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TALK ABOUT



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Bill Rowlinson—a humble man many of us knew at WWTC



William Josiah Rowlinson was born at Balgowlah, NSW, in 1919. After pre-war cadet service with 17 Battalion, he joined the AIF in June 1941, serving as NX37487 with 2/7 Armoured Regiment, a unit which did not see service outside Australia. In November 1944, seeking a combatant role, he transferred to 1 Australian Parachute Battalion, reverting to private from the rank of sergeant, but the war ended before this unit saw action. After a period with 113 Australian General Hospital as a volunteer in tropical disease research, Rowlinson was awarded the Commander-in-Chief's Commendation Card, but took his discharge from the Army in 1946. In 1950, he re-enlisted for service in Korea, becoming number 2/400239 with 3 RAR. Twice wounded in Korea during 1951, he was awarded the Distinguished Conduct Medal and Bar for his gallant conduct in the battles of Kapyong and Maryang-San, becoming the most highly decorated Australian soldier of the war. In early 1952 he was commissioned as a lieutenant in the regular army, but later in the year, while giving instruction in the use of explosives at Ingleburn, he was seriously injured in a Gelignite explosion, his right hand and forearm being amputated as a

result. He recovered from his injuries, remaining in the Army until 1957, and reaching the rank of captain. Bill Rowlinson died in the late 1990s.

The citation for the award of the Distinguished Conduct Medal reads as follows: 'On 23rd and 24th April, 1951, 3rd Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment was defending the area MOKTON-NI and D Company was assigned the role of right flank protection on feature 504 and the ridge line to the North East. 12 Platoon of which Lieutenant (then Corporal) Rowlinson was a Section Leader had the left forward section of this forward Platoon. During the first night of occupation 23rd April, 1951, enemy probing patrols endeavoured to penetrate his section position and were repulsed. On the morning of 24th April, 1951, enemy of platoon strength maintained continuous attacks against this section position for a period of from five to six hours and were again driven back sustaining heavy casualties. During these attacks Corporal Rowlinson and six members of his section were wounded. The wounded were evacuated but Corporal Rowlinson remained on duty and continued to lead his section until his section were ordered to withdraw. Corporal

Rowlinson although wounded displayed leadership of a very high order and outstanding courage by holding the section together during the continuous attacks on his section position and thereby securing the company position vital to the successful conduct of the battalion defence. It is estimated that during all these attacks the enemy threw in approximately 150 men and suffered twenty five known dead, killed in front of Corporal Rowlinson's section. 'The citation for the award of a Bar to the DCM reads as follows: 'On the morning of 5th October, 1951, D Company 3rd Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment attacked the ridge leading to Hill 317. This necessitated four separate attacks in three of which 12 Platoon D Company was

physically involved. In the early stages of the first attack the Company Commander was wounded and was replaced by the Officer Commanding 12 Platoon; Sergeant Rowlinson assuming command of 12 Platoon. 12 Platoon was immediately committed to the attack to bolster up the assault and Sergeant Rowlinson's quick cool and inspiring leadership contributed largely to its success. During the attack on the second feature in the face of heavy small arms, machine gun and 3.5 Bazooka fire he personally led his Platoon in the assault, displaying initiative and directing fire with firm control. Early in this action, he was wounded in the left leg, but without seeking medical aid he continued to follow the plan of attack and lead his Platoon in a further assault on the

third feature in the face of continued heavy small arms and machine gun fire. At this stage he quickly re-organised on the third objective and contacted his Company Commander by wireless and informed him of enemy dispositions on the fourth ridge. His quick thinking and appreciation enabled the Company to successfully conclude the operation on the fourth objective. Sergeant Rowlinson's Platoon accounted for 32 enemy dead and took 14 Prisoners of War. Throughout the operation Sergeant Rowlinson showed complete disregard for his own personal safety and inspired his Platoon by his example. Sergeant Rowlinson was previously recommended for Distinguished Conduct Medal by this unit in April, 1951, and again has proved himself an outstanding, brave and intelligent soldier.'

British War Medal 1939-45 : Corporal W J Rowlinson

Australia Service Medal 1939-45 : Corporal W J Rowlinson

Korea Medal : Sergeant W J Rowlinson, 3 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment

United Nations Korea Service Medal : Sergeant W J Rowlinson, 3 Battalion, Royal Australia Regiment

Across the Secretary's Desk - Lesley Forbes



Nita Walshe (Bruce 1967-68) I was really interested to read Ken's story

as we taught together at Temora West when I first started teaching in 1969. Was also interested to hear that Norm Stanton had taught at Walleroobie in the mid/late 60's. I went to that school in the 50s and did my home prac there in '68 although he wasn't there then.

Ian Herd (1966-67) Many thanks for your continued hard work supplying me with wonderful reminiscences of our teaching day via *Talkabout* magazine.

John Morris (1967-68) Many thanks for the latest edition of *Talkabout*. It continues to amaze me whom teachers can recall, with great accuracy, and their early teaching career experiences. Surely they must have kept diaries! I see you have invited WWTC graduates to furnish some articles for

the next edition. I had a chat to Norm Stanton. His article is the catalyst for this email, to see if it would be worthwhile providing an article on both life after teaching while remaining with the Sports Unit of the Department. I was employed, on a casual basis, travelling around the state teaching the rules of track and field (athletics) to both primary and secondary teachers. I commenced in 2010, after being offered the 'job' by Ross Morrison the manager of the Sports Unit, following the state CHS athletics championships the previous year. I am now in my eleventh year. Included in the article could be my experiences at the Sydney Olympics and both the Melbourne and more recently Gold Coast Commonwealth Games.

Editor inquired of Peter Lawler?

Yes I have met Peter occasionally in his role as a coach and mine as an official. He's a very knowledgeable and experienced throwing coach. I'll endeavour to put together an article and forward it to you with a photograph or two. It will make a change from writing my memoirs as requested by my two sons. Thank heavens for lockdown to give me time to read and write. Roll on the Paralympics next week.

Pam Piper (Platt 1957-58) I was just sitting here reading *Talkabout* and discovered the missing end to Ken's article, and being a 57-58 student, had been reading with much interest. Thank you for sending the amended version and thanks for all your efforts with the publication. It always brings back great memories. A group of 'girls' mostly from Kabi Dorm (1957-58) continue to meet on an annual basis, unfortunately cancelled over the last two years because of COVID VIRUS! We used to meet alternatively in Canberra and Sydney, but for some years now have been meeting half way between, in the Bowral/Mittagong area, most recently at a small off the highway spot called Eling Forest. Partners attending (often as chauffeurs) also seem to have developed a good friendship. We never have any problem in catching up where we left off the previous year. Those attending our gatherings include: Anne (nee Foster) and Doug Nutt - Canberra, Aileen Dillon (nee Phillips) now living in Melbourne near family, Margaret de la Garde - Sydney, Bev (nee Sear) and Ian Baulch - Tweed, with family in Canberra, so try to combine a visit., Di (nee Scott) and Wulf Mason - South Coast., Jan (nee Dinnerville) Goodall - Canberra, Pam (nee Platt) Piper - Canberra, Janice (nee Matthews) and Fred Hodgson - Canberra, Lynette (nee Gould) and Jeff Stewart - Canberra, Liz (nee Cunningham, also known as Jean) and Roger Morrow - Sydney, Michael Woolley - Canberra, husband of Bev (nee Parker) who died some years ago, Jennifer (nee Smith) Reynolds - Canberra. A welcome 'ring-in' to the group. I can't remember her dormitory; others will I'm sure. We are hoping we will all still be able to travel at such time when it will again be COVID safe to do so. I am sure many others have been similarly affected in enduring separation from family and friends.

