



St. John's College UBC

聖 約 翰 學 院

St. John's College Summer Alumni Formal Dinner Friday, June 28, 2013

Welcome back and thank you for joining us for the Summer Alumni Formal Dinner! We are so pleased to have you as part of our 15th Anniversary Celebrations.

Several of you submitted photos and special memories and we have gathered them together for you to enjoy. We even received some submissions from alumni who could not attend! Also included are several alumni stories that were gathered by SJC alumnus Kein Gan.

15
YEARS

**St. John's College UBC
1997 - 2012**



Go ahead and **JUMP** if you love SJC! Okay....we don't know for certain that is why these residents are jumping but they were a part of some great pictures that day including the famous "human SJC" (see below).

Photo : Dibesh Shakya

I couldn't have asked for a better first two years in Canada and an introduction to the international exposure than my time in SJC. Coming from Nepal where I never had any connection to anybody outside Nepal, SJC was a perfect venue for a completely culturally diverse immersion. I'll value what I learned here from each other forever. I made some friends here who I still call and get together with, and hopefully we'll be in touch always. Thanks SJC for giving me such an awesome experience!!

- Dibesh Shakya, SJC Alumnus 2009





Winning the first cup for SJC in the REC
Competitive Futsal League

Photo:

Nima Taherinejad, SJC Alumnus 2011



Soccer in the Courtyard

Photo: Nicole Ong

*Made friends with amazing people through
soccer.*

- Nicole Ong, SJC Alumna 2008-11



Winning the first cup for SJC in the REC
Men's Competitive Futsal League

Photo:

Nima Taherinejad, SJC Alumnus 2011

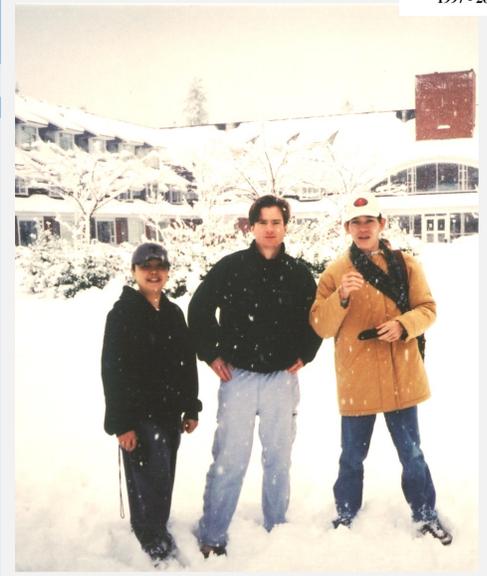


SJC Residents Playing in the Snow

Photo: Nguyen Nguyen

I will never forget the snowy days at St. John College and my dear friends from different countries who I met and talked every day. I miss our cultural performances at the International Dinner and hope I can go back there one day to live our memories and once again introduce to international students special Vietnamese foods, such as 'chả giò', bún, etc.

- Nguyen Nguyen, SJC Alumna 2002



Snowy Courtyard

Photo: Lauren Wu

SJC is a great place to meet new people, make friends, learn from each other and have lots of fun!

- Lauren Wu, SJC Alumna 2002



SJC in the Winter

Photo:

David Marechal, SJC Alumnus 2005-09

*Snow at SJC
obviously left
an impression!*



Coming home to SJC after classes gave an ineffable feeling of joy. The college and its residents radiated positive energy and brought together like minded individuals who both understood and shared the passion for learning and life. From the many memories from my time at SJC, one is my greetings to the rest of the college.

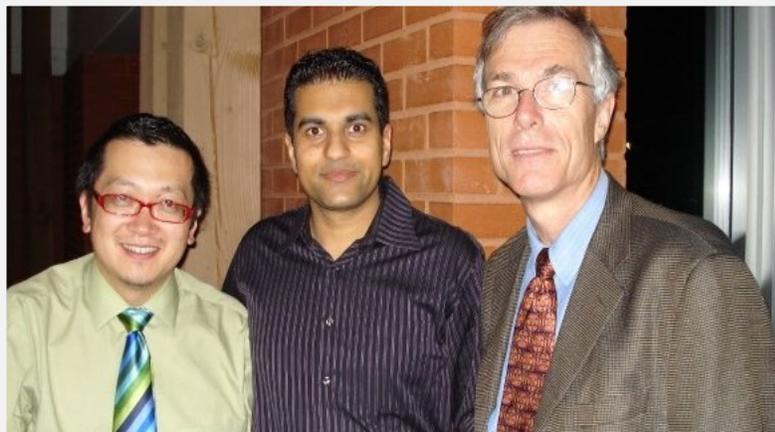
Walking into the dinner hall I was always sure to say hello with my arms placed wide to express happiness and gratitude. For some it seemed like a pose, for others a grand hello and it always produced smiles and laughter. I made many friends over time and was always remembered for this gesture. When I was leaving the college for research abroad to India in the summer of 2008 I was showered with so much joy and a group photo of my unique hello which was named 'The Kulwinder Wave'. Thanks SJC for giving such an awesome experience!!"

