



St. Mary's Past Students' Association

NEWSLETTER ♦ OCTOBER 2006



Happy Retirement, Sr. Virginia!

Most St. Marian must have come across Sr. Virginia Wong during their days in St. Mary's, since Sr. Virginia has been in St. Mary's for over 20 years, serving in different capacities.

In the 1960s, Sr. Virginia spent her young novitiate days in St. Mary's Convent. In the early 1970s, she was a training teacher in the primary school. She began her formal teaching career in 1975, teaching Religious Knowledge, History & Geography. Sr. left St. Mary's in 1984 as she was assigned to take up other tasks in the Canossian Order, but she maintained close contact with St. Mary's, and was always present at concerts and speech days etc.



Greetings from Sr. Virginia

In 1999, Sr. Virginia returned to St. Mary's to be the principal of the primary school. In the 7 years of her tenure, Sr. saw through the construction of the Bakhita Building, adoption of whole-day schooling, and introduction of new measures to enhance the quality of teaching and learning in St. Mary's.

As part of school management, Sr. has always been firm and demanding. Yet, at the same time, she is also well-known for her cheerfulness and receptiveness. She is always a friend, ready to listen and accept us as who we are.

Thank you so much, Sr. Virginia. May Our Lady continue to bless you as you begin your post-retirement life!

Dear Past St. Marians,

You probably have heard about my retirement. Though I am now free from the routine work as a headmistress, I am still taking up great responsibility in several schools. We, religious sisters, cannot actually retire, we must continue to work and pray for God's Kingdom, and this is indeed our honour and privilege.

Since much of my time has been spent in St. Mary's, naturally the sense of belonging I have for the secondary and primary schools is greater, and my relationship with the students is closer. As my time now is less binding, I really wish to make myself more available to you as your friend with whom you may come to chat and to share your life. I am still residing at St. Mary's Convent, so do drop in when you wish to do so.

*Keeping you close in prayer,
Sr. Virginia*



The PSA Has a New Name

As reflected in the new Constitution, the name of the PSA has changed from "St. Mary's Canossian College Past Students' Association" to "St. Mary's Past Students' Association". The objective is to include both St. Mary's Canossian College (SMCC) and St. Mary's Canossian School (SMCS), thereby enabling the PSA to support both schools in policy formulation and management work in accordance with the requirements of the Education Ordinance. The PSA is now represented on the School Policy Committees of both SMCC and SMCS, and has been participating in many other projects and tasks undertaken by either school. The two principals are patrons of the PSA, and teacher liaison officers from both schools also attend PSA meetings to facilitate communication and cooperation.

PSA Annual Report: April 05 - March 06

During the past year, the PSA focused on the following areas of work:

- With the **Membership Drive** in 2005, our membership rose from 3390 to 4393. 215 of the new members were F.5 graduates, and the other 788 were mostly graduates of the 70s & 80s.
- We organized the **105th Anniversary Dinner** on 26 Nov 2005, with over 750 past St Marians, teachers and sisters participating.
- The **Mentorship Program** made another successful year, with 44 mentors matched against 96 mentees. The official launch of the program was held on 8 Oct 2005.
- We published two 8-page **Newsletters** to inform St Marians of the latest PSA news, school news, alumnae news and class news etc.
- SMCC & SMCS have established **School Policy Committees** to oversee school policies & programs. The committees comprise school management and representatives of teachers, parents & alumnae. We revised the **PSA Constitution** to enable it to cover both SMCC & SMCS, and we nominated 2 excos to the SMCC School Policy Committee and 1 exco to the SMCS School Policy Committee.
- The **PSA Website** was constantly enhanced and updated, serving as the connecting platform between our Alma Mater and past St. Marians. A PSA Shop is now available.
- We produced two **Limited Edition Mementos** - a miniature of the Main Building and a photo album.
- We took part in the **Revamp of SMCC's Editorial Structure**. 3 excos now serve as Alumnae Advisers on the SMCC Editorial Board.
- 2 excos were advisers in establishing **SMCC's History Archive & SMCS's History Lane**.
- Two excos sat on the **St Mary's Development Fund** Management Committee. We also helped raise HK\$35,400 for the Fund.
- We continued to award the **PSA Scholarship for Outstanding Performance and Active Promotion in Drama & Speech**. Last year, the scholarship went to Joyce Wong of F. 4B.
- We maintained **close liaison** with SHCC Alumni Association, SFCC Past Students Association, SMCC PSA (Toronto) and the Canossian Association in Vancouver. We also established informal liaison with alumnae groups, including Marian in Action, the Alumnae Orchestra and the Alumnae Chinese Orchestra.

