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I. Letters
   1. Ian Grice on January 26 commented on FaceBook: "Today in my country it is Australia Day. January 26, 1788 marks the opening of European settlements in Australia. We celebrate the holiday with family and friends in private and with public entertainments. We also share this day of celebration with our Indian friends. For them January 26, 1950 marks the date their Constitution came into effect. So to my friends in Australia I say enjoy your holidays. To my many Indian friends I say 'JAI HINDI!'

II. Remembering Promod Kumar Poddar

Gnanaraj Moses <egmoses@gmail.com> January 24:

I am deeply saddened to hear of the passing away of my friend Promod Poddar of our days in Salisbury Park, Pune in the late 50's. He worked in the Publishing House and I worked in the Division office but we regularly met on the football field (soccer court) and played together six days a week. I believe it is all those years of friendship and running around that field with the soccer ball some of us have remained relatively healthy! Unfortunately age, heredity, environment, etc. do take a toll. I clearly remember Promod was always one of the full backs and a dependable one at that. He also was very competent and composed and never failed to instruct us from the back - almost as an unofficial coach. I played center forward and whenever my shots would go over the goal post I can hear him call out, "EG, give grass cut!!" We all knew what that meant and it became a standard instruction to anyone who lofted the ball too high and out.

The game provided an avenue for us to get wholesome exercise, develop lasting friendships, mature relationship whether we won or lost, and above all gave us a sense of unity as a community which was most evident whenever we competed in a tournament, against the wishes of some of our seasoned elders. However, most, if not all, our players conducted themselves well - no foul language or play, courtesy to others, etc. was a witness to our Christian faith. So much so the spectators, often even the friends of our opponents, ended up supporting and cheering us. In all these activities Promod and another dear friend who passed away recently, James Poddar, were in the forefront. Yes, we will miss these dear friends for a season but I live with the firm faith soon we will all be together again in the earth made new. I wonder if we will be playing soccer there? I hope we do and I would like Promod to be my full back!!

III. Honoring Dr. Neville O. Matthews

Gladwin Mathews <gladwinmathews@hotmail.com>

I am happy to learn about the honouring of Dr. Neville O. Matthews. I have fond memories of him from Spicer College when he took over as the President. In fact, I began my career at Spicer College under him as faculty and associate dean of men. He is a good leader but a very simple person who loved parties and get-togethers. During his tenure as president we had lots of staff and faculty pot-luck lunches and parties. He was an easygoing person. Some times you would see him sit at the (loafer) circle in front of the Ad-building talking to the students. He even went a pillon riding on a motorbike. Can you imagine the president of the College doing those kind of things? This was his simplicity.

When I moved to the United States, I met some of his family members (a
brother) at the Knoxville SDA church in Peoria, IL who told me more about him. It was a great privilege to work with him at Spicer College. His leadership taught me one great lesson that it is not the position that makes a person great. It is the principles that you live by in your life! God Bless him and his family!

IV. Spicer College Considering Terminating Pune University Affiliation

Gordon Christo <gechristo@sud-adventist.org> January 25:

Last week the Spicer College faculty voted to recommend to the Board that the college be allowed to withdraw from affiliation with Pune University.

The main reasons cited were (1) challenge in meeting the norms for salaries of teachers and administrators. The sixth pay commission is mandatory and salaries would have to be about three to four times higher. (2) The difficulty in getting qualified teachers who have passed the NET/CET exam. So far only two teachers have passed this exam and the college has employed 38 non-Adventists to teach in the University programs. 3) The difficulty in identifying a qualified principal—with 15 years of teaching, with at least 5 published books or equivalent scholarly works, who has already guided PhD candidates, etc, etc. (4) The impact of the University programs on the atmosphere of the college—social and spiritual. While the Board concurred with the recommendation, it has set up a small team to identify the pros and cons of this move.

If anyone has any strong feelings please send your views to Gordon Christo <gechristo@sud-adventist.org>.

V. Milo Academy Students to Labor in India in March

Rao & Susan Moturi <raosue@comcast.net> January 24:

We are living in Lebanon, OR; our two kids attend Milo Adventist Academy. Every year Milo kids have been going to South American nations since they are much closer and spring break gives them enough time to do evangelistic meetings and get back in time for school. However, this year they have decided to go to India, consulting Mr. Robinson in India to suggest a place to visit with high school juniors and seniors. He suggested the Sunderban Islands near Calcutta. There are about 12-14 kids anticipating going during spring break, Mar. 7 thru 27, 2012. Please remember them in your prayers. The kids are excited about this long trip and are engaged in fund raising activities -- they plan to visit 5 surrounding villages, conducting VBS and working with children and be a blessing to many children in the villages.

