



A PUBLICATION
OF THE ALUMNI OF
WAGGA TEACHERS

TALK ABOUT



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1949-50 WWTC Session

Left to Rt Back Row :
Don Newman John Pollack Bruce Phillips Pam Mowereiff Betty Puntow
Thelma Parsons Eileen Pickering Edith Morton John Airdy John Maskey ?
Middle Row :
Shirley Rolfe Dot Ramsay June Robson Pat Roughman Margaret Olive
Allison Nixon Fay Mullen Bonnie Mutch Judy Newman Ethna Parslow
Front Row :
Murray McCallum Leo Potter Bruce Robinson Maurice Pitfield
Kevin Ryan Lance Mullen Joe Pestell.
Ernest Looleo Studios



Across the Secretary's Desk - Lesley Forbes



Perhaps a sign of the times (or just that it is the final edition for the year) the contents are mostly noting members who are no longer with us. While our numbers inevitably dwindle, it is still wonderful to know that I have around a thousand I still send *Talkabout* to, either by email or snail mail.

Alistair Christie (1956-57) who resided in Stirling, ACT passed away in June.

Alex Abbotsmith (1951-52) went to glory on 5th June. (Jan Abbotsmith)

Rhona Morton (Southwell 1953-54) passed away in Wagga

in October. Rhona has been a consistent contributor to our association and Bruce taught her son at Koorringal High. RIP Rhona.

Brian Cambourne Lecturer (1963—84)

Thanks Chris and Lesley, I look forward to two newsletters I subscribe to. Each is bound up with my professional career.

They are:

1. *Panorama*, the Bathurst Teachers College where I did my preservice training in 54-55

2. *Talkabout*, the WWTC newsletter where I lectured from 1965 through 1984.

I'm now 86, legally blind and stone deaf and my memory is having the problems that afflict the elderly, to the degree that I sometimes have to ask myself, *Was this event or this person from may time at Wagga Wagga or Bathurst?*

It doesn't really matter as my time at both institutions was instrumental in shaping the kind of educator I became.

I recognise some of the names and events that come up in each Newsletter.

I was at WWTC when the Ag students were banned and when the nude statue at the front gate regularly went missing. I recognise many of the names (not the faces) from both institutions.

Thanks for the memories.



Joan Chaplin (Brown 1953-54)

From her daughter, Dianne: My apologies in that I haven't had time to catch up with you, to let you know that Mum sadly passed away on Saturday 27th August 2022. She had suffered another stroke, while living in Garden Village. We are very thankful for the extra 14 months that we were able to share as a family, after Mum's initial stroke in May 2021. The doctors were amazed at her recovery, at the time.

Mum always looked forward to her *Talkabout* magazines, and loved reading all the news. She could remember people from her time at WWTC, like it was only yesterday.

Both Mum and Dad (Bob Chaplin d. 2016) remembered their time at WWTC as very happy ones. Please pass on this news to your wonderful Community.

We have been very blessed.



President's Report - Bruce Forbes

Steppingstones, pathways, trials, triumphs, tribulations and a few traumas make up the sliding doors of graduates of WWTC in days gone by. Many of the articles in this edition once again relate the pathways taken by our members. Recounting of experiences, places we have travelled and how we reached a destination in some obscure and remote location to finally evolve as a citizen and make positive contributions to a community highlight this edition. As this is the final edition for 2022 may I take this opportunity in thanking you all for your continued support. Your membership, contributions to the scholarship fund and to other projects make for a very successful alumni association for CSU/WWTC.

Your committee has not been able to physically meet in 2022 for a variety of reasons but electronic correspondence has kept all in touch to ensure all activities related to scholarships and the publication of *Talkabout* continue. We look forward to an AGM in the New Year where no doubt the discussion will include future directions as even the final graduates from WWTC in 1972 are over "the three score years plus ten."

Keep well! Enjoy your Christmas with family and feel free to write a story.

Our Sojourn in a Teaching Life

Keith Smith (1951-52) and Marjorie Smith (Rush 1952-53)

I first met Keith on 24th February 1952. He was at the front gates of WWTC welcoming the new students as they arrived on their first day. He was a 2nd year student, President of the Students' Representative Council, but was posing as a PE lecturer at the College.

My mother walked with me to the gate where we were introduced, and as she was leaving, and, worried about her 17-year-old daughter being away from home, asked Keith to take care of me. And he did. There were 12 of us from Wollongong High and not one of us realised he was a 2nd year student.

Next morning, we all had a fire drill at 6am by jumping out the window. My window was probably the highest, so I was a bit apprehensive. Following that there was a PE lesson – the new male students with Keith, the girls with a female lecturer (a 2nd year student). I heard some of the students from Wollongong High complaining how Keith exhausted them all but kept pushing them. Then the rumour started – *they are not really lecturers you know; they are 2nd year students.*

Chris Sterling, one of the music lecturers approached me after discovering that I was a pianist and cellist. She asked me to please travel home at Easter and pick up my cello so that I could become a member of the College orchestra, which I enjoyed for the next 2 years; particularly accompanying the musicals presented by the College and the musical trios with pianist, Bev Bonner, and music lecturer, Merv Gray on his violin, and me on the cello. One Saturday night about 7 weeks into first term, I was at the College dance listening to John Rosengreen playing his wonderful dance music on the piano when Keith asked me to dance. He was an excellent dancer and from then on, we always danced together, and started going to the movies in Wagga on a Friday night when the students were allowed out.

I enjoyed the company of the other students, the demonstration lessons, prac teaching and most of the lectures. The

meals were edible, except breakfast which put me off creamed corn for life. At some stage during the last term of 1952 Keith and I split up. I was horrified to read in the next edition of *Talkabout* this ad – *Divorce – Keith Smith and Marjorie Rush.* We never did discover who was responsible for it. However, within weeks we reunited. Keith graduated at the end of the year.

In 1953, my 2nd year at College, I still enjoyed the dances on Saturday nights. There was a dancing competition held one night, and another expert dancer, Norm Bissett invited me to enter the competition with him. We won and received tickets to some function in Wagga on a Wednesday night. The Principal, George Blake-more, gave us permission to attend when it was against rules to leave the premises on a weeknight. Following that we were asked to hold dance classes in the hall for students wanting to attend. Not many were interested, so it didn't last long.

In 1953 Keith was appointed to Sandon Provisional School at Metz, a one teacher school. He had no idea where it was situated. After making enquiries he travelled by train to Armidale where he had to find his own way to Metz, 9 miles out of town. There was no bus, but if he was lucky, he might catch a lift in the mail car if it was going that way, hitch a ride, or walk.

On arrival at Metz, he found the school was a very tiny shearers hut. There were 11 pupils ranging from Kindergarten to Secondary school and 5 families. His accommodation was with a different family each term. The husband and wife of one family left early each morning to work on their farm. Keith was left to prepare his own

50th Wedding Anniversary 2006



breakfast and lunch which consisted of bread and jam, and a similar meal at night. The wife hardly ever cooked meat and vegetables. Her favourite saying was *bread and duck under the table.* At another home he was told he could sleep on the veranda. It would do him good. He didn't mind because he didn't have to pay board. He was rapidly saving money. There was nowhere out there to spend anything.

