

## My Memories - Charles Passant

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I arrived at PRS a bewildered eleven-year-old, knowing nobody and away from my mother for the first time.

I was assigned to Matthew House\* and put in the five-bedded room on the right side of the corridor. There was a star hanging on the door of the room to signify that the House Captain, a boy named Hutton, also slept there. He took charge of the allocation of beds and I got one of the two beneath the big double glazed windows.

\* Yes, it was Matthew, without the 's' when I arrived, but somehow seems to have changed to Matthews in my second term, when I wrote the House Notes. (Cavalier. Vol.1, No. 10)

It will be remembered by all, I am sure, that the inside windows, which opened inwards, were on hinges which allowed them to be lifted off in hot weather. I discovered this very soon after my arrival when, lying idly on my bed feeling sorry for myself, I found that I could move the open window up and down with my feet. Unfortunately, I lifted it too far and it came crashing down onto the radiator, scattering glass everywhere.

The House Master, after a perfunctory investigation of the accident, told me to report to his study after my bath that evening. So, scrubbed and still wrinkled from the hot water and dressed only in pyjamas and dressing gown, I presented myself. I was told to remove my dressing gown and bend over the arm of what, to me as a small boy, was a large leather chair, whereupon he proceeded to beat me with a cane. It was the only occasion in my life that I was beaten and, even to this day, I find it hard to imagine a more inappropriate time.

However, 'every cloud' and all that. I very quickly became a bit of a celebrity among new boys and old hands alike. It was like scoring a goal directly from the kick-off.

Although many boys were caned at PRS few could claim the distinction of that experience within hours of walking into the place. But even immediate notoriety did little to allay the fears of a worried little boy, many miles from home.

How quickly things can change. A few evenings later Stan Sackett, our music teacher, and Dennis Slade, who taught woodwork, came round the rooms trawling for talent for the choir. They came into to our room and asked 'Can anybody here sing?' I boasted that I could and, when asked to stand on my bed and demonstrate, I precociously announced "I shall sing 'Where E'er You Walk' by Handel".

From that time on I could do no wrong. Messrs Sackett and Slade, who lived in the Staff quarters on the first floor of Matthew, spoilt me rotten.

And when, at the beginning of the next term, I moved to a different room in Matthew our House Master, for reasons best known to himself, saw fit place the star on my door.

I grew to love PRS and was grief stricken when I had to leave. The School gave me so much for which I have ever since been grateful; even my Best Man, John Hollingsworth, and I mean that most sincerely folks!

Incidentally, when I became Head Boy of my very traditional boys grammar school in England, one of the first things I did was to remove the privilege of prefects to beat juniors!

Charles Passant