

**Tribute to Mr. Brookie D' Silva
(Legendary STC Athletics Coach)**



Sunrise: 13th April 1918

Sunset: 20th July 1998

80 Golden Years!

Brookie was the ninth of 13 children born to Mr. and Mrs. Hector D'Silva. Hector, like Brookie and his brothers, was an Old Thomian. Brookie attended STC as a student from 1927 to 1936 and was a boarder (Miller House) during his final years. He won College Colours in Athletics, Cross Country, Swimming and Water Polo. A Public Schools Shot Put Champion in 1936, he went on to become the Ceylon National Javelin Champion and Record Holder.

Brookie married Irene Capper in 1944 and had two daughters: Dianne and Romany.

Brookie joined STC as a Science Teacher. Subsequently he was appointed Athletics Coach and Master-in-Charge, and also took up the position as Chief Science Master and Head of the Upper School.

In addition to these demanding responsibilities he served in various senior positions with both the Ceylon Public Schools Athletics Association and Ceylon Amateur Athletics Association.

During his reign as chief athletics coach, STC won at the main Public Schools Athletics Meet – the Tarbat Challenge Cup for overall Championship, Jefferson Challenge Cup for Senior Relays, and the C.C. Dissanayake Challenge Cup for Field Events – on several occasions. In a fitting tribute to his final year as a coach in 1967, STC won both the Senior and Junior Tarbat Trophies (a feat repeated by his successors in 1968), and only missed out on a certain victory in the Jefferson Trophy due to an unfortunate drop of the baton.

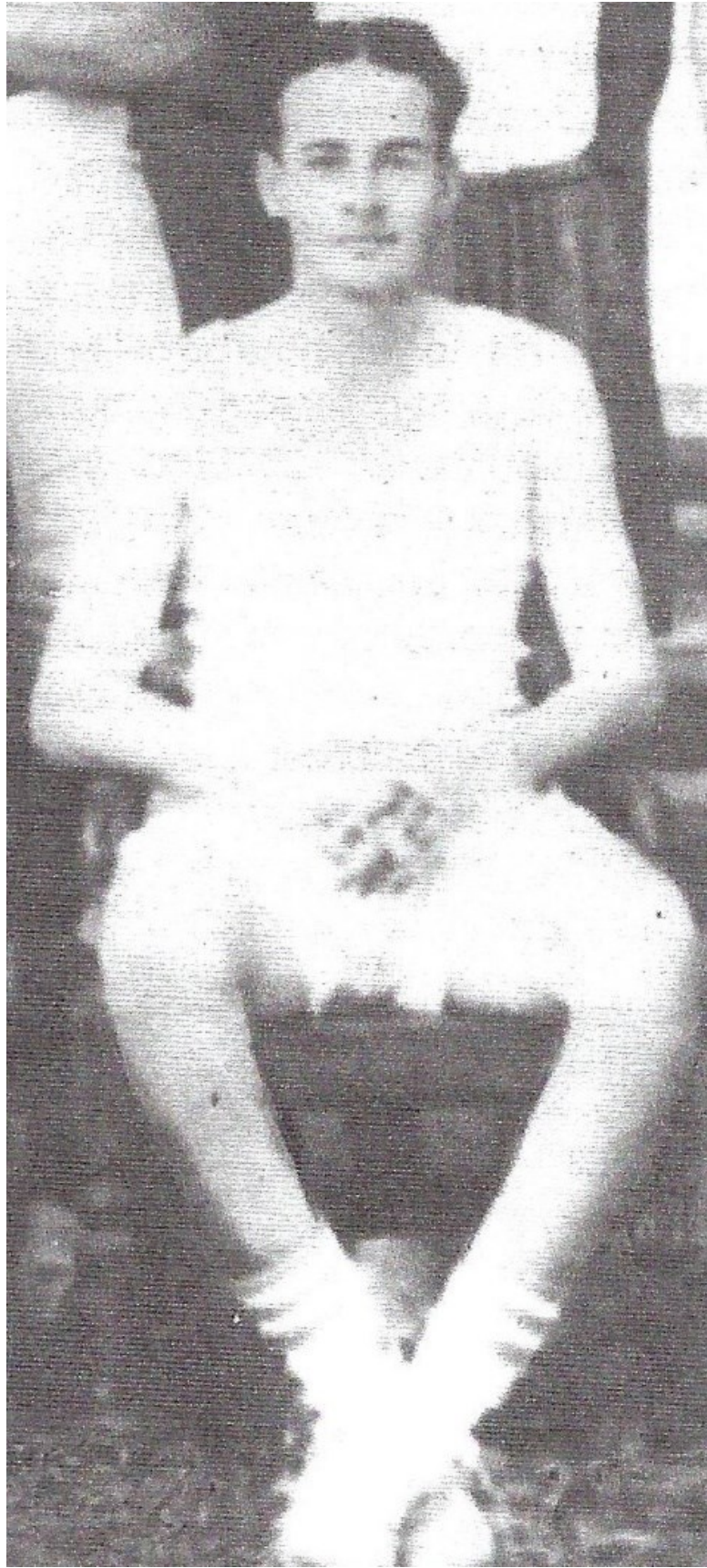
Following his sterling career at many levels, Brookie migrated with his family to Melbourne, Australia in August 1968. Brookie went back to doing what he loved – teaching and coaching athletics in Melbourne – when he was offered a position with Wesley College in 1970. Although he finally retired from teaching in 1983, he continued coaching athletics for a few more years in a voluntary capacity.

Mr. Brookie D'Silva gave much of himself selflessly, with dedication, affection, compassion, generosity and humility. His athletes learnt many lessons on and off the field as he inspired them to be better people. No one could replace the passion he had for the sport that he dearly loved. Many cannot thank him enough for helping them get to where they are today. We are extremely blessed for the endless hours he dedicated to our team. He remains in the hearts of all those whose lives he touched – both past and present. (RR)

Brookie the Champion Athlete



20-year-old Brookie with the Wilton Bartleet Trophy in 1938 for the Best Performance awarded for breaking the Ceylon Javelin Record at the Nationals Athletics Championship.



Brookie D'Silva – Captain of the 1941 University Athletics Team



Brookie In Action!

**Brookie D'Silva set a National Javelin Record of 181 ft 7 ins in 1942.
The record stood for 13 years.**

Results of the 1945 Ceylon National Athletics Championship
Held on 14 and 15th October at the Police Ground, Bambalapitiya

MEN

100 yards: 1. B.C. Henricus (Navy) 10.1secs., 2. Upali S Gooneratne (Prisons Sports Club), 3. W.T. Saunders (Jaffna College)

220 yards: 1. H.M.P. Perera (Nemeans Sports Club) 23.6secs., 2. W.T. Saunders (Jaffna College), 3. F.H. Brohier (Ace Athletic Club)

440 yards: 1. H.M.P. Perera (Nemeans Sports Club) 51.4secs., 2. J. Xavier (Navy), 3. P. Raymond (Army)

880 yards: 1. G.D.H. Karunaratne (Johnnians Sports Club) 2:08.0secs., 2. J.S.L. White (Government Services SC), 3. K.W. Piyasiri (Vidyarthi College)

One Mile: 1. J.W.S.T. Gunasekara (Army) 4:50.4 secs., 2. L.A. De Soysa (Ace Athletic Club), 3. M.B. Rathnayake (Prisons Sports Club)

3 Miles: 1. L.A. De Soysa (Ace Athletic Club) 16:33.9secs., 2. M.B. Rathnayake (Prisons Sports Club), 3. R. Suithaly (Army)

120 yards Hurdles: 1. A.C. Dep (Police Sports Club) 16.8secs., 2. T.L. Blaze (Nemeans Sports Club), 3 T. Fillil (Police Sports Club)

440 yards Hurdles: 1. A.M. Xavier (Navy) 59.0secs. 2. R.R. Scott (Police Sports Club), 3. T.L. Blaze (Nemeans Sports Club)

High Jump: 1. R.R. Peiris (Ace Athletic Club) 5 ft 10 ¼ ins, 2. E.W. Labrooy (Excise Department), 3. D.J.C. Jayamaha (Excise Department)

Pole Vault: 1. A.C. Dep (Police SC) 11 ft 2 ½ ins, 2. K. Chelvadurai (Nemeans Sports Club), 3. T.M.T. Gunawardene (Nemeans Sports Club)

Long Jump: 1. G.D. Peiris (Y.M.C.A.) 22 ft 0 ins, 2. J.P.K. Fernando (Excise Department), 3. J.V. Wijeratne (Y.M.C.A.)