After a few weeks, Keith noticed the school sanitary pans needed to be emptied. He asked the children when do they come to empty them? One child said, *They don't come Sir. You have to dig a hole, empty the pans, and cover it up, Sir.*

Early in the first term it rained from Sunday to Thursday. Rain poured down the chimney and flooded the classroom. Having nobody around his age and nothing interesting to do at weekends, he decided to start walking 9 miles to Armidale after school on Fridays. Before leaving, he wrote lesson instructions on the blackboard for Monday morning in case he was late walking back which

sometimes happened even though he rose early. Very rarely was he given a lift by a passing driver. One Monday morning when Keith was waiting for the mail car, he decided to get a haircut in the town, and to his surprise the school inspector walked in to get his hair cut also. The inspector and he both laughed.

It didn't take Keith long to save enough money to buy a car (an old bomb) and he was never late again.

In Armidale, Keith joined the football and tennis clubs, and attended dances on a Saturday night. He quickly made friends in Armidale and stayed with them at weekends. He was happy, loved his school and remained there for 3 years.

In 1953, I was appointed to a Goulburn school in the Infants Department, teaching Kindergarten. I was boarding with a lady not far from the school.

Each day it was my duty after dismissing my class at 3 o'clock to relieve the Infants Mistress on 2nd class. I didn't realise that my watch was slowing by 3 o'clock. Consequently, I was always late. She was not impressed. I bought a loud alarm clock and set it 5 minutes before 3. Problem solved.

One day she told me it was my turn to make toffees to sell to the children the next day. My landlady said, *That is ridiculous. You are not using my kitchen to do that.* I still remember how upset I was going to school the next day, knowing the children would be disappointed and that I would be unpopular again with the lady in charge. Another time, when I was on playground duty a parent of a child in my class was walking past and called me over to the fence to ask me something. The Infants Mistress was watching me through a window and reprimanded me for gossiping over the fence when I was supposed to be watching the children.

On another day, I took my class outside through the door from our classroom to enjoy some activities. I left the door open and unfortunately for me a huge gust of wind blew the door off its hinges. Again, she was unimpressed. A few days later, the children and I were enjoying finger painting when she told me that the School Inspector wanted to talk to me in the staff room. I went to the staff room, paint all over my fingers and after washing my hands we sat down to talk. He greeted

me and said, *I need a teacher who is a pianist at Crookwell Central School on 1st Class. Would you be interested?* Without even thinking it over, I said Yes!!

Next day I had a phone call from the Crookwell Infants Mistress saying she would meet the bus when I arrived and had arranged accommodation. She was there at the bus stop all smiles, saying, *It's so good to see you. I will help you with your luggage as you are staying just around the corner.*

On my first day at Crookwell School, the bell rang and the 100 children from 1st and 2nd class assembled in the front of the classrooms. Kindergarten children were accommodated in a church hall in the main street. Just as the children were in lines the Infants Mistress was called to the phone in the main office. The children and I proceeded into the classrooms which were divided by concertina doors that were open. Both classes were sitting facing the piano in my room ready for morning assembly. I introduced myself to the children, found a music book on top of the piano which contained the Good Morning Song, the Prayer and other songs which the children knew. After about 20 minutes the Infants Mistress returned, standing at my door listening to the singing. When we finished the song, she entered the room clapping her hands then said to the children *We are so lucky to have Miss Rush here.* They agreed. What a difference from Goulburn. She never criticized, was so helpful, kind and encouraging. Often, she was called to the phone but that never worried me. At last, I was happy in my profession.

The staff in the Primary and Secondary section were mostly young and I was made welcome. We played tennis and went to Saturday night dances together.

After 2 wonderful years at Crookwell the Infants Mistress and I both left. She had gained her 3rd promotion and was transferred to a large Goulburn school as Infants Mistress, a non-teaching position, and I left to marry Keith.

We were married early January 1956 and while we were on our honeymoon received notification of our appointments to Happy Jack, a 2-teacher school, Keith as teacher-in-charge and I was to be his assistant. The school



was situated high up in the Snowy Mountains Hydro Electric Scheme, 60 miles from Cooma. There were 53 pupils at the school ranging from Kindergarten to Secondary. We were allocated a lovely little cabin sitting near the edge of a cliff. The school consisted of 2 classrooms and a large indoor area for children to play if unsuitable for them outside.

One morning when the cold weather arrived, I went to our laundry where I kept perishables.

The milk was completely frozen in the bottle and had pushed the silver lid 2 inches above the top. From then on it snowed. The front door of our cabin was completely covered. The only way out was through the back door and walk over the snow-clad roof to the road. Each afternoon Keith would shovel the snow away from the back door hoping not too much would fall during the night.

We both enjoyed teaching there. At the end of the year, we left Happy Jack and I resigned to start a family. Keith was appointed to Thirroul Public School. We bought a house at Bulli Beach. In 1958 I returned to teaching and spent one year as a casual at Bulli Infants. My classroom was the original old building of Bulli School.

In 1960 Keith was transferred to North Sydney Demonstration School as teacher librarian. He rose at 5am, walked to Bulli station to catch a train to Sydney. He did that every school day except Wednesday when he spent the night with his parents in Strath-

field. After a few months we rented out our house at Bulli and moved closer to Sydney. In 1961 Keith was inspected for his first promotion and was successful. In 1962 we moved back to Bulli where Keith started teaching at Corrimal School, but within a week received a telegram offering the position of Principal at Balladoran, a 2-teacher school near Gilgandra. He left Bulli immediately to fulfil the position and find accommodation for our growing family. He stayed in a Gilgandra Hotel and towards the end of February answered an ad in the local paper – a farmer wanted a family to live in and take care of his farmhouse close to Gilgandra. From a number of applicants, he chose Keith, and offered to pay him for taking care of the house. Keith said he didn't want to be paid. So, we settled into that lovely property. As well as free rent, every few days the farmer came to the house with a billy can of milk fresh from the cow, and when he slaughtered a sheep, he gave us meat. The garden contained fruit trees and grape vines. He certainly set us on our feet.

In late 1964 Keith was appointed to Alectown Public School as Principal. Alectown is a small village between Parkes and Peak Hill. The school was a 2-teacher school with a residence, which was another bonus. I taught sewing to the primary school girls and enjoyed being the President of Alectown CWA for 4 years.

In the last term of 1967, the Inspector arrived and awarded Keith his 2nd promotion. He came to the residence for lunch, and during the meal asked me if I had been a teacher before I was married. I said I was. Next, he really surprised me by asking, *Would you be willing to commence as Keith's assistant on Monday?* I was criticized by a long-time acquaintance who had old-fashioned ideas. That person told me I was a bad mother going back to work. Married women don't work, I should be at home looking after the house and children. Was I being a bad mother? The children and I left the house together each morning, walked a few steps to the school playground. Two children were in my class, and two in Keith's. Then they walked back to the Residence with me after school.

All that mattered was that Keith and I were happy with my appointment and our children were excited. In 1968 we were both transferred to Bourke Public School. Keith was in charge of the Primary and Infants. I taught a 2B class. Towards the end of that year, the Inspector arrived and after spending some time in my classroom went to Keith's office to discuss my possible promotion. Keith explained that I had only just returned to teaching and the Department of Education had deducted 2 years from my teaching service because I resigned 10 years earlier. The Inspector arrived back in my room and told me that as soon as I was eligible, he wanted me to go for a promotion.

In 1969 we both accepted transfers to Albury Public School, a very large school. Keith was appointed as Deputy Principal. I taught in the Infants section.

Keith gained his 3rd promotion at the end of 1970 and we moved to Griffith. He became Principal of North Griffith Public School and I was appointed to Griffith Public Infants Department.

In 1973 I obtained my first promotion, and we decided to move closer to Sydney to enable me to use my promotion, and so that our children could attend tertiary education if they desired. We chose Camden, a lovely country town where in 1974 Keith became Principal of Mawarra, a newly formed school. We were delighted to discover that a few years later the Principal of the neighbouring Elderslie High School was Merv Gray, one of the lecturers from WWTC while we were students.

