

The War Years - 1940-45

When my parents decided to leave Puttur and settle down in Mangalore, they saw what was best for their children and their schooling. During the summer vacation in 1940 we rented a house in Bishop's Compound, close to the Jeppu Seminary. Silva road, cuts across from Kankanady to Cascia road, and joins the Coelho Lane in Falneer. A small lane close to the junction leads into the Bishop's compound, and on the opposite side, is the gate to the Jeppu Seminary.

While my father used to go on his assignments, to teach in the Board high schools, in the South Kanara district, we seven children spent our days at home, with our mother, who was 38 years old at that time. My eldest sister used to go to Rosario High School, run by the Apostolic Carmel nuns and she also did her teachers' training there. My two elder brothers had joined the St. Aloysius High School, and my sister, four years older than me, was admitted to the Marjil High School, in Falneer. I was six years old at that time, and was admitted to the first class in Milagres Elementary School, in Hampankatta. My younger brother and sister were still at home.

My elder sister, took me for the school interview, and when the teacher asked me questions to find out how much I had learnt already, I refused to answer her questions, and thinking that I was timid, the teacher advised my sister to put me in the first class, where I could get a good foundation. She agreed, and we came home. When my mother tried to find out how things went at the school, my sister told her what had happened, and my mother was disappointed how a bright student like me failed the interview. When she tried to pry out the reason from me, my answer was: "Why did the teacher ask me those questions, as if she did not know the answers herself?" Thus went one year of my life down the stream, and to every one's surprise, I was coming first in the class in every test, and my prize was the magazine, "War in Pictures" which was more for the grown ups. Our head master was one Fr. Francis Pinto, and my memories of the school days are still fresh.

Two events stand out in my mind. I used to be taken to school in the beginning by our servant, and later as I was self confident, I used to be met on the way by my class mate, and we used to walk to school together. We would first visit the Church, and pray, and then go to school. In the morning many used to come to Church for the mass. One of them happened to be a lady in a black saree. As soon as she saw me, she recognized my features, and asked, "Child, are you not the son of John Pais?" and my reply was, "Yes, Aunt,". She replied, "I am your Aunt, Dulcine, your father's cousin". I felt very happy that at least some one knew me.

The second incident was when my classmate, Kiran Alvares, brought his match-box pictures album, and I borrowed it from him, to see the same. During recess, I put it in my drawer, but when we came back it was stolen. Kiran suggested that I bring a three paise coin and buy a candle, and we light it before St. Anthony's statue and pray. I did as he had told, and we prayed, but when we did not get the album back, the reply that Kiran gave was, "Perhaps, St.

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Written by W.J.Pais

Anthony does not want to give the album back." Such was the innocence of the children of those days.

More things happened during those days, and hope you will visit again to hear about them.

We are moving out to Goa, and it will be some time, I will take, to get access to the Intrnet. So you may have to hang on for sometime. Please bear with me.