



Established in 1936

The Doon School

WEEKLY



Saturday, May 19, 2007 • Issue No. 2153

In Memoriam: Col. Eric Joseph Simeon (1918-2007)



What struck me most the first time I saw Col. Simeon was how nattily he was dressed! He wore grey flannels, solid brown walking shoes, a tweed coat, a white shirt, and a bright woollen tie. On his head was what looked like a pork-pie hat, big in the middle, with a small rim. And sticking jauntily out of one side of the hat was a feather. I seem to remember a neat white moustache as well. He was not tall, no more than five and a half feet, but strongly built in the shoulders. He walked with longish steps, his head slightly lowered. He would squint up from time to time. His face was large, square, and smooth, and he had a big, crooked smile.

Chris Miller, his predecessor, had left Doon late in 1970. Old S.C. Roy ("Kake" Roy) had run the school for a few months in the interim. News of Col. Simeon's appointment as HM had filtered through to the school by about Founder's, I think. We knew he had headed the Sainik School, Kunjpura, and La Martiniere for Boys, Kolkata, and that he was highly regarded as an educationist. His wife, Jean, was also quite a personality. We were to find out that she was a formidable partner of Col. Simeon, a forthright, sympathetic, charming, often eccentric (and misunderstood) person, a colourful foil to the HM who was—and indeed had to be—a more conventional presence.

When we returned in January 1971, after the winter holidays, Col. Simeon was already installed. My first memory of him, dressed rather like an English country squire, is from Sunday callover, which, much to our annoyance, he had chosen to revive. Callover in those days was held in the corridors of the Main Building. He sat next to where the bellrope hung, near the stairwell, called out each boy's name, and ticked the list in front of him. As we filed past, he looked up in a slightly inquisitive, expectant way—I thought he wanted a measure of recognition and cordiality from us which in those early days we were not able to give him. He was the first Indian HM of Doon, and he was a new and uncomfortable figure for us. We were watchful and aloof.

There is a view that he was slow to be accepted at Doon. Looking back at it now, I think that view is incorrect. Having been HM for four years myself, I know that acceptance at Doon is not easily obtained. Col. Simeon, phenomenally, did it rather quickly, within a year. Quite how he did it, I don't know. I got to see and appreciate him at close quarters through the school plays. I was in my first play under the direction of Mr. Amarnath Dar (AD) and Vikram Seth, and a day or two before the dress rehearsal I remember HM coming to the Rose Bowl, late on a summer evening, in the midst of a particularly frustrating session. At the end of it, he commented, quickly, tellingly, but above all, constructively and warmly. The following term I was in his Founder's Day play, "My Three Angels" (and later "French Leave"). He had a very sure grasp of what we had to do. He was direct and commonsensical in his stagecraft, aware of the limits of school theatre. We loved the plays. Jean Simeon painted our faces with drollery and care. There were always generous stage parties at the end and a lot of tomfoolery.

Eric Simeon's acceptance amongst the mass of boys came from an amalgam of qualities: experience, dignity, sympathy, unpretentiousness, a quiet sense of humour, solidity. He had seen it all as an educationist and as a head, and he was unflappable. I never saw him shout or lose his temper with boys or staff. He was not a constant presence, and there were no campfire chats, but he was at ease in our company. He did not posture and pose: he was what he was, take it or leave it. He did not laugh uproariously, but he had a good fund of stories, and he wasn't sarcastic. He exuded a sense of solidity, his feet planted squarely on the ground.

His years at Doon were not easy years. The Miller years had been full of experimentation and, as a result, turbulence. Col. Simeon had to bring back routine and calmness without rejecting change. The school was fairly deep in financial trouble, and the estate was in disarray—there weren't enough funds to maintain the buildings and facilities in the way that they should have been kept. There were virtually no new structures erected during his time, but he strove to improve living conditions. There was, it is fair to say, quite a bit of factionalism and obstructionism within the staff. This was inherited in part from the Miller period. Some of it was more or less inevitable: Simeon was new, he was Indian, and he was not "public school". Change was necessary in various areas, including the culture of the school, but for someone who was regarded as a bit of an interloper it was not easy to lead change.

