

An Exceptional Couple In My Life

~ Benny & Celia Mascarenhas ~

*(by Marci Pereira ~ Project: 'Archiving Memories of Mombasa Goan School')
(e-mail: mombasagoanschool@gmail.com ~ 27 October 2021)*

I am deeply saddened to learn that my friend, Benny Mascarenhas, a younger generation schoolmate, passed away on 24th September, 2021. Benny finished school in 1965 and was the founder and lead guitarist of the renowned Mombasa band: *The Shiftars* ~ which to this day, is fondly remembered by many former Mombasa Goans and others they entertained. I having left Kenya in 1963, did not know of *The Shiftars*. Neither did I know of Benny, Celia or their families until taking on this project in 2016. The way we got to befriend one another, makes curious reading in the context of this school project. This is my tribute to Benny (and Celia) as a gesture of my thanks for the unforgettable support they have been to me in this school project, unlike any other. I must admit, it made me very emotional in putting this piece together for obvious reasons. However, with this unexpected sad news I felt driven to record my indelible memories of our association for the archives. The project would not be complete without this chapter. It was their belief, encouragement, motivation and support that partly drove me on in what has been a monumental exercise. Thought I will share herein, a selection of our early e-mail exchanges that convey a measure of just how valuable their support has been to me.

a) How the 'School Project' came about

It was in May 2016, that the late John De Souza from Toronto ~ the erstwhile Editor of *Goan Voice Canada*, got in touch with my brother Lazarus, also in Toronto, to enquire if I would be willing to take on a project on 'Mombasa Goans'. John was someone who was a dedicated archivist and writer. He had a vast collection and an encyclopaedic mind on all matters relating to Goans of East Africa, be it history, culture, sport, music, news, etc. He was an ex-student of *Dr Ribeiro's Goan School, Nairobi*, and so well connected with the 'Who's Who' of the Goan expatriate community, I was to find out in the course of my research.

John's one key ambition, I got to learn, was to document, for posterity, the history and story of Goans, like himself, who immigrated to Canada. He was the driving force in the creation of the "*Goan Archives Canada Committee*" based in Toronto, which negotiated with the "*Peel Art Gallery Museum & Archives in Brampton, Ontario*", to catalogue, store and preserve printed material relating to Goan cultural heritage. Being '*the Archivist*' for the *Goan Cultural Archives*, John set about organising their vast collection for the '*Peel Archives Project*'. In the course of this work, he noticed there was an abundance of historical material on Nairobi Goans, and in contrast, scarcely anything on Mombasa Goans. He sought to put that right. That is when he attempted to recruit myself to help him in that task.

His original request was to cover *all* aspects of the Mombasa Goan community: *The Goan Institute, Star of the Sea School, the Goan High School, St Francis Xavier's Tailors Club, the Catholic Diocese* and anything else relating to the community worthy of archiving. I found that all-encumbering remit, would be too demanding for me to handle single-handedly, in the timescale he had in mind and offered to contain my efforts solely on the '*Mombasa Goan School*'. And so, the '*Archiving Memories of Mombasa Goan School Project*' was conceived on that understanding.

b) A Challenging Baptism

It so happens that I have always harboured a keen interest in wanting to know all about our school history: how it came into being and its evolution since its inception. Before taking on the task, I had assumed that fellow schoolmates were equally imbued about our school history and I could depend on interesting and revealing inputs from our school alumni. Could not have been more wrong, as I was to discover later.

I perceived my first big challenge was to reach out to our school community as widely as possible, wherever they are, and so drafted guidelines outlining the scope of the project. That letter (*Item 1*), dated '1st June 2016', first appeared in the *Canadian Goan Voice*. Although from feedback, I got to learn that the message had circulated far and wide, the meagre response alarmed me. I recall having received just three contacts in that regard. Obviously, I was disappointed and downhearted.

Item 1 ~ Project Outline Letter

01 June 2016

Dear Friends

Project: Archiving Memories of 'Mombasa Goan High School'

The 'Goan Archives Canada' Committee – negotiated with the 'Peel Art Gallery, Museum & Archives' in Brampton, Ontario, to catalogue, store and preserve printed material relating to Goan cultural heritage. This phase is complete, but there are "leftover" items and further information, which need to be processed. 'Goan Cultural Archives' is continuing this work and plans to include in its collection, some background of the places from which many immigrated. **Mombasa** is one of these places. If there are alumni associations, who have compiled this information, 'Goan Cultural Archives', will be willing to receive a submission.

