

by Commodore Shemal Fernando,
RSP, USP, MSc, psc

*The brave die never, though they
sleep in dust:*

*Their courage nerves a thousand living
men".*

— Minot J. Savage

The 'Monument of Honour' that majestically stands right in front of the famed Royal College Hall reminds us of the distinguished alumni who have made the 'Supreme Sacrifice' to safeguard the unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of our beloved Motherland as one Nation. The consensus, in the context of Royal College is that in keeping with the imperishable truths ingrained in the College Song, "They have repaid the debt they owed, they kept thy fame inviolate."

On July 1, Royal College will honour 47 heroic Royalists who have made the 'Supreme Sacrifice' during the last three decades of war and felicitate nearly 300 courageous Royalists who are presently serving in the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police and the Civil Defence Force at a unique and befitting ceremony styled *Rajakeeya Ranaviru Pranama* at the college. The Chief Guest on the occasion will be the Secretary to His Excellency the President, Mr. Lalith Weeraratna, himself a distinguished Old Royalist. Mr. Upali Gunasekara, Principal Royal College spearheads the organizing committee ably assisted by Mr. Rizan Nazeer, Secretary Royal College Union.

Royal College which completes 175 years next year is the oldest public school in Sri Lanka. It has produced outstanding personalities in numerous professions and almost in all the fields of human endeavour in Sri Lanka. Traditionally, many of the distinguished alumni, have helped to shape the course of events and have always been among those who gave of their best in the cause of the Nation.

Royal College which started as Hill Street Academy in 1835 was known as the Colombo Academy (1836-1842), Colombo Academy and Queens College (1859-1868), Colombo Academy (1869-1880) and stands to-date as Royal College since 1881. Judging by the contributions made by those who were fashioned into men at Royal, this hallowed institution is former Governor, His Excellency Sir Robert Wilmut Horton's greatest gift to the Nation.

Supreme Sacrifice

47 heroic Royalists have made the 'Supreme Sacrifice' during the three decades of war. The first Royalist to be Killed-in-Action (KIA) was Major Milroy Fernando of the Army in Omanthai on January 6, 1986. Lieutenant-Commander Sandun Gunasekera was the first Royalist Naval Officer to sacrifice his life. Flight Lieutenant R. B. Kulatunga was the first officer from the Air Force to be declared KIA. Amongst the seniormost Royalists who had laid their lives are Major General Wijaya Wimalaratne, Major General Percy Fernando and Brigadier Bhathiya Jayathilake.

In the "Roll of Honour," three patriotic heroes, Lieutenant A. W. M. N. M. de Silva of the Army, Flying Officer U. R.

Royal college salutes the Royalist war heroes



Padakkama and the Rana Sura Padakkama for the gallantry they have displayed in the face of the enemy.

Monument of Honour

Men in uniform are a brave breed who are used to take success and failure as they come. They take in their stride, advancing and retreating and winning and losing battle and they are also 'officers and gentlemen' who treat success and failure as impostors. When a courageous officer with the finest military traditions and training risks his life he

In keeping with these high ideals, the Monument is fittingly located right in front of the College Main Hall and take prides of place in between the two porches. It is based on a strong foundation finished with polished black granite on which the College Crest and the Roll of Honour are etched. The square shaped base is of 8 feet each at floor level. From the base rises a rough finished solid stone pillar 8 feet in height which carries the words "They have repaid the debt they owed, they kept the fame inviolate" of the College Song. On the top is a stainless steel pyramid. Most of the constructing materials symbolize the four elements: Glass (water, the sword, courage, all of society), stone (earth, sorrow and rebirth), metal (fire and change from the physical world) and wood (air, the spirit and transformation through death).

Background

Royal College is one of the foremost educational institutions in Sri Lanka to honour the War Heroes. As early as October 26, 1995 at an RCU Council Meeting, Dr. Ranjith Atapattu stressed the need to have some means to perpetuate the memory of gallant Royalists. On December 14, 1995, the RCU appointed a committee "Commemoration of War Dead" with Dr. Atapattu as the Chairman. On May 21, 1996 a ceremony by way of a Special School Assembly was held at the Navarangahala to commemorate those who had laid down their lives.