Tom Halls (1961-62) Many thanks for going to this trouble. And thanks for the excellent magazine as always. I have not flown out of Australia for 18 months; the longest period in 30 years. No withdrawal symptoms though, as I am almost as busy on zoom into each country as usual. How did we ever teach without this equipment???

Lorenza Powyer (Brian Powyer 1966-67, our former editor's wife) Hope you are both keeping well and not too affected by this dreadful pandemic. Thank you for the latest *Talkabout*. Whilst I didn't attend WWTC, I am still able to appreciate some of the stories shared by your contributors. Brian loved his time at College and often spoke of many incidents and adventures of life away from home with a whole bunch of young people that were enjoying the freedom of growing up together and learning to become 'serious', responsible teachers.

Bob let me know that **Jenelle Neich (Whitby 1969-71)** passed away in May this year. Our condolences to Bob.

Ronella Stuart (Snedden 1960-61) I have just opened and read my latest edition *Talkabout* and was thrilled to see 2 letters from people I knew at College. I have been trying to contact Elaine Armstrong (Etherington) but the email I had for her has not been acceptable. I not only went through college with Elaine but we also attended the same High school in Wollongong. Is it possible for you to give me her correct e mail address please?

Ray Griffiths (1964-65) Thank you so much for the production and distribution of *Talkabout*. I always enjoy your work and appreciate the burden you have accepted. I particularly enjoyed hearing about Norm Stanton due to my hockey days at WWTC. I enjoy reading every edition. I was particularly impressed with the contributions of Ken McCubbin, (A Reflection on Becoming a Teacher), Chris Lennon, (From Panania to White Cliffs and Back) and Norm Stanton (London Calling) in the latest edition. I found each fascinating reading. Thanks to all involved.

Tom McKibbin (1963-64) Thank you Lesley. I read the story by Ken and found it disturbing. I went looking for the last column and could not find it. This last posting made sense of it. Thank you. I really enjoy the teaching stories in *Talkabout*.

Terry Dwyer (1961-62) It is interesting to note also that the engagement involving Bill R on Hill 504 is (almost certainly) fictionalised by Bryce Courtenay in his tome *Brother Fish* (Viking, 2004 pp170). The character is named Bob Rowland in this novel. An item in *Talkabout* will surely prompt some reader response from WWTC inmates of that era ! *Thanks to Terry for sending in the link to Bill's military history.*

Marie Radford, (Dignan 1960-61)

Helen Schlenker (Barrett 1960-61) passed away in April.

(*Obituary on page 8-9*)

Helen Barrett as she was then ,was my roommate (Ipai Dormitory) .

Jim Power (1949-50) Many thanks for this. Betty (nee Barnes) and I enjoy reading about Wagga days. Now 93 and 92 we are still in good health.

Jimpower1@bigpond.com

Joan Chaplin (Brown 1953-54) Thank you for the latest copy of *Talkabout* for Joan/Mum. Letting you know that Mum/Joan had a serious stroke about 12 weeks ago. After time in Hospital and then also Rehab, Mum/Joan has now moved into the Wintergarden Hostel, at Garden Village in Port Macquarie. Mum continues her gradual improvement, and is an inspiration to us all. Joan still enjoys reading and will be pleased to have her copy of the latest *Talkabout* magazine. □ Many thanks for your support, Lesley, Di Bridge (daughter)

Pat Smith let me know that her husband, **Garth Smith (1958-59)** had passed away on 11 July 2020.

Ruby Riach (1950-54 lecturer) Thank you Lesley. I do enjoy reading the newsletters but sad to know of so many deaths. Of course we are

all getting older. Probably I am more senior than all of those I read about. I have known Francis Gavel over recent years very well. She and Dick, her husband, attended the Order of Australia gatherings in Dubbo each year. I have been the Convenor of the Dubbo Group of the Order of Australia Association for sixteen years, since I moved from Sydney where I had been the State Secretary for seven years.

Lionel King (1960-61) Thank you for always sending me the latest *Talkabout* that I get great enjoyment from reading the many life stories. This year will be my 60th year of working in education (paid positions) as I attended WWTC in a Small Schools Section. I did give a detailed *Fantale* account of my career for the 50th year booklet for my cohort - published in 2010/11.

I have added another ten years to my career since then.

Don Whitbread (1954-55) Thank you for including the short notice of publication of my book in the latest edition of *Talkabout*. However I was surprised to see that in the title you had used 'The' instead of 'Any'. Perhaps a typo? While that was still meaningful, it did not relate to a true story on p.210-11. I'll summarise briefly below. I was working in the Parliamentary Branch of Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, but at the same time I was Musical Director of Canberra Philharmonic's production of *The Music Man*. During a rehearsal there was a knock at the door. A stranger appeared and said, 'Is there a Mr Whitbread here?' I quickly owned up and he said, 'I was just passing a public phone downstairs and heard it ringing. I answered, to be told it was the Prime Minister's Office and can you hear any singing?' He said he could and was told, 'Go and tell Don Whitbread that the PM (Gough Whitlam) would like to see him at 10 pm with the Deputy Secretary of the Attorney General's Department. That was the end of that rehearsal. It turned out that they had

rung my wife at home and she told them where I was. So that was how the title came about,

Lucie Gabb (Press 1952-53) Attached is a memory of my first days as a young teacher at Cabramatta Primary School. It may be of some interest. Thank you and the committee for the wonderful work you do to keep our much loved magazine afloat. I enjoy reading it and always find a reference to someone I have known over the years. In the latest copy there was news of Francis Gavel. Francis and I both grew up in Condobolin and our lives were very different. Francis came back to Condobolin and married Dick Gavel, a grazier. She devoted her life to good works and did not return to the classroom. Like Francis my first appointment was in Sydney and I am still there. I married an engineer and when my youngest child started school I returned to the classroom and stayed for the next 24 years. I knew very little about Francis so it was most interesting to read about her and her life.

Dorothy Tanner (Williams 1948-50) Many thanks, Lesley and Bruce. Love your cheerful photo, Lesley. Never say die inspiration. Fancy Bruce waxing poetic - came from left field! Good one, Bruce! We're bearing up - Dot fully, I'm half, vaxxed - no reactions so far. I was convinced when 41 of 42 recent intensive care patients were unvaxxed. Still am persuaded that the whole thing should never have happened - biowarfare research at Wuhan (some funding millions from USA/Fauci funds) not properly controlled! (*The Truth About COVID-19*; Joseph Mercola and Ronnie Cummins.) Loved the story in *Talkabout* about the teacher being protected by the intellectually handicapped student! The language was straight from the gangster movies! Such good and appropriate photos of the Wilcoxes. Such a shame no-one saved the posts from John Charlie Ferris's WWTC Yahoo Group - so much potential *Talkabout* material there.

