

Ladies and Gentlemen-or Boys and Girls- take your pick. Perhaps you're still young at heart as I.

First of all, thank you for giving me this opportunity of saying a few words to my old classmates and the others who are here today. It is indeed an honor. I have been asked to say "a few words". But considering that I am seeing most of you after a period of 40 years forgive me if I say more than just a few words. However, I will try to keep it as brief as possible.

I am sure some of us must be asking the question: Why this reunion?

One of the answers, I suppose would be that everybody seems to be doing it. However, I personally am not much for jumping on bandwagons, but there must be something that urges so many people our age to re-examine their pasts. It's probably something to do with slowing down a fraction, family & business commitments notwithstanding and asking, "Who am I?"

Part of the answer to that can come from looking back to see "What made me? Who were my companions in my formative years and what happened to me that it shaped my life in certain ways?"

Ladies & Gentlemen, exactly 2 score years ago, we left Campion School, Mumbai to go our separate ways. Now, here we are again together after 40 whole years. It is difficult to imagine that some of us last saw each other in 1970 when we passed out of Campion. Had we been born a few centuries earlier, those intervening 40 years would have been years of little change. The truth is, that for thousands of years most of the world's population lived just as their parents lived, worked just as their parents worked, and died where their ancestors had been laid to rest. The idea of progress, even of change itself, was not only foreign; it was simply unknown, even unthinkable.

Not with us. Little did we know, back in the tranquil years of the 1960s, that ahead of us lay a world of great change, local, national and international. Rock and Roll music started with Elvis, The Beatles The Stones and The Doors-black music often imitated by whites and even by us. Women began their struggle for equal opportunity, at work and at home, forever changing stereotyped images of what women and men must be. Part of that change was a sexual revolution that followed the invention of "The Pill" A most useful invention, I might add, as I discovered to my delight in the years immediately after passing out of school. The television era began, changing forever the way we recreate, communicate and receive information. Other electronic wonders followed: the personal computer, the cell phone which gets smarter and smarter every year and other devises that to some of us might seem to have complicated rather than enriched our lives. Space travel began and continued with landing men on the moon and the exploration of our outer solar system. Nuclear weapons were proliferated to numerous countries and the Cold War ultimately brought about the collapse of our former ally, the Soviet Union. The Berlin Wall came tumbling down. Terrorism, a word unheard of during our school days has become commonplace and 9/11 and 26/11 happened. Unparalleled corruption reached places most high destroying the very fabric of our social and moral structure. Yes, so much has happened from the time that we joined Campion, and today, when we are celebrating this re-union

To night, I would like to leave high speed technology and current events behind while we journey briefly to the Campion we once knew and where, in my opinion, we spent some of the best times of our lives. Campion, for all of us was a place of learning and inspiration, a place where lifelong friendships were formed. I had the honor of being the School Captain of Campion and that is something I will not forget for the rest of my life.

Do you remember the Back Gardens where we learnt to play sport for the first time? We learnt to play cricket football, basket ball and many other games there. Learning to play under the watchful eyes of our coaches was one thing but in between, our own eyes wandering because of the many distractions from St Annes and Fort Convent was something else. I can still hear the abuses hurled at us by Hodi, BalaGovind etc when we were thus distracted. The games that we played at Campion I am sure you will all agree has stood us in good stead during our later years. Some of the inter-school matches I had played at different games representing Campion, on various playing fields, are still fresh in my memory. The March Past Trophy which we used to win every year without fail at the inter school athletics competition was a matter of great pride for the school. I cannot also forget the Elocution competitions, NCC Rallies, the Scouts Camps and the fabulous school plays that we used to put up annually.

During those days life was much simpler. The closest thing we had to the modern day shopping mall was Sahakari Bhandar next door and the nearest we experienced fine dining was a visit to Kwalities or Gaylords on the rare occasions when we had the money. The rest of the eating was at the School Canteen or one of the Irani restaurants close to school where we would mix Coke with Fanta to make it look as if we were drinking beer. The other place that readily comes to mind is Ahmeds where most of us had our first cigarette and from where we were caught smoking mainly by Hodi and then promptly marched to the Principal's office where we got a thorough dressing down. It is with great nostalgia I remember the socials we used to have with Fort Convent on the terrace of our school where the gravelly floor made it impossible to dance. Being innovative Campionites we overcame this small problem by spreading a tarpaulin on the floor and hey-presto we had a dance floor, which more than served its purpose.

In case some of you (I'm referring here to wives, companions etc.) think that all we did at Campion was play games and eat and drink and generally make merry, may I inform you that the school was excellent academically and most of us did well at our studies?. For that, we must thank our dedicated teachers who molded us into the men we have become today. I have very fond memories of Fr. Moore, Fr. Ribot and the one lung kid Fr. Miranda who were our Principals at various times during our tenure at school. Unfortunately, after having moved to South India, I have lost touch with most of our teachers and I will request some of you who are in touch with them to say a few words about them after I have finished.

I started out by noting how different life was a few centuries ago. But consider this: had we been born, say 50 years earlier, the chances of our being together today at our current age would have been minimal. Life expectancy in our country in the early years of the 20th century was barely 40 years. Surely, it is by the grace of God that most of us, but not all of us, have lived long enough to share this night together, to recall our formative years at Campion and to share with each other a little of what we have experienced since that day in November 1970 when we blithely and confidently stepped out of the security of the school that many of us had known for over 8 years, to go out into the sunlight and shadow, the triumphs and tragedies of the real world, to conquer and prevail.

Heck, so we didn't always conquer, but we did prevail, and we are here tonight to prove it. I am confident that what we learnt at Campion, and the friendship we shared, prepared us for the 40 years that followed, and I am thankful, as I'm sure that you are, that tonight we can share this common milestone in our lives and say together, Hail to thee, our alma mater, Hail to thee Campion.

Ladies and Gentlemen, boys and girls will you join me in raising a toast to our school and all of us present here and also let us remember our absent friends.

And now, enjoy the company. The night is young and so are we!!
Let the reunion truly begin.