playing-fields and gardens so it is doggy paradise. One day, I hope, Haluaghat will have some hotels so you can discover this little-known part of beautiful Bangladesh. Look at a map and follow the road due north of Dhaka, through Mymensingh, nearly to the border.

This Saturday is our Parents-Teachers Meeting. I hope all of you have told your parents about it -and especially told them they must be here in time for the cultural event in our Upper Assembly Room so that they can see our two wonderful teams of dancers. Mrs Islam and I have persuaded our Superintendent to allow the Senior School not to come in uniform but in best clothes, because we said we needed you to help with hosting our visitors. When we go to visit another school or other places, the people there welcome us and see we have a good time. To do this they need the social skill called 'hosting' – they are good hosts and hostesses. If your family do a lot of entertaining maybe they are training you how to welcome guests, serve them food, and see that they are happy and having a good time. It is a very important skill for boys as well as girls. It is really nice being welcomed to a home where the men and boys are gracious as well as the women and girls. Your school also should help you to develop this skill. Many of our parents may not know where to go to the cultural event, may not know where they can get some water or a cup of tea, where the toilets are or where the particular Form Teacher is that they want to see. Simply to smile at visitors can make them feel welcome. Some of them may want to see me in my office and, although I was promised a little notice on the landing saying 'To the Principal's Office', I have not got it yet so I am well hidden to visitors. We need your help, Senior School, and Mrs Islam is in charge of you.

Recently, you had your examinations. Saturday is a bit of an examination for our school. People who visit us, when we are open, are looking closely at us, they are checking whether our pupils know how to behave and whether the place is happy but

disciplined. Many people make an excuse to visit us on such occasions to look at the school and decide whether or not they would like THEIR child to be admitted as a pupil here. Remember the day there was a school excursion and someone saw how well a group of you were behaving, asked the name and address of the school and admitted their child here the next day. We have all got to be on our best behaviour but, I have to say, on such days, we usually have a very good time as well. I love meeting parents. I am extremely impressed by most of the people who send their children to this school. God bless you.

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MY SECOND WORLD WAR CHILDHOOD

Assembly 67 – May 8th 2003

Today is May 8th and there is a special reason why this was a very exciting day to have my birthday on in 1945. I wonder if any of you know why? My 7th birthday was…..on VE Day! Victory in Europe Day – the defeat of Germany and Italy and their allies after the Second World War. There was a little boy who was my enemy and his birthday was on May 7th and we waited to see whose birthday the war would end on – and it ended on mine! I was very pleased! The Allies had to wait until August for VJ Day – that was Victory over Japan Day which meant peace in Asia – and that was after the dropping of the terrible Atom Bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

I was brought up by parents who believed that children should not know how terrible the world was until they were old enough to cope – to be able to think about their world without being frightened or upset. They did not let me know how terrible the war was and, indeed what was going on. When I went to school later, I found that some of the children of

my age had terrible nightmares about the war – but I slept peacefully. My father and mother believed that children should be protected from what might upset them. Of course, it was long before television so it was possible for a little girl not to know what war was. Today, with television, it is possible for young children to be very frightened by things that they cannot understand and before they can cope with them. I find that is very sad because I am very glad that I was protected – that I was allowed to be a child who did not know how terrible the world could be for some people until later, when I could cope with it.

But I knew that the war was bad. I knew that we had had to dig up our flower garden to plant vegetables and have chickens. There was a big food shortage. There was a big metal bucket that we put on the stove and into it we put all the peelings of the vegetables and the smell of it went through the house. That was what we fed the chickens on. Each of us had a little dish with a little butter on it and that was our ration – as much as we could have – for a week. It was very little and, when it was finished, there was no more. We also had very little meat, very little fish and cheese. But there was free milk and orange juice for all children and there were lots of vegetables and bones for stewing to make the lovely sauce called gravy – and, although bread was also rationed, we had bread and gravy if we were still hungry after the meal. I did not see a banana until after the war. There were only lovely brown and sticky dried bananas that were kept on a high shelf and I still remember climbing onto the shoe box to steal one at a time!

Clothes were rationed so we all wore other children's second-hand clothes. I had a girl cousin who was a bit older than I was and I looked forward very much to boxes of her old clothes coming. As children, we did not care what we looked like. It was wonderful. I see how clothes-conscious you are today and I think, "Oh dear! Please be children and do not think of fashions!" We had a cellar – part of the house that was underground and, when

the siren went – Vooo! Vooo! – to warn us that the German bombers – the airoplanes with bombs - were coming over, we hurried downstairs to sleep in the cellar, under the kitchen stove where it was quite warm. Sometimes I woke up, back in my own bed, and realized that my father must have carried me upstairs without waking me.

When I was 11 years old, our English teacher asked us to write a composition on 'War'. I told my father and he went to the phone to ring the school and I did not write that essay. War was not a suitable subject for his little girl! He always kept this picture of me by his bedside – little Angela with a small truck full of toys! I took my responsibilities towards my family of toys very seriously and my mother told me that, one day, she heard a big sigh beside her (*Sigh!)* and a small voice said, "Mummy, I have 16 children and I can't cope!" Now I have 325 children as my family – you! I still wonder sometimes whether I can cope! God bless you.

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REFLECTING ON A SUCCESSFUL SOCIAL EVENT

Assembly 68 – May 11th 2003

I congratulate you all on yesterday's event. What a lot of parents came! Most form teachers tell me that only about 4 parents in every class did not come – and that was excellent. If your parents were among those who did not come, please encourage them to ring up and arrange a meeting this week. Some people in Bangladesh think that teachers are dragons who eat parents for breakfast! Please tell your parents that our teachers are really very friendly and want to meet them so that we can work together with them, for your benefit..