 1, Russell Ingram 2 catches

BENS 1/31 Russell Ingram 7, Rajan Sebastian 9 n.o, Stanley Sebastian 11 n.o..

Vs Nalanda 53 - Roshan 1 for 9, Charles 1 for 10, Marlon Meurling 1 for 6 **BENS** 0/54 Stanley 17, Marlon 32

Knockout Round

Vs Southern Districts 30 - Marlon 1 for 6, Russell 1 for 6, Charles 1 for 5

BENS 0/31 - Stanley 21 n.o, Russell 10 n.o.

Semi Final

Vs St Peters 0/34 off 3.3 Overs - **BENS** 3/32 off 4 overs - Stanley 3, Russell 5, Marlon 18,

Rajan 3. **BENS** 0/31 - Stanley 21 n.o, Russell 10 n.o.

Semi Final

Vs St Peters 0/34 off 3.3 Overs - **BENS** 3/32 off 4 overs - Stanley 3, Russell 5, Marlon 18, Rajan 3.

OBITUARIES

VALE PETER PRINS

"Everyone knew him for the musician he was, but to me he was much more than that. He was one of the most honest and sincere friends I ever did meet..."

He was a Legend in every sense of the word and was one of our greatest assets at St Benedict's College and the contributions he made to the Old School cannot be valued whether it was through his band or as part of the social committee. He was the silent worker, no frills no fuss."

(Tribute by old friend Franklyn Holsinger- OBU Victoria)

Our heartfelt sympathies to the families of recently deceased Old Bens:

- Michael Cadiramanpulle
- Richard Ramanaden
- Jaliya Fernando • Rasiah Sundaralingam.

R.I.P.