I was appointed to Campbelltown East Public School as Deputy Infants Mistress, and at the end of 1975 gained my 2nd promotion and was transferred to Hammondville Public School as Infants Mistress 'B'.

Since arriving in the Liverpool Inspectorate I had become involved in the yearly Infants Music Festival as the pianist for the massed choir, which consisted of approximately 400 pupils. It was at the end of the festival in 1977 that the Inspector

approached me while I was packing up my music. He asked me if I was interested in filling the position of relieving Mistress 'A' at Lurnea Public School. Again, I accepted. It was a non-teaching position. After 2 years, I received my 3rd promotion. I applied for Ruse Public School near Campbelltown and commenced there in 1980 as Infants Mistress 'A', a non-teaching position. It was a very large school, well over 1000 pupils, and I was in charge of 20 Infants classes. The numbers grew and I was asked by the Education Department to change the boundaries, meaning that many new families were disappointed that their children could not enrol at Ruse. I spent 10 years there. My role changed to Deputy Principal, the term Infants Mistress no longer existed. A few years before my retirement, I spent one year as relieving Principal at Ruse and retired in 1989.

Keith enjoyed 14 years at Mawarra School and retired in 1987. Merv Gray spoke at Keith's retirement dinner and quoted a remark made by the Principal of WWTC back in 1952, saying *Keith Smith and Marjorie Rush are an ideal couple. You never see them cuddling in dark corners.* Then Merv added, *Completely forgetting that Keith, as the President of the SRC had his own office.*

Keith was always community minded. While at Mawarra, he commenced inviting senior members of the community to some assemblies, to join in activities and enjoy refreshments. This became very popular and eventually it moved to its own establishment in Camden and was called the Camden Activity Centre, run mostly by volunteers. It still exists. A small daily fee covers transport, activities and refreshments.

Keith was Justice of the Peace for over 50 years and received an award at Parliament House. Wherever we lived he joined a charity club – Apex, Rotary or Lions Club. In 1987 he was elected Sydney Lions District Governor. We were invited to many Lions Clubs in Sydney as spe-

cial guests, and travelled to International Lions Conventions in Taiwan, the United States and Australia.

In 2007 we began touring NSW to visit all the schools where we had taught. When we arrived at Metz, Keith's first appointment in 1953, we could not believe the old shearers hut, his school room was still standing. We visited the old WWTC grounds and had our photo taken at

the gates where we first met 55 years before.

Balladoran and Aleetown schools no longer existed. We were unable to visit Happy Jack as the road was blocked.

After my retirement, I became a member of Macarthur Evening VIEW club for over 35 years. I spent 25 years line dancing at Camden RSL and became a mem-

ber of Ingleburn Lions Ladies Auxiliary where I served as Treasurer for 11 years. I am still a member, but the COVID pandemic has interfered with our meetings.

Sadly, on Valentine's Day, February 14th, 2018, a few weeks after celebrating our 62nd Wedding Anniversary, Keith passed away.

During our lives together we had four children. Sherene, Glenn, Gil and Brett.

A Life Well Lived

A tribute by Lisa Mitchell for Fay Mitchell (Mullens 1949-50)

Fay was born on 20th December 1930 at Woodburn, on the north coast of NSW into an already large and loving Catholic family as the 5th of 9 children with 7 brothers and 1 sister.

Her father was a school headmaster and so the family moved frequently, around country NSW. Her childhood homes included Breeza 1931-32, Wherrol Flat 1933, Upper Lansdowne 1934-5, then Kearsley in 1936 where Fay started school. In 1938 the family moved to Ross Hill where they stayed until 1942 before moving to Grafton where Fay commenced high school in 1943. She was the only one in her family to attend the one high school for her secondary education. At Grafton High School Fay was school captain and dux of her year. She was offered the opportunity to attend Sydney University. However, as a country girl, Fay was not comfortable to be in Sydney without family. In fact, her brother Lance also attended Wagga Wagga Teachers College at the same time as her. Because Lance was at the College too, she was the only female allowed to enter the male student quarters.

Fay graduated in the class of 1950 in the second cohort of the College. Her first appointment was to Fairfield Infants, then in 1951 Glenfield Special School where she met Ken Mitchell, who was a visiting school counsellor. In the luncheon room, where the teachers met to have their break, Ken came in and no one offered him a seat, so Fay said that there was a seat beside her and he was welcome to join them which he did.

Later that day, Ken asked Fay directions to get to the train station. Fay said he could catch a bus but that she could also drive him. When she was delivering him to the station, he asked her how long

have you been driving? She said only the last few days! Fay was never sure how Ken knew she was only an inexperienced driver at the time!

Soon after meeting Ken she went to Beverly Hills Infants in 1957 and then was promoted to Burke Ward Public School in Broken Hill as the deputy infant's mistress in 1958. Whilst she was there, Ken and Fay became engaged.

They were married on 9th May 1959 at St Joseph's Belmore and honeymooned at Broadbeach in Queensland. Ken drove his shiny new blue car all the way. Their first night of marriage was spent on the NSW Central Coast.

They returned from their honeymoon and moved into Daisy St, Chatswood, where Fay and Ken would live for most their lives.

Fay was posted to Roseville Public School where she was deputy mistress. By 1961 she was acting mistress at Chatswood Infants.

Fay and Ken had 4 children, Lisa, Gregory, Anthony and Suzanne, over the next 5 years. After the birth of Greg in 1962 Fay left teaching to raise her family.

In the first few years of marriage, Ken travelled to Denmark to complete a Master's degree, and this meant that Fay remained at home for 3 months with 3 small children. Once Ken graduated, and with Sue as a baby, the family moved to Barraba in 1966. Fay was not keen on travelling all the way to Barraba, so Ken promised that if she went, he would buy her a new house when they returned to Sydney. Instead, Ken ended up building the holiday

house at Pearl Beach that provided the family and extended family with many great seaside experiences which continue to this day.

Fay was engaged in casual teaching while Ken was principal at Barraba Central School. The 5 years there went quickly and many lifelong friendships were established. School holidays meant Ken driving the entire family from Barraba to Pearl Beach and back. Whilst the family enjoyed the country life in Barraba, Fay was keen to return to Sydney to ensure that the children were educated at Sydney high schools. To make this move back to Sydney in 1970, Ken had to leave the education department and join the health department. He was posted to Westmead Special School and the family moved temporarily into the old King's School grounds. At this time Fay was appointed to Northcott School for physically disabled children.

After leaving Parramatta the Mitchell family returned to Daisy Street in 1972. Tragedy struck at the end of that year when Anthony aged nine was killed in an accident at home.

Back in Chatswood Fay was a casual teacher at Chatswood Primary School in 1971-72. In 1973 she was appointed as a remedial and resource teacher at Palm Avenue Special School in Seaforth where she stayed until 1981 teaching country children with specific learning difficulties and travelling back to their homes all around NSW via small planes to teach their teachers.

Fast forward, Lisa, Greg and Sue are growing up, finishing school, going to university and thinking about their future careers. Fay eventually retired

in 1988 after seven more years of teaching at Balgowlah Heights, Castle Cove and Beauty Point primary schools having made lasting friendships throughout her teaching career.

After Fay retired and with Ken, she spent time travelling which they both absolutely loved. They travelled to Thailand many times, and the United States initially as Ken was lecturing at the University of Oregon and then with Lisa whilst she was stationed there for her career. They went to Europe, travelled the Mediterranean, and Greece and toured the UK and Ireland with Donn Mullen.

