

Mr PN Mathu



(Teacher par excellence, from 1960-1979, of Geography, Economics and Commerce and Housemaster of Sutlej House,)

Life Sketch of Mr. Prem Nath Mathu

MA (Economics), MA(Geography), BT(Mysore), MRST(London)

Mr. Mathu was born in the paradise on Earth, the state of J&K. He studied in the Biscoe School in Srinagar which was started in 1880. His father retired as Accountant from Secretariat Srinagar.

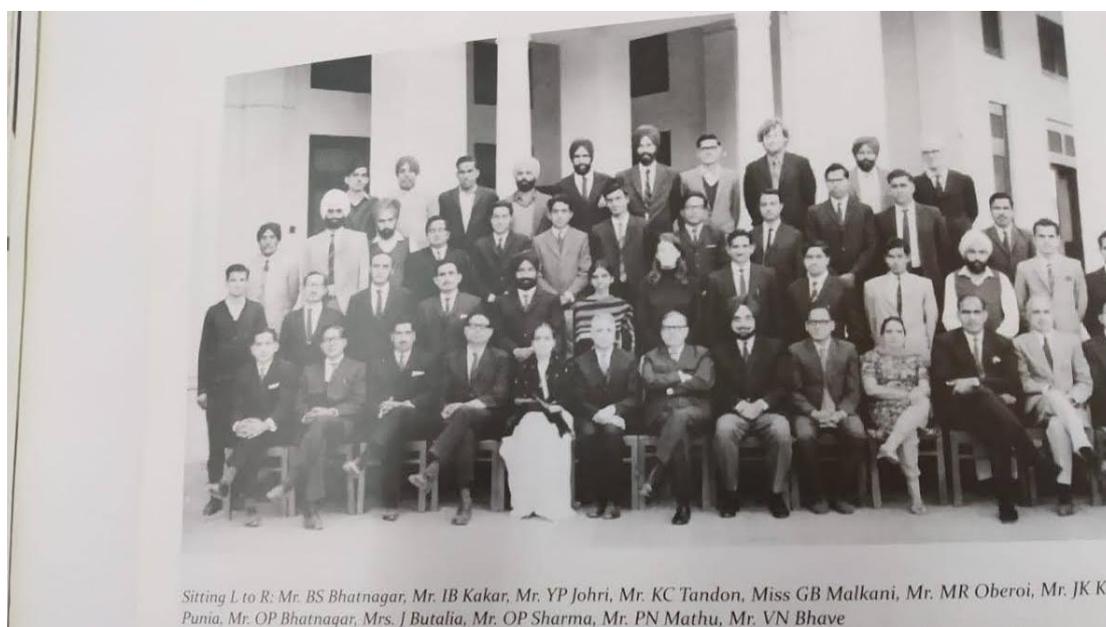
He did his Bachelor of Arts from Lahore University. Besides English, History, Geography he had also taken Persian and Arabic in his graduation. For BT (now called B.Ed.) he travelled all the way to Mysore University as during those days it was one of the best Teaching Education institute in India.

On his return he was appointed as trained graduate teacher in J&K Govt. He was posted to

“Dannah” which is now in POK. Later to “Keran” (border between India and POK) it was an intermediate school so he was appointed as a Principal at a very young age. Then posted to “Sopore”. But when the Kabalis came, they had to flee from there. Later went to Shalimar Multipurpose High school which later became Kashmir Agricultural University in 1982.

In 1953 he joined Col Brown Cambridge School, Dehra Dun as a House master. Established in 1926, It is one of the oldest and during that time one of the best boarding schools in India. While in Col Browns School he used to attend night classes and did MA in Geography and MA in Economics from Agra University and achieved first class. His students achieved high grades in his subjects in their Senior Cambridge exams.

In 1961 September MR PN Mathu joined Punjab Public School Nabha as House master of Sutlej House. He taught geography to Senior Cambridge/ISC students and Economics and Civics to Higher Secondary students. Students used to be amazed for his skill of drawing the world map on the blackboard without looking at it, instead looking at the class.