Gordon Bruton (1949-50). Thank you for the latest edition of *Talkabout*. It is doubly welcome this time with our libraries not being open - a real basket of goodies! I was saddened to read of the death of Shirley Salter (Morcom). Shirl was a great friend, and I remember the way I looked forward to meal times because our table group, which included Jeannette Urquhart, Allen Roberts, Ray (I forget his surname) and others, was always so jolly and friendly. Vale, Shirl.

Peter Clark (1960-61) Two great years of my life 1960-61, so always delighted to hear of the work of the Association and *Talkabout* - always good reading

Joan Kirkham (Robinson 1959-60) Re the latest *Talkabout*, I notice a brief mention of Anne Sheerin being in a nursing home. Anne was my roommate and is still a very close friend /sister.

She is still very lucid but lonely as the days are long with lockdown. If anyone would like to contact her, I have her personal phone number and mailing address. Anne doesn't do emails etc.

Another dear friend of ours from our dorm in 59/60 was Barbara Sargent (Hobbs). The three of us were in close contact until just recently when Barb passed away in a palliative care facility in Young. Anne & I miss talking with Barb.

Maybe you could post that in the next issue of *Talkabout*.

Derek Barry let me know that his Mum, **Shirley Barry (Yonge 1947-49)** had recently passed away in Tamworth. *Shirley has been a regular contributor to Talkabout since its inception in 1997.*

Leigh Griggs (Moore 1962-63) Many thanks for all that you and your husband do, sending 3 interesting printed copies of *Talkabout*.

Decima Pickles (Wheeler 1949-50) met my niece, a speech pathologist, at a Speech Session. She said, 'A delight'. *It is a small world!*

In Reply: 'Who Knew Mike Smith and Merv Whittaker

Jim Roche (1959-60)

Firstly, more about Mike Smith. Mike arrived in 1960, lecturing in Geography to Junior Secondary Section 597, which followed a vastly different curriculum to the other six Infants/Primary sections. The new High School Certificate (HSC) in Geography required detailed knowledge in subjects such as Cartography, Geomorphology and Climatology (quite foreign to most of the 597 students who had not studied Geography for their HSC. I was in a more fortunate position, as I had scored a Merit Pass in Geography 1 at Sydney Uni in 1958 (no mention of other subjects!) so Mike used me to help other students with tutorials and assign-

ments. Thus, we had a very positive teacher/student relationship. However, I came to know Mike much better through his love of Rugby and his accepting the role of coach for the College 1st XV in 1960. I was captain of that team and by sharing our knowledge of training, tactics and team personnel I was able to develop a close understanding and appreciation of Mike as a person and a leader. Many of the lecturers in 1960 were strong supporters of the Rugby team, none more passionate than June Whittaker, the esteemed, very popular Infants lecturer, who helped ferry the team to all our 'away'

games, to venues such as Temora, West Wyalong, Griffith, Leeton and Young. June's husband, Mervyn was well known to the team and some students were lucky enough to sometimes be invited to the Whittakers' home for a Sunday roast. I was one of the fortunate invitees and sometimes helped Mervyn to harvest honey early Sunday mornings, from their many bush hives. In conclusion and in reply to June Whittaker's question: "Yes, I was one of the lucky ones who got to know both Mike Smith and Mervyn Whittaker on a personal basis; two wonderful gentlemen who greatly enriched my college life!"

President's Report - Bruce Forbes



Thanks Lindsay, our Treasurer, for such attention to detail and your conscientious role.

Work is being done to establish a North Campus Walking Tour utilizing artefacts of significance from South Campus. Sheridan Ingold, working with Peita Vincent and John Ferguson have been planning this

project to preserve and highlight memorabilia from WWTC.

Unfortunately, there are some issues with "rediscovering" the whereabouts of gates, lights and sundial when they were transported from South Campus to Boorooma. John and I continue to be involved in developing the history tour. Any suggestions you may have will be welcome. The project is ongoing and hopefully there will be a rediscovery of the missing "historical memorabilia and artefacts" to make the project more representative of our time at WWTC.

Lesley had sufficient articles for this *Talkabout* but the next *Talkabout* will need your contributions to flow in. No doubt, many of you will remember Bill Rowlinson as one of our non-lecturing icons who was a friend who helped and supported so many of us on the campus.

Our last *Talkabout* was printed at CSU and thanks go to Sheridan who organised this for us. Apologies about the stapling if you received a hard copy.

It remains a hope that we will be able to convene an AGM in February 2022. Perhaps a celebratory luncheon would be fitting. What do you think? Let us know if that appeals to you.

I had a surprise visit from a fellow alumnus 1964/65. I was out mowing the lawn when this person strolled down the side path (after ringing the front doorbell for no reply). I had a vague recognition of the face (no mask) as he greeted me with a firm and warm handshake. "Do you know?" The wavering mind did its methodical reflection into the deep recesses to conjure a name for the face. I had a vision. It involved a basketball on a black bitumen court, a man in a white singlet with green and gold horizontal bands and with a deep passion for WWTC. He was our captain of the WWTC Basketball team which played in the Wagga Wagga Town Competition (1965). He was not on our list of alumni but craved for a greater connection to our common past. How could we miss such a person? He taught at a timber town called Kookaburra as an early appointment to a one teacher school. (There is a story there Col K). Here was John Roberts. After loading him with a few bits of memorabilia, like *Talkabouts*, reunion magazines, beer coasters and placemats, warden reports etc., he headed off to home at nearby Bonny

Hills. John replied later in an email, "we only scratched the surface" so no doubt we shall continue the story. Life has been a bit hectic here having just finished a week of golf for 160+ veteran golfers. I am the Treasurer for the KCCMVG so handling a

few "shillings" has been a bit of a trial. It makes me appreciate the job that Lindsay does. Players came from far and wide for this tournament and they certainly enjoyed being out of lockdown areas.

Looking forward to catching up with my progeny in Melbourne and Brisbane in the next couple of weeks.

Please keep fit and well and enjoy a cautious return to social sanity. Best wishes for Christmas.

Some Memories of One Teacher Small Schools

Terry Dwyer (1961-62)

Once upon a time a common site was a simple cream weatherboard structure (with its underpants on the outside) standing in splendid isolation on some side road. Sometimes pepper – corn trees surrounded it, sometimes wheat crops; often not much.

The One Teacher School in some form served as the social, academic, sporting and altercation centre of rural communities from a time prior to the Education Acts of the 1880's. Sadly these land marks have largely disappeared. Some have escaped any historical reference in Departmental documents. A hint to checking this is that for some reason best known to have impacted D of E schools, they are listed BY COUNTY—Wynyard, Mitchell, Clarendon, Selwyn, Bourke etc !

The above counties surround Wagga Wagga and in the early 1960's there were around twenty eight One Teacher schools operating. About one third of these had closed by 1970 and most by the late 1980's. State-wise there were some 1400 Small Schools in N.S.W. around 1950's. Today about 150 survive.