- Kulwinder Singh SJC Alumnus

2007-08



The "Kulwinder Wave"
Photo: Kulwinder Singh



Prof. Henry Yu , SJC Principal , Kulwinder Singh, Prof. Tim
Brook, SJC Principal 2004-09
Photo: Kulwinder Singh



Potluck Party
Photo: Xiao Zhou

Look at the size of this pot luck party, wow!! Yes, that is one of the greatest things about SJC - there is never shortage of delicious food of all styles made by talented masters or PhDs.
- Kirk Zhou, SJC Alumnus 2000-02



Potluck Party
Photo: Matt Dixon

What I will remember most about SJC is the wonderful people I met and the silly fun we had. There is nothing better than the day we sported fake mustaches while cooking and eating amazing Mexican food.
- Matt Dixon, SJC Alumnus 2009-12



Wine Tasting
Photo: Vanora Millar

I loved the sense of community at SJC! This pic was taken during in the courtyard with Vanora Millar, Jon Breen, Alejandra & Andres Varhola
- Vanora Millar, SJC Alumna 2007-08



Jamaican meal for Outreach Auction
Photo: Tim Came

So many fond memories of SJC. Such a welcoming place: my younger brother Dan (then an undergrad) made as many friends visiting SJC as I did living there. The picture is of us catering a Jamaican meal we prepared for an SJC Outreach service auction. A great memory, and one among many. In particular: Where else but SJC could friends meet, found a fictional interdisciplinary research institute (the Timothy J. Brook Institute for Operations Research & Behavioural Experimentation), and generate a research program?
- Tim Came, SJC Alumnus 2004-07



Photo: Sotoyne Godwin A-Hart



Photo: Coral Gonzales

In SJC I found sisters!!!
- Coral Gonzalez, SJC Alumna 2011-13

My time at SJC will always remain one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. My fondest memories are the people I met at SJC and the opportunity I had to develop and build friendships that I know will last for years to come. Living under the same roof with highly intelligent people whom I know will make meaningful impacts in their various fields of life is a privilege I feel very blessed to have experienced. If I had to do it all over again, I will choose to live and be part of the SJC Community again and again. My time at SJC will always remain one of the most remarkable experiences of my life. My fondest memories are the people I met at SJC and the opportunity I had to develop and build friendships that I know will last for years to come. - Sotoyne Godwin A-Hart, SJC Alumna 2010-12

*As the first president of St. John's Dining Society, I have always taken an interest in SJC's culinary evolution. Menu preparation by committee was great fun, although I'm sure our banter was quite frustrating for the chef. As a practicing lawyer, I used to appear for breakfast dressed in "tabs" preparatory to an appearance in the Court of Appeal, On 19 November 1998 I bit into something really, really bad. Or so it seemed as I drifted out of consciousness and off my chair onto the floor. Two SJC med students recognized the symptoms of cardiac arrest and responded instantly with CPR, summoning an ambulance. My blood pressure was 70 over 30. There is little doubt that the quick action of the SJC students saved my life. I was quickly transported to Vancouver General for rescue angioplasty. Two months later, I was back at UBC and 15 years later am still a practicing barrister, now armed with a Ph.D., in law. But ever since that memorable day at SJC I have always wondered: What had I done to p@# off the Chef?
- Gary Botting, SJC Alumnus 1998-99*



Photo: Gary Botting



Our Wedding day, Sunday June 28 2009 was a lovely sunny day. At 9:00 am a few friends gathered with us on the third floor balcony of St. John's College to help us with a few final touches and to welcome the marriage commissioner who was about to make us man and wife. The blue sky and the bald eagles flying over wreck beach made a stunning scenery to what was one of the happiest days of our lives. The next day we met on the balcony again with our fellow Johanneans to finish the wedding cake. It was a good cake, these were great friends and our time in St. John's College will be cherished in our hearts.