I believe, that the *Mombasa Goan High School*, has a rich history and tradition of academic and sporting excellence, worthy of archiving for the benefit of present and future generations. This is an appeal to ex-students and former staff members of the *Mombasa Goan High School*, to submit records of your memories, recollections, photographs/pictures, press cuttings, history, etc. to be centrally stored, in the above-mentioned resource.

Here are a few pointers, as a guide to the sort of material of interest:

- a) School History: When and who founded the school?
- b) Timeline of historical events
- c) Outstanding students: Academic & Sports
- d) Noted School Principals & Teachers
- e) The School Band
- f) School Alumni ~ the world over
- g) Reminiscences
- h) The School today
- i) Photos & Press Cuttings
- j) List of Deceased: Staff & Ex-Students

For further information or queries, do revert to me. Look forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards

Marci Pereira

Address: 15 Whitebeam Walk, Wirral, CH49 3QJ, Merseyside, UK
e-mail: <mombasagoanschool@gmail.com>

c. Enter: 'Surprising Good Samaritans'

1) Of the three contacts received, one was from a '**Cecilia Mascarenhas**' on 6th June, as per *Item 2*, introducing herself and drawing my attention to *Benny* and his band: *The Shiftars*. The courteous and obliging tone of her message lifted my spirits somewhat, as you will note from my reply, also in *Item 2*. On receiving *Celia's* message, what flashed through my mind was, that as renowned entertainers, *The Shiftars* are likely to have a sizeable fanbase – Mombasa folk in the main, plus many ex-students of the school. Hence, my letter to *Celia*, appealing to spread the word round on my behalf.

2) The exchanges in *Item 2*, were only the beginning. From what transpired thereafter, I couldn't imagine in my wildest dreams. Both *Benny/Celia* took it on board to support me to the hilt for reasons I still do not know. Here we are, not knowing one another and neither having ever met before. Yet, as will be evident from our exchanges herein, they voluntarily took me into their confidence and stuck by me, seemingly determined to ensure they did everything they possibly could to help me in the project. For me that was truly 'Godsend'.

3) Further to the release of the project announcement in *Item 1*, I learnt that *Benny/Celia* had received the same e-mail from seven other sources, but nobody knew or had heard of '*Marci Pereira*' back then. Apart from a few classmates, I am little known in our community. Obviously, *Celia* was curious to find out more about myself. Here is her query and my response to it in *Item 2*.

Item 2: Opening e-mail exchanges

<p>Cecilia Mascarenhas</p> <p>to me</p> <p>Hello Marci</p> <p>I have been told you are collating info from ex-students of Mombasa Goan School.</p> <p>Are you from Mombasa and also an ex-student? The reason I ask is because my husband and his mates attended the school and also went on to have a band called The Shiftars. Last year I put together photos and a story on how they formed the band whilst still young and in school...and went on to continue to play for the Nyalí Beach Hotel and various Goan socials and weddings too till their departure from Kenya.</p> <p>Let me know if it will be of interest to you.</p> <p>Regards Celia.</p>	<p>6 Jun 2016, 10:39</p>
<p>M Pereira <mombasagoanschool@gmail.com></p> <p>to Cecilia</p> <p>Hi Celia</p> <p>Thank you for your e mail. I finished school in 1958 - a classmate of Flavio Gracias. My Dad worked for the Mombasa Times and was also well known in the Goan community, for "Pereira's Coconut Oil". I left Kenya in 1963.</p> <p>Yes, it is the sort of material you describe, that is most welcome - accomplishments of former Mombasa Goan School ex-students. I recall reading a clip about the 'Shiftars' recently and please do forward whatever material you have on the band and even on their individual achievements. Hearing from and about ex-students always renders a feel-good factor among the school community. As you know we are dispersed globally.</p> <p>You mentioned the Shiftars played at the Nyalí Beach Hotel. I am given to understand that a former Goan School ex-student - Edmund Silveira - was a long-time resident pianist at the hotel. Presumably, the band knew him?</p> <p>I am trying to reach out to as many of our ex-students as possible. Please do spread the word round to your network of former Mombasa colleagues. Attached herewith are the following:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none">1) Project Outline: Archiving Memories of 'Mombasa Goan School' + My Personal Profile2) List of Deceased Staff & Ex-Students (I have started this list from those I know have passed away. Please, can you update this for me with the names of others, your husband and his friends may be aware of?) <p>Thank you so much for getting in touch. I look forward to hearing from you. Kind regards to you, your husband and all the Mombasa friends.</p> <p>Marci Pereira 06 June 2016</p>	<p>6 Jun 2016, 12:48</p>

4) Resulting from the communication above, the next thing I knew, *Benny/Celia* compiled and circulated the letter dated 18th June 2016, shown below as *Item 3*, to drum up support for the project from our ex-student community.