A number of factors /reasons could be advanced for the rapid rate of closures in this period. Among these are the increase in State Aid to Non-Government Schools, demographic factors, increased mechanization on farms and the cyclical nature of farm incomes and, of course, subsidised bus transport. A combination of the above resulted in the enrolment of my S.S falling from 15 to 5 and its eventual closure.

My One Teacher experiences were acquired within the Wagga District of the Riverina Directorate. In three separate circumstances I was involved with these rural educational establishments — twice as District Relief

Teacher and once as T.I.C. These provided many incidents; memorable, and often humorous such as :-

A typical Riverina Summer, early December. Blowflies, heat burning the nostrils as it arose from the burnt clay playground. Surrounding the school yard and extending far away, wheat ready for harvest. A gaggle of students – virtually the whole school — descended on me having lunch on the porch.

"Mr Dwyer, Mr Dwyer Katie's down the toilet !!!"

This facility was the standard Drop Design — a 'One Holer'.....a wide wooden plank with a large hole carved in it spanned the pit.

Katie was a small Kinder and had folded herself through the hole. I arrived to find her little fingers clasping the sides of the hole.

Fortunately the pit had not been re-dug for some time !!

A wet, cold and windy May day. The school had been a two teacher with two separate buildings. It was currently a One Teacher with him on sick leave. In anticipation of a stay of a week or so I had purchased some supplies at a roadside store. These included a tin of ...***"Tom Piper Steak and Onions"***.

School finished for the day and the flock had disappeared towards the Wheat Silo and horizon. I settled in, deciding to reside in the spare building for the period. I fired up the Pot–bellied stove and was stirring my Tom Piper with a plasticine impregnated ruler when a loud female voice demanded from a filled doorway ...

"WHAT DO YOU THINK YOU ARE DOING? PUT OUT THAT FIRE AND FOLLOW ME !!!"

I did, and spent a most enjoyable week on the farm doing some tractor work, driving the kids to school and enduring a menu which did not include Tom Piper!

External Studies from UNE was available and a number of T.I.C. took up the opportunity. I was only allowed a Rental T.V. tuned with a coat hanger antenna to 'near snow – free' and which went back well before Exam Time! Bob was T.I.C. some 40k out of Wagga. I arrived just before starting time as Relief Teacher for a few days.

I was greeted by a charming Sixth Class girl and placed on the verandah. Gayle (not her name) marshalled the students to an assembly, introduced me, ordered the students into the classroom and set each group to work. The kindy class was taken out for a radio program and I was placed at the desk with the mail etc. An amazing display of talent and possibly a clue as to why Bob found no difficulty in meeting U.N.E. assignment dead- lines!

Heather's father passed away suddenly. There was no telephone at my small schools so the message was delivered by local police.

We had to travel to Sydney urgently. I rang Area Office from a neighbour's phone and was informed that the District Relief Teacher, Trevor, would cover for the few days.

I set out the school work for each class group on the Black Board with a note to Trevor re circumstances etc.

Returning after a few days I checked out the classroom. Written on the green Black Board was the note

"Mr Dwyer, Trev didn't arrive so we did our work and went home."

We were married in January like most schoolies – and arrived at our small school appointment in dust and heat a few days before Term I began.

The school had a vested residence which had been condemned for some 15 years. We undertook to live there "...at our own wish and risk ..." for the sum of 10/- per week.

The complex consisted of a large stone building (1872) and a weatherboard addition (C.1920's) –neither of which had apparently been given much attention since construction

The school room was one end of the stone structure and originally had tiered seating.

Upon arrival we discovered that the electricity had not only been cut off but the box had been removed along with the line across the road to the source. Without electricity we had no water as a pump drew this from a large well near the house. There was no telephone to worry about.

A neighbour rescued us and we were eventually connected. Our new furniture had been delivered earlier and was of course covered in dust. Despite an

eventful introduction it was a wonderful appointment; a great community, lovely children. We really only occupied the weatherboard section using the rooms in the stone section for storage. I was suspicious that the spare rooms were inhabited by rats. One of the students brought in a number of traps and I asked him to set them in the rooms. We had determined to have a party and invite all the town friends for an evening.

It was winter. The very large lounge room in the stone section had a huge open fire place but was very cold. There was plenty of wood available so I decided to clean out the fire place in readiness.

During cleaning out eons of ashes I detected a vile smell and assumed that

I had disturbed something in the fireplace... WRONG! I eventually opened a door to one of the spare rooms and was enveloped in the PONG of several very dead rats.

They were great days. One Teacher Schools are now virtually part of history and in some cases forgotten. I could find no reference to several small schools once prominent in Wagga District activities... Eunonyhareenya, Brucedale, Downside are a few of these.

Perhaps some of the former T.I.C. of these and other One Teachers would like to share memories of those past days when Technological Innovation involved ditching the faithful 'Jelly Pad' for a second hand Spirit Duplicator!

Interesting Times

Alice Lane (McFaul 1953-54)

Two years of training at Wagga prepared us for some of what lay ahead. As you have seen from letters of others, some of what lay ahead was out of the ordinary.

My own experiences included:

Teaching at Grafton Girls School (Boys and girls were separated)

- A short attempt to lead a Girl Guides' Pack
- Teaching at Glendale, a southern suburb of Newcastle, when it was a centre for migrants newly arrived from Europe.

Some of these had escaped the invasion of Hungary and could not speak English. My class spent five terms in a weathered, due to lack of built spaces. The infants class had to walk up the road to the local church hall and only had to return to the school during lunch hour.

I was a short term replacement in suburban Sydney, ending when our family began arriving.

I took up Supply Teaching in Queensland in between the arrivals of more 'young Aussies'. This covered all primary

grades and was usually only for a couple of days at a time.

I set up private coaching, initially with a welfare group that took on students with disabilities. It expanded to cover school children of all ages, and some adults such as a man who was going for his licence in the mining industry.

I was involved in other volunteer work, though not actual teaching, made easier because of our basic training. Some time I spent with a city mission, where I taught a secretarial class, and several years with disadvantaged families, including those who had a family member in custody.

I did some volunteer work with 'Volunteers for Isolated Students Education'. Set up by a teacher in Canberra, the members of this group gave six weeks of time to help a family in an isolated area, where the children need extra help. All students were on Distance Education programs but sometimes mothers were finding it difficult to cope, in times of family care or illness. The scheme also covered itinerate

families who were working on the land, or travelling the show circuit. Volunteers could choose a geographical area in which to work and they were matched with a family. A telephone conversation was conducted, after which both parties could decide whether to proceed.

Although the aim was to help the family, this was an excellent opportunity for volunteers to go to places where they might otherwise not have been able to go. My own travels took me to the Northern Territory and to southern NSW.

I now write letters to the residents of the local nursing home. Even as a grandmother, I can look back on early training at Wagga, and see how it has helped me with my family. One son learned more about grammar and one grandson succeeded in maths after a slow start.

So, best wishes to anyone who is training in teaching. You have chosen a great career!