- Noa Grass, SJC Alumna 2007-09

Noa Grass & Beni Sasson Patio Wedding
Photo: Noa Grass

Collage of couples who met at St. John's College and later married! (those we know about!)



Aliye & Uli



Sarah & Bryan



Rebecca & Dave



Misato & Nathan



Janet & Colin



Lauren & Kirk



Jordana & Jean



Jaclyn & Scott

Memories and
Stories by SJC
Alumni....

Meaningful Conversations in the SJC Dining Hall

The time you spend in St. John's College can be life-changing. It certainly was for me.

When I was accepted into SJC, I was thrilled at the prospect of being able to meet and get to know exceptional people from all disciplines from all over the world. There is no other place on Earth, I believe, that has such a concentration of intelligent diversity. I participated in many SJC activities that I am sure endure to this day: the dining society, the movie club, the running club, the weekly trek to Koerner's pub, to name a few. There is, of course, no shortage of activities in which to engage. Every resident enriches the community in his or her unique way.

I was so thoroughly enamored by SJC's international ambiance that, by the second semester of my stay, I set about pursuing a goal that I had had at the back of my mind for many years: to learn foreign languages. So many languages are spoken at SJC — many more than the number of residents, since many Johannians are multi-lingual. I myself was already proficient in English, Hebrew, and Arabic. I set about learning French, Spanish and — if I could — Portuguese. I was fortunate enough to have a supervisor who allowed me to audit UBC language courses, which I did. By the time I finished my doctorate, I had audited more than twice as many language courses than I had taken credit for towards my Electrical Engineering program.

But these courses would not have amounted to that much without the reinforcement that I got from SJC residents. At the communal dinner table, several times a week, I would practice my new pet languages with other SJC residents who spoke them — either natively, or language learners like me. All were more than willing to engage me in conversation, patiently listening to what at first were probably only incomprehensible sentence fragments, correcting my mistakes, teaching me new words, helping me practice.

By the time my four-year stay at SJC came to an end, I had achieved near complete fluency in Spanish and French, a good grasp of Portuguese, and I could even understand Italian if spoken slowly enough. But that is just the tip of the iceberg in terms of how SJC affected my life. You see, one of the SJC residents, a doctoral candidate from Colombia, who was a good friend and one of my favorite conversation partners in the SJC dining hall, just happened to be looking for an Electrical Engineering doctoral candidate who would be willing to go to Colombia to dictate an Electrical Engineering seminar in her Colombian university — in Spanish. I jumped at the opportunity. Not only would this be a great opportunity to practice my Spanish but, needless to say, it also would be a free plane ticket to what would surely be a truly interesting trip to South America — a place I had never visited before.

The seminar was a great success. It turns out that, if you put your mind to it and have the good fortune of living at SJC, you can actually achieve complete fluency in a foreign language, good enough to dictate a university-level seminar without even having ever set foot in a country in which that language is spoken.

But this too, was only the beginning. While in Colombia, I was offered a position in that university as a visiting professor. Without much thought, I of course accepted the offer. I was supposed to be there only one year. But then, when that year was almost over, I met a wonderful girl. I managed to extend my stay there to see if I could get to know her better. It turned out we got to like each other a lot. I ended up staying in Colombia for three years and, when I came back, I brought my new Colombian wife with me.

So you see, what started off as SJC residents just having good-natured chats in the microcosm that is the SJC dining hall morphed, for me, into a completely unique cultural experience and then into a wonderful marriage. So, when next you sit down at the dining hall, take a good look around. You never know where your dinner conversations may end up taking you.

YL

SJC resident, 2002 to 2006

A Remembrance of Life at St John's College

When I received a request to write a submission for a publication celebrating the 15th Anniversary of St. John's College at UBC, a broad smile crept over my face as a flood of amazing memories filled my mind. I remembered the formal dinners, the choir, the coffee house amateur nights, the fundraisers for international causes, the inspiring guest artists, the BBQs up on the deck, language tutorials, concerts, carols around the piano, Christmas tree decorating, Halloween celebrations, and, perhaps to the chagrin of the principal, the room crawl parties.

It all began when an announcement was made in one of my graduate music courses that there were vacancies at St. John's College. My husband, Peter, and I were living with our youngest daughter in Vancouver and she was about to head off to Montreal to attend McGill University. It was just the two of us again, and, eager for adventure, I broached the subject with my husband. Would he be interested in living in a graduate residence with lots of younger students? Were we too mature for such an escapade?

