

**BATCH OF '65**

**60<sup>TH</sup> REUNION AUG 2025**

***Alka Sinha and Ganesh Gopalakrishnan have been in the forefront of all our reunions and this 60<sup>th</sup> bash was no exception. They sent emails, letters WhatsApp messages, and phone calls to get the guys in our class to move their tired and old and decrepit limbs to make the pilgrimage to our Alma Mater. This sent thrills to all of us and soon the emails and messages were flying all over the known universe.***

***Some messages reached even the unknown universe like Dubai – where his Highness Sheik Doraipandian Rajendran Benjamin resided. He was ferreted out by “Hunter Par Excellence” Cyril Mathen Mathai. He went all the way to Dubai to find him as no doctor by the name of D R Benjamin existed in Dubai . His spy work was proven to be very fruitful for he found Dr Benjamin D Rajendran. Cyril then convinced him to come to Vellore for our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion. Cyril was quite persuasive and D R Benjamin arrived in full style. He came with his assistant and also with packets of gifts for each and every one of us.***

***The emails from our 65 batch was soon flooding the computer screens. Really this flood of emails motivated me to make a real attempt at getting my act together and going to Vellore. My calendar for August was tight and it took a fair bit of juggling to get the dates free. Alka was very helpful and did coordinate my trip.***

***She really coordinated all our trips and did all the bookings in the Alumni Guest House (AGH) for us.***

***August 6<sup>th</sup> 2025 dawned early for me and as I was leaving for India at 2230 hrs., I had my preparations cut out for me. I did shopping for some food items and also a bottle of "Spiritual Sustenance" especially for the Addiction Specialist, Rohini Shah. The trip to the KLIA airport brought back a great many memories of that day about 62 years ago. I was dressed in a full blue colored suit and a bluish tie. I was carrying a Dunlop wooden tennis racquet and looking extremely dapper. But in reality I was quacking in my expensive Barret embroidered shoes. A whole load of family members and friends were at the air port to see me off. I was flying by Air India 707 plane. The Cabin Crew were all fierce looking fairly well-endowed women in Sari, and they gave little drift to this pip squeak who was boarding the plane. This was my first plane ride and I was scared.***

***The flight on 6.8.25 was by Malaysian Airlines Boeing 737 with cute petite cabin crew that treated me the full respect that an Octogenarian could have. Thank God they did not call me Tha Tha or Grandpops. In about 3 hrs. we were descending to land and I recalled the first time that I saw Chennai (Madras at that time). It looked exactly the same from the air as it did 62 years ago. But the Air Port was another fantastic story. Chennai International Airport at Nungambakkam is a lovely modern airport now and it was a real pleasure coming through.***

***Nitin the taxi man that was ordered by Alka was waiting for me and I was soon on the way to CMC Vellore Alumni House. It was 0300 hrs. on Thursday 7.8.25 by the time I hit the bed. I slept with a***

*permanent smile because I knew that in a few hours I would meet the guys and gals who in one way or another shaped my life.*

*I got up at about 0700 hrs. and got to the dining room of the AGH and met the whole “gumbel”. Alka Sinha & Ganesh Gopalakrishnan, Porus Dhabar & Nawaz, Surinder Kaul & Nook (His new wife and the one he now plays nooky with), George Jacob & Alice, Jacob Korula & Shirley Joseph, Ronnie Gyi, Cyril Mathai, D R Benjamin, Clement Deenadayal, Shalini Suneetha, Vasenthi Vasudevan, Rohini Shah, Lalitha Vairaghar. Vasenthi I had noy seen since the day we left Vellore. She looks the same and still has rhe cute smile that had endeared her to all the guys in our class. D R Benjamin also was someone not seen since the day we left Vellore. He looked the same and he had the same black hair – thanx to the special and famous ‘Dubai Black Shoe Polish’.*

*The breakfast was Poori ‘Biscuits’ and Potato which to me tasted heavenly. The eggs were fried to perfection and the coffee was divine. Alka made us move fast as we were being taken to see things on the campus that had changed the landscape in so many lovely ways. The flowers and trees around were lovely. So much greenery and colour. There is a special department that manages the landscape and it looks just beautiful. So many trees and shrubs that would have helped the loving couples in CMC to bond more closely. And in the immortal words of Jacob Chandy “ If you love one another – one another will love you”. And we can recall how one another loved in our class. So much so that we soon had in our third year an “other”. The only class so far that managed that!!*