Cabramatta Primary School: First Appointment

Lucie Gabb (Press 1952-53)

It was a beautiful summer's morning as I left the railway station on the short walk to my first school as a new teacher. This was the final step in a long journey by steam train from my home in the central west of NSW. Thoughts were buzz-

ing through my head as all kinds of scenarios came to mind. What class would I have? Would I make friends? First year appointments were the luck of the draw but rarely did the north shore or the coveted beach suburbs

come out of the shoebox. The school soon came into view. As I turned into the gate so did everyone else who had walked from the train. It appeared that few teachers had cars and they relied on public transport and this

included the Principal, Head Teachers of the Boys and Girls Department and the Infants' Mistress. Boy was I in good company. Cabramatta Primary School was a big old two story building with a demountable in the far corner of the playground. Guess where my room was situated? After an initial orientation and told not to arrive early or stay at school late as it was not safe, I was given a blue curriculum and a box of chalk and pointed towards the demountable. My Year 4 class consisted of 35 girls of seventeen nationalities. I grew up in a small western town where a Greek owned the cafe and there wasn't even a Chinese restaurant.

There was big migrant hostel in Cabramatta at the time hosting mainly middle European migrants with a scattering of those from the UK. Such things as support teachers, ESL, pupil free days, big school libraries and Google were in the far distant future. There was very little way for me to research and understand the home lives of these children or what their parents may have gone through during WWII. My Girls' Mistress was a lovely woman but I think she had seen enough new teachers and was physically located on the other side of the school. As well she had a large senior class to bring up to standard. Later I learned she only came to visit me twice a year to test my class. I can't remember ever having a staff meeting but maybe we did. Lunch time arrived. One of the girls showed me the staff room situated on the second storey. As I had been warned in College, I stood back and waited until most were seated and it was just as well I did. One 'elderly' teacher had her favourite chair and woe betide any-

one who dared to sit in her spot. She couldn't abide happiness in any form as she saw it as a sign of weakness. Later when I arrived at school proudly sporting a new engagement ring she was horrified. I really wanted access to the wonderful ABC school broadcasts. Pleas for a radio fell on deaf ears so there was nothing for it but to save up and buy my own. Luckily my fiancé was a young engineer with AWA and he was able to get me an attractive little portable radio at a handy discount. The class and I loved Terence Hunt and his music broadcasts. There were movement broadcasts as well as Social Studies and Science. We had fun and learnt a lot. Time arrived for my first inspection. I had worked hard to decorate my room and get the children up to scratch. With chalk, a blackboard and my tonette this was no easy task. There was great anticipation on the day the inspector arrived. She turned out to be a compassionate woman who set a high standard. Her idea was to encourage young women to reach their potential and not to countenance anything below their best. She set the bar high and it was a great lesson for a young teacher to learn. Cleaning out my filing cabinet during this latest Covid lock down I came across the long forgotten report she wrote for me. She praised my dedication and preparation but commented I could be more animated. I was probably scared stiff! I remember my first

two years spent at Cabramatta with fondness. I had no idea that I would make that walk into a new school six more times and end my career as an Infants' Mistress (later DP). I remember those lovely children. Like me in my demountable they lived in disused army huts or other converted buildings. They had nothing but I hope they enjoyed learning the basics and the music, art, craft and sport we were able to have in our out of the way room. There were no frills, social media, choirs, concerts in the school but I believe the children had a good basic education and many of the teachers were terrific. I remember the Boys Deputy whose favourite saying was TGIF (thank God it's Friday) as he sat at his desk and read the paper. I was in awe of the formidable Infants' Mistress who offered a high standard of education and made sure her staff arrived in hats, gloves and stockings. This morning I was looking at the Cabramatta Facebook page. The pages were filled with colour, festivals and varied activities. There were still many faces of newcomers to this country but these children had come from Asia not the war ravaged countries of Europe. The children in my first class would now be in their seventies and I hope that they have had happy and successful lives in their new country. Maybe I was able to contribute a little to make them feel welcome and to enrich their lives.

Helen Schlenker (Barrett 1960-61) — Her Life

Barry Schlenker

After finishing teacher education at Wagga Wagga Teachers College, Helen began her teaching career at Double Bay Primary School, close to home at Coogee. I met Helen at a friend's home in early 1964 and after about 6 weeks Helen said that we couldn't let this become too serious as she was going overseas to England and Europe in a few months and planned to be away for 2 years.

Helen came home after about a year and we married about 5 months later, on January 8, 1966. Helen had resigned and had

no position to return to. We lived in Kogarah in a 1 bed flat, a half house, owned by a vibrant Italian family of 5. That's where we both learned to cook.

A position became available at Narwee Primary and Helen was once again teaching full time on permanent staff. I was teaching at James Cook Boys High and between us we ended up with 5 jobs, saving hard for our own home. During 1967 – 68 I wrote a school/college text and Helen

was the proof editor. The rule was – if Helen couldn't understand something, I had to rewrite it! Helen thus became quite knowledgeable about engineering materials. This proved invaluable when Helen filled in on my Year 12 class while I was away teaching inservice courses.

We purchased land at Bilgola Plateau and commenced building in 1969, the same year that Helen became pregnant. So 1969 was a busy year, as we moved into our new home and

Helen gave birth to our daughter Theresa. Moving to Bilgola was not without problems, as Helen had to again resign her permanency and I travelled long distances to my own teaching position. Helen had difficulty carrying a second child and so we adopted a delightful little boy, Michael. Helen fell pregnant almost immediately and our third very healthy child, Christie, arrived – suddenly a full house! Even with 3 children, Helen managed to do some casual teaching, as well as spending time in her favourite places, on the beach and in the surf.

In 1976 we decided to move because travelling was becoming an issue, both our mothers were ageing and needed support, and Helen wanted a full time position. We moved to Blakehurst. Even though Helen had gained accreditation in secondary English, she was unable to secure full time teaching. So began a long period of both primary and later secondary casual teaching, for which Helen was always in demand.

During this time Helen and I became interested in German Shepherd dogs and we trained, showed and bred them under our own kennel name. Helen loved the dogs and puppies and it was quite usual to find several adult dogs and a few puppies inside with her when I returned home in the afternoon. They all adored Helen and the dogs were very protective of her.

In 1979 we decided to take 3 months and travel around Australia. We set off in a Ford station wagon towing a camper. We went through western NSW into South Australia, up the Gunbarrel highway to Alice Springs, out to Uluru, into Darwin, across to WA, across

the bottom of the Gulf then down to the Daintree rainforest, finally travelling slowly down the East Coast to home – 24 thousand km in all. The children, with Christie the youngest at 4, had a wonderful time, as did we.

Following our trip, we agreed that we could no longer live in Sydney and spent time looking around on the Mid North coast. In 1985 I accepted a position at Taree High and Helen was employed as a full time casual in English, years 7 to 11. We purchased a 35 acre farm and spent many years with our vegetable gardens, chooks, ducks, geese, horses, milking cows, calves and pigs. Helen and the girls enjoyed many trail rides with friends and neighbours. During these years Helen, in her spare time (sic!) completed a Graduate Diploma in Teacher Librarianship and relieved in many of the local school libraries. We continued our interest in German Shepherds, and Helen had her farm “shadows”, usually at least two adult dogs accompanied by our 3 cats, who loved the dogs and Helen.