Fay became a doting grandmother. Daisy Street provided the ideal after school location, with hot chocolate, Anzac cookies and tutoring all waiting for them to get home!

In 1998, after returning from his own overseas Odyssey, Greg meets the love of his life in beautiful Nicole, whose horse needed attention. A vet was called and Greg the locum arrived. Fay and Ken were overjoyed to welcome Nicole into the Mitchell family. Greg and Nicole married in 2001, and over the next few years, Fay would gain 2 more beautiful grandchildren Jackson and Emmersen. Unfortunately, before son, Greg and Nicole were married, Ken was diagnosed with cancer and died at the end 2000. Fay had cared for Ken at home before he

died. She had never lived alone so it was a big adjustment for her.

The next years for Fay were filled with travels. Paul Mullen, Fay and Lisa travelled to Cowombat Ridge to the site of Bernie Mullen's plane crash site in Kosciuszko National Park. She travelled with Lisa to Noosa, regular holiday breaks in Pearl Beach, Western Australia and going to plays at the STC and Willoughby Musical Society. Fay travelled to Russia with Clare Cusak, a Mediterranean cruise with Lisa, including Paris and Istanbul with Mary Brooks and her daughter Elizabeth. She became very involved with

Chatswood View club as secretary for more than 20 years and with the Mitchell and Mullen family histories (before it was all computerised). Fay was also caring for Ken's sister Joan who eventually needed 24-hour care.

Tragically, her son Greg passed away in 2013 leaving Nicole with a young family and Fay was even more determined to be there and to support them. Family traditions continued – the Mullen family annual barbecue, Christmas



Day at Daisy Street, New Year's Eve at Lisa's place watching the fireworks, holidays at Coolmore and Pearl Beach. In the last two years Fay welcomed to the family three beautiful great grandchildren.

Until the end, Fay continued to be in good health enjoying short holidays with Lisa, Frances and friends.

Fay has left a lasting legacy to education and community service, to her family and lifelong friends.

A Local Wagga Wagga Girl Rosemary Doherty (Slattery 1957-58)

I was very interested to read the article by Gerard Say of the 75-year anniversary of the founding of WWTC. I was a local Wagga resident, educated at Mt. Erin High School, and am a few years older than Gerard, who was also a local. I attended Wagga Teachers' College in 1957 and 1958 and in those years the Wagga Demonstration School was still an integral part of our teacher training as shown in the *Daily Advertiser*: **"Brass Bells & Ink Wells": A History of Wagga Wagga Public School 1861-1997"**

"The early Post-War period saw moves to open a Teachers' College in Wagga Wagga. The College began in June 1947 and as from May of that same year the Wagga Wagga Public School became the Wagga Demonstration School with the specific purpose of not only continuing to

provide education for the pupils but at the same time to assist in the training of the Students from the Teachers' College.

The student teachers were brought to the school by buses. The school rooms weren't built to accommodate 30 or more students as well as the pupils of the class. This led to considerable overcrowding in the rooms and because of the unsuitability of the rooms and the distance from the College, a new school, Turvey Park, was built and opened as the Demonstration School in 1959. This meant that Gurwood Street reverted to its original name and status of Wagga Wagga Public School as from the beginning of 1959."

During my 2 years at College, I lived at home in Peter Street, Wagga and

rode my bicycle to the College each weekday. There were several other local girls who lived at home. We were able to use one of the Residents' Common Rooms as our base and could join in the midday meal in the College Dining Room.

The Principal, George Blakemore, was extremely proud of any local sporting successes. In 1958, I was a member of the Teachers College A Grade Women's Basketball team, which won the Wagga A Grade Championship for the very first time. We were feted on the following Monday in the Dining Room by a very elated George. We celebrated with a specially baked very large cake designed in the shape of a Basketball Court for all to have a slice. It was only a few months later, on returning by bus from Practice Teaching at

Lockhart, that we were informed George Blakemore had died that day. Several days later, Wagga College students gathered for his funeral at the Wagga Presbyterian Church and formed a Guard of Honour to honour our Founding Principal.

My first teaching appointment in January 1959 was to the old Demonstration School now Wagga Wagga Public School, Girls' Department. This appointment was a surprise as I had not applied for a Wagga school. It was a great start to my teaching career in such an established school with Miss Hope Cassidy in charge of the Girls' Department, very helpful teachers and extremely well-trained pupils. Unfortunately, it only lasted a Term as numbers had decreased. In May 1959, I was transferred to the newly built, but not completed, Mt. Austin Primary School, where numbers were increasing.

Mt. Austin School consisted of one timber building with two classrooms. The larger Classroom had been built with a dividing wall so could be sectioned off. This section became my new classroom of combined Second and Third Classes. The Principal Geoff Potter was in the

adjoining section with Fourth to Sixth Classes. It was an eye opener in many ways. Very rarely a day went by that a builder did not peer through the high windows on one side of the classroom. In Third Term 1959, I was transferred to Narrandera Public School, which was my third school in my first year of teaching. It was a straight swap as the kindergarten teacher was marrying a Wagga man. I taught Kindergarten for three years there and loved it but had to resign when my first daughter was born. At that time, a woman teacher could only take six weeks accouchement leave following the birth of a child. There were no Day Care Centres or grandparents living locally to babysit.

A little later, I ran the Narrandera Preschool and then became a remedial teacher at Narrandera St Josephs. In 1974, my husband accepted the position of English and History Master at Yass High School. So, after 14 very happy years in Narrandera we moved on. I did not intend to teach in Yass but shortly after arriving I was approached by Sister Joan, the Principal of Mt. Carmel Catholic High School. The school needed a teacher for First, Second and Third

Forms to teach English, Social Science and Religion. On informing her I was not a trained Secondary teacher she replied that Primary teachers made very good High School teachers as they had received far better training than Secondary trained teachers had received. So, I spent three good years teaching at Mt. Carmel High.

In January 1977, following three years at Yass, we moved to Coffs Harbour where my husband had been appointed English Master at Orara High School. On enrolling my three daughters at St Augustine's Primary School, I was offered the position of Year 6 teacher. The Principal, Sister Joan Massey, told me that they had really wanted a male teacher but were unable to find one, however *I was the next best thing to a male as I had taught in a High school!* I taught at St. Augustine's for 23 years in various roles including Year 6 teacher, Teacher Librarian, Religious Education Co-ordinator and Assistant Principal retiring in 2000. I have been very fortunate in having a most fulfilling and rewarding teaching career. I am thankful for the excellent teacher training I received at Wagga Teachers' College so many years ago.

How It Was Back Then...

Ken McCubbin (1957-58)

Living in Kars St., Beechworth, only one house down from the main road, the Public School was not far away. My mother and her siblings had all attended this school. So when I turned 5 (13-04-1945) my parents attempted to enrol me at that school. One morning, my elder brother, Geoff, took me around to have me enrolled. We sat together outside the principal's office for maybe an hour before we were attended to. Meantime, from where we were sitting, we had an excellent view into what I guess was possibly a 4th class classroom. All the children were very busy. They were all knitting socks for the soldiers away in WW2. Some possibly had those frames that knit a long sausage, while many of the others, boys included, were knitting khaki socks on three needles. All the children were quiet and productive.

After a long wait, Geoff was called into the Principal's office, where he was told

to take me back home and bring me back when I had turned 6.

What had happened was, with WW2, a lot of teachers across the state had signed up as soldiers and gone to the war. This created a shortage of teachers right across the system, so the schools would only accept children of 6 and over, as required by law.