Triple Jump: 1. G.D. Peiris (Y.M.C.A.) 45 ft 9 ¾ ins, 2. C.S. Joseph (Old Josephians SC), 3. J.P.K. Fernando (Excise Department)

Shot Put: 1. C.P.O. Atherton (Navy) 38 ft 10 ins, 2. Chandra Senanayake (Police Sports Club), 3. D.S. Thambiyah (Police Sports Club)

Discus Throw: 1. Chandra Senanayake (Police Sports Club) 112 ft3 ins, 2. L.C. Goonaratne (Ace Athletic Club), 3. C.P.O. Atherton (Navy)

Javelin Throw: 1. B.C. D' Silva (Nemeans Sports Club) 171 ft 1 ins, 2. L.C. Goonaratne (Ace Athletic Club), 3. V.R. Fernando (Silverline SC)

WOMEN

100 yards: 1. Shirly Thomas (Unattached) 12.6 secs., 2. Y. Menzies (Navy), 3. Olga Walker (University)

220 yards: 1. Shirly Thomas 28.6secs. , 2. Y. Menzies, 3. Olga Walker

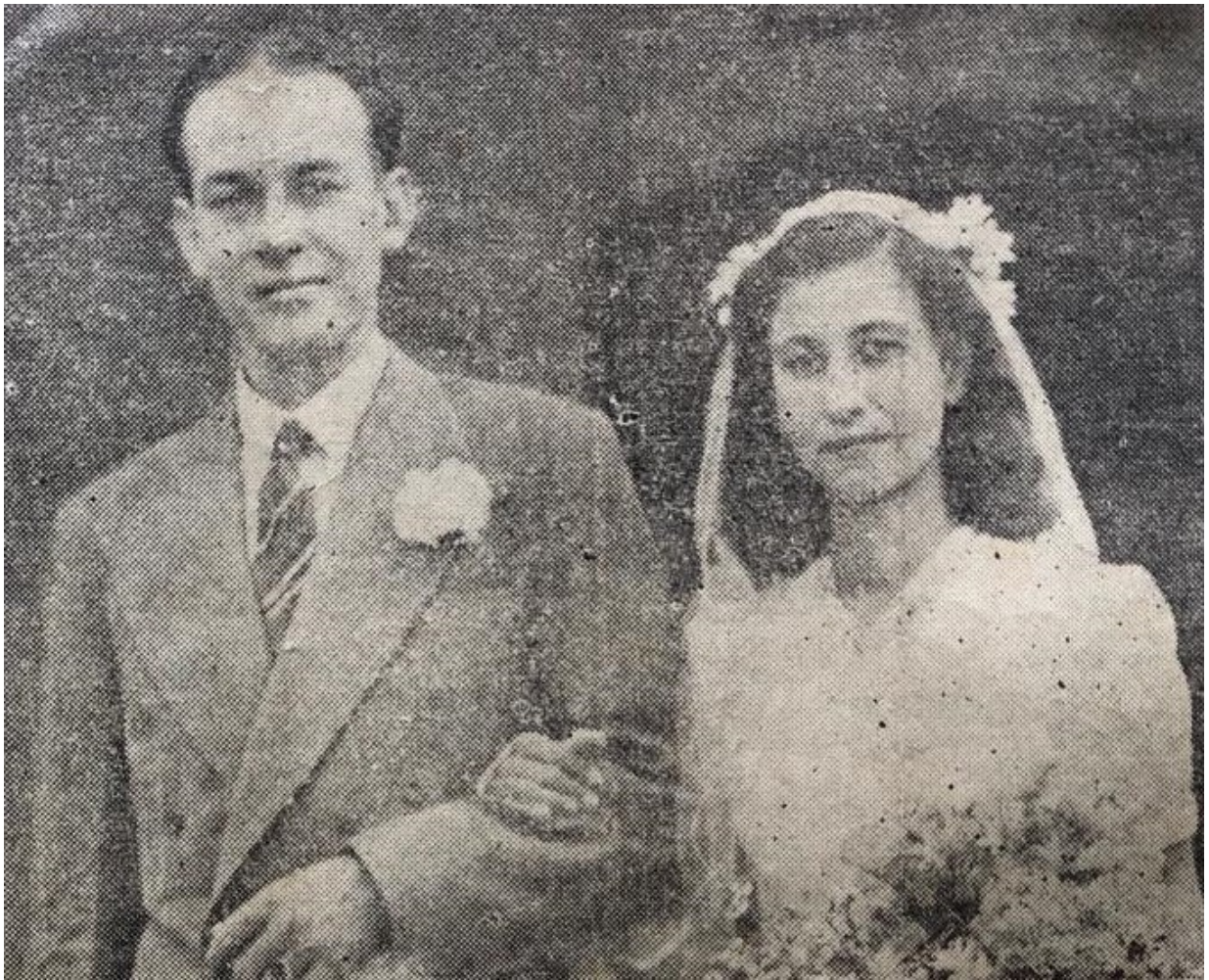
High Jump: 1. Olga Walker 4 ft 2 ins, 2. E. Garrett (W.R.N.S.), 3. Silvia Vanderziel (Unattached)

Long Jump: 1. Olga Walker 15 ft 3 ins, 2. Shirly Thomas, 3. M. Nathanielsz (Methodist College)

440 yards (Invitation School Boys): 1. G.A. Van Twest (St. Sylvester's College) 56.3secs., 2. S. Suntharalingam (Hartley College), 3. Norton Perera (St. Joseph's)

*Results courtesy of Sri Lanka Athletics statistician Saman Kumara Gunawardena.

The 'Royal' Wedding



“The wedding took place on 19th November 1944 at St. Mary’s Church, Bambalapitiya, of Mr. Brookie D’Silva, son of Mr. and Mrs. Hector D’Silva of Wellawatte, and Miss Marjorie Irene Capper, daughter of Mr. and Mrs. P.T. Capper of Dehiwela (Times).

The Rev. Father J.B. Gregory officiated, and the bride was given away by her father. The bridesmaids were the Misses Naomi Capper and Yvonne Demmer, and the best man was Mr. Dunbar D’Silva. Barbara Jacotine and Pat Luorensz were the flower girls. The ushers were Mr. Rex Demmer and Mr. Tommy Garvin. Mr. P.T. Capper and Mr. H.C. D’Silva signed the register.

The bride wore a full flared skirt of organdy with lace lover’s knots inset in a satin foundation and a lace.....

“Dad was very creative and could put his hands to anything and never gave up. He put together a working model of a heart for an exhibition in the College. He made it out of tiny test tubes, and you could see the blood go through. He used some machine (I think) to pump the blood through. Dad lived with me when he got ill with bowel cancer, and I nursed him till he drew his last breath; I was by his side. We were very close. Our father was as large as life, and I can carry on living as I know I will see him again. Dad would have loved to have a son. I remember how he used to train me for Discus and Javelin. In fact he bought me my very own javelin. I used to train at the BRC and one day I left my javelin in a room there. Someone got hold of it and threw it on the grounds and it went through an athlete’s neck. Thank God it didn’t kill him. That was the end of my training.

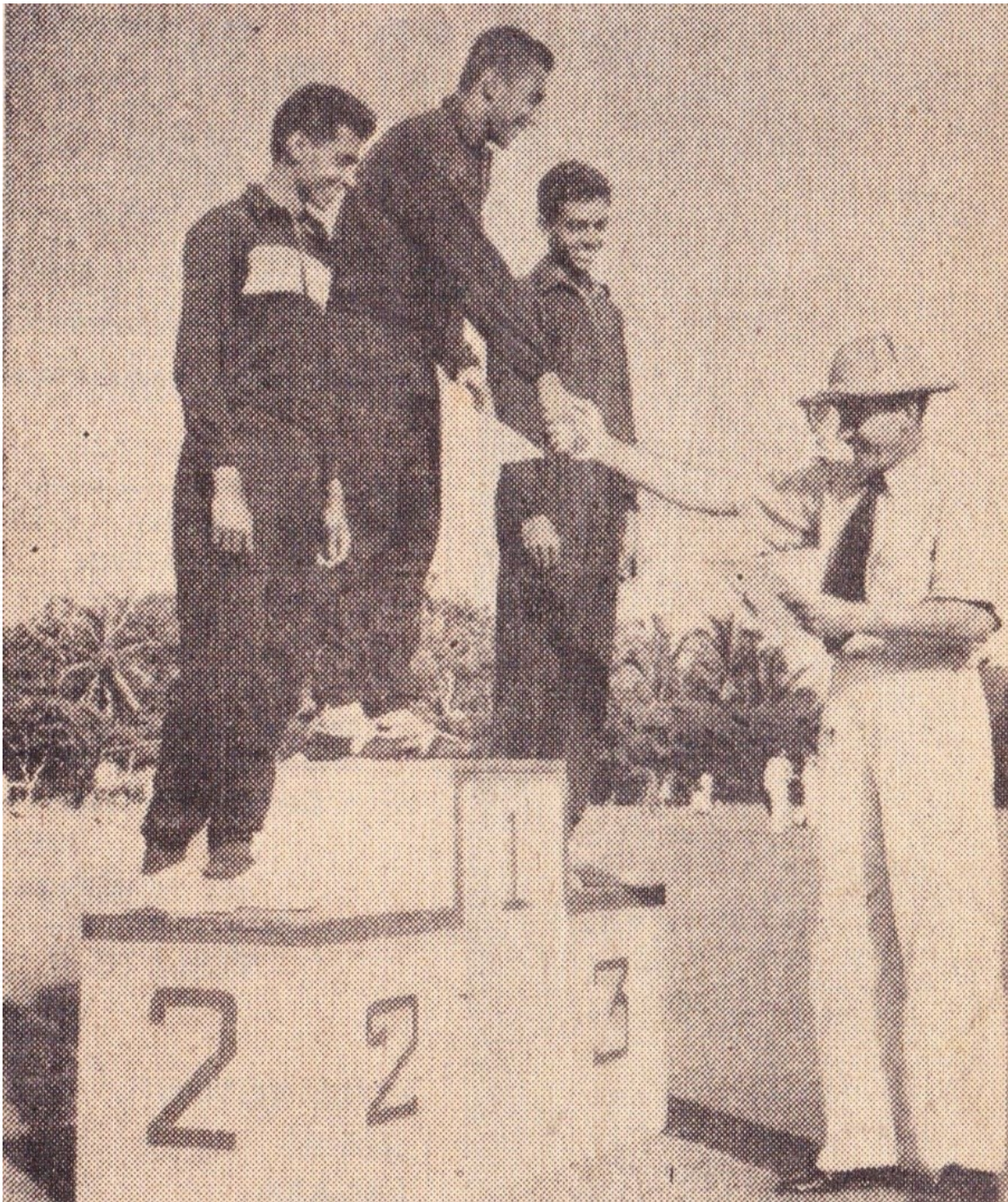
Dad’s favourite sayings from the Bible were from Mark 8 vs 36. “What does it profit a man if he gains the whole world and suffers the loss of his soul.” Matthew 19 vs 24. “Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

You could see his values from these two verses. He really lived and loved to help and encourage others, mainly the students and to teach them to persevere and reach the goals that made them better men. He never went after worldly riches, but he loved seeing his students doing well in life.

