

PAUL HARRISON AWARD - 2000

The Paul Harrison award is given by Christian Medical College, Vellore to its alumnus in recognition of a life time of outstanding service in an area of need. This year the award goes to Dr. Deena Sonna of the batch of 1936.

Dr. Deena Sonna was born on 23rd September 1910 at Belgaum in Karnataka. Her father was a Methodist preacher and a practitioner of herbal medicine. Dr. Deena completed her L.M.P. Course at C.M.C. in 1940 and went on to do her internship at the E.T.C.M. Hospital, Kolar.

In response to her Master's call she decided to set up a health care facility in a tiny village called Yelleri, a remote settlement 26 miles from Yadgiri railway station in Gulbarga district. She was supported in this endeavour by Eva Logue a foreign missionary nurse. Those days one had to walk many miles through the fields and travel by bullock carts to reach this remote village. The Villagers provided them with a house to live and to practice. Malnutrition, Cholera, Plague and Tetanus were commonly encountered. Dr. Sonna had to conduct even abnormal deliveries in the field huts. So she had to reach them in the fields to provide inoculations and other health care. Cholera epidemics had to be fought with vaccination and oral administration of Potassium Permanganate.

The caste feelings were strong those days and the high caste families initially refused to accept medicines from her. Dr. Deena Sonna responded by starting a Primary school. Many children who Studied there became Teachers, Nurses, Engineers and other professionals. The caste feeling gradually disappeared and she was offered a more convenient site to build the Linn health centre. The Villagers used to tell her "you have brought light to our village". During her stay there she got the opportunity to undergo Master's Programme in public health at the Harvard. She was loved by all and she retired after 35 years of dedicated service. Even after retiring from Yelleri she continued to serve the people by starting a day care centre for poor children in a village in Raichur District.

Dr. Deena Sonna still cherishes the sweet memories of her life and work at Yelleri and the love and affection bestowed upon her by the poor and innocent folk of this village.

In recognition of her selfless, life long service to the people in need the Christian Medical College, Vellore is proud to bestow the Paul Harrison Award for the year 2000 to Dr. Deena Sonna.

Director

Vellore

7 October 2000

Principal