Dr. Yvonne Mae Freitas

Dr. Yvonne Mae Freitas was born in May 1929. She joined St. Xavier’s College as a student in the science faculty in the late 1940s having been inspired by the life of Madam Curie. She graduated in Microbiology. She completed her M.Sc. and Ph.D. under the guidance of Dr. Fabian Fernandes, the then Head of the Department of Microbiology.

In 1953, Dr. Fabian Fernandes persuaded the administration of St. Xavier’s College to appoint Miss Yvonne Freitas as a lecturer in the Department of Microbiology. She became the first lady-lecturer in the history of St. Xavier’s College. When Dr. Fabian Fernandes left the college, in 1959, Dr. Yvonne Freitas became the Head of Department.

In the 1960s, during her tenure, Dr. Y.M. Freitas expanded the Department of Microbiology by transforming the Museum into a spacious undergraduate laboratory and preparatory room of great standard, which the department is fortunate to have even today. The Department grew with a classroom of its own adjoining the Postgraduate and the Undergraduate laboratories.

Dr. Yvonne Freitas was not only a great teacher but an excellent researcher. She did extensive research in the field of Marine Microbiology. As an impetus to her research, she was awarded a Fulbright Grant and Smith – Mundt scholarship at the Scripps Institute of Oceanography at the University of California – San Diego. She was also invited as a German academic exchange Professor in West Germany and through the Berlin Academy of science in East Germany. Miss Freitas encouraged research amongst her students and guided several students through their Masters and Doctorates in Microbiology. The department was her ‘second home’. One of her students was awarded the Doctor of Science (D.Sc.) degree during her tenure.

In the Centenary Year (1969) of the College, Dr. Y.M. Freitas was appointed the first non- Jesuit Vice-Principal (Science) of the College. As Chairperson of the Board of studies in Microbiology, Dr. Freitas was instrumental in introducing the MSc Papers in the University of Bombay. She also organized an all India UGC summer school in microbiology in the college.

Dr. Yvonne Freitas served as Head of the Department from 1959-1974 and then from 1980 – 1989. In May 1989, Miss Freitas retired from the college as the Head of the Microbiology Department. She remained associated with the subject and the Department after her retirement. Not one to sit idle, she used her talents for several Parish activities of her Church in Chembur.

On January 15th, 2012, Dr. Yvonne Freitas passed away at her home after a brief illness. St. Xavier’s College and the Department of Microbiology have lost an important pillar.

In fond Remembrance...

Dr. Bhaktawar Sam Sethna

The department of geology, and indeed the entire college was shocked on Saturday, the 3rd of March, by the untimely demise of Dr. (Mrs.) Bhaktawar Sam Sethna.

Dr. Sethna joined the department of Geology in 1979. I was the first senior college batch she taught in 1985. In many ways, Dr. Sethna was the final link between today’s department of geology, and that of yesteryears, which produced some of the best works of research on the geology of Mumbai and the Deccan Plateau.

Over the 32 years that she served as a faculty member at St. Xavier’s, Dr. Bakhtawar Sethna had a profound effect on her many colleagues and students thanks to her easy-going nature as a person, and her efforts in making even the most complex concepts easy. She was engaged in teaching introductory lab classes in mineralogy and petrology at the first-year level, and theory and lab classes in geomorphology, groundwater geology, and field geology to the second-year students. Her teaching methods provoked many young minds to think deeper. Generations of students have developed the habit of additional reading and doing reference work due to her teaching.

As a researcher, Dr. Sethna worked in the fields of igneous petrology and geochemistry. She was recognised by the University of Mumbai as a guide for Doctoral students in geology, and she mentored many students on their way to Doctoral degrees.

The department of Geology stands today as one of the most sought-after destinations for science students at St. Xavier’s College as well as students who want to pursue the subject at a post graduate level. Dr. Bakhtawar’s role in the department’s current glory can never be understated or disregarded.

Dr. Bakhtawar is survived by her husband, Dr. Sam Sethna, himself a former faculty member, former Vice-
Principal and Head of the department of geology at St. Xavier’s, and Khushnuma her daughter who was also an alumna of the college. Many of us are indebted to Dr. Sam Sethna for being instrumental in moulding us into what we are today and also for making our department a globally recognised centre for research on the Deccan Flood Basalts. The research efforts and quality work of the Sethnas is certainly going to benefit posterity. Dr. Bakhtawar’s presence shall never be forgotten.

Dr. Hrishikesh Samant
Associate Professor & Head
Department of Geology

Mario Miranda
(1926-2011)

Anyone who enters the portals of St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai, cannot escape the colourful cartoons that adorn the reception area. Mario Miranda’s art is an integral part of St. Xavier’s. The 2011 College Magazine, which was awarded the ‘Best College Magazine Prize’ had with due acknowledgment used several of Mario Miranda’s paintings. His illustrations bolstered the poetic image of the magazine.

An artist, cartoonist and illustrator, Mario Miranda was born in 1926. He graduated with a BA in History from St. Xavier’s College, Mumbai. His life is an inspiration to his family, friends and fans. His cartoons have brought a smile to a hundred faces with their simple, yet intriguing concepts. Miranda’s creations like Miss Nimbupani and Miss Fonseca were regularly featured in magazines like ‘Femina’, ‘Economic Times’ and ‘The Illustrated Weekly of India’.

It is said that, as a child, Mario used the walls of his own house to sketch, until his mother bought him a book! Mario de Miranda had not studied Art formally however; he began his career as a Cartoonist for the Times of India Group in 1953. By the 1960’s, he got his own slot in the Sunday Times edition of the Times of India. He later moved into illustration and fine arts.

Numerous books such as Inside Goa by Manohar Malgonkar, A family in Goa and The Open Eyes by Dom Moraes have been illustrated by him. Goa with Love, A little World of Humor, Sketch book, Germany in Wintertime, Impression of Paris and Mario de Miranda are among the few books that are exclusively his own. He travelled a lot around the world, exhibiting his art and working for various newspapers and magazines. He spent around five years in London, working on reputed magazines such as Lilliput and Mad. He held solo exhibitions in over 22 countries. After travelling for many years, he returned to India in the 1980’s. The Murals that adorn South Mumbai’s Mondegar Café, have been done by Mario Miranda.

Mario Miranda is a recipient of the Padma Shri (1988), Padma Bhushan (2002) and was posthumously awarded the Padma Vibhushan in 2012. He had a sharp eye for humour and a desire to celebrate life through pictures.

St. Xavier’s rejoices in the enduring spirit of Mario Miranda and sincerely believes his art will never be vanquished.

Mukul Singhal

An alumnus of the college from the Physics Department, Mukul passed away on July 15th 2012. A generous benefactor of the college, Mukul was always ready to help his alma mater - a Xaverite to the core. He was on the Board of Studies for Physics and a member of the Alumni Association of the college. Mukul was the President of the Manufacturers Association for Information Technology (MAIT) from 2006-2008. He was the C&MD of Lipi Data Systems Ltd.

They kill good trees to print out bad newspapers!
- James G. Watt

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