Obviously, we decided that living at St. John's would be an amazing opportunity for us, but little did we know that this decision would ensure that the next four years of our lives were the most inspired, most productive, most fulfilling, and, sometimes, most exhausting. Nothing was more exhilarating than sitting down for supper with some of the most incredible minds that the world has to offer and discussing various aspects of science, music, art, politics, law, and occasionally plans for an upcoming social event that would provide a fun diversion from our scholastic pursuits. Peter and I were absolutely enthralled by this exciting world of possibilities; each and every resident was undertaking their research studies with such vigour and enthusiasm that one could not help but be inspired. Complementing this vigorous academic environment was a world of friendship and camaraderie unparalleled anywhere else. We laughed together, sang together, behaved a little crazy together, and most importantly cared about each other and the world around us. We raised thousands of dollars for goats in Sudan, chickens for the women of Lesotho, food for the homeless in Vancouver, and fresh water systems for undeveloped countries. There was never a shortage of volunteers, for each of the residents of St. John's had entered the college dedicated to enriching community life. And, enriched our lives were!

Despite the smile on my face as I reminisce, there is a large part of me that feels sadness that my time at St. John's is behind me. However, the sadness quickly dissipates each time I reconnect with any of my many amazing friends from St. John's and realize that the bonds created during my tenure at the college are permanent and life-long. Years and distance may separate us all, but the friendships remain and the memories will continue to remind me of one of the most amazing times in my life!

Yvonne Gillespie

SJC resident, 2003 to 2007

A SJC Alumnus Experience in Haiti

While I lived at SJC, a few fellow students from Quebec set up a little “francophone café”. We met in the lounge once a week and discussed something in French. As with everything that I did at SJC, the atmosphere was fun and we were happy to be involved. There were many accents and ability levels collecting in a welcoming atmosphere—a nice international mix. Little could I foresee then, how residing at SJC would give me lasting benefits long after I had left the college.

In early 2012, a pal looking for a job in California came across an advertisement for a posting in Haiti and thought it suited me, a structural engineer; on pure speculation, I sent my CV to the firm in California and, within a few days, they had me on a plane to Port-au-Prince. This firm has been working in Haiti as structural consultants since the catastrophic earthquake of 2010 which was estimated to have killed 316,000 and made a million homeless. I started in February 2012. I now work with a Haitian-based consulting firm, repairing the main hospital (HUEH) in Port-au-Prince, some churches around the country and shanty town homes in the capital.

Because of its colonial history, Haiti is a Francophone country with Haitian Creole and French as official languages. Being able to speak French is a key asset although the locals are very forgiving of my imperfect mastery. They are very warm and welcoming and really value structural engineering, unlike in Canada where it is seen as a necessary evil to gain a building permit. Apart from the heat (a bad winter day here is like the best summer day in Canada!), a major challenge here is the lack of any real building code or quality control so I have to design from first principles and establish standards based on my judgement. Imagine how much more difficult my work would have been without a knowledge of French.

I now find myself in an international environment as the rebuilding of Haiti after the devastating earthquake is a multinational effort. I work with professionals from all over the world and am able to connect with many because there is usually a SJC pal from the country who, in times past, provided me with an insight into their homeland. The map of the world for a Johannan is a mosaic of friends and conversations and some of these echoes will never fade. I continue to have fun practising my French.

Joel Hampson

SJC resident, 2001 to 2003

My Fond Memory of St. John's College

Originally from Shanghai, my two-year residence at St John's College, UBC between November 2000 and December 2002 has been one of the most cherished and memorable experiences of my life.

Having experienced the life at SJC, as well as associated with the Johannean Alumni Association in Vancouver, I feel St. John's College has been the epitome of carrying forward the true light and tradition of the former Shanghai-based St John's University. St. John's College has cultivated a nurturing and intellectually stimulating community for graduate students, visiting scholars, postdoctoral fellows from all corners of the world. Its unique culture to embrace and celebrate diversity, which permeates each fibre of the resident life, allows the young Johanneans to make friends, to show their talents, and to share their expertise of their passionately chosen disciplines.

Resident life is full of both academic and enjoyable activities. Well can I remember the Coffeehouse concerts with such as brilliant displays of singing, dancing, acting, and poetry reading; the many cultural celebrations such as Oktoberfest, Festival of Lights, Halloween costume and pumpkin carving contest, Easter Egg Hunting, and the technology wizards who dedicated their time to the creation of an online magazine Life@SJC, the recording of the Johannean song and the making of a short movie of residents' experiences.

