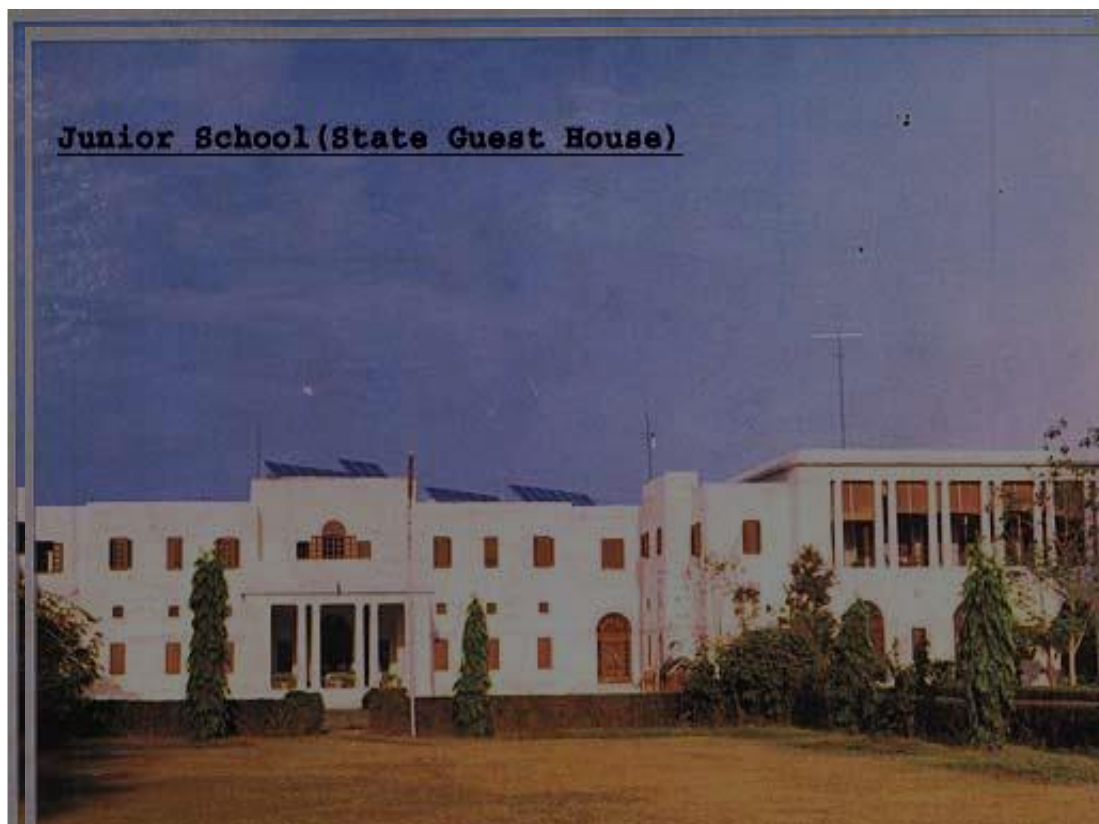


Memories of The PPS

Early Days

I remember very clearly the very first time we came to Nabha. It was towards the end of 1960. The school had started in April of the same year and was in session. We came to Junior School that was also called 'Guest House'. It was the guesthouse for the Viceroy of India and was a palatial building. This place was to be our home for the next twelve years. I fell in love with it immediately. The majestic staircase, the wooden floors, the massive rooms, the beautiful fireplaces, the chandeliers, filled me with awe. The Guest House was known as Junior School, and the Secretariat, which was known as the Senior School, constituted the school.



The Nabha state Guest House or the Regal Junior School Bldg. The right top front floor was house to Kates for over first 12years

Junior School had classes 5 and 6. All the teachers who taught in Junior School lived here. The four boarding houses were on the ground floor. We occupied the west wing and had a beautiful view of the lawns and the playgrounds. The classrooms were on the top floor. I joined the school in 1961 in class 5. It was a very small class then. I think there were only 14 students. Mrs. Tandon, then Miss Pannu, used to teach us. She was also our class teacher. Most of the boys who passed out of school with me had joined the school later in 1962.



Jyoti Kate at the Founders' Day Science exhibition, with Chief guest Governor Dharamveera.