He called himself an outstanding Catholic as he used to always stand outside the Church and smoke his cigarettes. He had a sense of humour too. I was always concerned about his relationship with God and when he came to live with us I used to leave Christian books that taught us to be better by seeking God and how God wants us to live. I never saw him read any of the books even once, but when it was getting closer to the end, he told me that he used to wait till I left the house, and he would read all the books I left around. I was so grateful as I saw a change in him and in the end he turned to God, and I was consoled. I must be telling you all this for a reason. I guess I miss him very much”

– Romany Bastiaensz (Brookie’s Daughter)

Pubs – 9th October 1959



Brookie D'Silva, one-time All-Ceylon Javelin Throw Champion and now Secretary of the Public Schools Athletic Sports Association, hands out the certificates to the winners of Senior Javelin Throw Anton Perera (St. Peter's) while Ranjit Liyanage (second) and Waruna Fernando (third) look on.

- (Ceylon Daily News)



Earliest Photo of Mr. Brookie D'Silva as STC Athletics Coach

1952 Senior Relay Team – Winners of Jefferson Challenge Cup

Standing(L-R): Mr. Brookie C. D'Silva (Coach), P.C. Munasinghe, The Warden (Rev. Canon de Saram).

Seated (L-R): D.K. 'Kella' Samarasinghe, M. Balasubramaniam, Ana Kanagasabai

*The 1952 STC Athletics Team won the Public Schools Championship Tarbat Challenge Trophy, along with the Jefferson Challenge Cup for Relays.

CEYLON PUBLIC SCHOOLS TEAM TO AUSTRALIA

AUG & SEP 1960

The twelve-man Public Schools track and field team to Australia will take part in a dual contest against Combined Schools enroute in addition to eight other contests in Australia. The team will leave by air at 10.45 am on 3rd August from Katunayake.

All efforts to collect the balance Rs. 6,000 needed for the trip have more or less proved futile, but Mr. Brookie D' Silva, Secretary of the Ceylon Public Schools Athletics Sports Association and Manager of the team is hopeful that firms and private individuals will step in and help this cause. He has already collected Rs. 34,000.

The dual contest in Malaya will be held on 4th August at Kuala Lumpur. They will have a sight-seeing day in Singapore on 5th August, before arriving in Brisbane on 6th August. At Brisbane, they will be the guests of Mr. P.H. Siri Mendis, a Ceylonese businessman and the Queensland Great Public Schools Association.

From 15th August to 20th, they will be in New South Wales, where they will have meets, at Armidale and Sydney. They will also make use of the opportunity to visit places of educational interest.

They will be in Victoria from 20th August to 29th and will have two meets on 22 August on the Melbourne University cinder track and on 27th August at the Victorian Military Centre.

From 30th August to 5th September, they will be in Western Australia.

On 1st September they will be the guests of Mr. R. A. Honter, former sports master at Wesley College and on 2nd September they will have a Pentathlon competition. Melville Athletic Club will take them on 4th September, the day after which they will leave for Ceylon on board SS Arcadia. They are expected in Ceylon on 12th September."

- Daily News

Ceylon Public Schools Track and Field Team (1960)



Standing L to R: A.L.M. Kahn (SJC, Bandarawela), T. Kasige (St. Servatius), W.H. Amerasinghe (Ananda), M.H.D. Perera (De Mazenod), S.A. Benedict (St. Patrick's, Jaffna)

Seated L to R: B.C. D'Silva (Manager), S. Wijenayake (St. Sebastians), M.D. Fairweather (Captain, STC), H.L.C. D'Silva (STC), G.A. Van Twest (Assistant Manager)

Ground L to R: S.W. Fernando (STC), A. Perera (Arethusa), D.W.L. Lieversz (Royal), R.H. Paul (Royal).

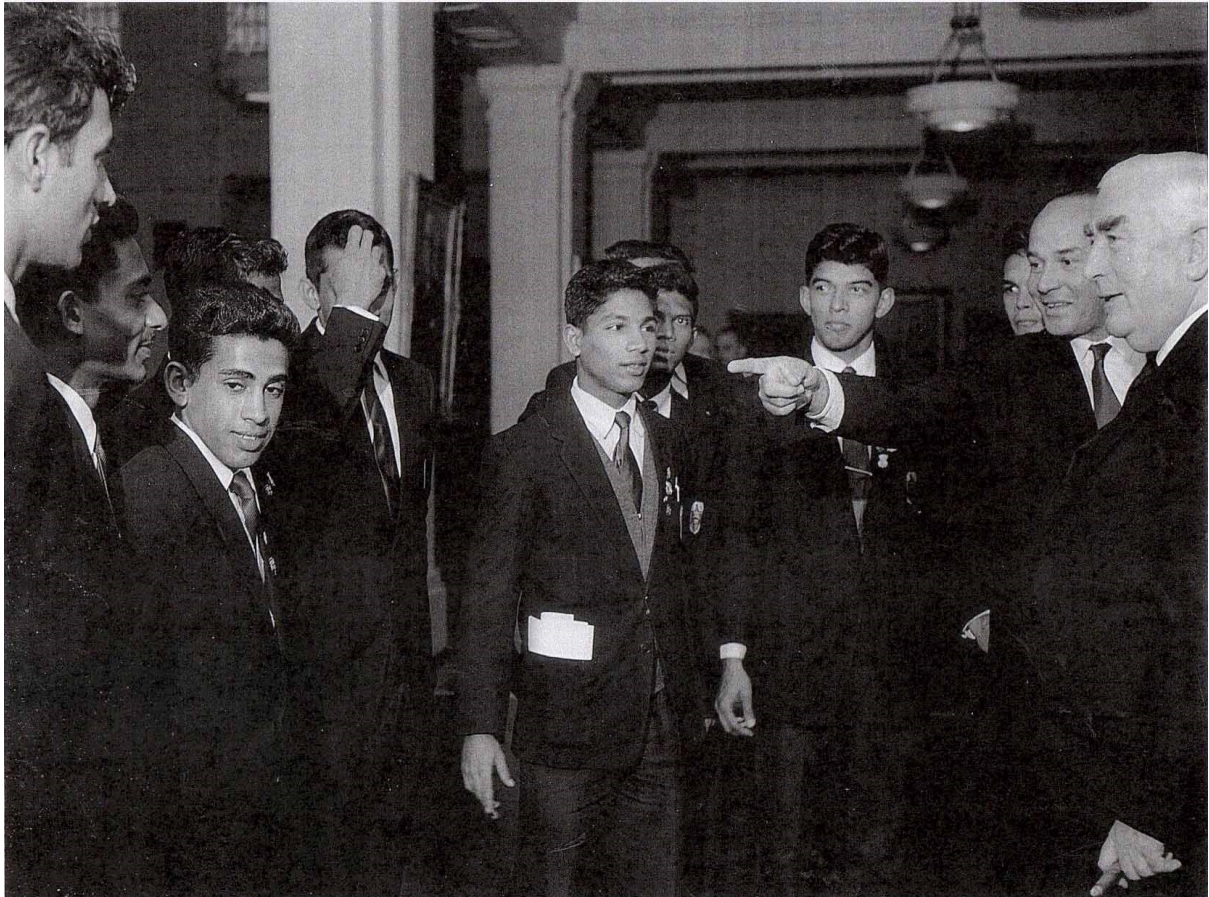
(Photo Courtesy of Darrell Lieversz)



Ceylon Public Schools Team Departure – 3rd Aug 1960



Ceylon Public Schools Team Arrival at KL Airport 3rd Aug 1960



Mr. Brookie D'Silva introducing the Ceylon Public Schools Athletics Team to the Australian Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies, at the Parliamentary House, Canberra, on Friday 19 August 1960.

P.M. TALKS WITH CEYLONESE STUDENTS



Prime Minister, Mr. Menzies, talks with some Ceylonese students yesterday at Parliament House. They were part of a group on a goodwill visit to Australia under the teacher-in-charge, Mr. B. C. De Silva (next to Mr. Menzies).

Australian Prime Minister, Rt. Hon. R.G. Menzies, talks with some of the Ceylon Public Schools Athletics team members. They were part of a goodwill visit to Australia under the Team Manager, Mr. Brookie D'Silva.



*Mr. Brookie D'Silva making a presentation to the Australian Prime Minister, Rt. Hon.
R.G. Menzies*



Mr. Brookie D'Silva with the Ceylon Schools Team

Seen on arrival at Port of Colombo from their historic tour to Australia on
12 September 1960

*Ceylon Public Schools Tour to Australia:

Articles & photos courtesy of Thomian Maurice Fairweather, Captain of
the Team and Royalist Darrell Lieversz.

“Brookie – a man hard to replace”

(Ceylon Daily News 17.08.1968)



It is axiomatic that no one is indispensable. There are, however, certain men who are well-nigh impossible to replace. S. Thomas' College and Athletic Circles in general will probably find this so, when Brookie C. D'Silva leaves Ceylon for good and sails for Australia in two weeks' time.

For S. Thomas' it is a crippling blow. Mr. D'Silva has been associated with – almost identified with – STC for decades together. Man and boy he has been at S. Thomas' either as pupil or teacher for close on 40

years. As Headmaster of Upper School, Senior Master-in-Charge of Science, Teaching, Careers Master, Coach and Master-in-Charge of Athletics, his name is a by-word to old Thomians, the island over. An old Thomian of my acquaintance when told of Brookie's breakaway from the Alma Mater, exclaimed agitatedly "My God! But what's going to happen to us?" By us he probably meant the Blue and Black fraternity, but Brookie's leaving has a larger context. He is a man who has served the cause of Ceylon Sport well – an informed and capable Coach and a tremendous 'go-getter'. Ceylon Sport can ill afford to lose such men.