In addition, there were many stimulating talks, discussions, lectures and conferences held within the college on an exceptionally broad range of topics. These included talks on international relations by diplomats, political analyses by prominent politicians, such as the Consul General of Canada to Seattle, the Chinese Consul general in Vancouver, and John Atta Mills, the former President of Ghana, with whom I had a memorable picture taken at the SJC International Dinner. Moreover, there were faculty talks, an international TeleHealth Conference exploring the potential of technology on health care, and numerous residents' talks ranging from bioregionalism examining humans' allegiance to a place, on classic Chinese poetry, the scientific knowledge of our daily tea and coffee, and a very educational and entertaining talk on wines.

We were also honoured to have very notable talks by Johanneans from St. John's University. Mr T. F. Ying, a prominent Johannean from the Shanghai era of the 30s and 40s, delivered a solemn history lesson on his *Alma Mater* in peacetime and in turmoil. It was a history little known to the junior fellows at SJC. Dr. George Shen, a Johannean and a passionate aficionado of Peking Opera, gave us a talk. It was an education on the treasure of Chinese culture, combining a brief history and the operatic basics such as facial make-ups and their assigned roles. The lecture culminated with Dr. Shen donning a theatrical beard to stage a most forceful recitation. His expertise and his passion were certainly infectious. Finally, one more notable lecture during my residence must be mentioned. It was on the subject of iodine deficiency by Jack Ling, a clinical professor of public health. The lecture enriched our knowledge of the humble table salt: its health benefits, its distribution in the world, prevalence in seafood and the particulars of Canadian law regarding it.

It was hard for me to bid farewell to the College. However, my memories of St. John's College will always be with me like camphor seeds from the trees on the campus of former St. John's University, which symbolize the *Alma Mater*. The seeds, sprouting time and again in my mind, will ignite for me, a smile here, a conversation there in the recreated pleasure of bygone days.

Cheryl Hu

SJC resident, 2000 to 2002

From Germany with Love and Dedication

In 1999, when a student of Professor Oliver Vornberger of the northern German University of Osnabrück asked him for a reference, little did he realise that this routine service would change his life. The reference was to support an application for residence at St John's College in faraway Vancouver. That student, Jan Hannemann, undertaking a PhD at the UBC, wrote back with a glowing description of the college and the pertinent advice, "This would be a nice place for you." This led to Oliver's first sabbatical residence in 2002. What he found was no dreary student digs but a place of trees, lawns and smart buildings filled with fascinating young people from across the globe, who were not only of high scholastic calibre, but also talented in the arts, literature and music. And, against this, was the backdrop of a grand university and a beautiful city between the mountains and the sea.

It was a setting that further inspired his own creativity in his chosen field of Computer Science and his hobby in digital audio-visual media. The moment was indeed ripe. Over that brilliant spring, there were fabulous parties, so-called Coffeehouse concerts and a theatrical; the students were practising a song that would express the college's international flavour. Sung in several languages to the tune of The Seekers' "I Am Australian," the song exemplified both diversity and inclusivity. Feeling that such a song should be published to a wider audience, Oliver made a recording one fervent evening in the Fairmont Social Lounge. Despite the simple equipment used, it was a beautiful piece of work and, placed on the Internet, allowed friends and relatives of students a peek into the microcosm of St John's College.

Then, feeling that something more of the spirit of the college should be preserved and, encouraged by the friendliness of everyone around, Oliver went further. Over the warming days, he set about making a short film with snippets featuring residents expressing their points of view as well their musical and acting abilities. It was a stunning success and, transferred to DVD, allowed the students to take home a time-frozen piece of the college.

Even when back in Osnabrück, Oliver remained enamoured of the College. Together with his students, he created the Johannan Database that would allow alumni to keep in touch, before Facebook was even launched. For many years supported by the college, the Database is still accessible and updated by many alumni although new entries have become scarce. It is a slice of the varied and captivating cast of characters that have populated the college across several years.

Oliver returned to St John's in the spring of 2007 and 2012 and, on each visit, made a short film of college life. He also had time to make a short film of the feisty Granville Island Market, presenting a range of stall keepers talking very articulately about their wares and another of a time-lapsed bus trip from the UBC to downtown Vancouver on a blue-sky day.