So I stayed home in Kars Street until my father got posted to the Healesville area, where he continued to give instruction in morse code to those wanting to join the Navy and Air Force, and work in Civil Defence, besides his work in the Post Office.

Some time after this, probably over a few weekends, Dad shifted us all down to the front room of Ma and Pop's house in Finch St. We moved with one of Pop's horses and a dray, which Dad drove. I had the privilege

of riding up beside him, looking over the rump and back of the horse.

We all slept in the south side front room of *Wongrabel*. Mum and Dad's bed was nearest the door, from there it was a single line of beds along the room. Near Mum and Dad's bed was the cot with Bruce in it, then my bed, and finally Geoff's bed.

Once we were settled in, Geoff had a much longer walk to school. My parents decided to enrol me at the Catholic School, which was just up around the corner of the block. So I was taken up there and handed over to the nuns. I do not know what time of the year this was, probably into May or June. In retrospect, this was absolutely Dickensian. We sat at high desks that had a lift up top and we sat on high stools, with no backs, which we had to climb to get up on. The only things kept in the desk were a slate, a slate pencil and a reader. There was a small rag hanging on a

nail on the side of the desk. The rag was dampened and used to clean the slates.

For some lessons we sat in a semi-circle close to one of the nuns. She sat on a chair facing us with what was probably a blackboard ruler in her hands. (It was certainly large.) She used this to point with and also to belt us around the legs if we made a mistake. This is how we did reading. We had a reader with a picture on the front cover of some elves in a tree tossing books to happy dancing children. All the type in the book was large ominous black letters. We read together out loud and also individually out loud. If you made a mistake, you copped the large wooden ruler across the legs below the knee. All of us had exposed legs. While the girls wore short dresses or skirts, all the boys wore shorts, in summer or winter. They were usually home-made and lined. No-one had long dresses or trousers. (I never had long pants until I was about 14yrs old.)

The first words in the reader, underneath an appropriate small picture were, *The cat sat on the mat...* very inspiring! And you *READ!* The moment you made a mistake, WHACK ! round the legs, and *Read it again!*

Remember that all of us were only 5yrs old.

The room contained some slightly older children, probably of 1st and 2nd class. They were the ones who did messages or jobs for the nuns. One job included collecting all the pieces of rag hanging on the sides of the desks, taking them outside in a bucket, giving them a rinse in the bucket, then squeezing them out, bringing them back and hanging them on the nail on the side of each desk, ready to use cleaning slates. (A slate was a piece of slate, a natural grey stone, set in a wooden frame, on which you could write or draw using another piece of slate, hence the slate pencil. Wiping it over with a damp cloth meant it wiped off everything written or drawn on the slate, and you could start again, like on a clean sheet of paper.)

I do not remember any child falling off those high stools, but a few chil-

dren went close, especially if they went to sleep. On the other hand, I recall several wetting themselves, as I did once.

Life for me was rather lonely and I had to work things out for myself. Being a Methodist in a Catholic School basically meant I was on the outside. There was no one I knew, and no one seemed to want to know me. At playtimes, I just wandered the playground. No one spoke to me or invited me to join a game. Then on a fairly regular basis we were all marched up to the Church. As we entered, I saw those ahead of me dip their fingers in a large bowl of water and splash some over themselves, so I did the same. Then, as they all marched up the centre aisle to the front, for whatever they did up there, I just ducked sideways into one of the rear pews and stayed there, joining them when they came back out. No one spoke to me or told me what to do. I had to make it up for myself.

I never told my mother or any of the family about this, I just silently wore it. Until one day, while Dad was still away, I told Mum I was not going back to that school. I now realize that this put Mum in a very awkward position, with her own mother (Ma) sitting in the kitchen. So my mother dragged me up to the front room we shared, closing doors, and proceeded to give me a belting around the legs (possibly with a belt or strap,) until I finally agreed to go back at lunch time. I had not been belted like that before.

So when lunchtime came, Mum took hold of me, walked me round to the entrance gate and shoved me in. I did as I usually did, wandered the playground, but was sure I was not going into the school. When the bell rang, I discreetly moved to behind the weather shed.

At the back of it, at each end there was a reasonably large shrub growing, so I sat down against the wall, nicely hidden by the two shrubs, and enjoyed the clear sunshine. I had a new black lead pencil, painted blue. I think it was branded Methuen, which was a good quality pencil. (Incidentally, the weather shed, with two shrubs growing at the back of it is still there the last time I looked.)

It was a lovely sunny spot, nice and softly warm. So I sat there on the ground, my back against the wall enjoying the sunshine and admiring the new pencil. I have no idea how long I stayed there. I had no way of telling or judging the time. So when I guessed I had been there long enough, I went back home again and told

my Mum that I got an early mark !!! I do not know what was said between Mum and Ma, or even Dad, when he next returned. Some of the Catholic kids on their way home, passed my reader, slate and slate pencil to me over the front fence. I never went back to school again in Beechworth.

So I was left very much to my own devices, while Mum coped with my younger brother and chatted with Ma. One thing I very much enjoyed at this time was Kindergarten of the Air on ABC radio, hosted by Miss Anne Dryer. I was an avid listener and participant, sitting in front of the large cabinet radio in the lounge room.

My Ma's youngest sister, who I knew as Auntie Elsie, was a WW1 widow with no children. Auntie Elsie used to visit Ma once or twice every week. She bought a set of cardboard letters, all red on a white background. She would sit with me on the lounge room carpet and taught me basic phonics and simple reading. Over the years she continued to send me appropriate books for my birthdays. One event of this time I can still recall vividly. Our house was hit by a fire ball form of lightning. It must have been a summer storm, with lots of lightning and heavy rain. I was kneeling at the window on Pop's favourite cane lounge gazing out the window at the rain bucketing down. Then, next thing I saw what looked like the sun, very colourful and spinning, growing larger and larger as it was heading straight for me. I didn't wait for it to get me, I ran. I took off down the hallway and into the kitchen where I buried my head in Mum's lap. As I was doing so, there was an enormous BANG!!!. Mum and Ma, both sitting at the kitchen table doing beans, looked up at the same time to see it through the skylight hit the top of one of the chimneys dislodging a couple of bricks. As the storm died down, Ma went to ring Pop at the shop, but the phone was dead. When the storm had finally passed we all went out into the front street. It was full of families who had come outside. Some of them told us they had seen it hit our house, then going northwards it bounced onto every house in the block, before fizzing out at the end roadway. .

So it was not until the following year after Dad got a promotion and we moved to Tumbarumba that I started school again. **(to be continued)**

A City-Slicker goes Bush...

Laurence (Laurie) Lepherd, aka Tige, spots (Ipai, 1958-59)

I confess to being the author of a piece in the latest edition of Talkabout. It started with "I stayed in primary schools for three years then went to the Sydney Conservatorium before ending up as the *Odds and Sods* master at Canberra High." I'm not sure why I didn't 'own' it! However, I thought I might follow on with another bit of nostalgia.

I read earlier in *Talkabout* about Myrtle, the welcoming statue complete with a raised white guiding electric light that guarded the entrance to WWTC. Over the years I would guess that these decorations would have been done a few times but I recall that one year Myrtle became "Crepe Myrtle" with the wrap around of copious numbers of toilet rolls. And then there was the year that her white electric light was replaced with a red light! Don't know why. I also recall the steam train night travel from Wagga to Sydney at the end of term. Very cold in winter, although compartments were warmed by the metal heaters thrown in at our feet. And that is not to mention the warmth of fellow student company!