In 1991 I accepted a DP position in a new school at Narara and Helen remained in Taree for 2 years. During this time Helen gained permanent part time status, 4 days per week. She was able to get a transfer to Narara Valley High as a teacher of children with disabilities. This was Helen’s last teaching position and she retired at the end of 1999, after taking long service leave to travel to England, Scotland, Ireland and France with me.

We moved back to our farm and spent quite some time travelling, including Fiji, New Caledonia, Vanuatu, Thailand, Vietnam, Cambodia and Burma. We both loved Asia and Helen made friends everywhere we went. During this time Helen, aged 59, completed a scuba diving course and qualified as an open water diver. One of her first dives involved counting grey nurse sharks in a marine sanctuary

and Helen came home thrilled that some sharks swam above her in the scuba bubbles. Helen also went diving in Thailand, New Caledonia, and Vietnam. The dive that Helen enjoyed most involved a depth of 28 metres to explore a sunken WWII American destroyer.

Our overseas adventures came to an end in 2012, when the first indications of Helen’s neurological illness, corticobasal syndrome, appeared. This was diagnosed in late 2014, with symptoms increasing until loss of balance meant a wheelchair was required by 2019. In 2013, Helen was well enough to travel to Tasmania on a self drive holiday, which she enjoyed. This was our last long holiday, but up to the end of 2019 we had many short – 3 or 4 day- stays in lots of places, including the Gold Coast, Yamba, Newcastle, Port Macquarie, Ballina, and Sydney.

One of Helen’s greatest loves was the Manning Regional Art Gallery. In retirement Helen supported the Gallery and its growth through involvement with the Friends of the Gallery and as a donor to the Naked & Nude Art Prize. At the same time Helen developed her interests in drawing, photography, wire sculpture and jewelry design using natural stones.

After diagnosis, Helen’s one request was that she remain at home and not go into a nursing home and this we managed with lots of support from family, friends and our aged care provider. Helen never complained, was incredibly brave throughout her illness and sadly passed away in Mayo Private Hospital on April 18, 2021, aged 78. I remember Helen as intelligent, a great teacher, a wonderful wife and mother, brave, caring and compassionate. She had a great sense of humour and lived life to the full.

A Life of Contrasts

Elaine Saunders (Hardy 1962-63)

Self Education

Infants – Russell Lea , Primary
Drummoyne Girls, Secondary – Fort St Girls
Tertiary - Co-ed Residential – WWTCC
External Studies – Dip Teach, Wol-

longong, 1977; B Ed, Newcastle, 1988

Career

Teaching

Matraville – Grade 3 girls, Broken Hill
North – Co-ed Multi Grade ‘Nests’
Casual/Supply – Toronto, Ontario &

New Glasgow, Nova Scotia

Junior High, New Glasgow – Grade 7 Science; Grade 8 Canadian History; Grade 8 World Geography
Goulburn North – Grade 6 boys, Five Dock – Grade 4 girls, Sydney – casual – Inner West & Mt Druitt

Goodooga – Director SCF Pre School
Walgett – School Community Liaison Officer, Coonamble – Primary, Mudgee – Support Teacher Learning Difficulties; Home School Liaison Officer
Ilford – Principal, Nowra Hill - first female Principal at school servicing HMAS Albatross

b. Public House Management for English Brewers, Charringtons

The Acorn, Stifford Clays, Essex *The Bosun*, Brighton, Sussex *Duke of Richmond*, Earls Court, *Bull & Last*, London NW5 between Kentish Town & Highgate village

c. Family

Son born in London, UK and daughter born in Balmain, NSW



Elaine with her daughter, Pheona and granddaughters, Ellie and Tam-syn



Elaine with her mother at her WWTC Graduation Ball, 1963

d. Retirement

1. Vincentia - Volunteer - Lady Denman Museum, Sydney Olympics & Paralympics, Youth Olympics, Rugby World Cup; U3A, Yoga, Family History
2. Kiama- Volunteer – Minnamurra Public; U3A, Yoga, Tai Chi, Proboscis, Croquet, Family History

e. Travel

1. Overseas - England, Scotland, Wales, Ireland, Island of Jersey; all provinces of Canada including Newfoundland; all states of USA except Florida but including Hawaii & the Inside Passage by the Alaskan Marine Highway ferries; all countries in Western Europe & Scandinavia plus Norway by the Hurtigruten Coastal Express; Berlin with & without the Wall; Yugoslavia, Russia, Bulgaria, Romania,

Turkey, Croatia, Hungary, Serbia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, Finland; Canary Islands, South Africa; Greek Isles by the ferries; cruise through the Caribbean & the Panama Canal; Hong Kong, China, Japan; Queen Mary 2 cruise; New Zealand, Fiji, Cook Islands, Pacific Islands cruise2. Within Australia - Circuit by Highway 1 & by Sea; Traverse by the Indian Pacific & the Ghan; Tasmania; Canberra; fly over, walk on & swim in Lake Eyre; Lightning Ridge, Coober Pedy, White Cliffs & Andamooka opal fields; Woomera; Cape York & Horn & Thursday Islands; Murray River cruise; Warrumbungles, Mungo & Mutawintji National Parks; Birdsville, Oodnadatta & Strezlecki Tracks & Simpson Desert; Uluru, Kata Tjuta & Purnululu; Gibb River Road & Savannah Way; Arnhem Land; Great Barrier & Ningaloo Reefs & Kimberley Coast

Memories from My First Year Teaching at Smithfield Public School

Ian Herd (1966-67)

Having grown up in Sydney, the third son of two Primary School teachers, I decided I too should become a Primary School teacher. After completing the Leaving Certificate I entered WWTC in 1966 at the ripe old age of 17. Here I had a wonderful time and occasionally learned a little about being a teacher.

At the end of my second year of training and

armed with the considerable wisdom of an 18 year old, having undertaken small schools and infants method courses at college, I thought that I would apply for a country posting for my formative years of teaching. One experience led logically to the next. Unfortunately the Department with its

own version of logic didn't connect the training with an appointment so I found myself arriving at Smithfield Public School on 30 January, 1968 to begin an illustrious teaching career. (On receiving my appointment telegram I was very pleased until my geographically versed father pointed out that my telegram read Smithfield

via Fairfield, not Smithtown via Kempsey! There was some humour in the department though as the border between metropolitan and Country Service was about 100 yards west of Smithfield School.

I'm not sure whether I was an early attempt at merit-based selection as the correlation between my appointment to Smithfield with its mix of ethnic groups and my background was extraordinarily slim. My background was of solid Scottish, protestant heritage with little knowledge or connection to our newly-arrived non-English speaking 'new Australians' (except of course Mrs Minetti who did the weekly ironing). My family didn't eat any food ending in 'i', had a healthy disrespect of Catholics and couldn't understand why all these new arrivals didn't have the decency to learn English before coming to our country!

'Sink or Swim' was a common phrase on the lips of many of my fellow newly graduated teachers arriving at their respective appointments at this time I'm sure. To meet me at Smithfield were 48 smiling Italian faces (all regazzo as the girls and boys were well segregated by a 100m distance between the boys' department and the girls' department) and 1 German face, a square classroom with chalkboard and chalk and a huge wicker basket of cane (no bases) as the entire art/craft store. 6C had a broad spectrum of English speakers with several being monolingual like myself except they only spoke Italian. I sat others next to them to interpret what was being said in class. Whether it was accurately translated or not I had no idea for the first term but these few gradually learned English and seemed to know something of what was going on in the classroom and by second term I became a little less didactic and a bit more relaxed.