*Sitting L to R: Mr. BS Bhatnagar, Mr. IB Kakar, Mr. YP Johri, Mr. KC Tandon, Miss GB Malkani, Mr. MR Oberoi, Mr. JK Ka
Punia, Mr. OP Bhatnagar, Mrs. J Butalia, Mr. OP Sharma, Mr. PN Mathu, Mr. VN Bhawe*

School Staff in early 1960s

Mr Mathu was truly dedicated to whatever he was involved in. He had the ability to support student learning and aide students in reaching their greatest potential. He was a very humble person, only thing he was proud of was the performance of his students in the Board exams. He was happy and content as a teacher. For Mr. Mathu his achievement / success in life was when he saw his students doing well professionally. He took it as his personal achievement. In all the schools and B.Ed. college he taught he earned a very good name as a sincere and devoted teacher. He was very popular with students and his colleagues.

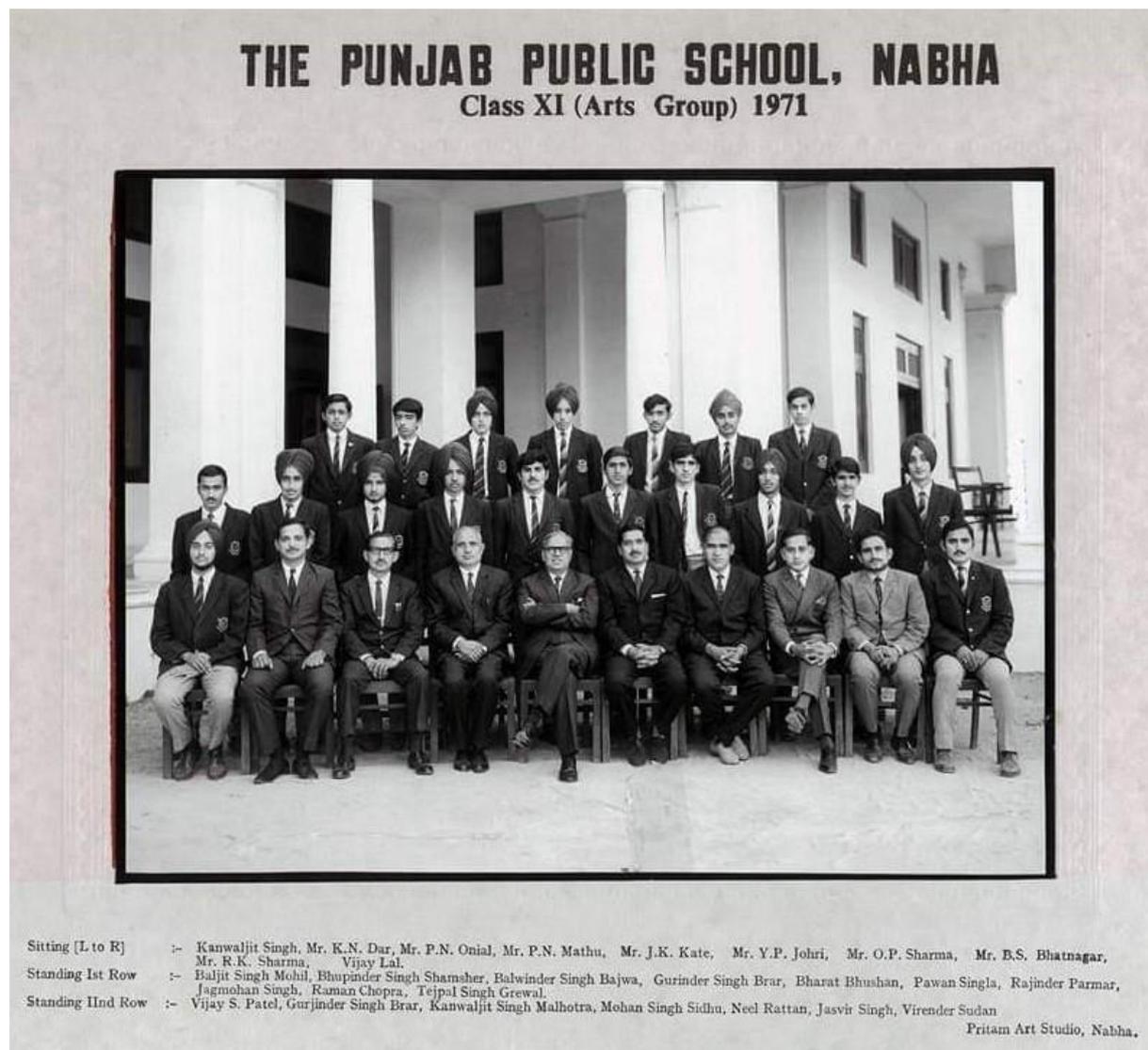
He left PPS in 1980 as he wanted to settle in Jammu. In Jammu he joined Model Institute of Education and Research, teaching B.Ed. students up to 1989.

