

## ACOBA Banquet 2012

This year the OBA dinner will be held on Saturday 24 November, at the Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand. This note is intended for circulation among your friends and the wider network of Anandians.

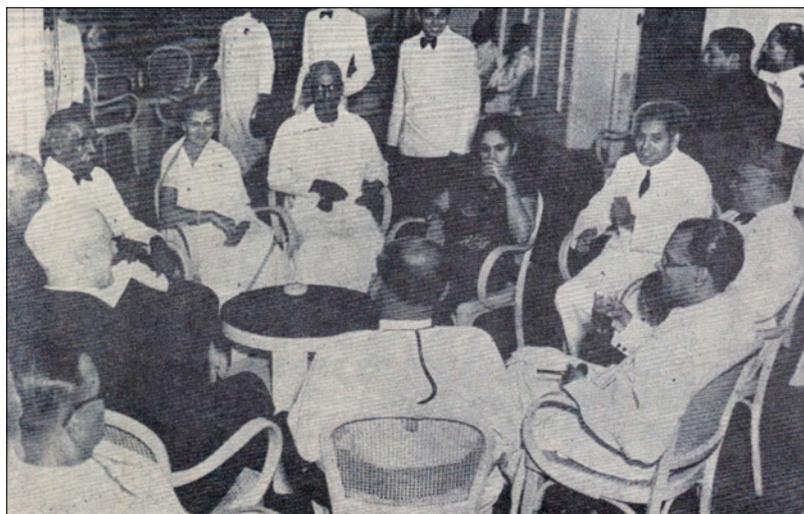
A team led by OBA Vice President Chaminda Egodawatte and the former Jt. Secretary Dushmantha Karannagoda are organizing the event to make the 2012 Banquet a social event where Anandians could gather with their families, reminisce about their time at Ananda, strengthen the fraternal network of Old Boys and stay connected with their Alma Mater.

While writing the Commemorative Journal a goldmine of information of historical interest was unearthed. The first OBA dinner was held in 1916 at the College Hall. Since the Olcott Hall construction was completed in 1914 it is safe to assume that it was the venue of the dinner held two years later. Fritz Kunz as the Principal would have been the ex-officio President of the Old Boys' Association and it may have been one of his ideas to organize such an event. Kunz was a visionary and a resourceful American. He introduced the teaching of science at Ananda and most likely started the tradition of Old Boys' Dinners. There is more about him in the Ananda 125 Year Commemorative Journal now being written. Much of the data about Kunz, a product of the University of Wisconsin, was sent by old boy Sumith Matugama who dug deep into the records at the archives of the American Theosophical Society in Wisconsin.

A news paper cutting on the 1935 OBA dinner records the distinguished personalities present; L H Mettananda as Acting Principal, Vice Principal Dr. G P Malalasekera and Mrs. Malalasekera, Mr. & Mrs E A Pakeman, Rector of St. Josephs College Reverend Father M J Legoc (of St. Joseph's CollegeZ), Mr. & Mrs. J A Tarbat, Mudaliyar T W Gunawardena, Mr. & Mrs. J N Jinendradasa, Mr. T B Jayah, Principal of Zahira (and a former teacher at Ananda during the Kunz and Kularatne eras), Mr. & Mrs. W A De Silva and Dr. Milroy Paul.

That year there had been an array of speakers. The toast of the college and the OBA had been proposed by Mr. C W W Kannangara. Mr. L H Mettananda had replied as the Acting Principal and Mr. K D De Lanerolle had responded on behalf of the OBA. Mr. W H D Perera, an alumnus of Ananda whose name is among the students of the Buultjens era to have excelled at examinations, had proposed the toast of the guests. Dr. N M Perera had proposed the toast of the sister colleges. Reverend Father Legoc had replied.

P De S Kularatne who was on a four year secondment to Dharmaraja College, Kandy had made an impromptu speech due to cries from Old Boys 'We want Kularatne'.



A news item on the 1949 OBA dinner published in the Ceylon Daily News with a photograph taken of the guests shows Principal Mr. L H Mettananda flanked by the Prime Minister D S Senanayake, the Principal of Musaeus College Mrs. Motwani, Mrs. Sirimavo Bandaranaike, Minister of Local Government Mr. S W R D Bandaranaike, Minister of Labour and founder of Zahira College Mr. T B Jayah, Senator A M A Azeez who succeeded Jayah at Zahira, Sir Ivor Jennings, Vice Chancellor of the University of Ceylon (and later the University of Cambridge), Prof. C Sunderalingam, Rev

Peter Pillai and Sam Wijesinghe (an old boy and later Secretary General of Parliament). This event was held at the Galle Face Hotel.

At the banquet held in the centenary year of Ananda, 1986, at the Ceylon Intercontinental Hotel, Mr. Ananda Tissa De Alwis made the keynote address. Toasts to Ananda were proposed by the Principal of Wesley College and Zahira College. Mr. Bernard Soysa replied to the toasts and proposed a toast to sister schools and guests. That event was attended by over 400. A former teacher of Ananda, Mr C Carthigesan, as the guest of honour made a long speech replete with reminiscences. Principals of Dharmapala and Nalanda, which started as branches of Ananda, Royal, St. Benedict's, Wesley and Zahira graced the occasion.

The 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary banquet was attended by over 350 including alumni, their spouses and guests. At that event old Anandians Professors Tissa Vitarana, Senior Minister and Sudharshan Seneviratne, Professor of Archeology at the University of Peradeniya delivered scholarly speeches. The toast to Ananda was proposed by Mr. Upali Gunasekera, Principal Royal College. The toast to sister schools and guests was proposed by Mr. Yasantha Kodagoda, Deputy Solicitor General. Both were old Anandians. Mr. Thilak Karunaratne as the OBA President made the welcome address.

This year it was decided to revive the tradition of inviting distinguished personalities from other schools for the OBA Banquet and to have Dr. Indra De Soysa, Warden St. Thomas' College, Mt. Lavinia as the keynote speaker. Heads of 14 other schools, including seven from former Buddhist Theosophical Society schools, have been invited to attend the event.

We intend to reorient Ananda College more towards the noble universal aims of our founders by fostering brotherhood and obtaining external perspectives by interacting with the Principals and alumni of other schools.

Mr. Kushil Gunasekera, an eminent Anandian who is today better known as the successful promoter of several community programmes including the Tsunami Trust established with Muttiah Muralitharan and the Muralitharan Cricket Trophy Tournament launched to promote cricket in the northern and eastern provinces of the country, will speak on behalf of Ananda.

The 2012 banquet will be held in six weeks time. Tickets for this event priced at Rs. 6,000 each are available at the OBA office (telephone 011 2698551) and with several OBA office bearers whose email addresses are attached. You can also call Achala (0777 562 228) Deva (0773 470 474) to obtain tickets.

We look forward to seeing you with your spouses on the 24th of November at the Oak Room, Cinnamon Grand.

Deva Rodrigo

Convener, Dinner Organizing Committee

14 October, 2012