



To Matron with Love

Mrs Griffs turns 100 on July 14



A ministering angel walked the corridors of that hallowed college by the river known to, and beloved by many Anthonians, specially the boarders when they did their stint in the junior Mansion. A matriach who nurtured those in her care with qualities of heart and mind - kindness, empathy, sympathy and love, her name shone like a beacon on a dark night to the boarders in the junior Mansion, none above the age of 13, who for three months each term were deprived of parental love and nurturing. In our hearts and minds that name is still held in high esteem and remembered with much affection. She is none other than Mrs. Inez Griffs, that doyen of matrons who celebrates her 100th birthday on the 14th of July. Mother Theresa once said that "the hands that heal are holier than the hands that pray, and I crave the readers indulgence if I may state my personal experience to illustrate how I was nurtured and "healed" by Mrs. Griffs through a very trying time when during those early ears (1955/56) I suffered from ear trouble resulting in sleepless nights due to agonising ear aches.

Often in the depths of a dark and lonely night, wracked in pain I would sob, lost and alone in the junior "Mansion", while my fellow boarders found sweet repose in slumberland. I was unable to win the favours

of Morpheus and would await the dawns golden light. One particular night was worse than the rest as the medication prescribed offered no relief, and in despair I cried into my pillow. However, I had not reckoned with a mothers kind heart and love in the person of Mrs. Griffs who was the matron in charge of the dormitory. From her room, with a mother's instinct she sensed that something was wrong, came upto my bed, and comforted me in my pain. There she sat, until the early hours of the morning, and the first thing she did at daybreak was to go to Father Thomas' room and tell him of my situation, since I had been having these earaches frequently. This was in 1956, and I was 12 years old. Fifty five years down the track, her acts of kindness are still fresh in my memory. Young minds are fertile and receptive to acts of kindness, and a little boy away from home and his parents does not forget such acts with the human element very much in evidence. I was sent to the sickroom where I spent three weeks and on several occasions she visited me inquiring from Mrs. Mulholland the matron in charge, about my welfare. I am certain that there are many other Anthonian boarders who were recipients of her acts of kindness.

Many Anthonians, specially the boarders would have experienced the kindness of this dear lady. As long as I can remember she was in charge of the Junior Mansion, Being a mother herself she empathised with those in her care, and we would often turn to her in time of need, confident that she would listen and counsel as only a mother can. I can vouch for this.



The Junior Mansion was not without its share of fun and excitement! When the durian season was on, battle lines were drawn between the junior Mansioners headed by Mrs.Griffs and some teachers and matrons of St.Anthony's Convent, Katugastota, our close neighbours. In fact the dormitory I was in stood at the edge of a little gulch which separated us from the staff quarters of the convent. In this gulch stood four tall durian trees. The fruits when ripe would fall with a resounding thud at night. It has been said that "the night has a thousand eyes". But when the durians fell there were many sharp ears in the



Junior Mansion ! Mrs.Griffs would hear the fruits fall and in the early hours of the morning would wake some of us to undertake a "search and retrieve" mission ! With the light of some torches we would sallie forth to collect the fruit. In the evening it

was "Durian Delights" outside her room where the troops would with her blessings feast on the flesh of this succulent fruit with relish. And the infernal odour of the durian held no terrors for us once the taste buds got to work ! However, there was opposition to contend with. On the opposite side, the matrons and some teachers of the convent would also lead the charge attempting to get to these holy grail of fruits with little success because inevitably the durian brigade of the Junior Mansion would beat them to it. Mrs.Griffs would despite a show of sternness, often turn a blind eye and a deaf ear to any of her charges caught breaking "Kurumbas" from the trees in the vicinity. The term "forbidden fruit" did not hold much currency in her book !

In time we left the Junior Mansion to go onto higher echelons of the boarding - the junior and senior "Villa" and ultimately the "Journeys End". But Mrs.Griffs remained in the Junior Mansion and was there until I left college. One could go on ad infinitum about the yeoman service rendered to St.Anthony's by Mrs.Griffs. Suffice to say that she was held in high esteem then, and to those of us who recall those memorable days in the boarding, particularly in the junior Mansion, the passage of time has only strengthened these sentiments and the ties that bind. Her name will evoke fond memories to Anthonians in the far corners of the globe, and we are privileged that she is with us today.

Anthonians in unison, wish Mrs.Griffs a very happy 100th birthday and may she continue to enjoy lifes blessings and all it has to offer. In one resounding voice we say "Happy Birthday Mrs.Griffs and may God bless you"

By Bernard VanCuylenburg