A passionate geography teacher Mr. Mathu loved his travels and enjoyed every bit of it. He visited Dubai, Sharjah, Germany, France, Denmark, Sweden, UK, Canada, United States, New Zealand.

While in London his 15-year-old granddaughter Sangeeta Matu observed that monuments, names of kings, queens were very familiar to him, he seemed so much at ease at British history of that period, she remarked “he was walking through history as they walked the banks of The Thames.”

“Teachers are our greatest public servants; they spend their lives educating our young people and shaping our nation for tomorrow”. By Solomon Ortiz

---by his eldest son Mr BL Matu



(Excerpts from The Eagle issue, Volume 19, October 2004 passing away of the great teacher, PN Mathu sir.)

ANOTHER GIANT PASSES AWAY

The PPS in the 60s was among the top seven schools of India. It was a new school in comparison to others in its league. The reason for it rising to such heights in such a short time

lay in the able leadership provided by Mr JK Kate. The selflessness with which he worked got him full backing of the Board. Above all it was the team work that existed in the PPS teaching staff during this period. They were hard working, multifaceted and dedicated bunch. They laid such strong foundations for the PPS that despite many upheavals in its short history the school has managed to survive with much of its reputation. The teachers of the founding years over a period of time became giants in the field of teaching and handling children. Most of them went on to head famous schools later in their lives.

I don't want to name them all here, but Mr Prem Nath Mathu (Ex Geography, Economics and Commerce) was among them and it was a sad occasion when he passed away recently in Delhi. and joined the growing list of those giants who have left this world.

We carry below some excerpts from personal letters written by his daughter, Old Nabhaite Basanti Sathu (Mathu) R73,1967) and son JL Matu and a tribute by madam Mrs KP Tandon in this issue. Also sharing two anecdotes by his student and house boy Wg.Cmdr. Bikramdev Singh (S-84,1969))

-----Dr Jashanjot(S-52,1967)

Letter from Basanti his daughter and Old Nabhaite

I apologise for replying so late but was extremely busy with my work. I really appreciate your idea of placing a write up in the PPS school magazine. Here is a brief about the time after PPS. Please feel free to edit as required for the magazine.

After my father left PPS around 1980 he went to Jammu and settled there. He loved teaching and wasn't going to give it up so soon, he got a job as a senior lecturer in a Model Institute of Education and Research, teaching B.Ed. students up to 1989.

After my mother passed away in 1989, my brothers, eldest in Delhi Mr B L Matu, and younger in Denmark, Mr J.L.Matu insisted that as he would feel very lonely by himself therefore live with them. So, my father moved to Delhi. During those days I too was based at Delhi.

You may recall Mr. YP Bhardwaj (he taught us history), while he was the principal of Army Public School, Dhaulakuan, Delhi he visited my father whom he held in great respect. At this meeting he offered him a job in his school and insisted that his school would be honoured if he taught there. My father was very passionate about teaching, and he did not need much persuasion to accept. In fact, we told him that he needed the much-deserved relaxation now, but he insisted that he loved to be with children, we didn't want to displease him.

He was keeping in good health and was very happy. He worked for about an year and then my brother wanted him to go to Denmark. In the summer of 1990, he went to Denmark and thereafter every year he spent 2 seasons in Delhi and 2 seasons in Denmark (March/April leave for Denmark and in Sep/Oct return to Delhi). He followed a regular disciplined routine, going for regular walks, reading, giving a helping hand which kept him physically and mentally in good health. While in Denmark, he used to visit the local library every day, read and had made some friends of his own age group. While in Delhi & Denmark, he used to

