ENGLISH COLLEGE LIFE

COLIN BOBB-SEMPLE left St. Stanislaus for England at the end of Form 3A

After I had sailed out of the Magnificent Province, I experienced a very interesting and educative journey via Trinidad, Venezuela, Curacao, Jamaica, St. Kitts, Madeira and Portugal to Southampton. On arriving in London, I was completely taken aback at the beauty and splendour of this great city with both its bad and good attributes and being so much brighter and busier than I had expected.

When I first entered St. Ignatius' Jesuit College, I immediately noticed that it was an old typical English structure with a church and a concrete playground and that the Principal, Fr. Brinkworth, bore a slight resemblance to Fr. Hopkinson.

I will never forget the various events on my opening day, Monday 12th September, 1960. As I walked into the schoolyard full of excitement and suppressed anxiety, all eyes were focused on me. After I had met the Principal, the shrill bell sounded and I was taken to my classroom to be greeted with the broad smile of the fourth line master who asked me where I was from, my former College, and so on. After introductions were over, I was then shown to my desk which was later filled with text books, similar to those which are used in B.G., and free exercise books with the monogram printed on the cover.

So I then settled down to work in these entirely different surroundings, anxious to know whether or not the schoolwork was different from that at St. Stanislaus. After three periods the bell rang again and we all went out for break. While I wanted to find out many things, many of the boys wanted to know all about me, and as soon as we cleared the classroom door, I was surrounded by inquisitive enthusiasts who asked me many questions, the first one of which was if I came from Africa. Another was if I were from Jamaica. I then explained carefully where I was from because many of them did not know where British Guiana is. During those fifteen minutes we chatted and I learned many things, for instance, who are the ferula wielders, etc., for the English boys can really talk very much and they can keep conversation going for a long time. The bell rang again, the party broke up and we were back in our classroom.

We do not go home for dinner, so at 12:20 we were out of class and as I walked along the playground I suddenly heard a Cockney voice say, "Want a game, Bob?" and I replied "Sure", so there I was enjoying an exciting game of football until 12:50 when, on a whistle, we went into a long dining room where I had my first school dinner which, I must add, wasn't very appetizing. The dinners are not always good and we have potatoes every day. After I had had dinner that day, I played again and at 1:30 I was back in class.

On Tuesday we went to Mass in the large church adjoining the College two periods after
we did P.T. in the gymnasium for forty minutes where in our white P.T. kit we did various strenuous exercises and had a shower afterwards. On Wednesday I learned that we would be beginning our Cadet course (it starts from the fourth form) so we all went down to the playground where the grandiloquent Corporals, Sergeants, and N.C.Os. drilled us for some time after enrolling us as members of the College Cadets. It is compulsory training for all of us and it is very interesting. I have learned to handle .22 rifles and have already shot fifteen rounds at the range. It is the first time I shot a rifle and I got five bull's eyes but most of the others were far away from the bull's eye. I still keep trying though.

Our Friday Benediction rounded off the week and on the following Monday during the last two periods all of us from the fourth line boarded buses which took us to the College ground where we changed into our jerseys and shorts and played a game of rugby which I find to be a rougher game than football.

A few weeks later I was given my school and Cadet Uniforms. The uniform consists of dark-grey trousers, white shirt, navy blue blazer, peaked navy blue cap and a blue, white and yellow striped tie. The uniform is the usual army khaki-colour,

After this eventful year that I have spent at St. Ignatius, I can say that the atmosphere is quite different from that at home, and I am the only negro boy in the College in spite of the increasing coloured population in England. The College contains seven hundred and sixty-five boys compared with Saints’ 412 and I am treated by both masters and pupils as if I were one of them, and even if there are some who are prejudiced they do a very good job in hiding it because most of them are courteous and helpful. There are four forms in every line and comparing the two Colleges, St. Stanislaus and St. Ignatius, I am pleased to say that the St. Stanislaus standard is higher and the competition is greater in 4A than that in my corresponding form. The classwork in my form is similar to that of home except that we do one extra subject, Geography. The lay masters wear a black cape and look very superior but the square cap is only worn at functions like Speech Day, etc.

I am amazed to discover that the Jesuits have the same system of teaching and the discipline is very good here like that of St. Stanislaus. There must be troublemakers who have to be dealt with severely, and again there is one thing common to most Jesuit Schools, what else but the ferula. I have not sampled it yet over here and I have no intention of doing so, bearing in mind some of those unlucky days in that small room at the top floor of St. Stanislaus. One of the masters here said, "The ferula is not given hard enough, and if it were given hard enough, you boys would only have to receive four to respect it." Anyway, I know the disastrous work it does to your hands.

I must take this opportunity of thanking all the masters and priests for their contribution in enabling me to have a very good education and hope that one good day in the very near future I shall have the pleasure of meeting many of my friends whom I miss very much.

C. Bobb-Semple.