I received the notice of my first appointment by telegram a few days before I

was due to start work on Tuesday 2 February, 1960. (I often describe a telegram as an early form of SMS message delivered by a young guy on a push bike.) I was to go to Baerami Creek public school as teacher-in-charge. Where was this? I couldn't find it on a map! The information I later received also said that accommodation was in a house supplied by a local farmer. Rental was 30 shillings a week with kerosene lamps provided and well water available!

There must have been some mistake. I had applied for a Sydney school so I could go to the Conservatorium. The 'gram was signed by 'Jones'. So I thought I would go and see this Jones fellow and get my appointment changed. I bounded into Head Office went to the 6th floor, spoke to the receptionist and asked, ever so politely if I could see 'Jones'. I was asked about the nature of my inquiry. I explained, and was ever so politely told that I could not see Mr Jones on this matter as he was the Director General, and I should really go home and pack my suitcase!

So I did. I found out where the Creek

was (just south west of Muswellbrook going towards Mudgee) and set off. This involved a steam train to Muswellbrook, and whence from there I had no idea! Enquiries showed that transport to BC was officially by postman in a VW Combi van. Ah, a small problem. The carrier only went to the Creek on Monday and Wednesday. Monday was the a public holiday so, no post. I had to start teaching on Tuesday. Scratching of head. Fortunately my father knew the Muswellbrook health inspector so I made contact and was told that if I climbed into the cabin of a milk truck before 4.30 am, I could get a lift out to the Creek. I did. There was no charge. All I had to do was help the driver throw the (full) 10 gallon milk drums into the back of the truck when they were collected. I think the reward for the driver was to watch me, a weedy city slicker trying to handle the cans!

At about 0700 we arrived at the Creek post office. This was the hub of the Creek. The post mistress was 'Aunty'. She knew all that was going on in the valley. (Telephones were on party lines and were in no way secured for privacy.) We pulled up in front of the office.

The driver bellowed out (from the driver's seat) *Hey Aunty! Pause. Yeah? What'll I do with your school teacher? Pause. We ain't got one! Yes, you do. He's in the truck with me! Pause. Take 'im up to the Smith's! Four farms*

T.G. 42
Sch. C.7452
3/56

This Telegram has been received subject to the Post and Telegraph Act and Regulations. The time received at this office is shown at the end of the message

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
POSTMASTER-GENERAL'S DEPARTMENT
TELEGRAM

The date stamp indicates the date of reception and lodgment also, unless an earlier date is shown after the time of lodgment.

Office Date Stamp
T
C
B

CHL. No. Office of Origin No. of Words Time of Lodgment

1 SYDNEY ROYAL EXCHANGE N.S.W. 18 4.3p

18

L LEPHERD
3 MCPHERSON STREET CARLTON N.S.W.

COMMENCE DUTY SECOND FEBRUARY TEACHER IN CHARGE BAERAMI CREEK NOTICE FOLLOWING JONES 4.40JH

Many of you out there will have one of these tucked away in your memorabilia

and 10 cans later later we arrived at the “Smith’s”. Truck driver – “Here’s your school teacher!” From the farmer to me - Glare!! “Are you married?” “No.” “Then you’ll have to go back. We asked for a married teacher.” A bit difficult on a public holiday when the Muswellbrook Inspector’s office was closed. “Anyway, you’d better come in and have some breakfast. I said, “Yes, thanks”, but, then again, I’d say anything to get out of slinging more cans around! The story was that the Creek parents wanted a married teacher to live in the house provided so that the rent went directly to the P and C funds. It wasn’t

a rich community so this made it easier for them to support their school in tough, dairy farmer times.

So, I had a very welcome full farm house breakfast. During our conversation, it turned out that I knew the farmer’s mother who lived Sydney. The long and the short was that this contact was responsible for the farmer and his wife to decide that they would offer to have me board for 12 months. I think they also quietly knew that the District Inspector would not be held to ransom and would say, “OK you take Mr Lephherd or you don’t get a teacher”.

I had a fabulous 12 months. The city

slicker learnt a lot about dairy farming, mowing and baling lucerne, tractor and trailer driving and a host of other things. The school had 15 children and a great set of parents. I stayed the 12 months after which I was relocated to Sydney where I started at the Conservatorium. Unfortunately, the school was closed at the end of that year because two share farmers left the area taking 9 children with them! Six pupils left was not enough to keep the school open.

It was a wonderful entry into teaching. I remained friends with the parents and my hosts for a number of years after. I was always welcome back to the *The Creek*.

A Remarkable Life

Peter Robert Bindon (1963-64)

Peter won a scholarship to Wagga Teachers College and it was there in 1963 that he met fellow student Nola Walmsley. Nola recalls their 2 years of Teachers College as hard work, but with time for fun when they were involved in the emerging folk-music scene. They shared the work of preparing teaching aides which often reflected Peter’s interest in nature so Nola recalls there was a white mouse collection, a bee hive and lizards. Peter enjoyed visiting Nola’s parents at the family sheep farm on the Yass River not far from Murrumbateman, where they would fossick for gold and assist Nola’s father Tom with the sheep. Tom and Peter got on well; which was helpful, thought Nola.

At the end of 1964, Peter was posted to a primary school in the small wheat town of Yuluma. Nola – somewhat to her disappointment – was posted back to Yass. Her attempt to spread her wings and fly had been temporarily thwarted by the grey people of bureaucracy. Through 1965 the romance was limited to letters and occasional visits. In early 1966 Peter and Nola were married and as a married couple, Peter and Nola were posted to Mulwala on the Murray River. Robbie was born in 1966 and the family stayed there

until the end of 1968. Peter was active in Yarrawonga Apex and was a keen member of a local rowing club on Lake Mulwala. His contribution to local community was always evident in his extra-curricular activities – Yarrawonga dramatic society, scout leadership etc and later, excursions into the great outdoors with school groups and university field work for his undergrad degree. His knowledge of, and love of the bush and his teaching skills inspired and empowered many.

Nola thought that Peter always viewed primary school teaching as an interim step - a beginning to his further education and this manifested itself when the family moved to Canberra in 1969 and Peter soon after commenced a part-time degree at ANU. In their 9 years in Canberra Peter taught at Red Hill Primary School and Nola at Hughes Primary and other schools.

These were busy years for the Bindons as Patrick had been born in late 1970. Nola had moved to part-time teaching and was focused on the boys while Peter was energetic in both his commitment to teaching and to his university studies. Peter was an active member of the Gould League of Bird Lovers and led holiday programs for students at camp venues

around NSW and led bush fitness camps for students – always imparting his knowledge and love of the natural environment. He and Nola took the boys canoeing and fishing on Lake Burley Griffin, and at his parents’ home in Nowra, using the resources of his father’s joinery workshop, Peter built a heron class sailing boat that gave delight to the boys. Peter used the family’s camping and bush outings to show his sons how to identify stone tool remnants and he continued his collection and researching of native plants. One memorable family outing included gold panning on the river at Mongarlowe. The goldfields and their history were major interests of Peter’s.

At ANU Peter was fortunate to be a part of the golden years of Australian prehistory. He studied under the world-renowned Professors Jack Golson and John Mulvaney. Mulvaney was key to the discovery and archaeological research into the Lake Mungo remains which are among the oldest human remains found anywhere in Australia with Mungo Lady being identified as 40,000 to 42,000 years old. As a student, under Professor Mulvaney, Peter participated in some of the early archaeological dig work on the Lady Mungo site. Peter

graduated from ANU in 1977 with a Bachelor's Honours degree in prehistory, anthropology, philosophy and Asian civilisation. At this point he accepted a position with the Aboriginal Sites Department within the West Australian Museum and the family moved to Perth settling in Fremantle. The 20 year period of living in West Australia was marked by significant highs and lows for the family.