It is five years between drinks for Oliver at the van der Linden Dining Hall and his next visit is timed for 2017. Then, we can be sure that residents of that lucky year will be able to take home a little disc that, perhaps on one lazy winter afternoon, might recreate for them, the voices and faces of absent friends. And surely some of the joy, colour and movement of long-gone days will surface from the crevices of memory: breakfasting together over the warm smell of coffee, scrumptious dinners, the jokes and songs, laughter and chitchat all concertinaed into the moment.

Note: In 2009, Professor Oliver Vornberger was awarded the prestigious Ars Legendi Prize for the best lecturer in Computer Science in Germany. All work mentioned in this story may be found in this link: <http://www.vornberger.net/stjohns>

A Whiff of Romance

In the spring of 2002, a story appeared in the college's online magazine, Life@SJC, which generated an enormous buzz amongst residents.

Titled "Hopelessly in Love," it was the anonymous, well-written confession of "Some Johannean Chap," a supposedly shy, socially awkward, young man who, having found the girl of his dreams living within the college, had no idea how to ask her for a date. It all sounded like a real cry from a breaking heart and, for weeks, the college talked of little else. Few doubted that the story was genuine but, despite intense speculation regarding the identities of the writer and his romantic interest, they remained hidden. This ten-year mystery has finally been cleared up with the writer coming forward. We reprint the original story followed by the denouement which may surprise some.

The front page of the March 2002 issue of Life@SJC has been archived at: http://web.archive.org/web/20041214200000/http://www.stjohns.ubc.ca/@sjc/index_issue4.html

Hopelessly in Love

By Some Johannean Chap

*"I believe that fate has brought us here
And we should be together, babe, but we're not"
- Macy Gray, "I Try"*

"See Kent! See Kent!"

"Gooooaaal!!!"

"Nice goal! It's 3-2 now!"

Voices from the soccer players (or footballers for the non-North American residents) rise from the field at the back of the College up to where I sit looking off towards the Pacific Ocean on the third floor patio. Unlike the way Snoopy starts his stories, no, it is not a dark and stormy night. On the contrary, it is a warm March Vancouver day. The sun is shining and not a hint of rain clouds on the horizon. Last night, the resident weather guy had sent an email to the mailing list predicting wonderful news of a warm and sunny weekend. With news of warmth and plenty of sun, some of the guys (which today included a gal) decided to have a little game of soccer this afternoon.

Sounds of the players running (and grunting) and the soccer ball bouncing off the wall of the College meant that play had resumed. I am drawn back to the spectacular view of the ocean and occasionally, I find myself staring at the eagle nest hoping for a glimpse of at least one of the two eagles that reside there. However, something else had been occupying my thoughts for the last half-hour or so – thoughts about a fellow resident in the College. She is unlike any other resident that I have seen or met in the two years that I have been here. There's something about Mary that caught my eye and more importantly, has now captured my heart.

I first saw Mary at the "Welcome New Residents" pizza party this past September. I had arrived late to the party because I was in downtown Vancouver running some errands that afternoon. By then, the party was in full swing with over half the numerous boxes of pizza consumed. As I reached in between the crowd hovering around the pizzas to get myself a slice or two, I accidentally bumped into her. I turned towards her to apologize for being such a klutz but when I saw her, I froze. I was dumbfounded. There I stood, in awe of such a stunning woman. After what seemed like an eternity, I sheepishly gave her a smile and muttered, "Sorry." Mary smiled back at me and returned to her conversation with the group of people around her.

Since that day, Mary has always been in my mind whenever it was not occupied with quasars and quarks. We've shared the same dinner table a few times since then, but the number of times that that has happened can be counted on one hand. The few times that I had walked into the dining room and found Mary already there having her dinner, she was always dining at the economists' table. The geographer and one of the Chinese residents are usually there at the table as well, and those guys are just so damn popular with the ladies in the College! If she is always around them, what chance do I have of attracting her eye? I am definitely no Ricky Martin, Tom Cruise or Brad Pitt. Heck, I don't know if I even stack up to those group of guys she has dinner with. Some may say that I have low self-esteem, but I prefer to say that I'm being realistic.

I'm a nobody here. People seldom greet me when I sit at their table during meals. I definitely know the feeling of loneliness that Dr. Ping wrote about in her article. Also, I'm a shy and quiet person by nature and so am quite socially inept. I was so happy when I managed to work up the courage to introduce myself to Mary during one of the rare occasions we sat at the same table and found out a little about her using the standard four questions asked of all new residents: "What is your name?", "Where are you from?", "What program are you in?" and "Master's or Ph.D.?" Looking back though, it was probably more of a feeling of relief than happiness that I did not come across as a complete idiot or fool with my penchant for stuttering when nervous.