If anyone is interested in donating: please have checks made payable to Milo Adventist Academy- India Mission Trip 2012 and mail to Milo Adventist Academy, PO Box 278, Days Creek, OR 97429.

VI. Reconstruction of Khanpur S. D. A. Church, Punjab

Ramesh Massey <rameshmassey@aol.com> January 28:

The Khanpur Seventh-day Adventist church was built in 1976 under the leadership of late Pr. C. M. Dass. Due to lack of maintenance which had been a direct result of poor management and resources, the church had been in a dire need for upgrading. There had been a number of attempts to upgrade or rebuilt this church, but for some strange reasons no progress was made.

I had been praying that God will provide vision and of course resource to rebuild this church. The first proposal was made to local board and the then president some four years ago, however it failed to materialised.

Our God is great, and He has plans and time set aside for everything. On 1st January, 2012 the foundation stone was laid, president of North India Section, Pr. Samuel Gill was present along with the local congregation. The first phase is now complete, and hasty progress is made to complete the church in next six months time. The old church was a small hall which could hold about 60 parishioners, however the new church will be able to host well over 150 parishioners. It will also have a lower hall for the social and youth activities. The main church hall will have pastor's office, youth hall, women ministry room and baptistery with changing room. The hall downstairs will also have kitchen, storage space, and toilets.

I would personally like to thank everyone who is willingly participating in this project, and would request all our brethren to pray for the successful completion of this church. If you feel that you are able to help monetarily, please contact me personally or send your donations to North India Section Jalandhar. The estimated cost of the project is twenty lakhs rupees.

Ramesh Massey
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VII. The Mother Jilani Story [Chapter 11 of 17]

Some time ago I came across a quite old book lying around our house by Goldie Down. I had never heard of it before though I had seen several of her other books. This one is about Mother Jilani, the mother of Dr. Mrs. I. R. Baziel who, with her doctor husband, WERE Simla Hospital for many, many years.

Chapter 11 War and Mystery

Robinson was employed by the Church Missionary Society Hospital in beautiful Srinagar, the capital of Kashmir. There the newlyweds made their home. Young Dr. Baziel was a good surgeon; he was particularly interested in bone surgery and was rapidly gaining a good reputation in that skill.

The gathering war clouds in Europe had not yet cast their shadow over Kashmir when their first son, whom the first son, whom they called Pervaiz, was born to Sakinah and Robinson,

"A son! A son! Another doctor in the family. Old Hagar was jubilant.
"Gulam shall have his desire through his grandchildren."

"Now I can die in peace," old Mr. Baziel declared happily when he heard the news. "Innocent Robinson is safely married, and now he has a son to carry on his name. It is enough. God is good."

The little boy grew fast. By the time he was able to lispe his first words, the European war had shattered its borders, and the whole world was feeling the impact of one man's greed and thirst for power.

"I must join up," Robinson told his wife. "Our own men will be fighting, and come back wounded. My surgical skill will be needed. I can be of service to my country, and I must not confine myself only to the mission at a time like this."

Since India was still a part of the British Empire in 1942, the army was under an English general. Robinson was given the rank of lieutenant as soon as he enlisted, and two months later he was promoted to captain. A year later he received his orders to proceed to Burma with a regiment of Gurkhas serving under British officers.

"I think there's been a mistake somewhere," his commanding officer said.

(Robinson thought so, too.) "They shouldn't be sending a specialist like you along just as a regimental doctor. You're of more use at home base getting the wounded patched up again. I'll have to write to headquarters about it."

Robinson saluted smartly to signify his thanks.

"But in the meantime, until this is straightened out, you'll have to obey orders and join your regiment in Ranchi."

While he was stationed in Ranchi, something happened which Robinson never forgot.

When the big Nepalese Hindu festival of Dusserah was in progress, Major Twist, who commanded the Gurkha Battalion, donated a young buffalo for a sacrifice. The men in the ranks took up a collection to provide another buffalo. It was customary at this festival to make many blood sacrifices--buffaloes, goats, even hens would suffice--and every family in the district had its own offering. The animals were sacrificed at a specified place by one official executioner, who was an expert. The meat was later given to the poor.