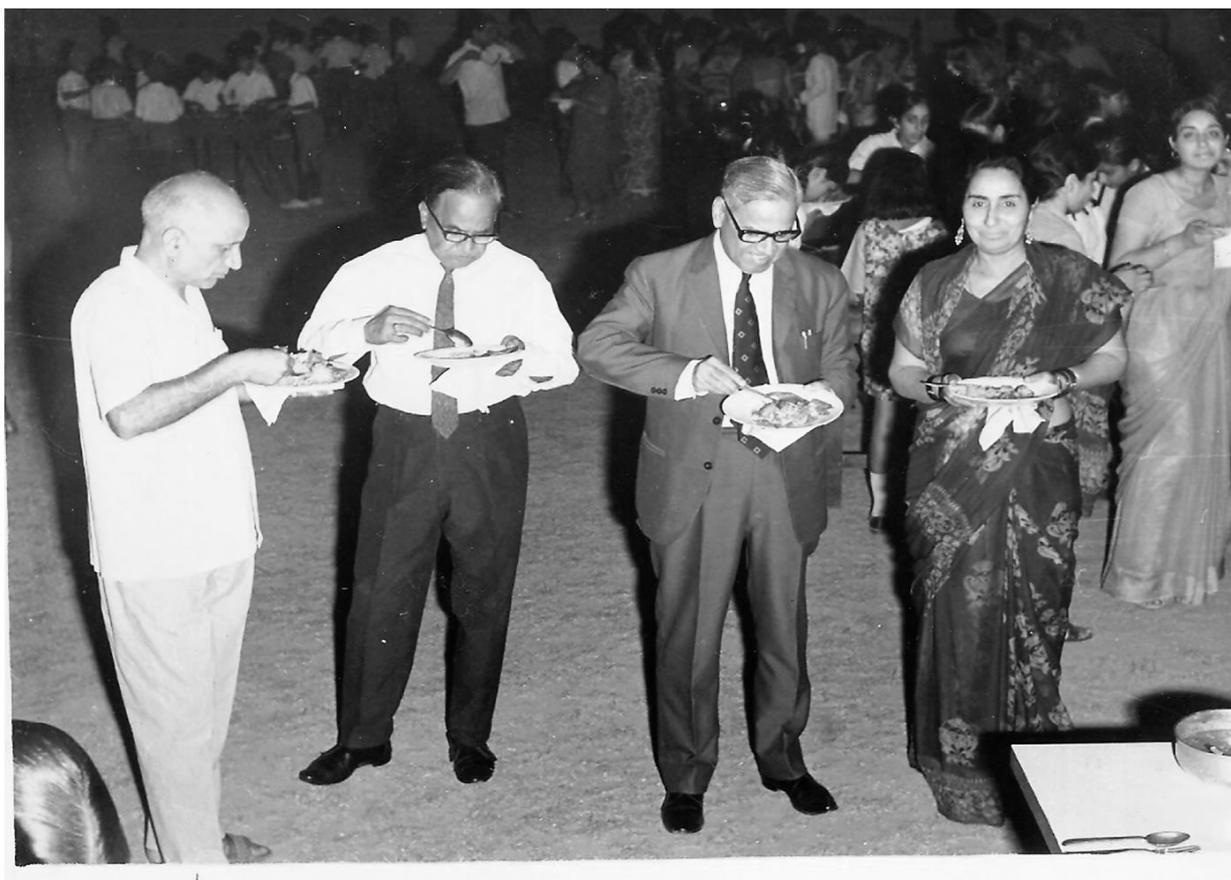
adjust and mix very well with their friends & children and they all used to look forward to his yearly visits.

Being a Geography teacher, he loved visiting new places and used to draw maps of the places he visited, showing lakes & rivers and write long letters giving all information about the places he had visited. He was fortunate to visit Sweden, Norway, London, France, Switzerland, Germany, USA, niece in Sharjah (Middle East), another niece in Canada and us in New Zealand. He read a lot of books on spiritualism and liked going to places of worship. My husband (Lt Col H.L. Sathu) who was there just before he passed away in Delhi told me that during his last few days, he started forgetting things and kept saying that he has to go to school to teach his students.

Recalling quite some time back, I once asked him, wouldn't he have been happier if he had achieved something more or risen higher, he replied "every time I see or hear a student of mine has achieved more than me I feel as though I have achieved it and then I get a great feeling of happiness, contentment and satisfaction".

All the best to you and family. Keep in touch even though I may take time to reply.

Basanti Mathu (R-73-1967)



Mr PN Mathu on the left with Mr JK Kate in suit.

