

My recollections of Govt Indian High School Nairobi.

Having completed my Junior School Certificate in Kisumu in December 1942 I joined Government Indian High School in Nairobi in January 1943 my class consisted of about thirty students. Our class teacher was Mr. Syed Mahmud Ullah Shah. He was also our English teacher. Mr. Shah was a thorough gentleman, extremely polite, never shouted or chastised any student. We held him in very high regard.

The main event of my time was the strike in the school consequent to an incident in the Arts Class in 1944. The Arts room was a large room and the teacher had hung students' art work on the wall. They were basically pencil drawings of scenes or portraits of famous people. One of the portrait was that of Pundit Nehru (later the first Prime Minister of India at Independence in 1947) who then was in a jail in India because of his political agitation in support of Indian independence.

The Principal of the School Mr. David Somen nicknamed Sumoni (Kiswahili for fifty cents coin) one day came into the Arts Class and saw the portrait of Pundit Nehru on the wall. He ordered the class teacher, Mr. Arya Muni Verma, to take the picture down. The teacher refused saying it was a portrait by a student and was not a political display. Anyway Mr. Somen pulled the picture off the wall and sent the teacher home. The news spread like wild fire and next day the students gathered outside the school and refused to go inside. I recall speeches by some students one was Maqbool and the other Brahm Aggarwal. As a consequence, everyone started to shout slogans and abuses. The crowd dispersed and as they came out on the road to Ngara some boys went out of control and created a disturbance.

The school, was closed and remained closed for a number of days. The department instituted an inquiry consequent to which when the school reopened after a couple of weeks, many students were expelled. Mr. Somen was moved to the Education Dept Headquarters. The new Principal was Mr. McKay, a very thorough gentleman. He was not curt like his predecessor. Mr. McKay introduced many reforms including appointment's of Class Prefects. There were eight prefects. Badru (Jimmy) Verjee and I were two from our class (second year).

Our Boy Scout Troop called 3rd Nairobi Troop (see photo posted in the Group Photo section) was very inactive. It was there only in name. A number of us, Baldev Moolraj, Harbans Singh, Ram Moorti Maini, Sewa Singh and I, reorganized and resuscitated the troop. I was appointed the Troop Leader. Our Scout Master was an outsider by the name of Mr. Mohamed Yusuf. The Troop became so popular that we stopped accepting new members. We used to go camping; on one occasion we toured Kisumu and cities in Uganda, staging dramas in each town or city we visited to entertain our hosts. We learnt how to administer First Aid to the Injured, in the event we were expected to go on duty, during an air raid; it being the World War 2 time.

My stay in school was very enjoyable and memorable. I finished school in December of 1944 and went to India in April 1945 for further studies.

***Dr. Brij Sood
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Dr. Brijendra K. Sood of Calgary, Alberta, was honored by the Governor General of Canada, Adrienne Clarkson, at a ceremony October 24, 2003, in Ottawa as a member of the Order of Canada. The Order "....recognizes people who have made a difference....our country's highest honor for lifetime achievement." The citation read, "A dedicated physician, Brijendra Sood has promoted multicultural awareness by recognizing and valuing the strengths of Canada's rich cultural mosaic. Since arriving in Canada in 1964, he has worked to develop and strengthen the social and cultural fabric of Calgary's East Indian community. He has played leadership roles in the city's India-Canada Association, Multicultural Centre, Hindu Society and Temple, and has received numerous honors for his ethno-cultural contributions, including Outstanding Physician of the Year 2000 from the Calgary Medical Society