Great crowds gathered to witness the sacrifices. It was a very important ceremony, and much significance was attached to its proper celebration.

Since he was a Christian, Robinson did not attend the function. At mess that night he noticed that one of his friends who had attended was looking distressed. "What is the matter, Bahadur?" he asked.

"Don't you know?" asked the Gurkha in surprise.

"No."

"A dreadful thing happened today. You know that when an animal is sacrificed, its head must be severed from its body by one stroke of the knife."

"Yes, I know. People believe it is bad luck if the executioner takes more than a single blow."

"Bad luck! It is much more than that. It is a fearful omen indeed." The Gurkha shuddered before he continued impressively. "Twice today the executioner failed in his duty."

"Really? What animals outwitted him? Surely not chickens!" Robinson did not appear to take the matter very seriously.

"It was two buffaloes." His friend lowered his voice and looked around lest he be overheard. "One was the buffalo donated by Major Twist. That is a dreadful omen. He will be killed in the war." Major Twist was much loved and respected by his men, and the Gurkha's sorrow was sincere, if slightly premature.

"Whose was the other?" asked Robinson curiously.
"It was the one that we all subscribed for. It means death or worse for us all.
"Nonsense." Robinson tried to cheer him up. "It is only a superstition.
Don't let it worry you. We aren't even at the front yet."

But the friend refused to be comforted. "You will see."

And Robinson did see. Before the battalion went to Chitagong and from there to Burma, he received his corrected assignment to a hospital in Poona.

He was not there when they went into battle.

When the casualties from the Burma front began coming in to the huge military hospital in Lucknow, Robinson was transferred there. It was at Lucknow that he learned the end of the story.

The Japanese invaders literally tore Burma apart. Major Twist had been the very first man in his battalion to be shot by them. The whole regiment had been ambushed and surrounded by the Japanese for fifteen days. Two thirds of the Gurkah Battalion were killed outright, and the rest were maimed and crippled for life before their position was relieved by the 5th Division.

For a long time Robinson pondered the matter. Was it actually possible that a curse had rested on the battalion because of the inexpert beheading of the two buffaloes On Dusserah Festival day? Or was it merely coincidence? As a Christian he could only believe that it was a coincidence, but he knew of many other strange happenings in his country, and he wondered.

Robinson thought of his dear friend Ahmed in Kashmir. A mutual love of flowers and gardens had drawn them together. Often they had gone out driving, visiting nurseries, gardens and parks.

Ahmed owned a fine house with beautiful garden and orchard. One day Ahmed and two friends were out walking. They stopped at a little tea shop to rest and refresh themselves. A saffron-robed sadhu (Hindu holy man) squatted nearby watching them eat. Suddenly he leaped to his feet, and pointing to the three men, he cried, "Before the end of this year none of you three will be in this world." Then he gathered up his trident and begging-bowl and stalked silently away.

Ahmed told no one but his family of this strange occurrence. It is better that no one knows of it until I am gone," he said. "I have more than six months yet."

Every day he thought of the sadhu's words, and soon he began to make preparation for his early demise. He sold his lovely home and bought a little cottage that his wife would be able to maintain when he was gone.

"Why have you sold your lovely home?" Robinson asked.

Ahmed smiled mysteriously, and a little sadly. "You will know soon enough," he said.

It came as a shock to everyone but Ahmed when his two companions of the tea shop episode died suddenly.

"It will be my turn next," he told his wife. "One day soon you will find me lying dead." He closed his eyes and leaned back in his chair. "This is what I'll look like when I'm dead."

Months passed. Ahmed kept a careful tally of the days. "Only seven more weeks of life," he announced one day. Sometimes he would refuse to eat with the rest of the family. "You go ahead," he would urge them. "I just want to sit here and watch you at the table. This is what the family will look like when I'm no longer here."

The twenty-ninth of December dawned. "Only two more days," he said to his wife at breakfast time.

Ahmed was in perfect health, and it certainly didn't seem possible that he could die so soon, He seemed happier that morning than he had been for some time.

After eating a hearty lunch, Ahmed said, "I must go and inspect the traffic on the line. It is a long distance, and I can't be finished until late, so I'll stay overnight with the Azizas."

About dusk Ahmed reached the Azizas' place and parked his car opposite the house. He alighted and after locking the car, began to walk toward the house.

No one knows what happened next. No one knows how he died or why. His friends found his unmarked body lying by the roadside.

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