Occasionally, Mary would go to the Sunday night movies to take a break from her psychology and education books. Just like during meals, I had always hoped that she would take one of the seats close to me so I could engage in a conversation with her before the movie. As luck would have it, she always sat far enough away from me that having a conversation would be impractical. So I watched the movies knowing in my heart that she was in the same room as I. And had the movie turn out to be a bore, I'd at least have something else to focus my attention on for the rest of the movie.

I have even gone out with some of the residents for drinks at Koerner's a few times hoping that she would come along as well. Yeah, me...the socially inept one. I have been disappointed so far – she has never showed up. I have also hoped that one of the many unnecessary emails from the mailing list would be from Mary – perhaps inviting fellow residents to participate in an activity with her. Patiently, I have waited for such an opportunity but alas, my waiting has been in vain.

As you can tell, none of my attempts at forming a relationship with Mary, or even to just be with her, has been successful at all. As I sit here this afternoon, I debate with myself whether to approach Mary and tell her how I feel about her. Yes, there's a chance that she might just laugh at my face, which would make all further contacts awkward since we will inevitably run into each other in the future. Yet, there is also the possibility that something positive may happen by sharing with her my feelings. According to GQ magazine, women apparently like men who are willing to share their feelings.

There are so many things pulling me every which way inside of me. My mind is telling me that rejection will be painful, embarrassing and unbearable. Yet my heart tells me that she could be the one for me...my soul mate. Life, as I know it, is complicated and life has recently thrown a wrench into this. I've recently heard that she is a religious person, which is okay with me since I myself am a religious person too. However, our religions are "incompatible". Why are they incompatible? Think about the violence, tension and all that is happening in the Middle East and you'll understand.

I am graduating soon and I will be moving out of this College in over a month's time. There's also the issue of me completing and defending my thesis, which is slowly turning into a real problem as my mind is constantly thinking of her during most of my waking hours. Should I try starting a relationship when time is at such a premium right now? And if a relationship should blossom, will a long-distance relationship work? So many questions, so many issues, no easy answers. Sadly, there's no one here at the college that I can confide in or ask for advice. Maybe this is not supposed to be, but I simply refuse to accept that. Oh, I'd give anything right now to have her by my side strolling together in the field at the back of the College, if only just to be with her.

I am brought back to the present by the opening of the patio doors. Some of the residents have brought with them food to barbecue. In the same breadth that I said "Hello" to them, I said my good-byes and left. I trudge melancholically towards my room still thinking about Mary and debating whether to ask her out, maybe for just a coffee. From a stone's throw away, I hear a voice greet me. I look up and there she is, walking towards me with a smile on her face. I stand there staring at her, dumbfounded again. What do I say? What do I do? Did fate bring us here together? And right now?

Hopelessly in Love — The Sequel

In early 2002, the story Hopelessly in Love appeared in the St. John's College online magazine, and it caused quite a stir among the residents of the college. The residents wondered who this "Some Johannean Chap" was, and who was the female resident with whom he was smitten.

One decade later, there are some who are still wondering who this S. J. Chap is and about his struggle with and for love. St. John's College will be celebrating its 15th anniversary in 2013 and the anniversary committee had sent word to S. J. Chap asking if they could get an update on him. S. J. Chap has obliged and this piece is the revealing of S. J. Chap and the story behind Hopelessly in Love.

S. J. Chap is a fictional character who was created by two Johanneans. I, Thaddeus Sim, am one of the two authors. The second person wishes to remain anonymous and I will honor that request.

Although S. J. Chap is not real, his story is real. His story is a collection of our fellow Johanneans' stories that both authors heard over meals in the dining hall, at social events, at the common kitchens, while playing croquet, pool or soccer, or while hanging out with our fellow Johanneans around the College grounds. We believe that many of the residents felt a kinship for or a connection to S. J. Chap because his story of his desire for companionship, for a relationship, and for love -- together with the complexities of it all -- is our stories.

Why did we write this story? Both of us will admit to a pinch of mischievousness when we initially decided to write it. But ultimately, the story's completion was driven by our belief that the stories of our fellow Johannians' struggles with the issues surrounding the search for companionship needed a voice; issues about cultures, age, religions, beliefs, upbringing, morals, and so on. For some of us, this may be the first time that we even think of these things, and it can be a difficult process trying to understand, rationalize, and reconcile these conflicts.