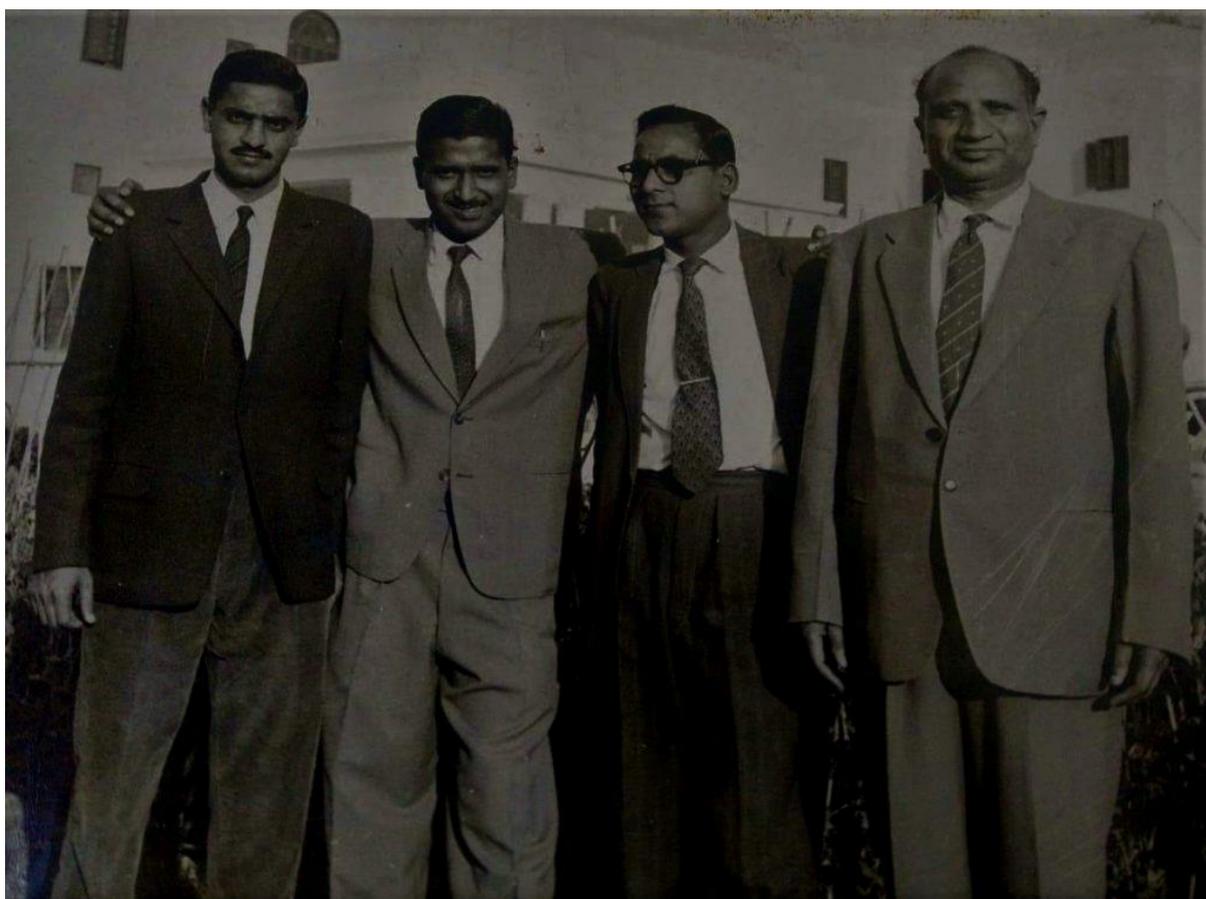
Words from Mr Mathu's son Mr JL Matu

All I would like to add a few things. while in Denmark, he read Bhagvatam, Bhagvat Geeta

and other spiritual books. He attended many lectures and "Satsangs" in temples /Gurudwaras etc. in Denmark. After reading many of the valuable ancient "Indian spiritual scriptures", he was asked by a group of Indians living in Denmark "What have you got from these scriptures and Satsangs". His immediate reply was "I am no longer scared of death any more". In his simplicity the last words he chanted before leaving his body on 17th Feb. 2004 were "Hare Krishna Hare Krishna Krishna Krishna Hare Hare, Hare Rama Hare Rama Rama Rama Hare Hare". I am thankful to God that I am the son of an extremely noble and simple father, who loved his family, country and most of all his teaching profession.

Kind regards

J.L.Matu (Mr Mathu's son)



The Great Teachers of 1960s from Left YP Bharadwaj(history), YP Johri(Maths), OP Bhatnagar(Hindi and Art) with Mr PN Mathu on the right.

In the words of the Headmaster

“Mr. Mathu, though very old-fashioned, taught both Commerce and Geography to Arts students all of whom were not very bright. His ISC results of both these subjects were very impressive.”