Supremely Confident

While much has been said of Brookie as an Athlete and of his work on the playing fields, his work in the Science Laboratory, in the classroom and as a Headmaster are hardly less important. He had supreme confidence in himself and any boy who went to him came back feeling confident himself and with a determination to make a greater effort. He was a strict disciplinarian and would brook no nonsense. Boys did not fear him, but they respected and loved him.

He was so full of enthusiasm for his favourite subject, Biology, that boys were made to feel that it was worth studying. From practically nothing at all, he built up a Science museum of which any School could have been rightfully proud. In his own unobtrusive way, with a charm all his own, he brought out the best in boys as any great school master should. Above all boys looked up to him as a friend who was always willing to help them and in this, they were never disappointed.

First Blow

Brookie D'Silva struck his first blow for S. Thomas' College just before he left school when he became Public Schools Shot Put Champion. When he rejoined the College in 1942, his career of usefulness was given full rein.

On the academic side he performed a much-needed service in the 'resurrection' of the Biology Laboratory – these were evacuation years – collecting much material and specimens on his own initiative. Later he was appointed Chief Science Master and Headmaster of the Upper School. As Career Master, he has been instrumental in placing scores of boys in suitable posts, particularly in the planting and private sectors.

On the Sports side, he put all his vast athletic knowledge at the disposal of his old School. The result of this is reflected in the number of

Thomian Tarbat and Jefferson Cup victories, even at present both the Senior Tarbat and Junior Tarbat trophies are in the lockers at Mount Lavinia.

“Brookie D’Silva,” said a Former President of the C.A.A.A. (Ceylon Amateur Athletics Association), “has fulfilled the three C’s – as Competitor, Coach and Committee Member.” This is an apt summary of his work here.

Too Many

As Competitor his successes are too many to enumerate. At the University in the late thirties his long career as Ceylon’s Javelin Champion began. In his first year there he not only became National Champion but cracked the Ceylon Record and was awarded the Wilton Bartleet Trophy (for Best Performance at the Ceylon National Athletics Championship) to boot. From here onwards there was no looking back. He won the National Javelin Title for 13 years in succession, collecting another Wilton Bartleet Trophy and three De Soysa Trophies (for Best Performance at the University Athletics Championship) on the way, and then went one better with a victory at the Indo-Ceylon Contest in 1940. Incidentally, he had the unique honour of captaining two premier Sports at the University – Athletics and Swimming.

His career as an Official began in the late fifties. He was Hony. Secretary of the Public Schools Athletics Association for 10 years, and now in the new set-up occupies the vital position of Chairman, Planning Committee of the Ceylon Schools A.A. In practically every innovation in Schools’ Athletics, Brookie D’ Silva has had a hand. It was he who was prime mover in the change-over from yards to metres, the organization of Decathlon, the Relay Carnival, the Schoolboy Tour of Australia in 1960, the Coaching Schemes, the recent Junior Nationals, and in the latest venture of the C.S.A.A. – the Schools Cross-country Championships.

On the Senior level he has been Hony. Secretary of the C.A.A.A. in 1961 and 62, and later Vice President while still being Secretary of the Schoolboy Association – a unique but rather anomalous situation. He is now Senior Vice President and President of a sister Union – the Cyclists Union of Ceylon – surely a wonderful record for a humble Schoolmaster.

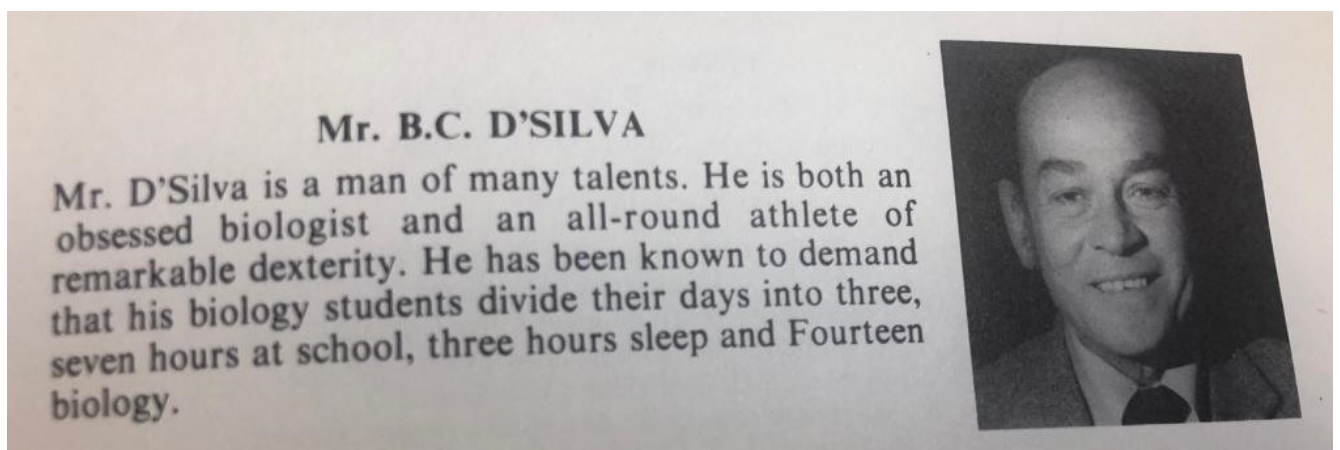
Amazing Ability

Perhaps the finest feather in his cap, something known only to a few, is his amazing ability to collect funds for the Association at very short notice. This has been demonstrated more than once – in the instance of the Australian Tour, the sending of a team to the Djakarta Asian Games, and the recent Junior Nationals in Kandy (April 1968).

From many aspects and among many Sports bodies of Ceylon, the loss of Brookie D'Silva will be acutely felt. We note with pleasure that at least among the Old Boys of S. Thomas' College suitable steps are being taken for a presentation to Mr. D'Silva in appreciation of his splendid work. No Sportsman or Sports Official deserves more. We salute him with the consolation that our loss is Australia's gain.

(Article as appeared in the Ceylon Daily News. Writer unknown)

WESLEY COLLEGE, Glen Waverley Melbourne (Final Teaching Career 1970-1983)



1976

BROOKE D' SILVA

"Basil" (heaven knows where that nickname originated!) is, without doubt, the most well-known and popular staff member at Wesley. His unique ability to conduct a biology class and comedy routine simultaneously and yet achieve top class results at the end of each year prove his worth as a brilliant teacher. On the athletics field, the man wearing the hat and smoking the pipe has overseen many past and present day field games champions. "Basil", his cliches and his super-fast wit will be the subject of many fond memories in the years to come.



1978

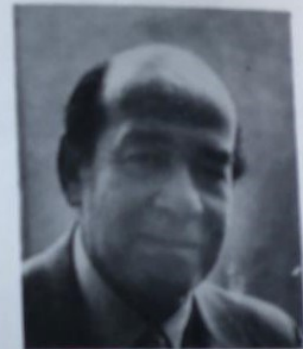
"Dad had a set of about six pipes, and he loved to smoke them all."

– Romany Bastiaensz

Staff Personalities

MR. B.C. D'SILVA

With the departure of Brooke D'Silva after a long and distinguished career at the College, a part of Wesley will also be going. Brooke has given a sincere and eager commitment to the school in the fields of athletics and as Head of the Biology Department. "Basil", as he is affectionately known by his Biology students, has employed his own brand of teaching which has proven to be a very popular style with his students over the years. Phrases that have become the trademark of his teaching such as, "Stop grinning like an ape", or, "I tell you a thousand things but you don't listen," will be long remembered and "cherished" by the students that were fortunate enough to be taught by this rather extraordinary character.



1978

TRIBUTES TO BROOKIE

My memories of Brookie D'Silva. I never did Biology or Zoology so was never under Brookie as a student, but I believe he was proficient with both hands and could draw a frog on the board with both hands at once...or so I have been told???

Brookie drove an old Peugeot 203 and had a parking spot behind the Old Swimming pool. It was a bit of a rust bucket...and the story goes the floorboards on the driver's side were so rusted through and he used his foot on the road to stop the car...

Brookie was a respected and popular master...unlike some others... I know I did not go for Rugger trials in Senior year one because Brookie very subtly indicated that I would get injured and would have put paid to my Athletics career??..I went the following year though!

He would set his students some tasks and go to his room next door and work on his Athletics programme...a guy called Tissa (TRP De Alwis...RIP) was frequently summoned to help. TRP had beautiful and neat handwriting At the start of the season...he would summon us and 'predict' the results against what he/we knew of the opposition...mainly RC, SJC and SPC...sometimes TCK...allocate points for results and get us to work on it.

In fact, I enjoyed the short sprints...but he coaxed me to take up the 440 yards. I was not overly impressed...but history proved him right...and lastly you have heard of the Milocarian tables???...I remember being told that he and Fr Yin a brilliant Mathematician...modified and rewrote the stats to suit Asian(SL) standards.. In fact, at the 1959 group meet...a guy called Abdeen won both the 800 and mile I think...but I was awarded the best performance or something. I remember he was ranting in the SPC change rooms about it... till someone pointed out that it was given on the points corresponding to the timing!

I recollect pulling a left hammy at the 1959 Colombo South Group meet...may have been in the last event as I distinctly recollect what looked like a huge bruise. I did not know what a hamstring muscle was at that stage...anyway...I 'recovered' and continued to train (the bruising subsided) in readiness for the pubs..... A week before I again sustained a slight hammy strain...I told Brooke and he was pissed off! Anyway, the next day he called me to his lab....and opened some book and gave me a form of therapy...which I had or never have heard since. He said I was

not to go to class...which thrilled no end...Being a school cop I shared a cubicle in Miller-Chapman. All I had to do ...religiously... was to sleep/rest...walk up to the small club grounds on the hour...every hour...and do ONE slow circuit of the grounds... I did this for the whole day till 6 pm I think 10/11 a day times for 7/8 days....I did not do any training in the last week!

