

Eastleigh Secondary School Alumni
Report of the ESS Nairobi Schools' Reunion – 1st October 2023

On the day, there were as many 180 participants, including wives and friends of nearly 123 ex-students. The participants' pack included the souvenir magazine, the Programme, a specially designed name badge and a Feedback Form. Each table also had two copies of a list of group photos to be taken to ensure everyone present is included in group photos.

On behalf of the organisers, Pradeep Luther, the Secretary, welcomed everyone. He introduced the Chairman of ESS Alumni, Jayant Tanna. Jayant started by thanking everyone for attending and introduced all members of his Reunion committee. He thanked them for their valuable support.

Jayant welcomed all the alumni present, particularly those from overseas – Prem Sharma and Parvin Syal from LA, Naresh Solanki from Chesterfield, Missouri and Gurcharan Singh Gill from Nairobi. He also thanked the 72 alumni from ESS and 51 ex-students from other Nairobi schools - Duke of Gloucester or Jamhuri School, Duchess of Gloucester or Pangani Girls School, Highway Secondary, Delamere Boys or Upper Hill, City High, Ngara Secondary, Khalsa Boys and Girls and Technical High schools.

As for the souvenir magazine, we had profiles of 74 alumni out of 123 attending this event. The profiles were fascinating! Many congratulations to all the writers who had made their schools proud. In addition to the profiles, there was a goodwill message from the Principal at EHS, the Chair of the local EHS Alumni, Rules of ESS Alumni; Goodwill Messages from all, a list of participants and photos from Basketball court opening; from 2017, 2019 and 2022 visits to Nairobi, and 2018 Toronto Reunion.

There was also a four-page supplement on the Rise and Fall of Hockey in Kenya. It was noted that after the tremendous success Kenya achieved in the 60s and 70s through world class players like Alu Mendonca, Avtar Singh Sohal and Surjit Singh Panesar, the standard of hockey has slumped so low that Kenya hockey has not been at the Olympics for the last 30 years!

The interviews with the seven Kenya hockey players and ex-Olympians were very interesting and informative. They had all worked and trained very hard to be selected to play for Kenya in the Olympics in 1968 at Mexico and 1972 at Munich. In addition, they played for Kenya in the Hockey World Cups in Barcelona in 1971 and Amsterdam in 1973. All of them thanked their families and hockey coaches for their inspiration and support. Everyone present applauded the Hockey stalwarts – Harvinder, Amarjeet and Tejinder Marwa, Ravinder Laly, Harvinder Sibia and Billy Ahluwalia.

Jayant talked about the work done by ESS Alumni to support the school including raising funds for Needy Pupils to pay off their Lunch fees. A cheque for K Sh. 330,446/- was presented to the school. And finally, ESS Alumni sponsored the building of a brand-new Basketball and Volleyball court in March 2022. We were able to donate nearly £25,000 for the new court which was opened in May 2022 by the MP for Kamukunji, Hon Yusuf Hassan. The photos are in the magazine. Jayant thanked all the donors listed in the appreciation section in the souvenir magazine. The school pupils were absolutely thrilled and were very appreciative of our efforts.

Jayant reminded the meeting about the excellent website www.essalumni.org.uk that many had appreciated. It has profiles of students, staff, all past school activities,

sports and results etc. It has, however, become outdated recently and needs an active driver to revive it.

Jayant then talked about the Sunday Lunchtime get-togethers organised by ESS Alumni. They gave an opportunity to our members to be informed about several health issues. We were fortunate to have 2 of our committee members giving us the benefit of their expertise. Dr Bhagwant Virdee, a General Practice doctor, talked about heart conditions in Asian families and how these might be avoided or reduced. We also had a presentation from Dr Pradeep Luther, a researcher with University College, London, on skeletal and heart muscles and the importance of maintaining strength in old age. The Accounts were in a healthy position because of careful spending and meticulous record-keeping by our Treasurer Nisar Butt. We had 90 Biennial Members and 45 Life Members.

Jayant thanked all committee members, advertisers, all donors, Karam Bharij for providing photography for this event; all Raffle donors and the Raffle team; Liquid Bubble Ltd our printers; Anuradha Shukla and Kiran Thakrar for the entertaining melody and music; Neha Gudka for their lovely venue and catering.

After a sumptuous meal, the music band Strings led by Anuradha Shukla and Kiran Thakrar, provided some beautifully melodious songs, both current and vintage which brought all participants on their feet in applause and on the dance floor.

The Raffle prizes were announced. These were Champagne Afternoon Tea & Thames River Cruise for 2; Three Course Lunch with Prosecco for 2 at Sindhu Restaurant – Marlow; Indian Afternoon Tea for 2 at Soho Wala; Comedy Night for 2; and a Studio Portrait by photographer Karam Bharij. The lucky ones shrieked with delight while others muttered under their breath.

At this stage, Jayant explained that EHS in Nairobi needed funds to support needy pupils. He invited participants to make any donations for EHS in Nairobi if they wished to. Gurcharan Singh Gill donated £500; Manvinderjit (Billy) Ahluwalia, Jagjit Bansal, Baldev Laly, Jaswinder Bahra, Vijay Patel and Ashok Sharma agreed to donate £250 each. Yaqoob Sheikh agreed to donate £200. Jayant thanked them for their generous donations and everyone applauded their charitable contributions.

Gurdip Singh Kalsi then extended a Vote of Thanks to the Chair and committee for their excellent planning and organisation of the Reunion. He wished all the guests a safe journey home.

Everyone smiled happily for their pictures in School and Year groups. All members left with lovely smiles on their faces bidding their old and new friends goodbye!

Finally, the feedback returns were very positive. 70% of the respondents rated the event overall to be Excellent and 30% rated it as Good. 71% rated the organisation to be Excellent and 26% as Good. All very positive!