In 2006-07, we will consolidate our efforts and continue our work on various fronts. Our focus is naturally past St Marians. We will continue to reconnect with St Marians through contacts, visits, the PSA website, newsletters & social activities. Another focus is our Alma Mater. We will work closely with SMCC & SMCS on all matters that will benefit the schools, the teachers and the students.

Membership Data

Thanks to the tireless effort of our Membership Secretary, we now have an active member database of **4,618** alumnae St. Marians, spanning across 10 countries. Among them, **2,357** are contactable via email and the numbers keep growing!

Please note that the contact information in our membership database may be shared with the school, or released to reunion organizers upon special request. If you do not want your information to be shared, please inform our Membership Secretary at smccpsa@gmail.com.

Graduating Year (F.5)	No. of Members
1930-39	2
1940-49	5
1950-59	127
1960-69	348
1970-79	480
1980-89	518
1990-99	1,629
2000-present	1,509
Total	4,618

Mentorship Program - Career Development & Professional Sharing

A careers development seminar and professional sharing session was held on 28th March 2006 for F.6 Students. Ms Jasbir Pannu gave a presentation on "Assessment Processes among Employers" and Ms Eva Chan advised students on "How to Prepare Yourself from Now on."

For assessment processes, the focus was on skill-sets and core competencies required in various industries, with particular focus on banking and finance. Tips on preparing for interviews were also discussed. It was fascinating for the students to note that choosing a specific discipline in the university does not confine one to a narrow career - they still have options to grow and learn and excel in various types of jobs. Students realized that what was important at this stage is to develop a broader perspective on life and choose disciplines that they have interest in. When preparing themselves for university, students are advised to have a positive attitude, to yearn for continual learning, and to have confidence in their own ability. They are encouraged to participate in more activities and contribute to society, such as taking part in voluntary work.

The seminar was well-received as very exclusive information was provided. Students found the session especially useful when planning their future.

Past students who would like to join our team of mentors can contact our Mentorship Programme Coordinator Ms Jasbir Pannu at jasbirpan@hotmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Mentorship Day

Date : 21 October, 2006 (Sat)

Venue: School Hall

Time : 2:30-4:30pm

Following the success of the program last year, the mentors and mentees for the new school year will meet for the first time. There will be sharing of past experiences and group discussions. All alumnae mentors are invited to join.

PSA Annual Dinner

Date: 17 March, 2007 (Sat)

Venue: World Trade Centre Club,
Causeway Bay

More information on the Annual Dinner will be available later in the year. Please mark your diaries and refer to our website for further updates.

Alumnae Day - BBQ

Date : 21 October, 2006 (Sat)

Enrolment deadline extended to 16 October, 2006 (Mon)

Venue: School Campus

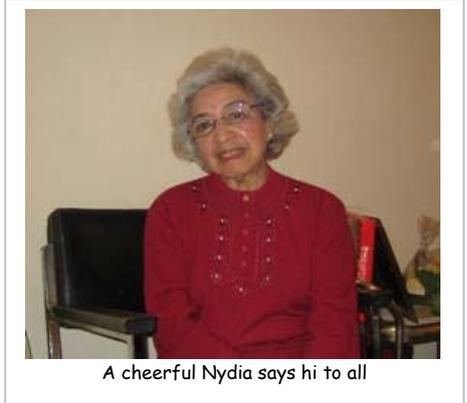
Time : 5:00-9:00pm

Ticket Price: HK\$100 (Children under 6 free-of-charge)

1. Each BBQ pit is good for 10 people. Members are encouraged to form their own group and enrol under one name.
2. Enrolment is on a 1st-come-1st-served basis. A confirmation will be sent to you on or before 18 October 2006.
3. All net proceeds from this event will be donated to the "St. Mary's Canossian College Development Fund".
4. Only very few parking spaces are available on the primary playground after 4:30pm on a 1st-come-1st-served basis.
5. In case of rain or typhoon signal No.3 or above, the event will be cancelled - final notice by 12:00 noon on website. Further plans will be notified within 2 weeks.
6. For enquiries, please email bbq@smccpsa.org, or call Mrs Karen Lui of the school office on 2724 2771.
7. Due to the large number of participants, we regret that guest parking will not be available on campus.
8. Seats are limited, enrol now by completing the Reply Form at the end of this newsletter accordingly.