Item 3: Targeted Outreach to Ex-students

From: BennyCelia Mascarenhas
Date: 18 June 2016 18:20:53 BST
Subject: Hello folks!

Hello

I know we have not communicated much in recent times, only perhaps at Christmas!.

The reason for writing is that we got about 7 emails from various folks about the Mombasa Goan School project and assumed that everyone, from the school would have contacted Marci with your anecdotes and information. Sadly, as you can see, he has barely got anything.

I do know that when we were trying to contact our classmates to forge a connection how difficult it was and yet how elated everyone became when we all connected and had a few reunions so I can truly understand and appreciate the frustration that Marci is going through. Likewise, when I was desperately searching for photos of the young Shiftars to do my book as a tribute to them.

However, I do not want to disclose or send him stuff that we have on our archives and are writing to you who I know are from Goan School (esp. as I am not from the school and do not really need a barrage of stuff thrown at me!) without informing you and letting some of you give him the information of your class and reunions first, as well as any info on your teachers and folks that have progressed through the school, nor not get your permission to do so.

I attach the project document on what it is about, his previous articles that precipitated this endeavour, his meagre list of teachers and deceased personnel, and finally his email to me when I enquired more info from him and how he came to know about me, all for your perusal and as to why I am poking my nose in!

So, c'mon chaps and gals... you plan reunions, facebook pages sharing old photos and anecdotes ...help a fellow Goan school mate achieve his quest to do this and let me know OK.

Warm regards from a cold damp UK
CEX (with permission of my Boss Benny!! Ahem).

5) There was so much I could read in between the lines of *Item 3*. As I suspected, the size of *Benny/Celia's* circulation list was way beyond my expectation. Further, the style of the letter conveyed to me the camaraderie and rapport they enjoyed with the ex-student community they were reaching out to. It was obvious too that I was not alone in being disappointed with the response rate. It is clear that they too encountered similar disappointments when trying to organise reunions and in compiling a photo story album in tribute of *The Shiftars*. In hindsight, I can now appreciate their empathy for me in undertaking an exercise of truly challenging proportions. I have in my records, remarks from respondents to the effect: "Rather you than me". From those early days, it occurred to me that Celia was in fact the 'PR Agent' for *The Shiftars* - and very good at it.

6) On re-reading that letter in *Item 3* in preparing this piece, Celia's closing statement: "***(with permission of my Boss Benny!! ...)***" brought tears to my eyes in the light of the present sad news. As I intimated earlier, they had a light-hearted, warm touch, in communicating with schoolmates and friends likewise. I later learnt that Celia, slammed that statement in for a reason ~ to silence those that questioned why she was getting involved in the school project when she was not an ex-student of the school. Furthermore, some took the viewpoint of: 'Why should you help him if he is getting paid for it?'. For everyone's record, I can state categorically, that I did not get an iota of monetary help, or any help, from the Canadians, in accomplishing this project. It has been an exercise best described as: 'Labour of love' and will continue to be so to the end.

d. Response from the Ex-Student community?

1) Quite apart from their email contacts, *Benny/Celia*, had an extensive social media network through which they further exchanged greetings, news, views, opinions, photos, videos etc. In conjunction with their exercise in *Item 3*, I too was active in reaching out to our ex-student community. Alongside my e-mail contacts, I wrote to the Presidents of *Goan Overseas Associations* in the UK, USA (New Jersey, San Francisco, Los Angeles); Australia (Sydney, Melbourne, Perth); Canada (Toronto, Edmonton, Vancouver), New Zealand, Goa media: (*The Herald, Navhind Times, The Goan*), *Mombasa Goan Institute* and *Mombasa Goan Community*, requesting the project guide in *Item 1* be brought to the attention of any former *Mombasa Goan School* ex-students within their membership/readership. In addition, the announcement got further exposure in *Goan Voice Canada, Goan Voice UK, Africana Orientalia (now Namaskar Africana), Goanet* and *Selma Carvalho's Blog*.