My Father

My father loved PPS with his heart and soul. For him going to work was a pleasure. If he had his way, he would have gone to office on Sundays too! As far as I can remember he was always working. If he was not working, he felt he was wasting his time. Very often prefects and teachers would be invited home on Sundays for breakfast and School Council meetings!

His Values

For him character was an integral part of life. He took a lot of personal interest in the boys of the school. If he felt had some boy had done something wrong, he would be invited to our home and after a hearty breakfast, my father would have a long chat with him. There would be follow ups too. He was very particular about the discipline in the school too, whether it was the boys or the staff members. That was one thing he couldn't tolerate. He never broke the rules for anyone. Once a minister's grandson didn't clear the entrance test for admission. He did not pass him but instead he agreed to keep the boy at home so that he could study under proper guidance and reappear for the entrance test. He was a stickler as far as rules were concerned.

I remember parents would come to ask for leave for a relative's wedding, but he never complied. For him academics were important and going on leave wasn't entertained.

He hated dishonesty and cheating. If he discovered that someone was dishonest the person was asked to leave. I remember once I asked him why I couldn't eat my lunch in school like Basanti did. He told me meals were not free for the administrative staff. I ate my lunch in school only on Saturdays when we had class tests. On other days I walked home for lunch and walked back for hobbies and prep.

He was extremely frank too. If something bothered him, he would not keep quiet until he got to the bottom of it. If a teacher or his wife didn't come for a school function he would go to the teacher's house and see what the reason was. Nothing escaped him. If a boy got low marks in a subject or very high marks that too was investigated.

He was a good administrator and hated cheating and dishonesty. He was very vigilant whenever there was a construction in progress and we would often find him making rounds at odd times to the construction site. I would often accompany him. If there was no driver around, he would drive himself and then I would act as navigator to prevent him from driving into some hedges as he was always so preoccupied.



Mr. and Mrs. Kate flanking Mr. and Mrs. Jayparkash Naraynan, the activist, who led a movement which shook Indira Gandhi and led her to declaring Emergency in India.

My father was quite a disciplinarian at home too. Both my mother and he insisted that we do our own work. The fact that we sneakily kept our shoes for polishing was another matter. Although I was not a boarder, I wasn't allowed the liberties of a day-scholar. I stayed at home while my parents went visiting. I had to go to school on my own; he never took me to school although we went to the same place. God help me if my cycle was punctured and I was late. I usually didn't get punished as I found my own means of reaching school before the bell rang. There was Mr. Mallon who always gave me a lift. He would drive his car at breakneck speed and we would be in time for assembly. On other days I would hop onto **Mr. Tandon's** bike who would be going to Senior School for morning assembly. (As **Mr. Tandon** was the only Music teacher, he took assembly in Junior School first and then went to Senior School.)

He was quite a visionary and had a lot of ideas for the school. It was fortunate that he could implement a lot of his ideas whether it was regarding academics or co-curricular activities or some other sphere. We often had principals and teachers from other schools visiting the school. In 1968 the IPSC (Indian Public Schools Conference) was held in our school. It was a

big event and we had a lot of guests staying in PPS. To have an IPSC conference at such an early stage in when the school so new was considered a great accomplishment.

By nature he was extremely helpful. He would go to any lengths to be of help whether it was to get a scholarship for a boy or get a better job for a teacher. He even made Jung Singh our first driver join Horlicks as he would get a better salary. Poor Jung Singh left very reluctantly. He recommended **Pushpraj** too but knowing Pushpraj he came back and told my father “I’d rather work for you”.

Another thing he was extremely fond of was people. In today’s parlance, he would be called a ‘people person’. Visitors to PPS was a norm more than an exception. He always wanted the visitors to contribute to the school in some way. That is how the ‘Wednesday talks’ started. If my father was busy, I ended up showing the guests around the school. I knew the place backwards. The many playing fields we had, was the strength of the school. How many boys had passed out in which division, who started the poultry farm etc. etc. Every visitor was welcome and treated with courtesy and respect. He had a genuine interest in people and remembered boys’ names and their families even after years. If he saw an old boy at Delhi railway station or any other place, he would call out to him and go and meet him. He was always proud of their achievements. More like a father taking pride in his son’s achievements

My Teachers.