Mr JK Kate in his article ‘Pride of Punjab’

A TRIBUTE TO MR PN MATHU (GEOGRAPHY)

The passing away of Mr. Mathu has really made us both very sad. It has opened chapter of our lives covering almost two decades of our stay in P.P.S. Nabha together with the Mathu family that it was in their residence. We moved in 1979-80. Mr. P.N. Mathu was a dominating personality amongst the faculty members of P.P.S. Nabha. He served as Geography head of department after Mr. M.N. Tankha and as a House master Sutlej house. Mr. Mathu's command over the subject was so strong and his ability to draw the world map on the blackboard while facing the class was fantastic. It made him an awesome personality for all.

My personal relationship with Mr. P.N. Mathu was of great value to me as Mr. Mathu had also served in Col. Brown's School at Dehradun before joining P.P.S. Nabha. Mr. P.N. Mathu's brother had been a great teacher at Col. Brown's and taught my own brother whose maps used to be so neat and nice that it made me admire not only his work but the teachers who taught him so well.

I am reminded of an episode when on Mr. Tankha's going to London and Mr. Kate making me shuttle between junior and the senior school in 1968. I was asked a question by 'Ravinder Virk' now in Lawrence school, Lovedale-what was the exact meaning of the word 'CWM'. I told her I would check and let her know. I met Mr. Mathu in the corridor and asked him but look at his modesty, he just said "Why are you pulling my leg ? Are Chhodo !" When I convinced him I wasn't sure through I knew it had something with glaciers he simply said" corrie, cirque aur CWM ek hi to hote hain". He was so unassuming.

His daughter Basanti and Jyoti Kate were classmates and it was really great having them with us. Mr. Mathu was extremely brave when he took Mrs Mathu for a check-up and straight away went in for her operation without waiting for anyone to share his burden. It really made us marvel at the mental strength Mathu Sahib.

There are number of interesting anecdotes related to the hard work he put in and made the pupils work hard too. I am reminded of Rajpal Singh Mann(Ravi) who wrote an interesting account of tea production in India by describing how his father relished a special cup of tea and Mr. Mathu's reaction to it.

Mrs. Mathu was such a friendly person and spoke in her lovable Kashmiri Hindi. Jawahar his son used to stay in Germany – (an excellent person in his own right) so Mrs. Mathu gave me a very carefully packed packet of spices for him when I went to England in 1970. As luck would have it an Indian plane was hijacked to Lahore and terrorism seemed to begin to show up its ugly face. We were frisked and checked and not allowed to get off the plane in Germany. The British were far too fussy over Indian spices – so the packet could never reach Jawahar and it also took away our chance of meeting in England from where he was to collect the same later.

I am sure the students who were in Mr. Mathu's house and had the good foretime of studying form him will join my husband Mr.K.C. Tandon our daughters Amy and Puneeta and myself in paying a great tribute to a towering personality teacher, a good friend and a genuine person

I wish God would produce more such personalities I pray to the almighty to make his soul rest in peace and give the family members the strength to bear this great loss.

Mrs. KP Tandon (ex-Teacher, Geography)

Articles From 'The Eagle' issues

Also sharing two anecdotes by his student and house boy Wg.Cmdr.Bikramdev Singh (S-84,1969)

“The Pinnie Eaters of Sutlej House”

I can't forget the incidence when Mr Mathu (Ex-Satluj and Ex -Geography) chased me and Mohanjit (S-110)(Now a Brigadier) when he found us skipping the games period and eating Pinnies. We had a classmate Gurdev Singh (S-83) who had brought Pinnies from home, Mohanjit and me decided to eat a few while everybody went for games in the evening. Mr Mathu was passing through the dormitory on his way home and we hid under the beds. He had seen us so he kicked under the bed, and there we were with Pinnies in our mouth running around the dorm till he caught us pinched our ears and said " you rascals you can't hide from me ", and sent us packing to the games field. We loved him for all this and he loved us more. It was he and his colleagues who were father figures for us and shaped our lives, and made us what we are today. That dedication with which he worked is rarely found in today's teachers.

Bikram Dev Singh (S-84, 1969)



Staff being introduced to Chief guest by HM Mr JK Kate. Mr Mathu is second from extreme left in the que.