2) Between *Benny/Celia*, that outreach exercise above, and myself, I envisaged that we must have reached out to at least 1000 ex-students of the *Mombasa Goan School/Sacred Heart School* in announcing this school project. Guess the response rate? Less than ten!!! Disappointed and down hearted, I reported that to the earlier mentioned John De Souza, who replied: "Forget them, you should be able to find information on the web". That was the best advice I received because from then, I delved deeply into researching into all matters relating to the school, determined to carry on, irrespective. Hence, much of my work is research based and from the results, I am pleased to have taken on the project in the first place. Any one engaged in 'research' will know what a time-consuming exploit it is. My findings have satisfied my personal curiosity about the school history and gives me added satisfaction in sharing them with fellow schoolmates, regardless.

3) Another of my noteworthy experiences was visiting the late *Professor Suresh Amonkar* at his home in Mapusa, Goa, in 2018, in the context of this school project. He was one of two surviving teachers of the *Mombasa Goan School* (the other being *Mr Custa Correia* in Alberta, Canada) and actually taught me in the years 1956/1958. I happened to remark to the Professor how disappointing the ex-student response was in this project. He was not surprised and turned to me and said: "*Marci, because they speak English does not mean they write English*". Those words still echo in my ears. He should know. He taught us English/English Literature.

4) I am no historian, no writer/author, no journalist, no politician, no researcher – this project was the first exercise of its kind that I had taken on. Early in the project, *Selma Carvalho* had forewarned me that the Goan community has an aversion to putting pen to paper. She is a historian of East African Goan heritage and culture, author of four books and a columnist. I now have my own hard evidence of that forewarning. Thankfully, that first-hand experience just spurred me on.

e. Continuing Support

1) Support-wise, *Benny/Celia* committed themselves wholeheartedly, irrespective of whatever I received from other sources. They dug deeply into their own collections, forwarding me whatever they felt would be of help: School related news, articles, photographs, reunions, exchanges and continued to reach out to anyone else they thought may be of value to me. ***This was the single-most/biggest source of communication I had in the context of the project.*** From my current count, our e-mail exchanges number in excess of **300** from this source alone. Understandably, most of these were in the years 2016. It really gave me a measure of just how well connected they are in the Goan expatriate community. They seemed to know almost anyone and everyone from *Mombasa* I named, and more.

2) Some of the photographs received via *Benny/Celia* were of ‘Class Reunions’ held either in Canada, Goa or the UK. On examining the material what occurred to me was that the reunions were organised mainly by Classes from the mid-sixties: 1964/65/66. It showed a strong bond and togetherness of these classmates and is pleasing to note is still continuing to this day - thanks to the easy access brought by social media platforms. Their interest in their comrades contrasts with those of earlier generation ex-students who seem to have an aversion to wanting to re-connect with their schoolmates for some reason.

3) Several photos received are of mini-reunions when classmates visited London, for instance. They quickly organise get-togethers in their homes, pub or restaurant for old times’ sake. From pictures I received, I was cheered to see our good family friend from Makadara, *Hilary Monteiro* and his wife *Liseth* (both from the Class of 1965), enjoying themselves in their home in London, at his birthday celebration gathering of other London-based, and visiting classmates from abroad. Often, *Benny/Celia* were the instigators of such social meetings. That camaraderie conveys a loving warmth of mates whose friendship began way back in their school days in Mombasa.

f. Introduction to renowned contacts

1) Quite apart from scouring their personal collection to help me, *Benny/Celia* went further to introduce me to some of their renowned and notable contacts. The list in *Item 4* includes some reputable literary and other names in the Goan diaspora.