Mrs. Nydia Osmund Peirera (Class of 1935)

Nydia Osmund Peirera is by far the most senior St. Marian that we have located. Nydia was born in 1920, entered St. Mary's in 1924 and graduated in 1935. Oh Yes! She started school at 4. [In the 1920s, the rules on the age for schooling were far less stringent than they are today.] As she was only 15 when she left school, Mother Louise, the principal then, offered her a teaching job in St. Mary's. So the teenage Nydia began to teach young Chinese girls English until 1938. She then worked in a British firm for 10 years before she joined the Judiciary as a court reporter. She retired in 1980.



Nydia was thrilled when she saw the school's photo album "Under the Banner" and the miniature of the Main Building. "They bring back so much sweet memories of the old days. When I was small, we used to have classes at the Chatham Road Building. But I do remember having sports lessons at the gymnasium (i.e. the current chapel)." And when she saw the photos of the current gymnasium, she exclaimed with excitement, "I recognize the wooden bars. We did all sorts of exercises on the bars!" Sure, Nydia. They are the same old bars, but none of us have ever used them.

Nydia was closely connected to St. Mary's even after she had left school. In 1949, she started the Legion of Mary in Hong Kong. She chose St. Mary's to be the place for establishing the first English-speaking praesidium, Regina Mundi, which was not only the first praesidium in a school, but also the first praesidium in Kowloon. Today, the Legion is still one of the most important lay organizations in the Catholic Diocese.

Notwithstanding her being 86 years old, Nydia still leads an active life, attending daily mass, meeting legionary friends, joining activities of the Portuguese community, etc etc. Just two months ago, she went on a 3-week tour visiting family members and friends in the UK!

Nydia's younger sister, Dr. Irene Osmund Ruis, is also a St. Marian. Irene was one of the few female medical graduates of HKU in the 1950s. She is still practising medicine at the Canossa Hospital.

Is it not a blessing of God that the Osmund sisters, trained in St. Mary's over 70 years ago, are still serving God and other people in their different capacities?



Opt to receive soft copies of the PSA Newsletter?

To help save paper and administrative costs, we encourage members with email access to opt for receiving electronic versions of the PSA newsletter instead. Please email the Membership Secretary at smccpsa@gmail.com if you'd like to help us out and opt not to receive the mailed copy.



Teachers' News - Mrs. Simmy Wong

For those non-Biology students who could only admire Mrs. Wong from afar, or who joined St. Mary's after 1991 - Mrs. Wong was a Biology teacher and Student Council Adviser in St. Mary's before she retired 15 years ago in 1991.

Surely Mrs. Wong well deserves her relaxed life now, after teaching St. Mary's for 30 years from 1961-1991. Teaching in St. Mary's was her first job after graduating from university with a Biology major. "It was a rare thing in those days for science graduates to go and work in government administration unless maybe in the Agricultural and Fisheries Department! Since I liked teaching, I decided to become a teacher."



A beaming Mrs. Wong in 2006



Elegance in the 60's

As a science teacher, Mrs. Wong takes pride in the reasoning and quick thinking this discipline can train students for. At the same time Mrs. Wong also speaks very highly of the intellectual stimulation that Arts subjects can provide. "Literature and history call a lot on an individual's input. They provide room for the expression of ideas and the training on analytical skills." Though retired, Mrs. Wong still pays attention to the development in the education arena. "Nowadays it's popular for students to go for science subjects, aiming to get 10As. Well, we didn't encourage that, and our F.5 students used to take a total of eight subjects for their School Certificate at that time. We believe if they can excel in all eight subjects, that's already very outstanding!"