1962 was the year **Miss Malkani** joined the school. No amount of praise for **Miss Malkani** will be enough. All those who were under her tutelage will agree. She was a legend. I remember seeing her for the first time when she came to our house for breakfast. After that she almost always came at that time as she knew that was the best time to get my father’s attention before he went to Senior School. We were on our best behaviour when she came. For as long as I can remember when my brother didn’t get up in the mornings we would say, “Vilas, Miss **Malkani** has come”.



The "Lady in white" Miss Malkani being introduced to His excellency Gov of Punjab Dharamvira by Mr JK Kate. far is Mr Oberoi senior Master, from right Mr OP Bhatnagar, Miss Kirat Pannu (Tandon), Mr MN Tankha and Mr John Mallon

Like for many of us, she was responsible for so much of my upbringing in my formative years. Often when I would teach in school, I would hear myself saying, "Sit straight, left hand on the book". She was responsible for teaching me so many things. Whether it was like showing respect to the servants, or throwing trash in the bin. (Once we had gone to the Nabha cinema hall to watch a movie. There was no place to throw the peanut shells, she told me to keep it in my coat pocket till I could throw it in the dust bin. I still squirm when I see empty plastic wrappers on the road. I remember the first year the school went to Rohti (a place 2kms from PPS) for a school picnic. She made me learn a poem called Rebecca and recite it before the whole school. After that I was made to recite poems on various occasions especially when the lights failed during a programme! When someone asked me how I felt so comfortable addressing people, I would reply, "I have been doing this since I was eight years old!"

Miss Malkani, along with **Mr. Vodden**, who came from the British Council, were largely responsible for the English Syllabus of the school. Almost all the boys who came to Nabha in class 5 knew almost no English. They devised teaching methods and techniques for these boys.

To their credit these boys could appear for the Senior Cambridge exam and NDA entrance exam and pass with flying colours. **Mr. Michael Vodden**, who came from the British Council, joined the school in 1962. He was a tremendous asset to the school He wrote our school song. And we practiced it during morning assembly. We got a lot of informative magazines and books from the British Council.

We were very fortunate to have teachers from the British Council. It gave the boys an excellent foundation. **Mr. John Mallon** joined Nabha after **Mr. Vodden** left in 1965. **Mr. Mallon** taught English from 1965 to 1968. It was because of him I developed a love for the subject. He was an excellent teacher and took a lot of pains over his teaching. He started a club called 'Athenians' for us when we were in class 10. He would get records from the British Council and make us listen to them in the assembly hall.



Jyoti on the left with Mallon family and Mrs Poutney of Horlicks and her two daughters

Probably one of the first teachers to join the school was **Mr. Cowell**. He was the first senior master and we were terrified of him when we came to Senior School. He was a strict disciplinarian. Quite a few Jumna House boys would vouch for that. He always wore rubber soled shoes so we couldn't hear him when he came on his rounds. On one April Fool's Day the boys in my class decided to play a prank on him. We were in class 9. We placed a tumbler of water on top of a lot of books and placed it over the front door, and waited anxiously for him. During prep we kept stealing glances at the door hoping he would walk in. Walk in he did, but through the back door! We were learning Mark Antony's speech after that for a long time.

In the class room he was completely different and an excellent teacher. He was very diligent and thorough and we learnt good English from him. He taught us inside the class room as well as outside. I can never forget how he corrected our notebooks. No mistake was overlooked however small.

He had a unique way of teaching. I remember one afternoon the first bell for prep had already rung and I was in the school library. According to the rules, you had to be in your seat by the second bell. I ran from the school library, dashed down the wooden stairs, cut across the visitor's room, and almost banged into **Mr. Cowell**. "What were you doing just now? What did you do just now?" He asked me again.

There goes, I thought to myself. I'm going to get punished now.

"It begins with d" He said.

'Diversion' I said.

Another word beginning with 'd'.

He let me go only when he elicited 'detour.' from me. Can I ever forget!

I still use his methods when I teach.