<u>Item 4: Introduction to Renowned/Notable Contacts</u>		
<u>Item</u>	<u>Contact</u>	<u>Who's Who</u>
1.0	Cyprian Fernandes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Sydney-based Journalist/Author/Blogger/Archivist. ● <u>Author of three books</u> a) <i>Yesterday in Paradise</i> b) <i>Stars Next Door</i> c) <i>Twilight of the Exiles</i>
2.0	Frederick Noronha	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Goa-based Publisher/Editor/Journalist/Entrepreneur. ● <i>Goanet</i> Moderator.
3.0	Mervyn Maciel	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Doyen of London-based Goan Writers. ● <u>Author of two books</u> a) <i>Bwana Karani</i> b) <i>From Mtoto to Mzee</i>
4.0	Benegal Pereira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Founder of ‘<i>Namaskar Africana</i>’ – East African Asian Forum. ● Co-Author of Publication: “<i>Liberating Minds, Restoring Kenyan History by Progressive South Asian Kenyans 1884-1965.</i>” ● <i>Harvard alumnus. Based in New Hampshire, USA.</i>
5.0	Edmund Silveira	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Veteran Mombasa-based Band Master: ‘<i>Ed Silveira & Quartet</i>’ ● Ex-Student of <i>Mombasa Goan School</i> – Class 1952
6.0	Dr Jawaharlal Henriques	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Founded the ‘<i>St Anthony’s Hospital</i>’ in Mapusa, Goa. ● Ex-Student of ‘<i>Sacred Heart School</i>’ Mombasa. Class 1964. ● Chairman of ‘<i>1964 Ex-Students Reunion Committee</i>’ that was held in Goa in 2014 to celebrate 50th Anniversary of Class year.
7.0	Ilham (Elham) Al Busaidi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Great-Granddaughter of <i>Sir Ali bin Salim</i> – Founder & Patron of <i>Mombasa Goan School</i>. Now based in Oman. ● Commissioned publication of book entitled: “<i>Sir Ali bin Salim ~ And the Making of Mombasa</i>” by Judy Aldrick in 2018. ● Ex-Student of Sacred Heart School (Class:1964/65). Guest of Honour at 50th Anniversary Reunion in Goa.
8.0	<i>Mombasa Goan School ‘75th Anniversary Celebrations Committee’</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Michaela Nicholls</i> ~ Celebrations Committee Member. ● Contact to try and get access to the Goan School’s historical archives.
9.0	<i>Mombasa Goan Institute Centenary Celebration Committee</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Franklyn Pereira</i> – President of Committee. ● Contact for access to Club’s archives. ● Ex- Student of <i>Mombasa Goan School</i> (Class 1950)
10.0	<i>Sacred Heart Primary School, Mombasa</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Contact with known Board Member of Trustees.

2) Scanning an eye through that list in *Item 4* is further testimony of just how well-connected *Benny/Celia* are, quite apart from their vast network of former schoolmates and Mombasa friends. Mind you, this is just a small selection of names received of probable sources of help, drawn in here to emphasise that point. I am immensely thankful for these introductions.

Observations

● Cyprian Fernandes offered some of his previously released blogs and one that included our illustrious sports schoolmate: *Seraphino Antao*.

● Mervyn Maciel proved such a blessing to me in the context of my research. Early in the project I was trying to lay my hands on a book entitled: “*Goans of Kenya*” by *Dr Teresa Albuquerque* that was released in 1999. Unfortunately, the publication is totally out of print and any copies around are literally like ‘gold-dust’ now. Despite my best endeavours to lay my hands on a copy for this research, I failed. In my quest, I even got in touch with the distinguished lady herself, who in her e-mail reply, wished she had a spare copy to give me and extended her good wishes with the project. Understandably, as the book is now an ‘antiquity’, even those that had one, would not let their copy out of their sight.

To my good fortune, *Mervyn*, who was contacted by *Benny/Celia*, painstakingly **typed out the full chapter** (yes, typed the full chapter) relating to the ‘*Mombasa Goan School*’ from the book in his collection, and forwarded that to me!!! I am hugely thankful to *Mervyn/Benny/Celia* for that. I have yet to find, as authentically recorded and detailed early history of the *Mombasa Goan School*, as documented in that book.

● Benegal Pereira used to know our schoolmate: *Dr Klaus De Albuquerque* (Class:1962) who had moved to the USA after schooling in Kenya, and has sadly passed away. *Benegal* kindly shared some of his exchanges with *Klaus* on his upbringing in East Africa. Furthermore, interestingly, *Benegal’s* father, *Eddie Pereira*, was born in Mombasa in the home of *Diogo Luis Pereira* who featured in that project chapter entitled: “*A Very Influential Mombasa Goan: Diogo Luis Pereira*”. On seeing that chapter, *Benegal* kindly shared his father’s Birth Certificate and a Baptism photograph from his family collection. I got to learn too, that his mother *Yvonne Maillet* attended the *Star of the Sea School*. Also, with *Angelo Faria* in his network, he passed the word on, on my behalf.