Any way the pubs came...got through all the heats...and for my luck got the last/outer lane...in the 440 final...I had no alternative other than to run my own race...which I did...all went well...and as the object was merely to win...when an inward glance towards the end confirmed that... I may have eased off ...knowing that there were other events to follow...and had no idea whatsoever about any record.

That was that...then came the 220 final...and entering the straight against...felt the familiar rip....though I doubt I would have beaten Adolf Silva...one of the most beautiful runners ...*poetry in motion*...I opined...I managed to limp home...Then the drama...of the 4x440 relay...I told Brooke...no way could I do it...he wouldn't hear of it...managed to get hold of Specialist surgeon Mr. (no he was not called Dr)..Drogo Austin to have a look after which they strapped my thigh...not right round. To cut a long story short...did the 440 relay...where we came second by a whisker (I think??)...of course coming into the finishing straight the bloody plaster kept coming off and flapping in the wind...anyway to give Broke his due...while I was reluctant to run, he made the correct call...and as the say...such is life!

Brooke was great coach...and was always so confident. We used to start our training during term 2 holidays...which was no big deal, but I was a boarder and valued my school holidays as I always went to my Aunt's estate in Matale. Mate...them were great days”

- Maurice Fairweather (STC Athletics Captain 1959 & Ceylon Schools Athletics Captain to Australia 1960)

Brookie was uniquely ambidextrous: That natural coordination may have also been a factor in his becoming a champion javelin thrower. In the zoology class, with chalk in both hands he would draw perfect outlines on the board of the specimens we were to study or dissect: Needless to say, this impressed every student entering his class for the first time:

A few of them thought they could also learn to draw like him, although that was not an acquirable skill. To be in his inner circle, one had to be either good or at least interested in zoology or athletics, but not necessarily in that order.

There were a couple of very capable boys who had no intention of pursuing higher studies and they were drafted into admin work for the Public Schools Athletics Association during class hours, in the “zoo lab” next to his classroom:

With the work experience gained in those roles, they were subsequently recommended for mercantile jobs by STC / Brookie and went on to forge successful careers in the private sector during the 1950s and 60s.

I remember a zoology practical class in “Coll A” one afternoon, when I was sitting at the back of the class dissecting a Scoliodon (small shark), which held very little interest to me or the classmate next to me, who kept talking to me about sports:

Having noticed this, Brookie came across and told the other boy, *“Isay -----, stop disturbing Kanagey: He has athletics practice this evening.”*

He then said to me: *“If ----- is being a nuisance, go up and rest in the dorm.”*

Without a moment’s hesitation, I retired to the cubicle I had in Copleston A for the rest of the afternoon and did likewise during the remaining zoology classes until the end of the term!

Brookie must have kindled my friend’s interest in the subject, for he qualified as a doctor and later became a popular GP, with a well-established practice.

A few years later, I heard that a couple of senior boys who had cut classes because of their involvement in sport, got into serious trouble with the next Warden.

(Our batch of guys must have been lucky to have left before “The Carnival ended”!)

This background information may be of interest:

In 1955, soccer was replaced with rugby at STC by Warden De Saram, reportedly on the recommendation of Old Thomian / Oxonian Noel Gratien, the eminent Advocate, Attorney General and later Supreme Court Judge. He had advised the Warden that playing rugby would improve employment opportunities for Thomians within the plantation as well as mercantile sectors, the senior ranks of which were held mostly by British ex pats, until changes to recruitment were set in train after independence, due to government policy.

This paved the way for Ceylonese to also be selected for training in executive roles across the private sector. Perhaps, based on the adage that the “battle of Waterloo was won on the playing fields of Eton”, the British owners and their agents preferred to engage rugby players to manage their estates.

The thinking may have been that the hard knocks and pain absorbed on the field built the endurance and character needed to work in climatic extremes and handle large, sometimes troublesome work forces.

Initially, a high proportion of Trinicians were taken into plantations, followed by Royalists and then Thomians in smaller numbers, with their common attribute being rugby.

Brookie was consistently and firmly opposed to his leading athletes playing rugby for a simple and very valid reason: **The high risk of injury.**

Very few rugby players retire from the sport without chronic pain or long-term injury! Shot Put and Discus Throw champion Lorenz D’Silva was no exception, sustaining a shoulder injury in 1961, his first and only year of school rugby.

After STC beat Trinity for the first time in 1960, followed by wins over both Trinity and Royal the next year, our standing in school rugby was significantly enhanced.

Mr Gratien's "judgement" proved to have been "right on the ball" when 12 players from those two STC teams were subsequently selected for careers in plantation management.

Those achievements also provided confidence and impetus to the STC teams that followed.

It is generally acknowledged that the plantation sector progressively lost its lustre as a source of employment, after nationalisation in the mid-1970s.

Brookie taught, guided, encouraged, protected and trained generations of Thomians. A product of a bygone era, he was an icon admired and respected by countless students and athletes.

- Selva Kanagasabai (Athletics: 1958 – 60, Vice-Captain 1960; Rugby: 1959- 61)

D. A. C. C. 1966



Standing L. to R: M. Christoffelsz (Trainer), D. Hermon, A. Titus, T. Kelaart, O. Motta, R. d' Silva, R. Wijenayake, I. Perera, P. Amerasinghe, J. Vaughan, M. Samarasinghe, D. Thomas (Masseur).

Seated L. to R: M. Ratwatte, L. Schokman, M. Parry, (V. Capt.), S. Kanagasabai (Capt.), S. Unamboowe, J. Bousfield, K. Murray.

On Ground: R. Morrell, P. Dias.

*Note: Team photos of Dimbula (Source: "History of Ceylon Tea" website; → Planters' Clubs → Radella Club.).

The leading planters' club in the mid to late-1960s, show more Old Thomians than any other comparable cohort.

- Ravi Rudra



DIMBULA RUGBY TEAM 1967

STANDING (L-R): Mohan Samarasinha, Nissanka Welikala, David Schokman, Reggie de Zilva, Dicky Hermon, Andre Titus, Miles Christoffelsz (*President DACC & Coach*), Peter Amerasinghe, Roger D'Silva, Owen Mattau, Mike de Alwis, Dharmasiri Madugalle
 SEATED: Yasa Ratnayake, Selva Kanagasabai, Mike Parry, Ken Murray (*Capt.*), Larry Schokman, Mike Waring, Ralph Gauder
 ON GROUND: Peter Grigson & Derrick Mattau

Photo by: Photo Centre, Nuwara Eliya Photo Source: Ken Murray
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Brookie, my mentor and more

I lost my father on November 17, 1959, just 2 weeks before the GCCE “O” levels. He was bedridden for about 2 years before his demise, and this became a burden for the family in terms of how it affected the three children and their “freedom” of movement while their mother went to work. That someone would appear to play an impressive role in my life was inconceivable.

My release from these restrictions gave me the time to discover my running abilities. My pater never got to know this. However, Brookie took on the role of a stepdad and nurtured and disciplined me well. I had not known him before 1960 as I was not in the Coll forms (for zoo) but knew of his legendary enthusiasm for Athletics and also he knew me as an incidental boy scout at various athletics meets. He was a friendly teacher and coach despite his fame. He always called me “Hey, Silva” or “Hey, AGN”, my initials, which did not intimidate me. He also spoke bursts of very humorous Sinhalese at times in a very Burgher accent. In class was a D.H. Wickramasooriya (a classy cricketer) whose nick name was Kadiya – why, I do not know. One day Brookie pulled him up by calling him “Hey, Dimiya” much to the amusement of everybody and endearing him to the class. I am yet in close touch with Dimiya.

Brookie was very well informed in athletics, its history and coaching secrets and shared this with the boys ungrudgingly. In those days when sports information was scarce he was the “internet”. His library had a few books on athletics that related mostly to the 1940s and I yet remember some of the European and Caribbean names of that era – Macdonald, Zatopek, Nurmi, Owens, Duncan White etc.

The 1960 Olympics was held in Rome, Italy, and as expected the 1,500 meters was won by Australian legend Herbert Elliot, who wrote a book on his career in 1961 calling it “The Golden Mile”. Brookie bought this book for me, and it inspired me no end. Many in class with me read it. Elliot trained more on the beach than on a track. I did too – so much so that Brookie once suggested to me that the beach between the Mount Lavinia Hotel and Dehiwala Railway station be called the “Silva mile”, punning on the word silver, if I trained hard enough. He also loaned me an Omega stopwatch to time myself on the track. This made me feel quite important and special. He also bought me a pair of Hotspurs spikes, although it did not help my performance. Once, he told me to remove my basketball running

shoes and show him the soles. He brought them together side by side and asked me to observe the pattern of wastage of the soles. I was amazed. They were the mirror image of each other. He then said that that is a mark of a well- balanced runner who wastes no energy unnecessarily.

Exactly a week before the 1962 Colombo South Group meet I fell seriously sick with unrelenting diarrhoea for 5 days. I could not keep food down and was severely dehydrated and probably in electrolyte imbalance. I did not have fever and was not hospitalized. My mother was at work, so I was alone at home during the day. Brookie visited me daily and brought a different medicine every time, which I believe were antibiotics. The Warden visited once with Brookie and this got me really worried, and the next day Brookie comes with Rev. Baldwin Daniel. My neighbour had independently called a doctor also to see me and he arrived almost at the same time as the Chaplain and got the impression that the match was over. Many classmates also came with a variety of rumours from other schools suggesting that my condition was in their favour as I would probably not run. On Friday, the first day of the Group meet, I was too sick to run although I attended the meet. Ranjith Ranasinghe, my running buddy, ran the 880 yards and won easily. The next day, I decided to run the mile after not eating or drinking regularly for a week and with no training. I won in a new Pubs record time! Could not believe it myself. Brookie could not figure it out either! Maybe, training daily is too much for teenagers.