Sitting L to R: Mr. PN Mathu (Geography), Mr. DK Dighe (Maths), Mr. YP Bhardwaj (History), Miss KP Pannu, Mr. HD Vodden, Dr. Surjit Singh (Senior Master), Mr. JK Kate (Headmaster), Mr. SC Cowell (English), Miss GB Malkani, Mr. GS Punia (Bursar), Mr. MN Tankha (Geography), Mr. OP Bhatnagar (Hindi), Dr. Ram Kishore (Medical Officer)

Standing 1st Row: Mr. D Pine (Peace Corps-USA), Mrs. W McMullen (Nurse), Miss J Lamba (Punjabi), Mr. SG Khan (Craft), Mr. MR Sharma (Maths), Mr. KC Tandon (Music), Mr. R Sibal (English), Mrs. J Singh (Matron), Mr. OP Sharma (Hindi), Mr. Satya Pal (Hindi), Mr. IB Kakar (Physics), Mrs. SK Sidhu (Matron), Miss L Kak (English), Mr. R Burridge (from UK)

Standing 2nd Row: Mr. MS Bhatnagar (Biology), Mr. Ishwar Singh (Steward), Mr. H Kumar (PT Instructor), Mr. Harbans Singh (Accountant), Mr. KK Jha (Office Assistant), Mr. SK Jain (Office Superintendent), Mr. Jagdish Singh (Librarian), Mr. OP Nagar (Estate Officer), Mr. Pushp Raj (Steno), Mr. KM Saxena (Chemistry)

Right from the initial stages PPS made a name for itself with its excellent school results. We had an excellent set of dedicated and devoted teachers. **Mr. V.N. Bhave**, who taught Chemistry, came from Sanawar. He joined the school in 1963. **Mr Bhave** was so good in his teaching that even if you wanted to fail you could not. He never left anything to chance and **Basanti** and I would be mouthing our Chemistry equations all the way from Senior School to Junior School. Even if you forgot an arrow in one equation you had to write all of them all over again. I guess that's why we knew our subjects so well. Every year some teacher or the other would go abroad for training. One year four of our teachers went abroad at the same time. No other school can claim to have the distinction of sending four teachers on scholarship in one year. Though it was hard for the school to find their replacement, my father never came in their way and let them go for better prospects in the future. We were fortunate to have such good teachers who took so much interest in us. I am forever grateful and thankful to them.

Mr. Kakar, who taught us Physics, also joined the school in 1963. For him no amount of effort was enough. He took great pains to see that we understood his subject. And always wanted us to do well. I was always sent to his house during the holidays to do Maths and Physics. He was never tired of teaching! He loved giving us tests during class or prep time and we always found ways and means of getting around them. One time someone from our class put off the main switch just before a test. As luck would have it, we were caught. The whole class was doing extra PT for a month!

We loved going to **Mr. Katyal's** class which was in the Biology lab. Other than playing with

the skeleton which was there, we enjoyed his class. He was an excellent teacher and knew his subject well. I think the boys enjoyed dissection as it gave them an opportunity to do some mischief. Once **Vineet (J-72) and Vinod (J-65)** managed to topple a whole box of cockroaches which **Mr. Katyal** had collected. Needless to say, after collecting the cockroaches which took two whole periods to do, we were all punished.

No amount of praise for my teachers would be enough. They were very sincere and dedicated. It was so nice to see all the boys hugging them when we met them in March 2003. More like long lost friends than teachers! Whenever I meet any **Old Nabhaites** we always talk of school and how lucky we were to have teachers who took so much interest in us. We all acknowledge the fact that we are what we are because of them. If we slackened a bit in our studies, **Mr. Mathu** was breathing down our necks and threatened to tell our parents! Because of **Basanti** I went there often. He was more like a father figure and extremely very protective and caring. I loved going to **Basanti's** house as I would be pampered by her mother.



Jyoti Kate as a small girl standing next to her mum Mrs. Kate. Mr. Kate in foreground is talking to Mrs. Horlicks in early 1960s. In the background can be seen Miss Malkani, Mrs. Tandon, Miss J Lamba and M.r Kumar looking on at the end,

VSO's and Peace Corps.