Professional development was a rather foreign concept in those heady days and the Headmaster (about to retire) had little interest in anything outside the office. Each teacher's class timetable was pinned to the back of his office door and there was to be rigid adherence to times so determined. Once and only once that year he came to my room to check on my timing. I had sensibly

timetabled poetry (English or Australian of course) on Thursday afternoon before going home. Apoplexy ruled (his not mine) when the Headmaster appeared at my door at 3.20pm to find I had not begun my poetry lesson and I was duly court martialled there and then and had to instantly start the day's verse. I had a sombre 1 ½ hours trip home in the trains that afternoon!

Mr Cozier of craft teaching fame in WWTC would have been proud of my efforts in engineering craft projects, not to mention the considerable sums spent from my pocket to provide suitable materials. I remember deciding to include pottery into the class program. (Craft didn't require a lot of language as much of the instruction could be by example.) Off I went to the local brick works in Ryde and bought some potter's clay. It turned out to be most unsuitable for handcraft lessons – it made great earthenware pipes for plumbing but not small pots and objects for classroom pottery. The exercise turned out to be very popular with the children so something good came of it.

Programming in the programme book was in 5 week lots divided into weeks. One taught the planned items during the week and tested and revised on Friday before sport. Each subject's test on the weeks work was given in the morning, marked by lunchtime and handed to your supervisor. Results were duly examined to measure your proficiency for the week and duly recorded on your record. One of my colleagues a few years more experienced used to use his jelly pad to have copies of the Friday test given to his pupils on Thursday afternoon to take home. Friday's results were usually very good and he was regarded as a very good teacher and awarded a first list later that year. In my naivety I thought so too but didn't twig to the dastardly behaviour till much later. I came across the same self-promotion during basic skills testing when a colleague would change the answers on her students' test papers to make her school results look good.

The arts were not of great im-

portance in Smithfield in those heady days. The School Broadcasts were beamed through the school PA system each week so singing was encouraged with a selection of songs with considerable multi-cultural influences. Songs such as The Lincolnshire Poacher, Skye Boat Song and Men of Harlech were interspersed with Celito Lindo, Santa Lucia and Donna Donna. Other forms of music, dance and drama seemed rather foreign to classrooms in those days although with 49 6C boys and one beginning teacher I'm sure some of these lessons could have been rather interesting. Sport on the other hand reigned supreme. Not least of all was the marching session when the whole boys' department lined up in squads, 4 abreast, and marched around the quadrangle in formation, overseen by the sergeant-major in the form of an ex-military man turned teacher bellowing orders at the pupils and the lesser staff members. It made for a great opener for the sports session to follow.

Of art/craft/music equipment there was little. Sport however seemed to ooze from the sports store, guarded by the Deputy and sports monitors. Cricket, Softball, Vigoro, and Soccer were amply supplied. Off to the local sports oval (later to be part of a 4-lane highway) we trotted for Friday sport. By the time we had marched, travelled to the oval, set up, dismantled and returned to school the actual time spent playing sport seemed disproportionate but I'm sure some skills were learnt given the expert tutelage.

By the end of term 3 I had a smattering of Italian and my 6C students could all speak English to a proficient degree. I don't know how much of my grammar and speak lessons aided in that development although I was glad to take some credit for my first inspection. We managed to make it appear that some sort of education and preparation for High School had happened. I had completed my first year of probation and had been given the all clear by Inspector Austin Flynn to continue to second year probation with the accompanying raise in salary. I had survived and 45 boys in 5C awaited – but that's another story.

Using Our Talent

Gerard Say (1963-64)

Over the past few months, we have witnessed the tragic spectacle of Afghanistan reverting to *Taliban* control, ensuring the girls and women of that country will once again be deprived of their rightful places in education and in the leadership of the society for the foreseeable future.

After the terrorist outrages in New York, Washington DC and Pennsylvania in September, 2001 that claimed almost three thousand innocent lives, most of us would have supported George W. Bush in his project to intervene in Afghanistan to annihilate the *Al Qaeda* training and staging camps that were controlled by Osama bin Laden.

However, after the Vietnam debacle [1962-1975], we were well aware of the American ignorance of other cultures and their almost religious belief that people around our planet were just yearning to embrace the *American Way* once the USA firepower had overwhelmed the military opposition. A number of WWTC students had to answer the demand that they be conscripted as they turned twenty from 1962 to 1972.

Of course, even in Australia, the discriminatory approach to the educating of girls and women had lasted right up to our own day. *Wagga Public School*, in Gurwood St, Wagga, from 3rd Grade, was still in Boys' and Girls' Departments. In the Catholic schools, from 3rd Grade, the boys attended the Christian Brothers' school while the girls became students of the Presentation Sisters.

The curriculum, particularly in the high-school years, was significantly different. It was not until 1962 when the *Wyndham Scheme* was launched that many schools built science facilities for their girls and comprehensive libraries. It had taken five years from when the Report was presented to NSW Government before its implementation commenced.

A few days after my last *Leaving Certificate* exam in November, 1962, I reported to the *Rural Bank*

of NSW in Fitzmaurice St, Wagga. Over the seven weeks when I awaited the news of my *Teachers' College Scholarship Application*, I became quite adept at the cheque-exchanges held at the ANZ branch each day.

Even for a raw bank-officer, it was evident in that relatively brief period that three young women resigned as their wedding-days arrived. In a large town where most students left after three years at High-School, it was expected that a married man's salary would provide for the couple so the wife should leave paid outside fulltime work to free up positions for the high-school graduates.

On reaching WWTC as a day-student in February, 1963, I was allotted to an alphabetically determined *Section*. From prior experience, I knew that *Teaching* and *Nursing* were two professions that welcomed women. From memory, the *General Primary* students in the 1963-64 Session had the women filling the positions 55% - 45%, dramatically different to teacher-education courses today.

Naturally, when young women were so restricted in their vocational choices, it was no surprise that some highly intelligent female students were to be found at WWTC. In both lecture-room interaction and academic results, this was very apparent.

At a Chatswood Library talk when she launched her autobiography, *Live, Lead, Learn*, Gail Kelly, the former head of *WESTPAC*, revealed that it was a very similar milieu in her native South Africa. Beginning initially as a *Classics* and *History* teacher, Gail switched to Banking where she was fast-tracked. It helped that her husband had become a leading doctor, but this mother of four, including triplets, took the initiative to fly to Australia and, after taking on an executive position at *CBA*, then moved to lead *St George Bank* and, next, *WESTPAC*.

It is, of course, impossible to know how much Australia as a nation lost when so many women in our society never had their talent recognised and were never given the opportunity to rise to the positions to which their ability should have propelled them. Yet we can suggest that the old-style *Talibanesque* Australia would have left us considerably inferior to our current elite status today among

the world's most advanced nations. This does not take into account the major immigration effort whereby the Australian population has tripled to almost 26 million during my lifetime.