There is certainly a universality with all of these issues, and St. John's College seemed to be an appropriate environment for such discussions and reflections. Our sense was that this story would create opportunities for frank discussions wherever Johannians gathered, and would provide avenues for those struggling with these issues to explore their thoughts and feelings with others without revealing too much. Judging by the conversations following the story's publication, the story has certainly done its job.

We hope that many of you enjoyed the story as much as we did writing it. The two of us (and we are sure many of our fellow Johannians too) appreciated the conversations that arose from it.

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The Old Days of St John's

If I could find them all, those moments that I most cherish at St John's College, I know they would be gathered in a tight knot within the Dining Hall. It was there that I had felt at times, the world to be a safe and serene place, there that I met fascinating individuals, enjoyed absorbing conversations and even been struck by instants of awe and mystery.

Soon after the turn of the century, I lodged at SJC, having enrolled as a mature student in software systems at the UBC. With an engineering doctorate long under my belt, I did not really need another degree. But work had fallen into a rut and I was looking for an *annus mirabilis*, a year of wonders against the backdrop of a famously attractive city.

I was considerably older than most of the residents but I found friendliness and kindness at the first flush of admittance. There was the American guy who found a room for me to sleep in when I tried to check in on a cold December evening with the office all shut. There was the invitation to a private Christmas buffet the following day that I was too embarrassed to accept and all those people I soon got to know, from every inhabited continent, like so many pieces in a kaleidoscope. As I had long been living by myself in Melbourne, the impression was one of going from a plain, white-washed wall to the ceiling of the Sistine Chapel.

There were parties and festivals, music and talks, and lots of chit-chat over coffee in the Dining Hall beneath the lemon glow of lamps with the darkness outside pressed against the windows. But there were also lonely days in my room when I longed for the deeper friendships that at first eluded me and it had seemed to me that everything was below expectations. Beautiful days with the snow falling all over the college and lots of rain when the fall came. But it was undoubtedly the wide spectrum of human nature that enthralled me most. I thought I was learning so much about others until I realised that, through them, I was also looking into the mirrors of my inmost self.

The two nights I spent helping a Chinese student recover from a computer disaster were no sacrifice because it led to some interesting conversations. The Life@SJC web magazine that I edited gave me joy yet, I had destroyed a good working relationship with a resident through one cruel e-mail. I made no attempt to remedy the situation with one Singaporean lecturer on sabbatical whose undisguised loathing for me was as unexpected as it was perplexing. Then, there was the criminally handsome, talented Canadian so friendly towards me when, in fact, I would always be crushed by feelings of insignificance in his presence. And what about that terrifyingly desolate night when I wandered the corridors and realised with a start that there was not one door that I could comfortably knock on for succour? Through my reactions and interactions, I learnt far more about myself than about others and if, through the long tail of reflection, the music of my life has acquired depth, there is also a strange, yearning quality for all the other human connections I might have made.

But now, I am back in Melbourne at an age when time can no longer be said to be on my side. The days and weeks and years have acquired a certain metronomic regularity. I no longer have so many friends and I am always going between the office and the apartment. It is not unpleasant living by myself: sunshine floods the lounge on summer mornings and the moon casts a silver patch over my bed in winter. The slow drip of my weekends is placid and restful, so quiet in fact that I generally talk to no one. But I walk through the streets of memory to a place of seemingly endless chatter and the sound of many voices and a summer so thrilling that I am glad for all the circumstances that have conspired to bring me here. And I meet someone who asks: "Well, what was it like for you?"

It was like one of those intricate gardens full of mysterious pathways and light and shadows. I would not have missed it for the world. There was that clear night we gathered on Wreck Beach to watch the Leonid meteor shower, that afternoon we watched the completely electrifying USA versus Canada ice hockey match. The morning when snow fell so thick that we could build a snowman and throw snowballs, the Chinese New Year celebrations with dumplings, songs and bright splashes of red. Helping Oliver record the Johannean Song, hearing Paul sing *Wave Over Wave*, the truly sumptuous fare on International Dinner Night, flurries of e-mail over the network, walks along the sea-facing road, writing those Dr Ping stories, language classes, movie nights and, after St John's College, nothing, nothing will ever be the same for me again.

Kein Gan

SJC resident, 2001 to 2002