The first VSO who came to Nabha was **Roger Miall**. He joined PPS in 1962. **Roger Miall** taught us in class 6. The VSOs who came were all very young, about 18 and full of life. The boys enjoyed their company and they also made themselves quite at home in India. They stayed in the school for a year. They stayed in the Junior School under the watchful eyes of my parents and **Miss Malkani**. They taught in the Junior School too. My mother learnt to make English food from **Mrs. Vodden and Mrs. Mallon** and she would call them over sometime. They came for Christmas and during holidays. We would put up a Christmas tree so that they didn't feel homesick.

Janet Anderman and Roger Burridge came during the Pakistan war in 1965. There was talk of sending them back, as my father was worried about their safety, but they stayed on. We had a steady succession of VSO's and they contributed to the school in many ways. And they got on well with the young members of the staff.

Dick Pine was the first Peace Corps volunteer who joined the school. He helped to start the poultry farm which soon became a big success and soon there were two sheds. We had an aviary too. The Junior School boys would help him in feeding the birds. In the holidays when there was no one around **Miss Malkani** would make us do it.

David Goldberg and **Lowell Edwards**, who were from the Peace Corps, came in 1965. They along with **Rob Clarke**, a VSO, brought an endless supply of comics. I got hooked to Superman and Batman for good. **David Goldberg** taught us to swim and became our swimming coach. **Lowell Edwards** taught me Algebra and how to dive. He was one of my favourite teachers. The VSO's and Peace Corps teachers left their mark in their own way. Whether it was cycling or swimming or monopoly or English they were always there guided us. Unknowingly we learnt a lot from them. **Anita Williams** came in 1966. She was one VSO who stayed for two years. For me she along with **Lila Kak** were more like companions than teachers. The bonds made during those years were so strong that although they are in another part of the world they still keep in touch. After so many years Nabha still binds us together. **Anita Williams (now Mrs. Scammell)** came to PPS in 2008 to teach for a week. What a great gesture. She paid for her own way to visit the school.



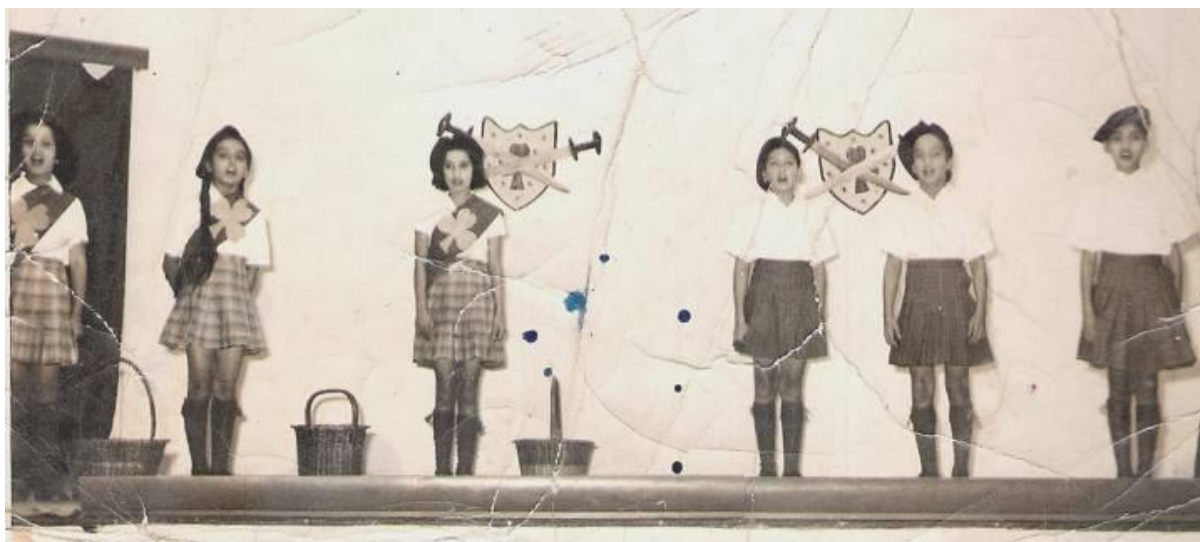
Jyoti with VSO Anita and the boys (1967-68) photo sent by Mallons

Founder's Day

In April 1961, Dr Rajendra Prasad, the first President of India, formally inaugurated the school. It was a grand function by all means. The whole of Nabha came together on that occasion. The Maharaja of Nabha lent my father one of his Rolls Royces for the occasion. The army helped and so did Horlicks. The Senior School lawn was the venue for the main functions. We put up a Hindi play called, "*Kutte ki Maut*" in which I took part. I was "Mary Ayah" but **Lt-Gen Kulwant Singh** called me '*meri ayah*' for a long time after that. Mrs. Tankha taught us girls (there were three) a *Pahari* dance.