● Dr Jawaharlal Henriques, our schoolmate in Class 1964, obligingly came on board when first approached by *Benny/Celia* and immediately got in touch with fellow schoolmates urging them to offer their support to the project. He despatched a selection of photographs and supporting material of his hospital and the Class Reunion held in Goa in 2014. He was the Chairman of the Reunion Organising Committee and I found out is still a very influential and respected contact in his year-group, and others.

● Ilham (Elham) Al Busaidi, another schoolmate in Class 1964/65, is the great-granddaughter of our distinguished school Founder/Patron: *Sir Ali bin Salim*. It happened, when *Celia* got in touch with her, she disclosed that there was a forthcoming book launch in Mombasa entitled: “*Sir Ali bin Salim – And the Making of Mombasa*” by *Judy Aldrick* and extended an invitation to myself to the launch. *Ilham*, now based in Oman, had commissioned that book and I got to learn she is now heading her family’s philanthropic foundation/trust in her great-grandfathers’ name.

As I stressed earlier, this is just a small selection of names I received from *Benny/Celia*. I found that they were so well informed on news and developments relating to Mombasa Goans – past and present. I only had to drop a name and there was a high probability that they knew of them and if not, they would make enquiries within their network to obtain the information. A case in point, is another of our school’s

sports legends: *Albert Castanha (Class1952)*. I found during my research there was scant information available on his formidable achievements and accomplishments. From my early memory he was a remarkable and gifted all-round athlete. He picked up the '*Victor-Ludorum*' at the annual school sports in his final year, I recall. Apart from sprints, he excelled in the hurdles, high jump, long jump, football, hockey, cycling. He was an outstanding talent. In regard to cycling, I still remember that gleaming, light-weight racing bike with curved handles he so loved. It was probably the first of its kind in Mombasa. He was the winner of that inaugural cycling event that was introduced that year, by *Mr Joe Fernandes*, the Sport Master. I had endeavoured to find out if I could lay my hands on material to do with his school days. *Benny/Celia* know members of his family. We tried.

g. 'Benny/Celia': Miscellaneous Findings



1966 ~ 'Young Love' courting days in Mombasa
(Dominic Noronha/Celia/Benny/Angela (Benny's sister)
(Tyronne (Celia's kid brother)/Victor De Souza (The Shiftars Band Manager)

1) Looking through my collection I came across this delightful picture of *Benny and Celia* dating back to their younger Mombasa days with members of their family and friends. Apparently, this was taken just before *The Shiftars* played at the *Mombasa Goan Institute*. They look a happy bunch. Those youthful happy, beaming Goan faces brings back memories of Mombasa for me.

2) *Benny* hails from a richly talented musical family. They are a family of nine siblings gifted with musical genes it seems. Their father, *Joaquim* played the violin. Brother *Leslie* played the trumpet and moved to Nairobi playing for various bands there. So too, his brother *Philip*, who played for *Edmund Silveira*. *Benny* started off with *Conny Kit's Band* before establishing his own band: *The Shiftars*. Younger brother *Jojo*, played the drums for *The Shiftars* in their later years, when *Rudy Lopes* migrated. More about *The Shiftars*, the illustrious band, in a separate chapter on the *Mombasa Goan School: Music & Musicians*.

3) *Benny's* sister, *Gracie*, was crowned '*Miss Mombasa*' – the first Asian - in 1960. Another sister, *Sybil*, married *Mr & Mrs Henry's* son, *Benedict*, who was the brother of *Mrs May Soares*, who taught me English in 1958. *Mrs Henry* was the very first Principal of the *Mombasa Goan School* in 1932. All in all, a very rich pedigree it appears.

4) *Celia*, had a hard but a happy upbringing. She lost her father, *Mr De Souza*, in 1955. Her mum *Virginia*, remarried and yet again, sadly the father of *Celia's* brother, *Tyrone – Mr Vaz*, passed away within a short time in 1958!! Imagine a young mother having to raise two kids single handed. Her mother had a fabulous Soprano voice and used to sing for weddings, carol singing and at socials in Mombasa and later, when they moved to the UK. They arrived in the UK in 1969. *Benny*, moved soon after I understand. Although her birth name is *Cecilia*, I note, her preferred pen name is the shortened: '*Celia*'. In my family we know three '*Celias*'. When talking about this '*Celia*', I refer to her affectionately as '*Project Celia*', which is soon understood.