Of course, key decision-makers in Australia have yet to respond comprehensively to the massive changes that have taken place. In the past couple of decades, the high-school exit academic-attainments for acceptance into teacher-education courses have often plunged so universities could fill the allocated positions governments were willing to fund.

After being guaranteed quality student-teachers in previous eras, the educational authorities were unwilling to boost salaries and other conditions of service to ensure that potentially expert and committed teachers were encouraged to join the profession and afterwards rewarded to stay with their focus on classroom-learning, both teaching students and sharing their skills with younger colleagues.

There is some extraordinary hypocrisy across Australian Society concerning *Teaching*. So many parents demand that a highly intelligent and committed teacher be responsible for the learning of each of their children, often more in the role of an individual *Tutor* rather than a *Teacher* of twenty-five in *Primary* or a hundred-plus in *Secondary*.

However, should their children select *Teaching*, I have seen many of these same parents employ considerable pressures to ensure the choice was another pathway seen as more appropriate for their high-school exit-score and the university pathways it opened.

So, is *mediocre* going to be the most accurate description of our next generation of Teachers. Not necessarily.

The truly committed intelligent young high-school students are likely to persevere with their yearning to become Teachers, to rejoice in nurturing children's learning and their joyful embrace of both language and thought, the very learning tools for how to learn.

Future teachers who also intend to

become Parents of *K-12 Students* will embrace the likelihood that their children's and their own holidays will probably coincide, bringing much greater harmony to family-life.

As well, the development of Before- and After-school *Out-of-School-*

Hours services in so many schools makes life less difficult for so many *Parent-Teachers*, particularly if they receive a discount on their fees.

One outcome of the *School at Home* driven by *COVID-19* these past eighteen months has been the realisation

by so many Parents that Teaching is very much not *living on Easy Street* as they once envisaged. Our political class may discover that our Australian Community is much more ready to invest in improving the overall conditions of the *Classroom-Teacher*.

Some Memories of Robertson Public School and the 1961 Earthquake

Ron Johnson (1955-56)

I had spent my first teaching year at Cronulla before being sent for country service to Oberne, 12 miles from Tarcutta. Here I spent 1958 and 1959 as teacher in charge of 12 pupils.

I wanted to return to Wollongong so put in for a transfer and succeeded (?) in being given an appointment to Robertson, only 30 miles away but this small town was on the escarpment.

I realised that I wasn't prepared to travel up and down the Macquarie Pass each day so I elected to board in Robertson for four days and come home for the weekend to my parents' home in Wollongong; a house I still reside in! The social life at the weekend in my hometown was much more appealing for a young bachelor.

In 1960 I resided with an elderly retired couple in a rather ancient house in poor condition. I slept in an old featherbed with an open window which allowed the couple's cats access and I often awoke in the morning to find two cats asleep at the bottom of the large bed.

The second year I boarded in much more palatial conditions. I was at Mrs Mackay's house, Ackworth, on the outskirts of the town over the railway and on the northern side of the highway. Mrs Mackay was recently widowed and had gone into real estate. Her engaged daughter lived at the home and also there was another boarder, a young shy, Danish chap who worked at the butter factory.

At the Robertson school in 1960 and 1961 there were three teachers.

The principal was Jim Carson who took the Upper Division of years 5 and 6. I had Middle Division of years 2, 3 and 4, Kath Bunyan had the Lower Division of Kindergarten and years 1

and 2. Kath was married to an ex accountant who preferred the open-air life of the potato industry.

Jim Carson was a kindly man of mid forties who had been in the airforce and in the winter wore his navy blue, great coat to school. Mrs Carson was probably in her late twenties and was a teacher. The couple had one small child and lived in the school residence. In the days of talk and chalk teaching I remember little of the classroom except for using the school magazines and teaching tables to very well behaved country children.

All my life I have been heavily involved in sport so it was natural that I was given this responsibility at Robertson School. Mr Carson was always willing to let me take a large group of children across the road to the oval for various sports so that he could catch up with his administration work.

In 1960 I managed to coach a 5 stone 7 pounds rugby league team that played in the Camden knockout carnival. In the team the following year was a young player named Billy Hindmarsh whom I believe was the father of Nathan Hindmarsh, the Parramatta legend.

There are two other occasions associated with sport of which I have strong memories.

Norm McKnight was the area P.E. consultant and he arrived one day at the Robertson School with about 30 broom handles. I suspect these were from an over order of cleaning equipment and Norm was given them to dispose of.

Mr Carson sent the class and myself to the playground to be instructed on how the handles could be used in P.E. lessons.

I have no memory how these handles could be used usefully as I was struggling with terrible pain developing in my knee.

At the end of the day I managed to drive myself down Macquarie Pass to the family doctor in Wollongong. Here the doctor opened up the swollen knee to treat the infection. I was still in some pain and needed more time to recover.

Meanwhile Mr Carson had gained permission to have his wife replace me in the classroom. When I rang a few days later to inform Jim that I was ready to return he encouraged me to take the rest of the week off! Obviously the extra money that his wife was earning as the replacement was very welcome!

The other sports based memory concerns the last day of school.

Again Mr Carson wanted to do his administration so in the afternoon I took all the primary children across the road for various sporting activities.

The final event was the sweet hearts' race.

All the senior boys were sent to one end and their female partners to the other end of about 70 metres distant.

The problem was that a Robertson fog enveloped the field and the boys could not see their sweethearts!

On the final day of the May school holidays in 1961 I was still in bed downstairs at 7.40 am. when I heard a great tremor. Upstairs I feared our gas stove had blown up. I soon learned that it was an earthquake that had affected a large area of N.S.W.

Next day when I arrived at the Robertson School I was confronted by the extensive damage to the original sandstone building. Large blocks had fallen in the library. A number of chimneys

had also been demolished.

It was lucky that the quake hadn't occurred 26 hours later as many children would probably have been killed.

Until repairs were made Kath Bunyan taught her class in the nearby church hall. Other buildings in Robertson were also damaged.

Later in 1961 I enjoyed meeting Roy Williams (now deceased), my friend from Wollongong High School and Wagga Wagga TC, one afternoon at Bowral Country Club for nine holes of golf. Roy was a Teacher In Charge at Yanderra.

I was happy to receive a transfer to Warrawong School for 1962 but later that year I travelled to London on the Fairsky.

In May this year before the 60th anniversary of the earthquake I made a sentimental journey up Macquarie Pass and visited Robertson School where I delivered some photographic memories. I then enjoyed lunch at the Bowling Club with Mrs Mackay's daughter, Fran Bailey whom I hadn't seen for the sixty years.



Cloud over the mountains at Robertson



Children inspect damage.



Teacher Ron Johnston before daily departure to Robertson Public School.



Damage to library

On Myrtle

Jan Pittard an avid Art Historian



Jan Pittard made the tree change to Wagga Wagga from Sydney in 2014 and since then her writing has flourished. Jan has a blog <http://alicewritlarge.blogspot.com/> and writes poetry and non-fiction. She has published articles on family and local history as well as several poems.

For those who had a love affair with Myrtle at WWTC, make sure you read Jan's Blog



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KEEPING THE SPIRIT ALIVE IN 2021 TO SECURE THE FUTURE



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

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