Maj. Gen. Gemunu Kulatunge succeeded as Chairman in October 1996 and, with a formidable committee that included Messrs. Nihal Seneviratne and Viji Weerasinghe and officers from the services made vast strides. The committee changed the nomenclature from 'War Dead' to the more appropriate 'Killed in Action', and were instrumental in organizing a befitting Commemoration Ceremony on May 19, 1997 which included unveiling of a "Roll of Honour" by the Principal, Mr. S. H. Kumarasinghe at the entrance to Navarangahala.

On May 20, 1998, the foundation stone

for the Monument was laid by the seniormost living Old Royalist Service Commander, General Sepala Attygalle in the presence of a distinguished gathering that included the Next of Kin. This followed a Special School Assembly under the patronage of the Principal, Mr. H. L. B. Gomes at which Old Royalist Service Commander, Air Marshal Harry Goonetilleke, whose son Group Captain Shirantha Goonetilleke is amongst the Royalists KIA, shared his sentiments.

The unveiling ceremony of the Monument was held on June 2, 1999. The Next of Kin of 39 Royalists KIA were invited to grace the historical event as Chief Guests. The youngest old Royalist disabled officer, Captain Rohan Perera of the Sri Lanka Army was bestowed the rare honour of unveiling the Monument, thereby giving pride of place to the gallant men who have sacrificed their soul and body for our Motherland.

It was sad that the name of Lieutenant Colonel Dhammika Tennekoon who served on the committee had to be added to the Monument, following his sacrifice. The serving Service Commanders, retired Old Royalist Service Commanders and IGPs, past Principals, host of Old Royalists in their military attire and enthusiastic young Royalists added glamour to the solemn ceremony.

It was certainly a memorable day for all the Royalists who gathered to salute the patriotic Royalists in true Royal spirit and tradition. The most poignant moment of the ceremony was when the Next of Kin of 39 Old Royalists KIA - fathers and mothers who brought in their sons to Royal College; spouses dressed in mourning; sons in Royal College uniform; infants who would never see their fathers - all in tears, rallied round the Monument to lay White Lotus Flowers in sacred memory of their loved ones.

Cadet Battalion

In January 1881, 30 persons signed a petition to the Lieutenant General Governor requesting permission to form the Volunteer Corps. On February 23,

George O' Brien writing on behalf of the Colonial Secretary informed that all possible help would be given under the Military Code Ordinance No. 3 of 1861. In the Government Gazette of April 1, 1881, Lt. Gen. Sir John Douglas, granted permission for the formation of the Corps. A Gazette notification of April 7, announced that forms for the purpose of taking the oath are available at the Offices of the Police Magistrate of Colombo, Kandy and Galle.

On April 12, John Armitage who held a Commission in the Volunteers in England was appointed the Commanding Officer and Captain Curone as the Acting Adjutant. The Royal College Cadet Battalion formed in August 1881 was the first Cadet Battalion to be formed in the schools. The first parade by the newly established Cadet Battalion was held on July 2, 1881 at the Royal College Prize Giving.

Major L. V. Gooneratne broke a long link with the Cadet Battalion, having taken over the Battalion in 1923, first as a Lieutenant and then as a Captain and a Major. He gave his heart and soul to the College Battalion. A big made gentleman, his stirring, stentorian commands on the Parade ground were long remembered. He was much loved by the Royalists of his era and his name is etched in gold at Royal College.

World War I

The First World War (1914-1918) saw many present and past Royalist Volunteers serve in the British Army in France and the Near East (Iraq and Persia). And some made the "Supreme Sacrifice. The first from Sri Lanka was a young Royalist W. E. Speldewinde who was drowned when the Troopship "Villa de la Ciotat" was torpedoed and sunk in the Mediterranean sea while sailing to England. This ship carried mostly schoolboy volunteers from Royal College and Trinity College. Six others had sacrificed their lives during the World War I - Bombardier J. Loos, Rifleman W. E. Edema, Private G. J. C. Van Rooyen, Sergeant H. A. E. de Vos, Sergeant R. H. G. Orloff and Flying Officer D. Bleakley.

The first student from Sri Lanka to win a military decoration while on active service was a Royalist, Captain O. J. Robertson who was attached to the 23rd Battalion of the London Regiment. He was awarded the Military Cross for conspicuous bravery and devotion to duty in June 1916. Other recipients of the Military Cross during were 2/Lt. H. E. Speldewinde de Boer, Lt. C. W. Nicholas and 2/Lt. J. Robertson. A total of 88 past and present Royalists served in World War I.