One could easily feel the degree of care that Mrs. Wong gave to her students by simply talking to her. The care doesn't only focus on academic subjects but also on the overall development of the students. That's why Mrs. Wong became one of the pioneers in establishing our Student Council in the mid-70's, and she had been a Student Council adviser since then. "It's the opportunity for students to build leadership, to champion decisions and to explore their talents. The girls were so proud of themselves when they saw their missions accomplished. This is something very different from what basic teaching can give," she remarked.



Mrs. Wong with fellow teachers Mrs. Shirley Yip & Mrs. Ruby Ma in the early 80's

Mrs. Wong has two daughters, and each of them has three children, so Mrs. Wong is a grandma of six - three boys and three girls. The eldest is now 15 and a half, and the youngest is four. After retirement, the energetic Mrs. Wong takes care of her mother-in-law, teaches her grandchildren homework, plays with them in the park, and still has the time to enjoy her hobbies such as pottery, Ikebana, knitting, swimming, tai-chi, yoga, line dance, just to name a few! "Tips on staying young? I would say be cheerful, keep learning, and stay busy!" The persistence and hardworking attitude that Mrs. Wong embraces is also the word of wisdom that she wishes to share with all past and present St. Marians. "Setting objectives for oneself and to work hard towards them has always been the key to success, whether it is for study or for life," she said.

For those who miss seeing Mrs. Wong - the good news is that we can often spot Mrs. Wong joining the school's functions. Next time when you see her, remember to ask her how to stay young, pretty AND smart!

School News

- In the HKCEE this year, 4 of our girls scored Grade A in all the 9 subjects that they took. For English Language, 30% of our girls scored Grade A, and another 48% got Grades B & C.
- In the A-Level Exams this year, 79% of our girls scored Grades A to C in Use of English.
- Of the 81 F. 7 graduates this year, 31 were admitted to the University of HK, 21 to the Chinese University, 8 to the University of Science & Technology, 7 to Poly University, 8 to Baptist University and 1 to Lingnan University. The others went to study abroad.
- 8 students and 3 teachers from the Shanghai No. 3 Girls' High School visited SMCC from 26-30 April. They stayed at homes of St. Marians, participated in our lessons, workshops and debates, and watched our drama production "Nefertiti".
- 47 St. Marians and 4 teachers went on a study tour in the UK from 20 July to 10 August. They stayed at 22 British host families, attended workshops on drama, language, music & dancing etc, visited museums and joined the family functions of their host families.
- Mr. Geoff Oliver, who taught English and Drama, has retired this summer. Mr. Oliver has been in St. Mary's for 27 years, from 1979 to 2006.

School Drama - Nefertiti

Our school drama this year was titled "Nefertiti". It is a musical play specially written for the school by our drama teacher, Mr. Geoff Oliver, and deals with the life of one of the world's most beautiful women, Queen Nefertiti, and her husband, the Egyptian pharaoh, Akhenaten, who reigned from 1350 - 1334 B.C.

Nefertiti & Akhenaten introduced revolutionary ideas concerning religion and art into ancient Egypt. The play had songs and dances composed by St. Marians and gave fascinating insights into the lives of this loving couple and their family.



*Akhenaten and Nefertiti
singing to the Aten*



Mr. Oliver & cast joining hands at close of curtain

Nefertiti was shown for a total of 6 evenings in April, and all such shows were well received. A music CD and various souvenirs had been specially produced for the drama - including key chains, hair ornaments. These were all hot items that virtually got sold out every night of the show!

The play was reported in a number of newspapers, with interviews for our cast, production team as well as Mr. Oliver, who would be retiring and returning home to the UK. Rest assured however that Mr. Oliver will keep in touch with us, and St. Mary's will continue with her tradition in drama!

External School Review for SMCC



St. Mary's had undergone the External School Review in April and May 2006. The Review Report highly commended the school management, teachers and students.

