

My School Year's Reminiscences

By Tafesswork Wondimu

The location was the present Nazareth Girls' School at Arba Dereja, the period the early fifties, and the School was the Commercial School of Addis Ababa (CSAA).

Those of us who joined the School in September 1952 came from different schools as was the practice then with the other years' intakes. What made our case different from the others was that we were drawn up from different grades.

I joined the CSAA after finishing 1st year at high school. Others joined it after completing the 9th grade. Still some others joined it after having done the 10th. There were also one or two who had completed the 11th grade. Such was the mix of our classes; so to speak, the year's intake was unique. It was not composed of eight graders only. Such a diverse mix made a difference. All worked through the years with envy and enthusiasm only to reach the highest step of the educational ladder; and they proved it.

We were all young between nineteen and twenty three at most when we finished the school with diplomas, having split into two classes as we were numerous. We joined the school with bright minds, standing between 1st-10th rank at our previous schools and went through with the same fervent at the CSAA. I led my class ranking 1st and earning a prize from the late Emperor at the completion of my 1st year.

There was something that was void in my personality though. I was led intuitively by drifting events rather than by achievable matters when I joined the school. It was an impulsive drive and not one of reasoning that prompted me to join the CSAA at those early years of my youth.

I remember Mr. Dimitry, the Egyptian Director of Menelik the II High School who called me to his office and advised me against joining the school at so an early age and while I was shining out ranking between 1st and 3rd in my class that I had to leave behind. He told me that I would go through colleges and universities easily and become an Engineer or a Scientist at one future date if I would stay at my high school.

Honestly, that time, nothing of the great words that the Director was striving to get across my head held water at all. All that was crossing in my fresh and unstinted mind was the pictures of the clean clothes and woolen suits and the beautiful shoes that were worn by some of the boarding commercial school students, as I was also a boarding student that shared the same premises of Menelik II Secondary School. I knew that the commercial school provided education that would lead to quick employment during the long winter vacations that would enable students procure things they wished to own. My foot, it was sheer folly viewed by latter day's mentality!

I had reasonably good clothing and shoes of my own already when I came to Addis; and my parents had equipped me with reasonable stuff good enough for high school student when I left my birth place Dessie and the famous W/ro Seheen School. And obviously, I was not a person that would claim coming from a poor background as I was raised with a middle-middle class parentage by the standard of the community into which I lived. One thing was missing though, I was blind for vision. I had no vision and had no clear objectives. What was more; I had no people around me who could help me find my true direction of life. My mother had departed me a few years earlier in life and my father was aging and confused because of the loss of his beloved wife, my mother. My brothers around me were my younger who had no better ideas.

It was that missing gap that hovered over me with the rest of my school life at the Commercial School of A.A. Having finished the first two years then I had earned the money that I desired to get when I was able to procure the gears I wanted. Most of our teachers used to watch our progress very closely. They used to follow us on our heels. Apparently, one bright morning I was flirting with a charming girl in the school compound thinking slightly that she might be my future spouse, when my French teach, Mr. Hovanessia suddenly passed by me. At his next class, which was in the afternoon, he asked me to conjugate the French infinitive "Aller" I did not bother much and went on the business. I said "J'alles,tu alles,il alle..."instead of "je vais,tu vas,il va..." it did not take him time to scorn me, and rightly so, when he said, "Tafesse(afar)-instead of (Tafesse(work)).. these days one of your legs is on the moon." Immediately, I realized, the fault was mine, not follow my studies as before after coming in contact with my new friend. Otherwise such a flurry situation could not have happened.

I started to rethink about the whole episode; I said to myself: 'I have to find myself again.' Obviously, my sudden acquaintance with the girl had already cost me dearly and that what had been started accidentally had to come to an end accidentally as well. It was a relief in a way because it wouldn't put me at logger head with my teachers any longer. That experience did not take me back to think again about spending my time with other girls. I came back to my senses to start thinking objectively for the rest of my life.

As to my colleagues, all were unique. When we graduated from the CCAA most of us with "honor diplomas" we all felt that we were well educated firmly and concretely. We looked up at our school not to be any lessee than a college; we spoke and wrote good English and fair French: although most of us had to go through colleges and universities later on in life.

After all, our school provided us with the best education the country could offer at the time. Amharic typewriting and Amharic grammar were only given by eminent Ethiopian teachers with the name and stature of Ato Taka Asfaw and Aleka Tsigur respectively. All the rest of our classes were given by prominent expatriate teachers like Haden George (a New Zealander), who later on joined the Haile Selassie I university College; G.Welld, and Mrs Jandy,(U,S nationals); Mr.Ross,(an Irish), Hovanessia, and, of course, our famous Indian Accounting teachers, the Abrahams and many more . Our director of the school, Dr.William Naguib should also deserve a special mention.

The 1956 graduation produced solid personalities that reached prominence in life from professorship and academician to prominent leadership positions. To mention only a few, Hagos Gebreyessus (sometimes known as Corbeau at school), Hagos Legesse. Tsegaye Gebremedihin (Honorable Laureate), Alemayhu Borga, Tefesse Akale (Diplomat) Bahate Meles, (Diplomat) who was wedded at the jubilee palace with a foster child of the late Emperor,Kebebew Ashagre, Kidane Alemayehu, Lissnetwork Aklilu, Mengistu Abayneh, Fiseha Habte, Kassaye Wondafrash, Yoftahe Dimetros (Diplomat) Deressa G.Mariam, Masresha G.Meskal (Insurer), Aklog G.Giorgis, and Yilma Kumalachew,(bible readers at our morning parade; Yilma kumlachew,besides having served as a teacher at the Commercial School later on, had been instrumental in procuring the premises of the

present Commercial Graduates Association. Others included Kiros G.Mariam, Zekaria Yessuf (an industrialis), Abdul Jawad and Abdual Menan,Abdurrahman,(An Artist), Bekele Zerihun and Bekele Zeru, and Amare Feleke. In the sports arena, names like Tadesse Eshete, Seleshi Aboye, Mekasha Yifru, Gizaw Tezera, Debalkew W. Micheal, and Kifle Gebeyehu fared high. All those young men were talented and brilliant. Most of m colleagues joined the famous commercial School Graduates Association, the forerunner of the present Association as early as their graduation. (At this juncture, I would like to express my sinker condolences to all the families for my diseased friends from the ranks of the above mentioned list).

As for me, I am the happiest person on earth, thanks to God the Almighty, having been married to my beautiful wife, Roman work Eshete, a latter year's graduate of the same school who has been very instrumental in the improvement of my personal life. I have a debt of deep gratitude to her. Today, together with my wife, we have brought unto this world four daughters who finished their high at Hiot Berhan (former American Mission) and the Nazareth Girls' Secondary School and graduated from different Universities. Besides, we are today, a grandfather and mother of lovely boys.

Before I wind up my reminiscences; I would like to pay attention, in the interest of my young readers, to the need of being directed by reasoning and not by impulses. SMART principles are the spices of life that the youth should follow to make a difference in one's role in the national development effort of our country.

Nonetheless, I feel proud to have gone through my CSAA where I had finished my most rudimentary business education, and congratulate it for having transformed itself into the present eminence of college life. I am also proud for having contributed what-ever little advice in my capacity as Management Consultant and Trainer in the process of its degree-awarding moves.

By the same token, I am also proud in congratulating the former Commercial School Graduates Association in changing its status to the Commercial Graduates Association widening its doors for other similar college graduates to join it freely. Hurrah!