At the Pubs in 1962, Brookie wanted me to win both the 880 and the Mile. However, I had not qualified for the 880 as I did not run it at the Group meet. Brookie came up with a plan together with Ranjith Ranasinghe. In a show of great sportsmanship, "Ranaya" gave up his spot in the 880 Pubs finals and gave it to me. This indeed was an act of great sacrifice for a College athlete to voluntarily give up a shot at glory for the sake of College and a friend. To this day, Ranaya and I are very close friends. Ranaya swears that Brookie, realizing the significance of this gesture on the psyche of a teenager, never forced it on him, but only told him of this way out. Both Ranaya and I never knew of this substitution rule. Ranaya is a great sportsman and Thomian. What better demonstration than this.

I did indeed win the Mile but placed second in the 880. Minutes after my win, in the centre of the field, he approached me and gave me a large envelope that was not sealed. I wondered what and peered inside. It was an enlarged picture of me winning the National Title. When I thanked him, he smiled and said it was for my mother. My mother had never ever come to see me win any race. Brookie's humaneness was so palpable.

In 1964 March I had won a scholarship to study in Japan and needed to get my passport within a week. A certified copy of my original birth certificate was needed. My records were at the Badulla Kacheri as I was born in Haputale. I related my plight to Brookie who took me to the College office, from where he made a single telephone call to the Badulla Government Agent, by the name of Nesiah. "Hey, Nesiah. I need a fast favour" Then mentioned my name and other details to him and requested urgent attention. The certificate came the day after! Apparently Nesiah was an old Thomian that Brookie remembered well. This was well before "networking" became a fashionable buzz word.

The interest that Brookie took in me was so sincere. He designed a weight belt for me to train. Tailored by his wife to fit me precisely, it had a series of 2" by 3" and quarter inch thick pockets that accommodated slabs of lead weights that he had got made. Word had got around other schools that I was using a weight belt. Next, he made me run in Army boots that he procured by speaking to Mr. V.D Burder of the Cadet platoon. This kind of interest gave me the impression of a dedicated human being, more focused on a mission than on personal glory. Never once did I hear that he boasted that he was my coach. He gave me a glowing letter of recommendation on leaving school.

Of course, another great performer he trained was his Peugeot 203. The 403 was the newer model but he did not want to give up on his 203. I have travelled many a mile in this. The floorboards are legendary as they gave vent to the engine heat that was directed into the vehicle. Once the heat became unbearable, there was a very practical solution. Open the front door about 3-4" (in addition to the open windows) and there was "a gush of fresh air". The 203 was conveniently engineered for this air conditioning manoeuvre as the door hinge was in mid chassis, while all other cars had the door hinge at the wind screen level. It was also rumoured that if the car braked suddenly, the forward jolt would dislodge the battery terminal, causing

the car to stall. This made him drive mostly close to the left pavement in case he had to fix it. The bonnet (hood) was also supposed to be hard to open. This 203 also acted as his mobile office as he had a lot of unorganized paperwork in the car including in the dickie. His air conditioning manoeuvre would occasionally make papers fly. Apparently, his wife had threatened to inform the Police about this inconvenience, but never did put it into action. Brookie was safe anyway. The IGP (Inspector General of Police) happened to be a former National Title holder in the Pole Vault. Gentleman by the name of Mr. A.C Depp – Brookie’s contemporary and close friend – who could bail him out of any vehicular misadventure. He once told me that he was convinced that his car would never be stolen. Why? It was too unattractive in looks and sound.

I truly felt very close to Brookie and feel he played a significant “paternal” role in my maturing teenage years. I feel honoured that I can call him my coach, mentor, teacher, role model, confidant and counsellor. A good man indeed. Thank you Sir.

- [Dr. A.G.N. \(Nihal\) de Silva \(One Mile - Public Schools Champion & Record Holder, and National Champion\)](#)

Brookie D’Silva was one of those larger-than-life people that left a permanent impression on me and the memories of my days as an athlete at S. Thomas College some sixty years ago now! He was an inspiration to me and to many other before and after me. I had been the best sprinter in College right up to my U16 year including securing the ground record for the 220 yards and I was one of Brookie’s protégées.

However, at the Public Schools meet in 1963 a sprinter, Jabir Junaid, from St. Thomas College, Gurutalawa, beat me handily although the year previous, I had beaten him as a junior in 1962. It crossed my mind that the two of us together on the same team would have been awesome so, needless to say, I was overjoyed when Jabir joined STC in 1964. I was thrilled to welcome him as a team mate rather than an opponent!!

We became close friends and with the addition of Jabir, STC put together a very competitive (I would say unbeatable, if we did not beat ourselves) 4x100 relay team. Although I should have been running the third lap, Brookie insisted that I start because I was usually the fastest

out of the blocks and as is tradition, Jabir being the fastest, did the last lap.

Unfortunately, we had our share of ill luck with dropped batons, the occasional poor exchange, a runner stepping out his lane, injuries, etc., and so we did not win every race but when things did come together as designed, we were unbeatable.

Just before one of our big events, which I think was the Relay Carnival, Jabir pulled a hamstring practicing long jump and Brookie was none too impressed because Jabir hurt himself goofing around before an important date. Brookie immediately arranged to see Dr. Anthonis who was a premier surgeon/anesthetist and Jabir, Brookie and I piled into his famous Peugeot 203 and drove to the good doctor's residence. Despite our best efforts, Jabir's hamstring did not heal in time.

Talking about injuries, I remember one year I wanted to play Rugby in the second term, but Brookie convinced the Warden (Davidson) that the Royalists and Trinitians would do their best injure me and got the Warden to tell me, directly and in no uncertain terms, that I was not allowed to play!

Brookie was also a good friend of my dad ("Rifle" Mendis) who was Brookie's colleague and taught at STC during this time. They would solve all the problems of the world over a number of beers at the Old Thomian Swimming Club which was then just a shack between the office building and the Scouts building and across from the high jump pit. And if they were still at it when the club closed, they would come over to our little place on Barnes Avenue and continue there, particularly if it was a Friday!!

One of Brookie's sayings was that "Sprinters are born and not made" and that is something I have always remembered. However, that was back in the 60s and there maybe weight training and other techniques today that may contradict that meme.

I spent many hours particularly in 1965, in his semi-circular office in the old Zoo/Bio building, which was full of zoology specimens floating in formaldehyde, in glass jars. The smell would clear my sinuses! I was his acolyte while we plotted and planed programs for SK Jayasinghe who was an unbelievable and unbeaten distance runner who broke a number of records like it was just another morning's work. Brookie related many stories about distance runners like Paavo Nurmi, Zatopek,

and coach Percy Wells Cerutti and using their training and performance techniques in SK's program. SK and I were good friends and stayed in touch until I left for Canada.

I saw another side of Brookie when he and I visited one of my colleagues, Sivaloganathan, at his residence in Wellawatte. He was our 440 guy and was suffering from Leukemia. And even on his deathbed he was determined to come back after beating his illness. We drove out there in his Peugeot 203 chatting away but on the drive back we were both in absolute silence.

He was also my Zoology teacher in Coll Science A. He was really one of the best teachers I ever had and some of what I learned in his Zoology class I still remember! He was very good at dissections and yes, he could draw with both hands simultaneously! He had a real captivating style of teaching and I know he has given many of us a lifelong passion for science. His classroom was Nature and the great outdoors itself.

I give thanks for what is in retrospect an ever so brief time I spent with him and for so favourably influencing me in my formative years. Esto Perpetua!!

– Rabin Mendis (STC Athletics Secretary 1965)

To me Mr. Brooke ('Brookie') D'Silva is 'Mr. Athletics'! The word 'Athletics' is written all over him. His intense passion, vast knowledge, sheer dedication and application are beyond description. A gentle giant of a man and a larger-than-life icon. Some indelible memories come flooding from my memory whenever Brookie's name is mentioned.

Ever since he brought me over to STC Mount Lavinia from Gurutalawa, in 1964, Brookie became not only my coach but a mentor and a father. He made sure that I had the best of meals, at no extra cost, in Mr. Sam Jiffrey's house where I was boarded, and additional liquid sustenance such as cocktail fruit juice and 'Tono' hot chocolate at the Tuck Shop, free of charge – presumably paid for by Brookie.

He turned up at the grounds sharp at 4 pm each day, smoking his favourite brand of 3 Roses cigarettes, and making sure that I did all my routine warmups before going through the various drills he had carefully mapped out. I was very lucky to have a coach who took the time to prepare workouts, and was personally involved in each session. He remained an

interested and involved coach both during and after training, as well as during the off-season.

On one occasion he took me in his famous Peugeot 203 to Diana's sports good shop to buy me top-quality Adidas or Pumas running spikes. He felt my old Indian ones were too inferior and had seen better days. However, I didn't have the heart to receive such an expensive gift, and changed his mind by telling him that my dear friend and teammate Sivaloganathan was gifting his pair of Adidas to me. It so happened that when I visited Siva's home in Wellawatte after he very sadly passed away following a battle with leukaemia, his lovely mother brought his spikes and said that her beloved son had specifically wanted it presented to me. This brought tears to my eyes as Siva used to lend me his spikes at big meets when I performed well, and it was such a perfect fit. Having gratefully accepted this token of incredible love, I wore Siva's spikes for the rest of my athletic career.

Brookie also took great interest in my studies, and in 1964 he arranged extra free tuition for my O-Levels from three wonderful teachers – Rev. L.G.B. Fernando, Mr. V.D. Burder, and Mr. Vevil de Kauwe. Thanks to them I was able to get through my exam, which was a great relief to me and my parents.

Brookie's interest and responsibility did not cease with my College Athletics Career in 1965. One day he called my father and me to see him in his office and asked my father what I was good at and what were my capabilities. My father responded that I like drawing and was a good artist. The next moment Brookie rang his friend Vishwa Selvaratnam, a renowned architect and brother of the renowned sportsman Renga, to recommend me for a trainee position. I turned up the next day at the appointed time in my whites and tie, only to be blasted by Vishwa for my formal dress code, before offering me my first job as an apprentice with a princely starting salary of Rs 250 a month, which was big money those days!