*The bus taking us around the campus wound its way to Bagayam Road Junction and past the Mental health center. This facility with the Rural Hospital was no longer recognizable. It looked*

*sophisticated and beautiful. Off the road to Chittoor was the new Stem Cell Centre. This was a collaboration with the Government of India and CMC to form a world class center that is doing cutting edge research into stem cells. It was a real eye opener for all of us – especially Cyril who always thought Stem Cells were for his ‘stem’. The stem cell center gave us a lovely brunch and we were sent on our way. Most of us slept the afternoon away and met at the Alumni Guest House in the evening for a Zoom meeting with our class diaspora. We had Meera & Roop, Sarama, Bella, Balaji, Sushila, Preman etc. At this gathering in the garden we were privileged to have Prakash Khanduri and Uma Menon as guests. The food at this venue was good and thanx once again to Alka and Ganesh. After the dinner and discussions a few of us repaired to my room for Spiritual Sustenance, prayer and meditation.*

*Friday came with a bang. We had to be ready by 0830 for the Ranipet Campus visit. In spite of all the cajoling and encouragement we managed to take off only by nine. The new hospital campus at Ranipet is fantastic. It has the look of a modern-day hospital in the USA. It is beautiful and looks so efficient. Its only drawback was there were no large pillars and dark corners for a quick squeeze or a stolen kiss. The doctors were young and vibrant and the nurses doe eyed and curvy. Oh how I wish my hormones could have kicked in. We had lunch at the cafeteria and came back for a well-deserved nap.*



***Darling Hotel was our next venue where we had a lovely dinner. But the conversation at that dinner table was really revealing. All of us present had stories to tell. And we were regaled with real life incidents that had taken place during our working career. All of us let our hair down – including us semi bald guys. The girls like Vasanthi, Shalini, Nawaz who were so quiet also had some lovely interesting stories.***



***Saturday was the high light of our reunion. We went to Scudder Auditorium for the Tree Planting Ceremony. It was followed by the introduction of the class members who were present. Alka had given me that task. Only names and designation was to be announced. Our class followed the protocol but the rest did not. Then each class had to have a representative to give an inspiring talk to the student body. In our class Rohini Shah was nominated by Alka and she gave the students lesson on “How to become Addicts”.***





***After all the motivational talks were given our class was designated to have lunch at Men's Hostel. The hostel mess and kitchen were in a sorry state. The common room on the first floor was being used as the Gym and the TV room. It was a dark dusty and deary looking room. There were dogs running around and in general the living quarters looked decrepit. The garden and pond and road in the center by contrast looked beautiful The trees and plants were all growing well. The President of the Men's Hostel Union approached Ganesh to solicit some form of donations for the renovations. I felt that these sort of renovations were best done by the institution and not by some random donations.***



***We had a few hours of rest before the Alumni General Body meeting. This was followed by a lovely dinner in the community hall behind the Scudder Auditorium.***

***We then went back to the SA for the entertainment. The other special batches all had musical dances. But ours was the last and the best. Thanx of course to Rohini Shah and Jacob Korula. Every time we were free Rohini grilled us into a practice session. She pushed and shoved us and got on our nerves. But she persisted in spite of Porus Dhabar smart aleck comments. Jacob had the skit all in his mind and it worked vey well. After the skit and dance we sang 'We are the World' and held hands across the whole SA. This was the clincher that sealed the fact that ours was the best show on that day.***

***We were all tired after our 'sterling' performance and poor Ganesh ferried us in 4 trips from SA to AGH in his Hyundai SUV. It was about 2300 hrs. when we all were safely ensconced in the AGH. Cyril, Georgie, Ganesh, Jacob and I had to have spiritual sustenance & prayer and meditation. We were all leaving in the early hours of the morning to our various destinations and this was the last meeting before we all went our separate ways.***

***Rohini & Lalitha left at 0400 hrs. Shalini left the night before with her husband Vinod Shah as she had a prayer meeting to conduct. Most of the others left in the late hours of Sunday. Jacob, Shirley and I left at 0500 for Chennai. I was dropped off at the airport and Jacob and Shirley carried on to Chennai city to meet about 500 relatives from Kerala. All of them had come to see the Liver Specialist and Geneticist for various congenital problems.***

***The whole reunion was just so fantastic that I cannot help reliving those 3 joyous days I had at our Alma Mater.***

***Abel W K Arumugam 1016***

***Batch of '65***