The Bond that delivered

I was reading the Oct issue of the Eagle and learnt of the Sad Demise of Mr. PN Mathu who was my House master and a father figure at school. He was a great man who really loved his students and went out of his way to help them understand whatever he taught. I was posted in Jammu in the Air Force helicopter unit from 79-82 when I met him just by chance. It was late in the afternoon when a newly posted in Officer Flt Lt RS Saini, an ON (ex Ravi 67 or 68 batch), walked up to my room and asked if I could help his wife get a seat in the B Ed College. As a helicopter pilot I used to be flying the state ministers pretty often so he thought I could do him this favour. With Saini on my pillion, I drove my motorcycle to the college. Though the college was closed, the watchman guided us to the residence of the Principal. We drove to the said house and low and behold, Mr. & Mrs. Mathu received us at the door. It was really a great surprise and we hugged each other. Mrs Mathu gave us a lovely cup of tea. We spent an hour plus talking of good old days at PPS and I enquired about you and learnt that you were married to an army officer from the Signals. Flt Lt Saini was promptly given a seat for his wife although the entrance exams had already been held.

The PPS bonds are so strong that Mr Mathu whispered into our ears " Don't tell anyone. I will put her name on the list of students admitted to B Ed." Soon after this meeting I moved out of Jammu to NDA as an instructor and never had the chance to see the great teacher again.

In his passing away, the world has lost a Great Teacher. However, he has left behind footprints in the sands of time for the PPS fraternity to follow. May God bless his Soul.

Wg.Cmdr.Bikram Dev Singh (S-84, 1969 batch)



Mr Mathu with Mr H Kumar (PT) and Mr Ghan (Crafts). Behind them is Jasbir (S110,1967),
at a cricket match

“Mr. Mathu, though very old-fashioned, taught both Commerce and Geography to Arts students all of whom were not very bright. His ISC results of both these subjects were very impressive.”

Mr JK Kate in his article “pride of Punjab”

From The 'Chronicle', a unique Geographical Society Meeting 19th Oct, 1962

That evening a meeting of the Geography Society was held in the Assembly Hall. The stage had been got up to represent the dining room in Green's, the local restaurant. Here there foregathered parents from different climatic regions of the world, all come to Nabha to admit their progeny to the famous Punjab Public School. At the request of a waiter, whose thirst for knowledge was equalled only by his ability to produce the most outlandish dishes at a moment's notice, each visitor in turn told us something of the climate, living conditions, natural resources and principal occupations of the people of the region from which he came. Full marks to Mr Mathu for a novel, entertaining and instructive meeting.

The fourth General Knowledge Test (on Geography) was held on Sunday 21st October.

The fourth Mark Reading of the year was held of Monday, 22nd October, when the Houses were placed in the following



Picture from Farewell party of 1967 batch with Mr and Mrs Punia Mr PN Mathu, John Mallon, Anita Williams, Mrs Singh

POSTS FROM WHATS APP EXCHANGE

Whenever I see something to do with geography reminds me of my geography teacher late Mr P N Mathu sir (pardon me for spelling mistake if any.) Sitting in class still remember very fondly sir drawing the map of world to perfection looking at us the students with his back towards the black board. Great he was.....om shanti sir. ...'.... was my Sutlej house master, till I left the house.

Brig. Yashpal (S-43, 1967 Hr Sec)

I remember Mr Mathu used to say that he could teach 8 subjects. A claim, few teachers can make. Remarkable personality he was.

Ravi Dev (S-131, 1972)

Beautiful! What a great human being Mr Mathu was a very down to earth family man loved and very well respected by students and faculty. Frugal by nature he practiced what he preached. He always advised students to work hard towards their goals as their parents worked very hard to pay for their school expenses. His presence was felt all around as he never missed any school functions be it debates, dramas, lectures, etc. Apart from his favourite subject of Geography Mr Mathu possessed a vast knowledge of many topics. I learnt a great deal from him. Equally generous was Mrs Mathu. Proud to say that they both considered me a family member of theirs. I got to know his sons and Basanti very well. During my hitchhiking days I spent nearly a week with his son Jawahar in Denmark.

Pushpraj (PA to Mr JK Kate)

Pushap Raj sir, I agree with what you have said of my father, he practiced what he preached. He loved his students and felt very happy when they did well after leaving school. He used to proudly talk about his students in high posts. Like parents feel elated when their children do well he felt the same when his students did well. My brother who is in Denmark remembers you.

It's so nice to be in contact and remember our good old days at PPS.

Basanti (R-73, 1967)