What were some of the issues that faced him apart from the increasingly appalling state of the campus? This was a time, for instance, when there were questions about the viability of Indian public schools: what was their place and role 25 years after

(contd. on page 2)

REGULARS

SQUASH NEWS

The following are the results of the **Inter-House Squash Competition**:

- 1st:** Oberoi House
2nd: Jaipur House **4th:** Kashmir House
3rd: Hyderabad House **5th:** Tata House

ONE-ACT OSCARS

The following are the results of the **Inter-House One-Act Play Competition**:

- 1st:** Tata House
2nd: Kashmir House **4th:** Hyderabad House
3rd: Oberoi House **5th:** Jaipur House

The **individual awards** are as follows:

- Best Actor:** Usman Ghani Khan (Jaipur House)
Best Supporting Actor: Dilawar Kapur (Hyderabad House)
Best Directors: Vivaan Shah (Tata House) and Anindya Vasudev (Hyderabad House). Well done!

HOCKEY HITS

The following are the results of the **Inter-House Hockey Competition**:

- | Junior Cup | Senior Cup |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1st: Oberoi House | 1st: Tata House |
| 2nd: Kashmir House | 2nd: Kashmir House |
| 3rd: Hyderabad House | 3rd: Oberoi House |
| 4th: Tata House | 4th: Jaipur House |
| 5th: Jaipur House | 5th: Hyderabad House |

House Cup

- 1st:** Tata House (48 points)
2nd: Kashmir House (47 points)
3rd: Oberoi House (44 points)
4th: Hyderabad House (23 points)
5th: Jaipur House (18 points)

The following boys were awarded school **Hockey Colours**:
Half Colours: Tanveer Singh, Suryajit Singh and Amit Gupta.

Full Colours: Himmat Singh and Saket Mahajan.
Congratulations!

SCIENCE FICTION

The following are the results of the **B.G. Pitre Science Short Story Writing Contest**:

- | Juniors | Seniors |
|-------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1st: Vatsal Khandelwal | 1st: Ankan Dutta |
| 2nd: Revant Nayar | 2nd: Yashvardhan Jain |

Obituary

It is with deep regret that we inform the school community of the passing away of **Col. E.J. Simeon**, former Headmaster, The Doon School (1971-79), on May 15, 2007. We extend our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family.

(contd. from page 2)

independence? Doon School boys of the 1950s and 1960s had gone easily on to St. Stephen's College or to Oxford and Cambridge. By the 1970s, that was not happening with the same ease. Was Doon's education still relevant? With the great early figures gone, how was Doon to be led? Were its systems still in good working order or were they in terminal decline? What was to be done about indiscipline? He did not bring radical change, nor did he disturb the school's methods and norms in great measure, but he quietly encouraged the process of change that Miller had begun. As an "outsider", he asked some fundamental questions without always providing the answers and without rampaging through the school, wrecking its balance and tone.

When I think back to my two years with Col. Simeon, I feel great affection for him and Jean, respect for his courteous manner, and some bewilderment at why, if he could go on to the Cathedral School in Mumbai, he didn't stay longer at Doon. There is a warm colour and light to my two years with him—memories of the Simeons, of teachers, and of friends, all mixed up in a bittersweet jumble. And Eric Simeon so often features—walking to Assembly, his head cocked to one side; acting out a part on stage to show us how he wanted it done, his eyes shining and expressive; leading Dr. Karan Singh into the auditorium with the School Captain, Nikhilesh Senapati, at his side at Founder's; getting us to prepare for Mrs. Indira Gandhi's sudden visit by (as it turned out) rather disastrously "planting" questions in the audience; pounding his fists on a table and telling us as Prefects to do something about discipline; opening the door of his house and calling to Jean because some of her young fans were standing at the threshold! Above all, I remember that Eric Simeon helped shape the boys of his era in a refined and gentlemanly way and left The Doon School a better place.

It is a legacy to recall and revisit.

(Kanti Bajpai)

I was the officiating Bursar when I received Lt. Col. E.J. Simeon and Mrs. Jean Simeon at the Dehradun railway station in January, 1971. He was the Headmaster of the school till 1979.

An M.A. from Allahabad University, he had worked in RIMC in the years 1948-49 as a young Army Captain. He went back to Regt. of Signals. A few years later, when the government of India decided to open up a number of Sainik Schools, he was chosen to head the Sainik School, Kunjpura, Karnal. He then took over as Principal of La Martiniere School, Calcutta. He came to The Doon School from there. Later on, he served as the Principal of Cathedral School, before retiring, and settling down in Pune. He was a man of few words, but was thorough, precise and extremely efficient. A cool and unflappable temperament helped him to sail through many a tense situation. It was he who started the tradition of having a full-length play on Founder's Day. *The Journey's End*, *My Three Angels*, and a few others were staged at that time. He had the knack of spotting a youngster for a particular role, and then making an actor out of him. He and Mrs. Simeon kept in touch with many of the Old Boys and Masters. The loss of Mrs. Simeon a couple of years ago made him very lonely.