On arrival in Perth, Peter was invigorated by his work. Under then West Australian legislation, the Museum's Aboriginal Sites Department had responsibility for identifying and clarifying the genealogical and traditional land rights entitlements of indigenous lands being considered for the granting of mining or exploration leases. Peter's role was to work with the indigenous owners to present a report to the government advising on sacred sites, compensation options and the associated environmental impacts that would affect traditional hunting and gathering. This role encapsulated Peter's intellectual concept of a synergy between anthropology, archaeology, ethnobotany and traditional survival. He enrolled in a Master's degree at the University of WA and graduated in 1993. His thesis represented findings from classic archaeological field work and discovery. Peter showed that over eons of time there was a consistency in the form and social pattern of settlements that reflected changes in environment. His thesis was entitled *Old Campsites, New Tenants*.

Nola at this time had specialised her teaching skills to work with hearing impaired people and this further supported her assistance to Robbie in the development of his life opportunities and potential work skills. With Peter busy on work travel to remote WA areas and his university studies, Nola held the domestic front. Nevertheless, the family enjoyed time together on the Swan River and camping. The boys were growing up. Robbie had a traineeship and Patrick was moving through his secondary schooling. Peter had formed an academic link between the University of WA and the Department of Geology at the University of Bordeaux, in southern France. On one

of his research exchange visits with his French academic colleagues Nola and the boys accompanied him to France where they were exposed to some of the world's then oldest known human habitation sites from c35,000BC.

In 1980 as a Site Officer with the WA Museum, Peter became a significant figure in the historic Noonkanbah dispute. He identified and reported on Aboriginal genealogical ownership and sacred sites at Noonkanbah and revealed legislative breaches by mining and exploration interests. The resulting public interest and growth in awareness had many outcomes in the further development of Aboriginal land rights. More directly, in WA, the government of the day was frustrated with Peter's report and his refusal to alter it to cover over the illegal acts that had occurred. The Board of Trustees of the WA Museum supported Peter's stand and there was a backdown by the government. However, the backdown was only temporary with the government altering the legislation to remove the Museum from its Aboriginal sites protection role.

Peter was dismayed at this apparent malfeasance. Nevertheless, he continued his career at the Museum and in 1992 was promoted to head the Anthropology Department. In this he continued his close association with a wide group of Aboriginal peoples and community associations. He built the Museum's resource base of scientific knowledge in anthropology and archaeology, ensuring that was available as a resource to Aboriginal peoples and researchers both in Australia and internationally.

He also furthered his links in joint work with academics at the University of Bordeaux where he carried out post-graduate research. He worked with John-Paul Raynal and others in, amongst other things, identifying the possible routes of movement of neanderthal peoples from the African continent to southern Europe. A key aspect being the investigation of comparable

camp and fireplace sites and later the similarities in stone axe manufacture. A few days before his passing, Peter spoke to me about research he was participating in on the effect of volcanic activity on the choice of living habitats for early humans. He was continuing to pursue his core interests in archaeology as a means of understanding the links between ethnobotany and community survival and social development.

In February 1989 Robbie died as a result of a workplace accident. Nola, Peter and Patrick had to carry the pain of this tragic loss.

It was some years later in 1996 that Peter and Nola left West Australia to settle in Yass. Patrick remained in Perth to continue his studies and a career in politics. By this time Patrick was more West Australian than east coaster. Peter recognised this and would often comment that Patrick would probably not leave the West as hard as that may have been for them both but particularly for Nola as a mother. Nola's acceptance of this separation represented a key aspect of the tyranny of distance that has shaped Australian history.

With the move to Yass, Peter and Nola re-established their east coast life. Along with archaeological research and consulting, Peter opened a leatherwork shop in Yass and pursued his love of skilled hand tooling of saddles and other farm accoutrements. There were many visits to Nowra and Nola's family and this took Peter back to his roots and the origins of his interest and passion for the natural environment, archaeology and furthering his interest in plants and their life sustaining qualities.

By now Peter had established a base of knowledge and experience that enabled him to conduct technical surveys of indigenous land claims and defend these on behalf of land owners before the tribunals and decision making bodies that determined the boundaries and compensation that would accompany the granting of exploration and mining licences. Fundamentally, Peter had pioneered a material shift in the way in which traditional archaeology and anthropology

was used to present the case for protection or compensation in respect of indigenous sacred sites, food, resources and traditional environment protection. Peter argued on behalf of traditional landowners on the basis of a holistic or regional perspective of land rights rather than the accepted pattern of mining companies negotiating with landowners based on individual sites and small land areas. Clans and language groups were now able to present a defensible argument for the broader protection of their traditional land. He offered his Yass-based consulting services to state governments and Aboriginal groups across Australia but especially in Queensland. Interestingly, it evolved that his main sponsors became the mining companies who eventually recognised they gained a greater assurance of a sustainable agreement with land holders by using Peter's model for deriving compensations and exclusions from proposed mining leases.

Through his earlier work at Nookanbah and then later as a consultant, Peter significantly changed the nature and expectation of governments and corporations in dealing with indigenous land holders. Others now routinely follow Peter's model.

He worked on significant archaeological excavations and interpretations across Australia and in the south of France where some projects were funded by the French government. He worked with and supervised graduate students and passed his knowledge on to indigenous peoples of Australia, Canada, South Africa, Indonesia, The Philippines and Brazil. He was a member of the Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islanders Studies and worked in an anthropological role with indigenous groups across Australia to establish sustainable micro-businesses and build business opportunities in eco-tourism and botanical collecting (the saving of seeds and flora rehabilitation projects). He developed and managed certificate courses for Aboriginal Archaeological Assistants.

Peter was utilised by the Australian

armed forces and other groups to teach arid conditions survival strategies and techniques. Much of this training and education was based on the knowledge and experience contained in his various books about native plants and their uses for both foods and medicines.

He wrote extensively for various specialist and special interest journals including *The Australian Bamboo Network Journal*, *Hunter Magazine*, *Sporting Shooter* and a range of camping and survival magazines. He wrote in excess of 100 scientific and special interest articles in fields as diverse as ethnography, botany, environmental assessments, endangered species, archaeology, anthropology, Aboriginal site assessment best practice, surveying, Aboriginal rock shelters, stone tool manufacturing, love magic in traditional societies, plants and their uses, native bamboos, traditional hunting and gathering techniques. Peter left no stone unturned and nor was there moss gathering on any of his rocks.

In addition, Peter was the published author of at least 12 books and was involved in the development and production of 7 films and videos, including several guest appearances on ABC's *Burke's Backyard*.

Peter was a polymath whose range of interests and expertise tested the definition of that term. He built his knowledge and assessments on science, established facts and was capable of his own original field and desk research to test the veracity of issues. He was balanced in his assessments and decisions. As a humanist, he routinely exhibited a tolerance and respect for others; he was non-judgemental, accepting people as they were while offering advice if it was sought.

Peter set himself the task of understanding the history of human spiritual beliefs.

Having grown up in the Catholic church in Nowra in the 1950's and 1960's and at St Chevalier's college, Peter went on to develop a powerful understanding of matters spiritual, theological, and philosophical including Chinese and southeast Asian phi-

losophies such as Buddhism, Daoism and Zen and other esoteric spiritual and religious studies.