How does one repay such debts to a man that I dearly love and miss? Dear Mr. Brookie, you were such an integral part of my life in so many ways. You shaped and nurtured me like your own son for which I am ever grateful until my very last life's breath! You are always in my prayers. May your beautiful and gentle soul forever 'Rest In Peace, dearest Sir!'

- Jabir Junaid (STC ML Athletics 1964-65)

I should say he was a Super Star, a true Legend, handling so many Thomian Athletes over several decades.

He had mastered the Art of Coaching basically every event whether it was Track or Field. Over the years Thomians were in the forefront winning many meets including the Public Schools Championships - the Tarbat and Jefferson Trophies for many years.

Mr. Brookie D'Silva had the knack of getting the finer points to the Athletes to perform well. His sharpness of picking the Young Thomians and guiding them to their respective events to perform well. He moved very closely with the Athletes in their training pattern and how to improve the performances.

He was basically at the grounds daily especially during the 2nd and 3rd term offering us his Valuable Time and providing Updated Training schedules with Precious Guidance. I also should mention Thomian Athletes not only won many events they went on to break many records at Dual Meets, Colombo South Group Meets and Public Schools Athletics Meets over the years.

Mr. Brookie D' Silva's dedicated, caring and untiring efforts made the young Thomians compete with True Thomian Grit which helped us a long way in our personal Lives.

- Vijitha Jayasinghe (R.V.) - (Athletics Captain 1966)

“The STC Prep School song includes the lyrics “we will cherish the days of our youthful years, to the life that lies before us”. In another great song, from Rev. Boyer Yin, we have the lyrics, “We’ll always remember, wherever we may be, the school of our boyhood, the school by the sea. And we always will cherish the friendships fine and free, that we made at Saint Thomas’, the school by the sea.”

These lyrics come to mind as I write, of our youthful years and beyond, we revered our teachers who were our mentors and became our friends.

I searched and found that, a teacher is the one who listens to the “strange” boy talk about his fascination with dragons and not judge., and that the most important value most teachers hold is that of knowledge and their commitment to instilling this value in their students. These attributes and values, I saw in Brookie D’Silva. who

impacted, if perhaps, not on my knowledge of Zoology, but my outlook on life, while he attempted, to instil knowledge into an oft times distracted and disinterested student.

I have such fond and warm memories of him, as a teacher in zoology, athletics coach, a “friend” and a mentor. I see him at the blackboard, chalk in hand, drawing the heart amongst other organs. This man had “HEART” and one could not draw that!!! He strode around the class as though he longed to be outside, a javelin in his hand. He was a record holder in that discipline. He was the proud owner of a Peugeot 203, which had seen far better days. There were holes in the floorboard, but it ran well. I picture him struggling to get his big gangling frame into the driver’s seat and settling himself, behind the wheel, smiling and waving as he drove away, what memories.

In 1965, I was to captain the U16 Cricket Team against Royal College (the mini-Big Match). But for me, this was NOT to be. The Relay Carnival was held on the same weekend, and Brookie, told me that Senior sports “trumped” junior sports, no matter that I was the skipper. I argued that I would ONLY run a single lap in the 400 meters relay (max of 1 minute) event and that I was only marginally faster than the next best at that distance. But Brookie would NOT budge. We remained friends. although I am sure I must have sulked. He watched my “handiwork” in dissecting a shark, and remarked, “Manilka you have played cricket on this dead shark”. He introduced us to running “Fartleks” - which means "speed play" in Swedish, is continuous training with interval training. Fartlek runs are a very simple form of a long-distance run. Of course, we were intrigued by the sound of this word, with emphasis on the first four letters. So, we ran, stopped for Brookie to read our heartbeat, and send us on to the next distance. He literally “killed” us. At the end of the hard afternoon, he coaxed the administration to provide Ovaltine and some Vitamin tablets for the athletes. He arranged to hire an Ebert Silva bus to take the team/s to events at Sugathadasa Stadium and other places. He cared about us and looked out, and for us.

I wrote the above several years ago and include the following extracts from emails received from several ex-students whose lives were impacted by Brookie.

1. [*Nimal Jayatileka*](#) (a highly qualified, retired, physician), resident in the UK. He states that he was a contemporary of the late Premalal Gunasekera (Big Match 1964). Nimal wrote “I endorse

all you write. Brookie used to give me lifts in his old ramshackle Peugeot 203. Often, he would ask me to start it by cranking the starting wheel from the front. When getting into the driving seat he would say 'don't bang the door too hard, the others will open!'.

2. From anecdotes and discussions: (1) *Dr. AGN DeSilva (Nihal)* recounted that he was running a mile at Big Clubs, intending to qualify for a Scouting badge. Eagle eyed Brookie saw him, saw his form, fluidity and pace, called him aside and urged him to take up to long distance running. He coached Nihal, encouraged him, gave him training routines, arranged for him to train upcountry at a high altitude and watched the ugly duckling turn into a flying swan. Nihal won the mile distance at various levels; (2) Ajit Jayasekera was running alongside me in warmups for cricket practice. He beckoned to him, and said "you can do the hurdles, come to athletics practices". Ajit ended up as the captain and won Public Schools Colours.

In a similar anecdotal discussion, I was told that it was Brookie's interventions that resulted in a cricketer (will remain anonymous) being awarded College Colours in cricket, even though he did not play at that year's Big Match – there were twelve players with colours (re-awarded or awarded) in that year.

I note here that twenty students had to run (it was difficult for day-houses to find 20). The first to finish was timed as was the last to finish. The two times were added together, and the lowest total number was declared the winner and received a cake from the tuck shop. In my time at STC, I know that one or the other of the boarding houses always got the cake. They won the cake and ate it!!!

Clearly, Brookie had a fine sense of justice and would stand up and fight, as he did when he threw the javelin, with great distance and winning results. YES, he truly embodied the Thomian Spirit, the Grit, and the Fair play. I have failed if I do not reiterate that he was a good teacher, as two physicians of no mean repute, have attested (please see below for Dr. Buddy Reid's comments). There are certainly many more who have NOT written about their experiences, in the classroom. However, just consider the great numbers who passed Zoology and Biology, with flying colours and were able to pursue stellar careers in the field of medicine.

Brookie, Sir, you made an indelible impact on my heart, I THANK YOU, posthumously though it maybe.”

- Manilka Wijesooriya (STC Athletics Vice Captain 1966)

I remember Brookie driving us hard, with flags planted at the 100, 200 and 300 marks and him blowing a whistle at the expected timing at each flag and us slowing down or accelerating depending on where we were when the whistle was blown, completing a run, walking in concentric circles, and doing it over again and again until we virtually dropped. Then he gave us Ovaltine and sent us home. Winning the 4 x 400 event at the Pubs resulted from this hard training and we were almost invincible in this event.

I was also aware of how Mr. NM Perera came to STC as an Athletics coach. NM was coaching a school in Maharagama, Vidyakara Vidyalaya, which produced some good athletes in the 1960s. Brookie saw his dedication, coaching abilities and hard work and asked him whether he would like to come to STC. He agreed and resigned his government job at that school and came over and started coaching us.

There was a hitch, though. Brookie could not get him a staff appointment in College for some reason, but for over a year, he coached us without being on the payroll. This pained Brookie no end and I suspect he funded NM during that period. After about one year, just before Brookie migrated, he managed to get NM on the staff. That is the sheer dedication of the man and the sheer commitment to college shown by Brookie. I know this well because I interacted with Brookie quite a lot during that period. He did not allow me to pass his Room in the new lab without shouting out to me and getting me to his office for a chat on athletics! I missed several classes due to this, but the Masters never dared tell Brookie about my absence from class! I was with him, the Headmaster of the Upper School! Great man Brookie D'Silva!

- Ajit Jayasekera (STC Athletics Captain 1967 & 68)

“If not for the arrogance of Mr. Brookie D’ Silva I would never have been doing Athletics in the senior years. He walked to me one day and wanted me to participate in the Putt Shot and when I responded by saying that I was not interested because of rugby he replied saying then I should be wearing a ladies skirt, and that changed my mind!

My Sincere Thanks to this Fine Gentleman for his persistence, foresight, support, and recognition that enabled me to accrue many achievement certificates in Athletics at Public Schools Championships. His vision and encouragement to so many students at the College sports meets over the years contributed enormously to the standard of Athletics at STC. Our thanks must also be focused to the students who did their level best but did not always end up with the desired results but definitely contributed to the success of Athletics at The School.

Another good example was Barney Reid. Barney was an International Table Tennis champion, but Brookie saw that he could star in Cricket too. So, he said to Barney, *“I say, Barney do you know that you will be the only Reid brother not playing cricket for College”*. This got to Barney, and he took up Cricket & the rest is History. Whenever I meet a Thomian for the first time, every single time they would come up with a story how Brookie encouraged them & supported them to participate in a sport suited to them. ”

- Shihan Rahim (Pubs Putt Shot 1968-1970)

Brookie always thought I was a waste of time. He was right. I did Long Jump because I couldn't run. Can't actually recall whether I did participate in the 'B' team at the Relay Carnival but what I do recall is Ajit (Jayasekera) was Captain at that time and just to have some fun put me in the squad to travel to Kandy for a Dual Meet with Trinity. Ajit had to take the list to Brookie for approval.

"Why is Kariyawasam included".

"Sir, he is good in the 4x400 Relay"(The reality was, I could barely complete 400!)

"Rubbish, cut his name off"! That was the end of my trip.

Famous words of Brookie (according to Ajit) as the squad reached the platform of Mount station to go to Fort, *"Boys, we are going Third Class because there is no Fourth Class"*.