The school Founders' was held on the second Saturday of March each year. The reason being that the second Saturday was a holiday for government officials. We had many important dignitaries who were the chief guests for our Founders'. One year it was the chief of the army staff, Gen Chaudhary. Another year it was Air Vice Marshal Arjun Singh who came to Nabha in a helicopter.

Founders' was an important event for the school. My father read the annual report for the school year. It was important for him to impress upon the chief guest the need for an auditorium, dining hall, library, boarding houses, etc. etc., as the need arose. He would request the chief guest to sanction some amount for the project. Each year was a milestone. The school grew by leaps and bounds. The first building to come up was the dining hall behind the Senior School. It also doubled up as an auditorium where we saw movies on Saturdays and Sundays.



Jyoti Kate (R-52) on the left, Harinder (Satluj-62) middle and Basanti (R-73, all 1967) as the girls in this one of the early Founders' Day rendering of a ?Scottish song. On the right are Suresh Soft (Jumna-30), Bharatinder (Ravi), Amarjit Malik (Satluj-46)

With each passing year, a new feature was added to the school. In 1965, we got the school band. It was the pride of PPS. Then we had cross- country, and then the Duke of Edinburgh awards. When I visited the school in 2003, they had horse riding too.

We also had a full-fledged Arts and Craft exhibition on Founders Day. **Mr. O.P.Bhatnagar** and **Mr. Ghan** put up an impressive exhibition each year. The carpentry and the *paper mache* work, were really impressive.



Jyoti Kate as a female poet in the 'Kavi Sammelan' organised by Hindi Teacher Mr OP Bhatnagar.

It would not be inappropriate to mention here that one person who was busy even after Founders was **Pushpraj**, my father's P.A. I remember he was always smiling and never got hassled by any amount of work. He was extremely efficient and knew exactly what my father wanted. He would type out the minutes of the board meeting and other important papers to get it signed and soon my father would be on his way to Chandigarh.

School Holidays

Being a residential school we celebrated holidays in a unique way. My father believed that if the boys were left to themselves for too long, they would end up doing some mischief and it was best to keep them occupied. For *Holi* and *Dussehra* the whole school walked to a place called *Rohti*. It was about a two km walk then along the Sutlej Canal. One year, **Mr Tankha** had arranged a treasure hunt along the way. *Rohti* had a government rest house where we could rest. We had games and the boys played around and loved jumping in the Sutlej canal.



The schoolboys after swimming in the Rohti canal with Mr Rajender Sibal the English Teacher

It was great fun and everyone had a great time. We spent the whole day there and came back in the evening. For *Dussehra* the whole school would gather outside the new dining hall in the evening to see the burning of *Ravana*. **Mr. Ghan**, the carpentry instructor, and the senior schoolboys would make it out of old newspapers and bamboo.

For *Diwali* most of the boys went home, as it was a long weekend. There were always some boys who couldn't go home and we would light *diyas* and burst crackers on the playgrounds.

Extra classes in the summer vacation started as early as 1963/64. Initially they were meant only for the weak students. By the time I reached Senior Cambridge they were already going on in full swing. And we had full-fledged classes in the summer vacation! Those who were considered weak in the lower classes were also told to come to school in the holidays. The school library was always open during the holidays and it was one place I loved to visit.

The winter vacation had classes for those boys who appeared for the NDA exam. The number of boys who stayed back was also much less. They loved to wander around the school and visit all the teachers who stayed back.

On *Gandhi Jayanti* there would be a football match between the class IV employees and the school team. The prefects and ladies would serve lunch to the whole school on the Junior School lawns.

Guru Nanak Jayanti prayers were held in the open under the trees, in the Junior School compound. It was a beautiful concept. Mr. Tandon would do a beautiful job.

