Happy new year 2005, and also happy Republic Day! This issue has many varying articles, ranging from celebrations, to biographies, tracking asteroids and comets and everyday safety, as well as the continuing poets and kitchen sections. The pictures seen in this issue have captions detailing the characters in them on the last page. Bal Sandesh would like to express its gratitude to everyone who contributed to the relief efforts for the recent tsunami disaster.

-Ashok Cutkosky

Pongal

Urmila Kutikkad, Third grade, Ridgeway Elementary

The festival of Pongal is celebrated in the southern state of Tamil Nadu in India. Pongal falls in the month of January. It is similar to the Thanksgiving day here. Pongal is a three day festival. The first day is celebrated as Bhogi when Lord Indra is worshipped. Lord Indra, being the ruler of the clouds, is worshipped for bringing plentiful rain and a good harvest. The second day is Surya Pongal and is celebrated to praise the Sun God. Prayers are said to the Sun God to seek his blessing. The third day is Mattu Pongal which is an occasion to honor the cattle. To the farmer the cow gives milk and the bull draws the ploughs in the fields. Therefore the farmers honor their cattle on the day of Mattu Pongal. Lord Ganesh and Goddess Parvathi are also worshipped on this day. During pongal celebrations community dinners are held where rich and poor people, old and young come together to celebrate.

The Indian community of Columbia celebrated Pongal on January 17, 2005 at the Memorial Union. We had entertainment programs for about an hour. Some of the items were done by us kids. One of the items was representing famous people from the history of Tamil Nadu. This is a photo of that event. I am Manimekalai, second from the left on the back row. She is the heroine of the great literary work Manimekalai. She was a Buddhist monk and believed that nobody should go hungry or homeless. We had a food drive on Pongal day and donated the food collected to the Central Missouri Food Bank. There were skits, dances, and songs too. After the entertainment we had a nice potluck dinner with Sarkkarai Pongal as one of the main dishes.
I was saint Thyagaraja on the Pongal parade of famous Tamilians. Thyagaraja was born near Thanjavur on the banks of the river Cauvery in 1767. He started singing devotional songs on Lord Rama when he was really young. As he got older he had disciples wanting to learn those songs. In 1907 his students and their students started singing his songs every year in January and other musicians are continuing this.
Grandpa's Funeral
By:
Prerna Srinivasan,
4th Grade, Shepard Elementary

If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral, you don't know how to cry.
Chubby tears roll lifelessly down your chubby cheeks.
Sad noises come out of your mouth. sad thoughts come into mind.
If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral,
you don't know how to cry.

If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral, you don't know how to frown.
You try to turn your smile upside down, but it won't let you.
Some people think you are weird, because you smile when you are angry.
If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral, you don't know how to frown.

If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral, you can always remember your grandpa.
Yes, you can always fondly remember your grandpa.
From the time he carried me to the time he played joyfully with me, there are lots of memories.
I am glad, that I even learned my mother tongue from him.
If you hadn't gone to your grandpa's funeral, in many ways you 'CAN' remember 'YOUR' grandpa.
But you can't remember 'MY' grandpa.

"I am Thankful that Nature Still Survives"
( A thanksgiving Poem)
By:
Maya Cutkosky,
5th Grade, Fairview Elementary

Yellow flowers flow along golden sheets of grass
Along the lake lotus flowers shower all their beauty
The lake itself, see through blue dazzles with life
A squirrel shivers wet because it has fallen in water
And I am thankful places like these exist.

The wild life is plentiful as well as the plants
A patient little bird waits for its worms
A fox pokes his nose up at a promising scent
The sun set shows while the cool air starts to stir
And I am very thankful such a place exists.

A deer runs about glad to be free
Color flashing around her, such a pretty home she has
A frog hops across the lilies, his back green and blue
The yellow green lilies bounce up and down with ripples
And I am very thankful these places exist.

What a wonder it is that these places survive
Alone in the peace and harmony of nature
More prettier than the endless buildings of society
I am glad nature still survives.

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Safety Tips
By Shreyas Srinivasan, Preschool, Southwest Play School

Be careful when plugging in any electrical applicances.
Small mistakes could even cost you your life, like the way it happened to my paternal Grand-father 33 years back.
Small children under the age of 19 should not talk in their cell phones for a prolonged periods of time. Thewaves can damage the brain cells, leading to poor grades in school.
Always wear sturdy helmets and other safety gear, while riding your bike, skate-boarding or roller-blading.
Always look in both directions for vehicles, before crossing the street.
Never eat more than one chocolate a day. It will lead to decaying of teeth.
Kollukkattai - not Athribaksha

This recipe comes from an old folk tale.

Once there lived in a village, a man named Shiva with his wife Swathika. On Ganesh Chaturthi day, Shiva went to his mother’s house. His mom had made some sweets, and he loved them. He asked his mother what they were called. “Kollukkattai” replied his mother. When Shiva was coming home he kept on saying the name Kollukkattai, Kollukkattai, Kollukkattai so he wouldn’t forget the name. Suddenly he came to a big puddle along the way. He screamed “Athribaksha”, as he jumped across the puddle. After he jumped over the puddle he forgot all about Kollukkattai and began repeating Athribaksha instead.

When Shiva went home he asked his wife Swathika to make “Athribaksha”. She did not know what Athribaksha was because she had never heard of it. Shiva hit her because she did not make Athribaksha for him. Swathika sobbed and complained to Shiva. She showed that there were bumps in her body like “Kollukatti” because he hit her. He then remembered that his mother had said that the sweet was called Kollukkattai. He screamed, Yes, make “Kollukkattai” not Athribaksha. His wife made Kollukkattai and they lived happily ever after. This is an old folk tale. What do you think will happen today?

Here is my mother’s recipe for Kollukkattai.

Kollukkattai:

**Ingredients:**
- Rice rava - 8 Oz
- Grated coconut – 4 Oz
- Chopped onions – 2 Oz
- Chopped green chillies – 3
- Oil – 2 tsp
- Mustard – ½ tsp
- Urad dhal – ½ tsp
- Channa dhal – ½ tsp
- Curry leaves, coriander, salt/ to taste

**Cooking Method:**

Heat oil in a pan and sauté mustard, urad dhal, channa, curry leaves, onion, chilli, cilantro and coconut. Add 2 cups of water and let it boil. Add the rice rava and salt and cook for a little while. Make round balls out of it and steam it in a steamer. Kollukkattai is ready to eat.

Beginning the January 2000 issue this column has become a regular feature in Bal Sandesh. If you have recipes to share with our readers, please send them to our editorial staff or parent advisors. We will select a few recipes to include in each issue. Photos to accompany recipes will also be appreciated.

Photo Captions

Seen on the parade photos on pages 2 from the left are: Narasimha pallavan, Mahendra pallavan, Raja Raja Cholan, Rani Mangammal, Thyagaraja with M.S. subbulaskshmi in front.

In addition seen on the front page are: Mathematician Ramanujan, Ilango Adigal, Manimekalai on the left end and Bhalasaraswathi and Thiruvalluvar on the right end.

(Photos by Bharat Srinivasan)