

Abroad Thoughts From Home

By Kaberi Dasgupta

"A blue whale can destroy a ship," declared our instructor in adaptation.

"How?" one of us ventured to ask.

"With its tail," she replied with conviction.

After class, we referred to **Organic Evolution**, the book that she was accustomed to regurgitating. The actual fact? A blue whale can outdistance a destroyer. Small problem in memorization.

From August 1985 to August 1986, I was in Calcutta, India. One of the places where I replenished my store of anecdotes and experiences was Lady Brabourne College, one of the top seven colleges in Calcutta.

"Ma!"
"What is it, dear? A six-year-old should be asleep by midnight!"

"I know, but Ma, is there a single or double s in scissors?"

A neurotic protegee? No, probably a normal, middle-class child preparing for his elementary school entrance examinations. (I wonder how the **Journal** would feel about that.) Anxious to give their children every possible advantage in this insanely competitive city, parents dream of sending their children to one of the private schools that guarantee success. If the parents are sufficiently wealthy, the children are able to pass the examinations, and the parents are able to pass the interviews (What do you do for a living? How much do make per year?), and admission is no problem. Of course, a little influence helps.

If, however, one of the above requirements is not fulfilled, a less-renowned private school or a government school is resorted to. There, the children must struggle in the hopes of being accepted at a reputable college on the basis of academic merit. Some children, however, need not go through such exertions. Instead, they have to work, to satisfy needs like eating.

Having been supplied with such information, I looked forward to my period of college-Calcutta-style with interest, and perhaps a little apprehension. A six-day school week. Classes from ten o'clock to half past four, punctuated by a fifteen-minute lunch break. Surely the discipline would be overwhelming the avenues of knowledge boundless?

"Who wants to go to the circus?"

This was the preoccupying question after the first zoology quiz. The girls, it appeared, were ushering in a process of metamorphosis: they wanted to make some qualitative differences between school and college. Until now, the only major changes for them had been not having to wear uniforms, managing to experiment in the chemistry lab without any equipment, and having classes without teachers. The teachers were rather unconcerned about attending classes, and when they did attend it was generally only to dictate notes from fossilized notebooks or, on a good day, to commit a blunder like the one given in the opening incident. They were not worried.

They knew that their students would do well on the provincial university examinations; after all, had they not extracted the best from the multitude of students in Calcutta?

The girls (this was a girls' college, though the situation in co-educational and boys' colleges was much the same) were determined to enjoy the pleasures of life though they knew that they would pay for it later. After all, it had been almost four weeks since the month-and-a-half Durga Puja vacation. (Durga Puja is the Hindu counterpart of Christmas.) The two-week Christmas vacation was still a number of days away. One could not be expected to survive on Sundays and the few Muslim holidays in the interim.

Now, the question was how to go to the circus without getting into trouble. (Even mature college students do not relish the prospect of being scolded.) A botany practical class was the major obstacle. As for the other classes, well, the zoology department would understand; after all, they had made us go through the ordeal of a test.

The strategy evolved was this: two students would go to class. The teacher would decide that there were enough students to hold a class. If questions were later asked, the rest of the students could say that they had been delayed, and when they ultimately did arrive, they found that the class had been cancelled.

Fortunately, consciences remained unblemished: the two appointed students returned to

report that the teacher seemed to have disappeared; no one in botany department had seen her all day. Off we went to the circus.

The performance was disappointing. The acrobats seemed to have lost their coordination and the lions and tigers, the performers that the future zoologists had excitedly been awaiting, merely walked around for thirty seconds, occasionally condescending to go through the hoops. At any rate, a class had been missed; that fact seemed to console the majority despite the poor quality of the show.

Nothing was said about our absence that time, though on future occasions, the instructors thought it appropriate to appear at least mildly disgruntled. How beautifully people understand people.

New Paving Projects on Campus

Students may have wondered when the new paving projects around the university will be completed. There is a new, wider road being built to Belvedere Ave. and a new parking lot with a 250 car capacity nearly finished behind Steele building. Both projects are meant to alleviate the new traffic flow that the Atlantic Veterinary College will bring to UPEL.

The work is being done by Curran & Briggs Construction and project engineer Cliff Campbell says the new Belvedere access road should be

completed approximately by October 10th. The new parking lot is awaiting delivery of lighting poles and for reasons of safety cannot be open until they are installed. Unfortunately, the lights are not expected to arrive until early in 1987. Students who use this new parking lot are warned that until it is opened, they do so at their own risk.

It was decided to close the old road to Belvedere Ave., which currently runs past Blanchard Hall, because traffic entering the university

from Belvedere in the mornings has been stacking up to the University Ave. intersection. Opening a wider road a little further down Belvedere will increase stacking space and, hopefully, traffic flow as well.

The new parking lot will provide a more central parking area on campus, making it a little shorter walk to class than from either the infamous Lot A between Belvedere Ave. and the Robertson Library, or the student parking lot located behind the Barn.

SENIOR CLASS REPORT

This is just a reminder to all Seniors that our car wash is scheduled for this Saturday, September 27, 1986 at Burger King from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm. All those who signed up for the event are asked to please report at the respective times and any another are welcome to come along. Just a note in case of rain, the event will obviously be cancelled.

Lottery tickets can be picked up on Wednesday, September 24 by contacting any executive member in the Library Lounge. Tickets go on sale Wednesday, September 24 and prizes will be drawn on October 9th at the Senior Class Pub.

Alf, Barb, Tony & Leanne

JACK SCORPIO

By BRIAN LINKLETER

