



A DAY AT THE BRITISH SCHOOL SOMETIME IN 1954 by Dr. J. Michael Drever

That year I was 16 years old and about to finish Senior Form 4 and enter preparatorios de medicina". We got up from our slumber and poured down our "café con leche" pushed by our Mum with her usual, "You boys are going to be late again!" Together with my brother Charles we scrambled down the stairs and jumped on our bikes.

The school was in Pocitos, Calle Lamas, a few blocks from our house. To get there we had to go by the venerable Ombu in Boulevard España; there we looked back to see if we could get a glimpse at the beautiful Berket girls! Though the school was co-educational, sexes were separated in everything but the classroom. The building had two big front doors, girls entered by the right and boys through the left door; also the playgrounds were separated as for most activities. Hence the plural name British Schools.

Coming along Luis de la Torre we met with the bright Hughes twins, Susana and Charlie and rode together.

When arrived to the School we left our bikes in the green shed; by that time the stands were taken so we left the bikes on the floor. I can't remember anybody that ever got his stolen.

The first activity in the morning was the morning exercises. We formed lines and usually the head prefect, at that time Carlitos del Castillo, was in charge of directing these exercises. After 20 minutes, a loud bell rang all through the whole building indicating it was time for class.

Those who took the compulsory Spanish subjects that enabled you to enter preparatory and University formed our classroom. On the other side of the building were the mostly English Proficiency classes that included some very pretty girls, such as Sonia Ailing, Marilyn, Francis Brown and the Crocker. Most of the students in this class had done primary school with us, so we knew them well and went to the same class parties.

After the first morning class and we had "assembly" where we all gathered at the Gym, a central large room that was used for inside activities such as Gymnastics, Choir, Boxing, as well as for large school reunions and Parties. Assembly was either a routine information session or an extraordinary meeting because something "big" had occurred. Usually the Prefects organized assemblies, and everybody attended in groups by Forms. We all chatted noisily till the glass door at the front opened... dead silence and Mr. Schor (alias 'El Ave'), the Headmaster came in. Frankly I have never seen such an imposing figure in my life. His presence commanded silence,



respect, admiration, attention and a little fear of what he may say now. It could be a simple notification of a change of schedule of a particular class or sport, a short reminder of a special day in Uruguay (or Britain) or in the worst of cases that something terrible had happened and somebody had to be expelled from the school!!

After assembly we had another class and then a 15 minute break in the back playground. This was fun usually because there were several activities running at the same time, all in the same limited space. The main one was soccer with a tennis ball; the goals were the two supporting beams for the basketball board. I remember Alberto Brause and Eduardo Muro as good football players. Then there was also some basketball running simultaneously, Daniel Puig and Bernardo Fontana were good at it. Then we had the marble collectors playing a strange game against the surrounding walls called "chante-norriche-novale-bochon". It consisted of one fellow sitting on the floor with his legs apart, between them he protected a pyramid of marbles. From a distance of about two yards any other boy took aim and tossed marbles at the pyramid. If the pile was hit, the boy took all the marbles that made up the pyramid. Marble fortunes were made or lost in a question of a few minutes! I think that Dennis O'Connell or Richard Vignoles invented this game. Not sure. Then there was handball played against the flat wall opposite the bicycle shack; you frequently found Luis Morelli and Jack Pettigrew playing this. Then there was a social crowd that just hung out like Carlitos Scavino, Juan Schultz or Pepe Obes.

The amazing thing about these 15 minutes of playtime was the level of tolerance. Very rarely was there a fight going on considering the reduced space and the amount of people with different interests. Amazing!

The bell rang and back to the last morning class. I recall our Spanish subject teachers were Prof. Bojorge, a rather stocky, no-nonsense type of man. Then there was Prof. Schulman, a tall and good-looking man who taught History and Geography and was greatly admired by the feminine part of our class. Prof. Carrere taught Maths, and Arts; I really liked his keen and perceptive mind and his knowledge of human nature. Madame Dotta taught French; I wish I had paid more attention for it would have been very useful having lived most of my life in Canada. Surely I am missing some teachers, but all struck me for their dedication and seriousness.

At midday, Charles and I rode back home for lunch and were back to school two hours later. We envied the food the guys who stayed at school had. Maybe they felt the same of us!

Anyway, in the afternoon, we took mostly English subjects or the same subjects in English. There was the unforgettable Mr. Schor, plus Mr Oxton



Vol. II - Number 3/4

Centennial
Edition

October
2008



who taught us Math, who had a red face and a quick temper, and the gentle and erudite Mr Hobson. All fine men.

There were also after school activities too, of course rugby, but also the Boy Scouts and Girl Guides. I remember particularly Talo Morelli and Mr.Neri, the latter who taught boxing, not fighting. These activities were voluntary but gave you skills and offered new experiences. Once, with my brother Charles, we were out wandering Pocitos with our bikes when we encountered two boys that said something insulting to us. "Lets take them on," I said with a false confidence acquired after some boxing lessons. The next thing is that I find myself in the floor holding a sore eye! "No te metas con los duros," said Charles.

Barring the odd unfortunate incidence, I always look back at these days at the British Schools with fondness and happiness while I was acquiring experience and friendships which have remained for the rest of my life.