

## **26th January - Alumni Get together-2008**

The success of the 26 January 2008 get-together was thanks to the joint effort of each and every one of us from the 1983 batch.

It was during the previous year's get-together that Lt Col Nikunj Goel assumed charge and insisted on meeting within the following week. So about 10 of us met at Rajeev Agarwal's house on a rainy Saturday afternoon over hot chai and munchies to list all the things that needed to be done; asking for volunteers for each task. The first task was to compile the list of persons and contacts and then send out mail to all asking for more contacts to build the list. We began with the email address of 10 persons in February 2007.

We made some rough calculations on how much each person would have to contribute to cover the costs for the lunch on 26 Jan and then we thought we would set a 1 lakh rupee target for collection, over the get-together expenses, to make some gift to the school. Ideas ranged from books to silver trophies to models of the old school building when suddenly someone suggested collection for a scholarship corpus which everyone present instantly agreed to.

Thereafter, everyone got into action-mode. I sent out e-mails very regularly asking for contributions which I know were annoying. Initially most persons felt the get-together was still several months away and response was slow which discouraged some of our core organizers. But hearing from old names from one's past hit a nostalgic nerve in each new addition to the list and people began responding enthusiastically sometime after October. Savita Gupta in the U.S. – president of the Students' Council during our time – popular, active, and instilling enthusiasm in all – rose to the occasion and managed to be the major fund-raiser as she tracked many of the overseas classmates. Only 10 persons abroad ended up contributing over 1.17 lakhs - one-third of the total collections.

Rakesh Vohra kept meticulous accounts. By June we had contacts for 40-odd persons. Finally by December, we had contacts for 76 persons from our batch and 60 persons sent in contributions which surpassed all our expectations. Hence we ended up with Rs 2 lakhs to set up the scholarship corpus after having generously spent on the lunch.

Each one did their bit to make the event interesting and memorable. And the best part was that each did not really interfere in what the other was assigned so at the end of it we ourselves were surprised how well it all came together. Sangeeta Kashyap put together a wonderful powerpoint presentation of new and old photos; Naresh Yadav hosted a lovely get-together for our batchmates; Piyush Gupta organized the caterers and managed the entire

show of organizing tentwalas, drinking water, and several other things along with Nikunj in a seemingly effortless way; Sonya Malik, Seema Jha, and Rajeev Agarwal made special efforts to make things different for this time. Since we go to meet friends each year, people tend to overlook the food arrangements and have fun despite everything but this year the attention paid to details was much appreciated.

Molly Basu came all the way from England, Vijay Bathija from Canada, and Jyoti Puvulla and Vivek Kapoor (our most generous contributor) from the U.S. just for this. Manisha Goel rushed across from Ambala for a day.

We took some effort to make the get-together special for ourselves. We requested school for permission to attend the morning assembly on 25th Jan. Despite being in Delhi most had never come back to attend it. It was an unusually cold Delhi winter but 15 persons came and we sang 'tu dhoondata hai jisko basti mein ya ke van mein', 'shamso kamar mein aapka', 'ambe, charan kamal hain terey', 'vande mataram' (amidst groans from the kids just the way we did!); and marched out with 'ham dharati ma ka aaj naya itihaas banayengey'. It was very emotional. The school had organized a tour of the ashram and the new campus and then Mrs Singh had organized tea with lovely ashram cake and cookies and asked a small group of Class 7 kids to do an impromptu skit performance they had prepared for class. It was lovely to see how smart kids are these days. Mrs Singh told us how she got a call on her cellphone from couple of 4th standard kids recently who said they couldn't think of anyone better than her to help them with some homework they were having trouble with!

We all met again that evening. We remembered two of our friends who're no longer here - Niraj Agarwal who died soon after he was diagnosed with cancer - his child was just about a year old. Shipra Sharma died in a car accident leaving behind 3 young children.

On 26th morning, we entered the school grounds and were surprised at how lovely it looked -lots of tables and chairs, spaciouly spread counters for food. It looked almost like it had been set as a wedding banquet (but of course without the floral decorations!). Everyone complemented us on the sumptuous food. The chat counter comprised golgappas, dahipapdi, aluchaat, alu tickki. Then there was pao-bhaji, kachoris, naans, matar-panner, dal, bedmiallu. Dessert was kulfi, moongdall halwa and an angelic frothy doodh mithai. Lots of biseleri water, biodegradable plates. It was so neat and clean. Felt so very proud when we received all the complements.

Sanjeev Madan and Nikunj went to pick up Mr Shekar who complemented us on the card we had printed inviting the teachers with all our names listed on

the back. He said he could recall faces when going over the list. So when he came, much to our glee, he addressed everyone by name. Mrs Pillai, Tara-didi, Shivani Goswami, Anima Chandra and many of the old teachers were there.

It was a memorable get-together for us and we were happy to pass on the baton for the next year's arrangements to the 1984 batch.

- Walking down the boulevard.... ([\*\*click here\*\*](#) to download presentation)