In West Australia Peter worked with a monk of the Pallottine order to write and publish a book on aboriginal spirituality entitled *Body & Soul*. This book explored traditional medicine approaches in a manner akin to what western society would call holistic medicine – a healthy body and mind. He worked in WA with the Benedictine order of New Norcia where the monastery held 13th and 14th century manuscripts brought from Spain in the 1930s to ensure their safety from the Spanish Civil War. By negotiating a sort of knowledge swap, Peter provided insights into Aboriginal spirituality and heritage preservation in return for being granted access to their rare manuscripts, some aspects of which he translated from the Latin. Peter was a Theosophist, believing that knowledge and meditation upon that knowledge was the path to self-understanding and the leading of a productive and fulfilling life.

In this breadth of intellectual commitment Peter stood as a true Renaissance Man.

At the practical daily level, Peter believed in family and community. He was committed to giving back to society and using his knowledge and skills to enrich the lives of others.

He favoured the family as the heart of building sound community values and a morality that was accepting of difference among peoples. He was generous with his time.

He shared his knowledge and skills and enjoyed working with others to achieve outcomes of benefit to his broader community and visitors to it.

In his actions and his thought Peter was profoundly positive, he saw good and opportunity in others and in situations before he saw any negatives. But when deficiencies became apparent, he stood ready to offer a hand in rectifying and ensuring a sound outcome.

Peter was active in many local community groups including the Ma-

sons, the Yass Historical Society, the Garden Club, Cooma Cottage and the Antique Farm Machinery Club.

Peter supported Tony MacQuillan in the writing of several Yass historical books including one on Eric Bell an Aboriginal elder of the Yass area. They wrote also on Father

Charles Lovett the first Catholic priest in the Yass region and produced an account of the early days of the Yass and District Historical Society, and a 75th Anniversary history of the Masonic Order in Yass. Tony has commented on how locals missed Peter's leather and saddlery skills. He said also that he believed Peter's

depth of knowledge was generally unrecognised due to his inherent modesty.

Peter, a giant of a man in stature and intellect, was a loved and loving husband and father who leaves a large treasure box of precious memories.

Early College Times

Robin Cantrill (1950-51)

From *Talkabout* the memories of my time at WWTC come back as I try to put names to younger faces of published photos. I think as well, that the demolition of the old residences prompted me to write my contribution. Who will ever forget the old unpainted, dark brown, Masonite interior walls of our room?

There has always been a teacher in our family for several generations so it must be in our genes. Our son, Douglas is a teacher and several of our grandchildren carry this mantle too.

After leaving high school I really wanted to teach Woodwork and Technical Drawing. Dad thought I might like to be a plumber. In fact, I was not aware that he had already negotiated a possible job for me as a plumber's assistant. Digging ditches, laying drainage pipes and soldering water tanks in Orange in Winter! I can understand why Dad did it. He lived through the Depression and was mindful of his responsibility as a parent after World War II.

After I left school I worked in an orchard for a few months. I was rather glad to go off to College because I didn't think spraying grapes and fruit trees, as well as picking and packing fruit could possibly be a long term occupation for me.

College days were a good preparation for my new life challenges. I still had to make my bed, but now I had to wash and iron my clothes. I learned to cook starch in a cup (Vic Chapman recipe) in the copper and rub it into shirt collars to stiffen them. That was the accepted fashion in order to look somewhat smart for Lectures and Demonstration lessons. The starch recipe was very handy for getting good creases in our uniforms for special National Service parades too. I could never take to wearing a turtle neck sweater over my pyjamas in winter as some students did when they turned up for breakfast.

Live-in College definitely prepared me for my next experience in National service. As well they both prepared me for boarding with people as I began my teaching career.

At College, I enjoyed so many of the activities: gymnastics, basketball, softball, rugby and Australian Rules. It was softball on Saturday morning and Rugby in the afternoon, followed by Australian Rules on Sunday afternoon to fill a winter weekend.

In athletics, whereas I had learned to high jump, I now was introduced to the javelin, discus and shotput. I was musical and often helped others with the recorder. Later it was a handy skill I used to accompany folk dances at a small country school in Central NSW. I often wonder how many descant recorders finished up in the back of cupboards in schools in NSW or were trashed by students before they left the College grounds.

I still have my three two plait edged cane basket with my section and number burnt into the back of it. (I also helped a few others complete theirs).

I roomed with Jim Bates and Bill Small. Our next door neighbours were Vic Chapman, Don Hyde and Tony Morley.

Bruce Gordon had the only radio-gram and it was often playing the 78 record of *Ghost Riders in the Sky*, to me, a shocker, only marginally ahead of *Little Sir Echo*.

We escaped rather quickly at the end of our two years at Teachers College due to a mumps scare. I didn't have much time at home before I went off to do National Service at Puckapunyal rather

than Holsworthy. It was the army camp closest to Wagga Wagga irrespective of whether we came from anywhere north of there. It was a reasonable way to spend three months.. One of the Sergeants didn't care for the newly trained teachers and was keen to get us for a round or two with him in the boxing ring. Sad the boxing amateur champ from College, Spud Whittaker was not in our platoon.

I began teaching at Penrith, a country town in those days but close enough to go to the SCG to watch cricket or football. I was transferred to Orange to support Mum and family after Dad died. Here I met Jenny, my wife and welcomed our four children.

I enjoyed Science teaching and with List 1 and 2, I was invited to take over the Science Department at Orange High School and later became Science Advisor with the Department. Gradually the powers that be gave out designated areas to the Science Masters to work with in advising. I was the only one without an area given so I asked what my role might be. I was duly informed that I had the rest: a kite shaped area including Lithgow to Broken Hill and from Bourke to Young. Didn't they know how big NSW was?

I held seminars at different schools inviting surrounding schools to join in. It was a fulfilling role for me and I enjoyed meeting other teachers, especially those from small schools where they were the only Science teacher. The exchange of ideas was important to me and I gathered many ideas and passed them on. I initiated Science fairs in some schools. Many single science teachers in the smaller Central Schools had such wonderful Science teaching ideas. I began a magazine, *SCAG* giving ideas in teaching Science and Agriculture.

(to be continued)



Wagga Wagga Teachers Alumni Association

KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE IN 2023 TO SECURE THE FUTURE



IMPORTANT NOTICE

MEMBERSHIP CONTRIBUTIONS

To ensure the continued financial viability of the Wagga Wagga Teachers Alumni Association the following membership contributions and services will apply from 1 January 2023

a) Electronic Membership:

Receive all information and three (3) copies of *Talkabout* electronically. \$10.00 p.a.

b) Standard Membership:

Receive all information and three (3) printed copies of *Talkabout* via standard mail.
\$20.00 p.a.

In addition to either Electronic or Standard Membership members may choose to make additional contributions from the options below.

c) Additional Contributions:

- general donation to the Alumni for ongoing projects e.g. digitise archives from \$10.00.
- specific donation to the WWTCAA Scholarship Fund from \$10.00.

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WWTC ALUMNI ASSOC

Commonwealth Bank Casula NSW

BSB: 062 329 A/C No: 10073789

Reference : Member's First Initial, Surname and first year at college e.g. BForbes65

Please send a Remittance Advice to email:
bruceles@bigpond.com

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Given Name _____

Address _____

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Donation to Alumni Projects _____

Donation to Scholarship Fund _____

General Donation _____

TOTAL CONTRIBUTION 2023 _____

Make cheques payable to:

WWTC ALUMNI ASSOCIATION

Send Your Contribution To:

Secretary WWTCAA

12 Silky Oak Rise

KEW NSW 2439

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(Including Photos)

Please email contributions for *Talkabout*

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