I express my own, as well as on behalf of everyone at Chandbagh, heartfelt condolences to his son Dileep and his family. We all pray for his soul to rest in peace and give everyone the strength to bear this irreparable loss.

(Sheel K. Vohra)



Stagecraft



Karam Puri (ex 655-KB, '95), a judge at this year's Inter-House One Act Play Competition, writes in with his review

A balmy summer evening crept upon the Chandbagh estate for the Annual Inter-house One Act Play Competition, 2007. The Rose Bowl once again played host to a couple of exciting evenings of theatre produced, directed and enacted by the students.

As the quiet murmur of voices petered down into the still night the competition began with Jaipur House performing *Endgame*, which deals in tones and perversities of expression. Since Beckett's theme is unearthly, the unearthly form becomes it. Anirudh Kapur's direction led him to chose a minimalist set which tended to be too spread out, making the play drag at points. Shrivats Chandra as Clov, insisted on breaking the 'fourth wall'; his unclear diction added to the fact that his relationship was not well established with Hamm. Rahil Rai Puri and Dhruv Singh as Nagg and Nell played a wonderful old couple; it was heartening to see their relationship. On the whole it was a valiant attempt in trying to produce the toughest play of the competition.

Hyderabad House used the kidney and upper stage intelligently for their selection of the evening. A secluded English country manor house, ominous radio reports of a criminal on the loose, visitors behaving suspiciously, a relative with a shady past and an unidentified dead body hidden behind the sofa—these oh-so-familiar plot devices have been packed into this comic spoof of the whodunits popularized by Agatha Christie. Constructed as a play-within-a-play, Tom Stoppard's *The Real Inspector Hound* opens with two competing theatre critics, Moon and Birdboot, settling into their seats ready to review the latest mystery. In time, both find themselves literally drawn into the comedy, playing roles leading to the climax of the plot when the murderer's identity is revealed to all. Unfortunately H House fell shy due to some very basic directional flaws. The blocking was unsatisfactory and again we had most actors breaking the 'fourth wall'. Dilawar Kapur as Felicity was very good; he held the character well and did so with panache. Aditi Joshi as Cynthia looked uncomfortable on stage and Vishal Singh as the inspector bumbled his way through his lines. Rishi Sood held his own as the real inspector but failed to deliver at key moments.

What do you get when you cross a Guy Ritchie film with fifty-five Tata House students? A mishmash of goons, scheming characters and a rollicking good time. Vivaan Shah directed *Lock, Stock and Two Smoking Barrels*, although at many points both dialogue and actions were lifted directly from the film, leading one to question where adaptation ends and mimicking begins. The line is thin and at times the cast crossed it, taking away from its originality. The ensemble cast played out most of the characters well with no exceptional standouts, barring Angad Singh as Rory Breaker, who brought more to the character than the film version. What was most commendable was the adaptation of a 90-minute film into a 30-minute stage piece. The stage could have been used better and there were too many blackouts and scene changes. The music selection was very good and reminded one of the Tarantino-esque sequences that we have come to enjoy and expect.

Kashmir House presented *The Jar* by Luigi Pirandello. It is a piece of delicate Italian comedy with Don Lolo, an owner of a huge olive jar which breaks under mysterious conditions, looking desperately to have it repaired. A hunchback gets trapped in it while fixing it and an agreement over financial differences seems to be out of the question. What started out as a well-produced play began to unravel and the cracks in the jar became more evident. There were moments of brilliance and the three olive pickers and K.P. Somaiah's performance were commendable, until he forgot, at times, that he had a hump. Sachin Uppal as the Don shouted his way through the performance, leading to a very one-dimensional character sketch. The chorus of singers awash in blue light was one of the highlights of the play. However, what could have been a delicate masterpiece of subtle humour turned into a bit of a farce. Sachit Taneja as Olivia provided some comic relief, while the jar, made up of Arjun Khaitan, Nakul Jaidka, Pulkit Bansal and Yash Mall, did a convincing job. I just wish the play had been produced with more props, giving us a Sicilian-village feel.

The last play of the competition was a welcome change from the comedies and adaptations. Oberoi House presented *Bearclaw* by Timothy Mason. The play deals with some heavy emotional issues and yet treads softly with its subtle humour. I was most impressed with the choice to perform it at the competition and kudos to O House for choosing it. The sets and the costumes were absolutely brilliant, as was the usage of space. Each costume was functional as well as aesthetically pleasing. Seif Khan as Peter portrayed the eccentric professor with a high degree of success. Ashwin Bhaskar as Paul shone at points; his monologue was powerful but his comic timing was off. Kshitij Paliwal was dressed to near-perfection with his caring but stern nurse attire: the diction and emotion, however, left a lot to be desired. Chetan Kaul played Paul Jr. and lacked that bond with his ailing father; however, there was a simplicity to his acting that was very refreshing.