On some occasions the boys who stayed back during holidays and long weekends were taken to see a movie in the local theatre.

We always had some function or the other and it was something to look forward to.

I enjoyed my years in school. They were so full of fun and totally stress free. For me the whole of PPS was like one big family. I felt totally sheltered and I loved the whole place. I was so homesick when I went to college. I couldn't study. Even now when I talk of Nabha I am filled with nostalgia and happy memories.

Back to school

I visited Nabha in 2003 after a gap of 32 years. It was lovely to be back and see the place for myself. The Headmaster was very kind and let us see our old home. It was even lovelier meeting all the people I knew and exchanging news with them. I stayed with **Mr. and Mrs. Punia**. When I went there, I felt I had never been away. Even as a child, I had stayed there many a times and played there with **Mina and Raghuvinder**. We were spoilt silly by both Mr and Mrs. Punia and we loved it. We never went home till Balbir Singh, our Junior school *chowkidar*, came to fetch us.



Vilas Kate (S-96, 1970) on the left Minna Punia (J-54, 1966), Jyoti Kate (R-52), Basanti Mathu (R-73, 1967) and Raghuvender Punia (J-85, 1970) Staff Children of HM Mr JK Kate, Bursar Mr GS Punia and Geography Teacher Mr PN Mathu

It was lovely seeing my classmates again and meeting the other old boys, and talking of old times. I felt I was in school again. The years just seemed to dissolve. At the Old Nabhaites dinner, one ON's wife asked me how I felt being one of the three girls in a school of 500 boys. I told her it was simple. As an eight-year-old, you have no status, ego, name, or expectations from anyone. We just all grew up together. It was as simple as that. It is just you. In addition, you are willing to play and study together, shout and run around and enjoy school life and share your failures and successes with them. They accept you for what you are and vice versa. And this bond lasts a lifetime. Nothing can replace that. We pick up the threads from where we left off...