The following are excerpts from the Review Report:

- "... an excellent school, whose culture is characterized by a strong sense of tradition, identity and community..."
- "...Teachers, students past and present and parents form a close knit and mutually well informed community.... The alumnae have a strong sense of belonging and commitment to the school."
- "...The school has a clear objective to develop students to their full potential in a caring and harmonious environment...One particularly praiseworthy activity is the annual school drama performance, which is very successful in developing students' capacities in music, aesthetic work, costume design and performance art."
- "The Principal is leading the school with skill and sensitivity....she is ably supported in this by two Vice-principals who share with her a common devotion to the school and complement each other's experience and expertise."
- "...teachers feel a real sense of belonging to the school. Many express strong satisfaction with the school and its sense of community.... Teachers are very professional in their attitude and demonstrate a high level of subject expertise..... Teacher-student relationships are very good and teachers respect students' opinions..."
- "Students are well mannered, amiable, self-disciplined and self-assured. They generally have high self-esteem and are well behaved both in and out of school... Students' proficiency in English, their communication and presentation skills are very good... They are willing to take on responsibility and serve others, such as their fellow students and the needy in the community... Student leaders are responsible and dedicated.... Strong organizational ability and leadership skills are demonstrated when independently organizing activities and providing services in and out of school..."



Marian in Action - Fulfill your Compassion

Founded in 2004, Marian in Action is an alumnae charity group which aims to reward our Alma Mater by dedicating ourselves to serving the community. Enlightened by the school motto, we aspire to follow the altruistic spirit of Magdalen our Foundress, Mary our Mother and Jesus through services.

We offer service opportunities to current St. Marians. Past students provide advice and guide current students to develop their potential. Training workshops are provided. Our services include visiting elderly homes and teaching new migrant children. We firmly believe that through sharing of experiences and working with girls from across generations, we will grow together. Despite the very diverse background, we share the same value - to contribute to society, and a common identity - St. Marians.



Come and join our force - brighten others' lives while enriching our own. Send your contact information to marian_in_action@yahoo.com.hk. May we spread the spirit of St. Mary's through actions!

Class Reunion News

Class of 1961



After 45 years of absence of contact, seven F.5 graduates of 1961 reconnected and had their first reunion in August 2006 in Colorado, USA. They included Loretta Woo, Katherine Woo, Saddle King, Carina Lee, Shirley Kwok, Myrtle Leung & Theresa Shum. The 2007 reunion will take place in Toronto, Canada. All F.5 graduates of 1961 who wish to reconnect, please email Theresa Shum (Cheung) at tcheungsss@yahoo.com.

Class of 1964



The Class of 64 celebrated its 40th anniversary in Oct 2005. Over 30 girls joined the event. The reunion kicked off on the 27th with a school visit, lunch at the Shatin Jockey Club and a visit to Stanley. The reunion dinner was held at the Butterfield's Club on the 29th. Then on the 31st, some girls went on a tour to Shanghai. The contact point for the Class is Linda Tong and her email is stimbarn@yahoo.com.

Class of 1976



The reunion of the Class of 1976 was divided into 3 parts. First, over 10 girls visited the school campus on 8th July, 2006. Then, 34 girls attended the reunion dinner on the same evening, and they were joined by 7 teachers. Finally, 8 girls and families went on a trip to Guilin. Those who would like to reconnect please contact anissawongsy@hotmail.com.

Organizing a reunion for your class? Let our Membership Secretary know and we can include your news on the newsletter and the website! Email to smccpsa@gmail.com.

St. Mary's PSA 2006 Alumnae Day BBQ Enrolment Reply Form

Enrolment deadline extended to 16 October, 2006 (Mon)

Name : _____
Tel : _____
Email : _____

PSA membership no. : _____
Fax : _____

- I/We will attend the Alumnae Day BBQ. I'm attaching payment for:
[] person(s) x HK\$100 = HK\$ []

Please prepare a crossed cheque made payable to "St. Mary's Past Students' Association".

- I will not attend the Alumnae Day BBQ but would like to make a donation of HK\$ [] to support the St. Mary's Canossian College Development Fund.

Please prepare a crossed cheque made payable to "St. Mary's Canossian College". Donations over HK\$100 are tax deductible. Please provide contact information if you require a receipt.

Kindly return this reply slip and your cheque(s) to:
St. Mary's Past Students' Association, c/o 162 Austin Road, Kowloon.
Please mark "Alumnae Day 2006" on envelope. Thank you.