This year's Inter House One Act Play Competition was highly enjoyable with some tough choices and innovative concepts. The Dosco has many things on his plate at once and it is most commendable that he puts the time and effort into what is a truly gratifying experience, not only for the actors, directors, producers, stage hands, light and sound designers, but for us audience members as well.

The Choices That We Make

Shaurya Kuthiala

Vanilla or chocolate? Left or right? Jeffrey Archer or Dan Brown? *The Departed* or *Spider-Man 3*? From choosing the time to get up from your bed to choosing the subjects that will make the rest of your life, choices really do fill the world today. But, as society advances, the choices keep becoming tougher and more complicated. I mean, there was a time when the caveman simply had few choices like “cooked meat or raw meat?” However, now it’s more like steak, butter chicken, *tandoori* chicken, shredded lamb or meat cooked in some other way. I guess you can see how it can get to be a more than a mouthful.

Yet, on the other hand, we would not have advanced without these choices. I mean, imagine if Newton had chosen to do something else in life rather than wonder why an apple fell down from a tree. We’d probably still be struggling to understand gravity.

Looking back through history, I cannot help but admire how even a little turn has made what is the present, and how one little deviation may have changed it greatly. Imagine if the Indians had won the first war of independence in 1857. I doubt that we would have had one unified country today if that had been the case.

Even today, when we talk about whom is better between two people, we are, in effect, comparing the choices they make. At the end of the day, it is the right choices that separates the winner from the loser. In a game of tennis or squash, it is the choice of the area where the player hits the ball that accounts for his or her winning the match.

Have you noticed how life can be dramatically changed by a single choice? If a person suddenly chooses to jump off a cliff, no one can stop him. Yet it is, after all, a choice that makes the difference between his life and his death. One choice is all it takes. If you examine the choices you have made on any one day, you will realise the many compulsions and pressures that have gone into their making. From parents and peers to TV ads and tradition, all play a part, however subtle, in influencing us.

Yet, ultimately, the responsibility is ours alone. Making choices gives us the most valuable experience of what is right and what is wrong. If we make the wrong choices, then again we can choose whether or not to learn from our mistakes, or to make the mistake of not learning, and making the wrong choice again.

Trophy Flash

The Harry Haig Tennis Cup was presented in 1938 by Sir Harry Graham Haig, Governor of United Provinces, and a keen tennis player. The winner of the first Inter-House Competition for the Sir Harry Haig Cup was Hyderabad House, in December, 1938.



The Inter-House Squash Cup was presented by Mr. & Mrs. Ujjal Singh, in 1953, in loving memory of her brother, B.Jangsher Singh (T'160) who passed away on February 2, 1952. Jangsher was in school from August, 1948 to June, 1951.

B.G.Pitre Trophy for Science Fiction was instituted by Mr.B.G.Pitre in 1968.Mr.Pitre was a Physics teacher at The Doon School. This trophy is given for the best creative writing in Science.



(Contributed by: Trophy Squad. Photo Credit: Pankaj Das)

CAREER CALL



The careers' notice board, in the coming week, will focus on **Engineering** as a profession. All students who are interested in following this career should check out the details.

Opinion Poll



Do you think the new report card system is better than the previous one?



Next week's question: Do you plan to take tuitions these holidays?

Online Edition: <http://www.doonschool.com/magazine>

weekly@doonschool.com



IPSS® All rights reserved. **Printed by:** The English Book Depot, 15 Rajpur Road, Dehra Dun, Uttaranchal - 248009, India. **Published by:** Philip Burrett, The Doon School, Dehra Dun.

Editor-in-Chief: Shikhar Singh **Editor:** Ashish Mitter **Senior Editor:** Harsh Mall **Hindi Editor:** Suhaas Khullar **Associate Editors:** Shaurya Kuthiala, Abhaas Shah, Vishnukaant Pitty, Saurav Sethia, Rushil Singh **Special Correspondents:** Dhruv Velloor, Pranjal Singh, K.P. Somaiah **Correspondents:** Shoumitra Srivastava, Bharat Ganju, Uday Shriram **Chief-of-Production:** Naman Goel **Webmaster:** Vishal Mohla **Assistant Managers:** Stuti Bathla, Priya Chaturvedi, Arvindanabha Shukla **Special Assistance:** K.C.Maurya