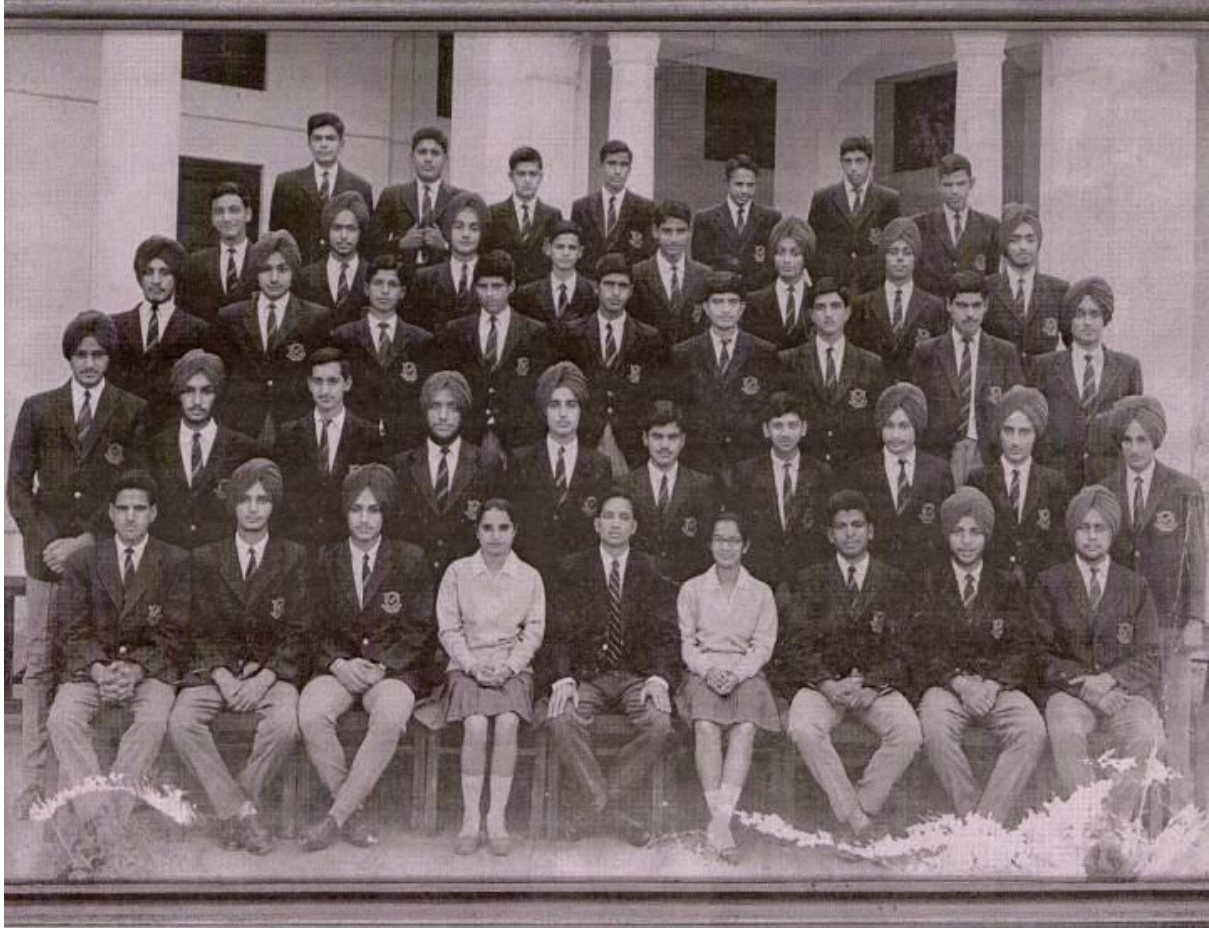


Vilas Kate (S-) Mrs. Vilas and Jyoti Kate (R-52) on stage at that time of Golden Jubilee of scholl(2010). They handed over the Padma Shri citation of Mr. JK Kate to the Headmaster Mr ML Syal.

My Class

I always proclaimed that my class was the best class in school. Everyone does! Yes, we were naughty but who is not? We loved school and we loved our teachers. In spite of the pressures of life they consistently managed to keep the spirit of the school alive with their unflagging devotion and perseverance and kept us all in touch with each other and with the school. They believed in letting us know what we could achieve with a bit of effort. What greater way can I thank them than salute them for bringing so much glory to PPS? ISC1967 had the best result in Northern India. Out of a class of 44, there were no failures- three went to IIT; three went to AFMC; two went to other Medical Schools (now moved to US), one is a leading builder of India, and one is internationally renowned for his French movies and writings settled in Paris. One is a lawyer ,US educated and Ex-MLA. At least three did MBA, one from Ahmedabad (headed US MNC firm Cyanamid, India) , other one was Gen Manager in Hafed, the third after retiring from Navy did MBA in USA at age of 57yrs. The majority went to NDA attaining the least rank of Colonel, the batch has the distinction of having three serving Lt. Generals at the time of writing). One of them likely to become Director General of his Corps. One is even headmaster of a leading Public School in Punjab. In March 2008, we had a class of 1967 get-together in Delhi. It was a great idea. Technology has made it easier for us to contact each other. The build up with the e-mailing and phone calls and school photos and catching up with each other was an experience in itself. Climax of the meeting was a slide show of PPS in our times. The get-together, the bonhomie we felt is hard to describe. It just reiterated what I felt. It was so wonderful to see my classmates and teachers and meet their families and learn about them and share their joys and success- and the promise and possibility of meeting school friends again.

We all have come a long way from the wide-eyed eight-year-olds we were when we came to PPS. We have travelled a long way since then, become successful people, established ourselves in life, become parents and grandparents. Life has come full circle. PPS has given us bonds that we will always cherish. And I hope we can pass this spirit on to the next generation. Like we all learnt in school assembly “If you have a kindness shown pass it on. Let it travel down the years ...pass it on”.



Class of 1967 with class teacher MR VN Bhave (Chemistry)

PS: For those who do not know, ONA is literally a creation of 1967 batch. **Dr Jashanjot (S-52)** has helped run ONA since inception and is the creator of “**The Eagle**”; **Col BS Grewal(S-50)** (Secretary, ONA), **Harpartap (B-45)** (Head boy, President, ONA 2004 onwards) and **Vinod Kashyap(J-65)** (Ex-President, ONA 1985-95) have nurtured it along with many others.

Jyoti Kate (R-52,1967)