Benny & Celia (2015)

5) *Benny and Celia* married in London in 1972. They are well known and loved by many in the Goan community. Both are proud to be associated with the village of Saligao in Goa. Saligao is that village known to be richly blessed with academics, writers, journalists, musicians, historians, etc. *Benny* served as the President of the Saligao Association in London in 1981.

6) From my research, there were three notable 'Class' Reunions: 1964/1965/1966 to celebrate their 50 years at the *Sacred Heart School* in 2014/2015/2016. For the 2015 event held in London, *Benny/Celia* were the key organisers with their guest of honour being, former teacher *Mr Custa Correia* and his wife *Nita*, who came over from Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada.

7) It is interesting to note that *Mr Custa Correia*, someone I keep in touch with, now in his 90s, is the last surviving teacher of my time. I learnt via this project, that several of our other teachers migrated to Canada too, including: *Dr Neves Pereira*, *Mrs May Soares*, *Mr Miranda*, *Mr Edmund Cordeiro*, the *Furtado* brothers, amongst others. A classmate of *Benny's*: the late, *Cassian De Cruz (Class 1965)*, who was also in Canada, is known to have been one of those ex-students who made it a point to keep in touch with the teachers there, often visiting them. There are photographs of his visits to these teachers. His passing was seen as a big loss to the ex-student community.

h. Finally: Recording My Heartfelt Gratitude

Truly, there is so much more about the *Mombasa Goan School/Sacred Heart School*, that I learnt from my exchanges with *Benny/Celia*, including a big collection of pictures, for which I am immensely grateful for. For this very reason I felt my project would not be complete without the inclusion of this chapter to record their valuable inputs to me in the school archives. We have never met, or spoken on the phone. Our exchanges have been exclusively by email which makes it even more noteworthy. I am one who stays clear of *all* social media, for a reason. I am most thankful to them for their time, dedication and encouragement they offered me despite not having known me or of me. A truly exceptional couple in my life. I have grown to love and respect them both. Cherished memories that will always remain with me.

A BIG THANK YOU DEAR BENNY & CELIA

Benny's Funeral Arrangement

The funeral is scheduled for ***Friday 5th November 2021*** and will be streamed as per the following details that appeared in the *Goan Voice UK 'Obituary Notice'*.

Funeral of Benny Mascarenhas. London. Ex Mombasa



24th September 2021, London, ex Mombasa. Funeral service for Benny Mascarenhas sadly passed away on Friday 24th September 2021. Born in Nairobi, studied at the Goan /Sacred Heart School in Mombasa, Husband of Cecilia, brother to Lambert, Sybil (late Benedict), Late Leslie (late Olga), Mina (Joe), Late Gracie (Martin), Late Philip (late Irene), Angela (late Tony), Jojo (Jennifer) and Uncle to many nephews, nieces and their children. Brother-in-law to Tyrone (Rose) Vaz. He was a well-known lead guitarist of The Shiftars in Mombasa, as well as for a short time with The Hombres in UK. A committed member of The Saligao Association and President in 1981, and previously active in G.O.A. His funeral mass will be at St. Mark's RC Church West Wickham on Friday 5th November 2021. **Due to ongoing COVID restrictions and restricted numbers imposed by the church.** Funeral attendance is sadly **by invitation only**. The Church service will be live streamed at 10.55am go to: <https://www.funeralfilming.co.uk/5th-november/> password funeral. For the Crematorium at 12.30pm again this will be live streamed to view go to **website:** <https://watch.obitus.com> User name: **timo5098** password: **886873**. A memorial donation in lieu of flowers can be made to The Roy Castle Lung cancer foundation <https://roycastle.org/> Condolences to Cecilia Mascarenhas at becemas@hotmail.com. Cecilia and the family are appreciative of all the condolences, calls and messages sent and thank you very much. (GVUK 21Oct2021)

My Closing Prayer

***'Lord, Welcome Benny into thy Kingdom of Heaven that assures eternal life
And Enfold Your Arms of Love, Comfort, Peace and Healing around Celia in her Pain and Grief.
Amen***

by: Marci Pereira

Project: Archiving Memories of Mombasa Goan School

Email: mombasagoanschool@gmail.com

27th October 2021