- Prabodha Kariyawasam (STC Cricket Captain 1969 & 70)

Brookie D' Silva was a legend - one of the greatest of our time! My STC Athletic Colours re-award, was declined by the Warden following that year's Public Schools performance. (Reason: punishment for breaking school rules by wearing 'Fancy dress at the R-T match!' earlier that year). Brookie intervened, objected strongly at that decision, and took the matter up to the STC Board of Governors. He won his appeal! At College "Assembly" the following week, my Colours were re-awarded, but was read out in a "garbled" message, understood by none!

R.I.P - Brookie D' Silva!

- Dr. Ranjith Dambawinna (STC Athletics 1955-56)

"Being Brookie's next door neighbour, I had the privilege of riding in his Peugeot 203 a few times. There was a hole in the floorboards of the front passenger seat, and it was my foot that held brakes. Ravi Rudra who rode in it some years later said there was no hole. Brookie must have repaired it to save Ravi's foot. Ravi was a good runner, and I was not. After the car ride I could perhaps have taken part in the hopping race.

He was right about Athletes avoiding rugby. Ronnie did not listen well enough and fractured his collar bone.

Yes, he could draw with both hands, but he commissioned another top artist student whose name escapes me now, (I think it was Weera) to do the drawing while he worked on the Athletics in the next room. He left us with 40 questions and told us, "Answer these and you will pass zoology."

It was Brookie who persuaded me to switch from "Southuwa's" Applied mathematics to his Zoology and it was this and Mr. Anandanayagam's fantastic Physics teaching that got me into University and Medicine.

We all owe something to Brookie!"

- Dr. Buddy Reid (former Ceylon Test Cricketer & Captain, and National Table Tennis Champion, including the World Masters – representing Australia).

A Man Who Instilled Supreme Confidence

I was extremely fortunate to have had two of my best years as a Juvenile athlete when Mr. Brookie picked me as a twelve-year-old in 1966 for my first Pubs. He was such a charismatic figure yet a 'gentle-giant' who radiated extreme confidence and instilled the same in others. During his final two years as Coach in 1966 and 67, the Juvenile Relay teams won every single event that we entered in. This included the Relay Carnival, Dual Meets with Trinity and St. Joseph's, Colombo South Group Meets and the Pubs. No one was more confident and thrilled at our ability than Brookie when in 1967 the relay team smashed all the existing records at every meet. His radiant smile was a delight to behold at the finish of every race.

My fondest memory of him remains being seated next to him on the front passenger seat in his famous Black Peugeot 203 when he often gave me a ride after training in 1967, as he lived only a few streets away in Wellawatte. The only scary bit, initially, during the ride on the busy Galle Road was Brookie asking me to open the front door to let in some fresh air every couple of minutes as the windows were not in working condition and the front windscreen would mist from our perspiration! However, I soon got the hang of it and learnt to do it automatically, without the coach prompting me.

I dearly missed Brookie when he migrated to Australia. Even though he had put in place a superb team in Mr. E.C.K. Abeysekera and Mr. N.M. Perera who carried on the legacy of Brookie as we won the Tarbat Challenge Trophy for Seniors for the next four years, I do often wonder as to how much more superior we would have been as a team under the helm of our legendary coach Mr. Brookie D'Silva!

-Ravi Rudra (STC Athletics Captain 1971)

I know Brookie D' Silva. He was secretary for CAAA and Public schools in the Fifties. Great gentleman. Contributed to school and CAAA athletics much. Sadly, now they have forgotten him.

- Dr Nagalingam Ethirveerasingam

**Note: Dr Ethirveerasingam is a former Public Schools, National & Asian Games Record Holder in the High Jump. He took part at the 1952 (Helsinki) and 1956 (Melbourne) Olympics. He also participated in three Asian Games: 1954 (Manila), 1958 (Tokyo), and 1962 (Djakarta). He won the High Jump Gold Medal at the 1958 Tokyo Asian Games, which was the first Gold Medal of any kind for Sri Lanka and also took the Silver at the 1962 Djakarta Asian Games.*

"Reminiscences of a man - Thomians called Him " Brookie"

I hope I will be able to do justice to the cherished memory of a man for whom I had the utmost respect.

It is not easy to bring out the qualities of a man who was responsible for shaping the careers and characters of countless Thomians during the Fifties, Sixties and the Seventies. Mr. Brookie D' Silva was a man who found employment for quite a number of Thomians who were not interested in going for Higher Studies. Over a few phone calls he could fill up a Dummy Copy of a Dance Souvenir with Advertisements. That was the power this man wielded both inside and outside the College.

Mr. Brookie D' Silva was a man of sterling qualities, both as an Administrator and as a Teacher. He taught Botany and Zoology for the A Level Classes. I am told that he would break a piece of chalk and draw the Alimentary Canal with both hands. A kind and an unassuming man who drove about in an Old Black car. If you were lucky to get a ride in his car, you have to be careful where to put your feet as it had a gaping hole where you could see the road passing by.

Brookie who was a gentle giant of a man had a very long and distinguished career at St Thomas' College, with a singular devotion to duty. He had a passion for Athletics and taught his athletes the fundamentals of sports with emphasis on continuous improvement. He had the capacity to see the potential in students as well as the shortcoming that was hindering their success. He used self-esteem strategies, providing them with responsibilities. These kinds of interventions were particularly relevant for students, not only in the classroom, but also in the athletic grounds. He never minimised the role he played in influencing student lives.

Mr. Brookie D' Silva has had a significant lifelong impact on me as a colleague. In retrospect I can visualise him walking past the old Scout Room to Thalassa and back. He really stood out in a crowd and gave so much colour to the School by the Sea

Esto Perpetua!

- Mr. G. Thambithurai



A Cheerful Mr. Brookie D'Silva with his daughter Romany and Son-in-Law, Old Thomian, Ralston Bastiaensz.

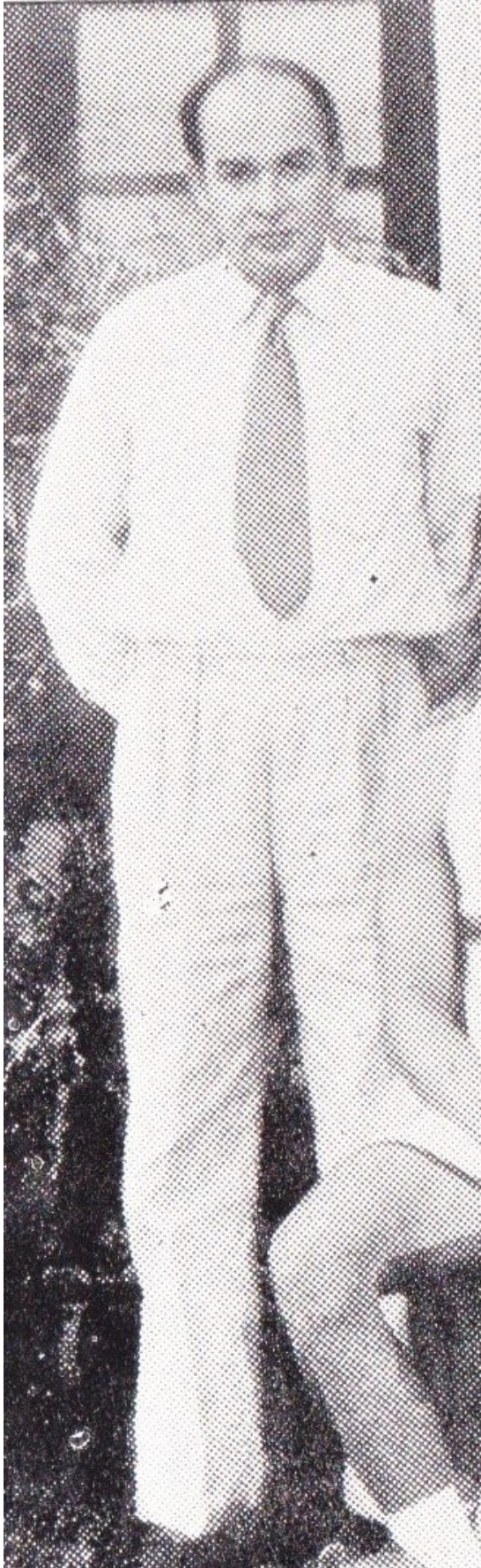
Brookie from past STC Athletics Team Photos – Below ↓



1952



1956



1959



1960



1961

“One of the All-Time Great STC Athletics Ground Record was Brookie’s nephew Roger D’ Silva’s 49 ft in the Under 19 Shot Putt set in 1963 at the Inter-House Athletics Meet. According to Roger his first throw went over 50 feet only to be called a ‘No-Throw’ by Coach, Official and Uncle Brookie D’Silva! While this was the only occasion Roger had picked up a foul throw in his long and distinguished career, it also demonstrated what an impartial and upright man of honour Brookie was.

Roger who also went onto break the National Record for the Shot Putt few times, mentioned recently, that when he migrated to Australia in the late 80s, Brookie had taken him to an athletic park and had him throw the Putt under his watchful eyes. Athletics was in Brookie’s blood until the very end!”

- Ravi Rudra



1963



1964



1965



1966



Last Photo of Brookie at STC - with his 1967 Public Schools Championship Team, Winners of both the Senior and Junior Tarbat Challenge Trophy.

Front Row (Seated): Mr. Brookie C. D'Silva (Coach), RV (Vijitha) Jayasinghe, Ajit Jayasekera (Captain), The Warden (Rev. A.C. Selvaratnam), Hasitha Kannangara, M. (Manilal) Pathmaperuma, Mr. E.C.K. Abeysekera (Master-in-charge).

Back Row: Yuvraj Sivalingam, Jaya Rudra, Sunil Wijeratne, Ajita Rajendra, JLC (Laksen) Salgado, M. Gunasekera, C.M. Gunaratne, Buddadasa Karunanayke, Azam Hameed, Dilsiri Dassanaiké, Johnny Attygalle.

On The Ground: Rajpal Samarasinhe, Ravi Rudra, Jerome Speldewinde, Kelvin Speldewinde, Chulla Warusevitane.