World War II

As in World War I, many Royalists, all former Cadets, served in World War II from 1939 to 1945. Amongst the Royalists decorated on overseas service was Capt. (Dr) A. Thenuwara of the Royal Army Medical Corps who served in the Middle East and Malta under the British Army. He was awarded the "Africa Star". Major A. N. Weinman and Wing Commander W. G. L. Wanbeck had the distinction of serving in both wars.

Service Commanders and IGPs

Since gaining independence 60 years ago and with the formation of the Royal Ceylon Army, Navy and Air Force, most former Cadets of the Royal College Cadet Corps have ventured to join the Armed Forces. Amongst them, Major General B. R. Heyn, General D. S. Attygalle, MVO, General T. I. Weeraratna, VSV and General G. D. G. N. Seneviratne, VSV served as the Commanders of the Army. Rear Admiral R. Kadirgamar, MVO, Admiral D. B. Goonesekera and Vice Admiral A. H. A. de Silva, VSV served as the Commanders of the Navy. Air Chief Marshal W. D. H. S. W. Goonetilleke became the solitary Commander of the Air Force. Three more Royalists, Messrs. S. A. Dissanayake, G. A. D. E. A. Seneviratne and L. G. D. C. L. Herath headed the Police Department.

*Solemn the drums thrill; Death
august and royal*

*Sings sorrow up into immortal
spheres,*

There is music in the midst of desolation

*And a glory that shines upon our
tears.*

*They shall grow not old, as we that
are left grow old;*

*Age shall not weary them, nor the
years condemn.*

*At the going down of the sun and in
the morning*

We will remember them.

*(The writer is Chairman of the Royal
College Union's Committee for
Commemoration of Old Royalists Killed
in Action)*



Unveiling of the "Roll of Honour" in 1997

Fernando and Squadron Leader E. A. D. Edirisinghe of the Air Force have so far been decorated with the Weera Wickrama Vibhushanaya for their individual acts of conspicuous bravery performed without regard for their own lives. Most of the heroes have been awarded with the Rana Wickrama

do so without question. Even though he may fear for his personal safety, he is always prepared to make the ultimate sacrifice for the greater good. His overriding concern is for the country he has to protect, the survival of his comrades in arms or the success of a particular maneuver.

Eating nuts cuts women's risk of diabetes

Eating nuts or peanut butter can help cut the risk of heart disease among women with Type 2 diabetes, research suggests.

A study of more than 6,000 women found those who ate lots of nuts or peanut butter slashed their risk of heart disease almost in half.

The women were asked to complete a food questionnaire every two to four years between 1980 and 2002.

The number of women suffering from conditions such as heart attack or stroke, or needing revascularisation treatment for heart disease, was also recorded.

Overall, there were 452 coronary "events" such as heart attack or revascularisation - surgery to

improve bloody circulation - and 182 cases of stroke.

Women at the start of the study who consumed more nuts and peanut butter were leaner, more physically active, and tended to smoke less, the authors said.

After adjusting for those factors that could influence the results, the experts found that women who ate at least five servings per week of nuts or peanut butter had a 44 per cent lower risk of heart disease and events such as heart attack or stroke.

A serving was defined as 28g of nuts or 16g (one tablespoon) of peanut butter.

The authors, from the Harvard Medical School and Harvard School of Public Health in Boston, said: "These data suggest that frequent nut and peanut

butter consumption is associated with a significantly lower CVD risk in women with Type 2 diabetes."

Ellen Mason, cardiac nurse for the British Heart Foundation, said: "It is beneficial to include nuts in our diets as they are low in the saturated fats that raise our cholesterol.

"However, peanut products can be full of added sugar or salt so check the label first as this may cancel out their positive benefits. Also don't forget that nuts are high in overall calories.

"Eating more of one food in isolation will not make much difference to your health if you are inactive and don't have a balanced diet.

"Unfortunately, preventing heart disease is more complicated than just eating peanuts."



study of more than 6,000 women found those who ate lots of nuts or peanut butter slashed their risk of heart disease almost in half. Photo: GETTY

The research was published in The Journal of Nutrition.

© The Telegraph Group
London 2009