



TALKABOUT



President's Report - Bruce Forbes



The WWTCAA Scholarship How does the Scholarship Fund Operate?

In 1997 the WWTCAA was formed by the Pioneer Students who entered tertiary education at Wagga Wagga in the former RAAF Hospital Base. The main goals were to establish an alumni association through revitalizing the *Talkabout* magazine from pioneer days and establish a Teachers' Scholarship to support aspiring teachers in their tertiary studies.

Most students from 1947 to 1972 were on scholarships which includ-

ed on-site accommodation, meals and an allowance. Today's students have tertiary costs, living expenses and HECS.

When ex-students were rounded up and our Alumni Association was formed there was a call for contributions to be made to a scholarship fund. By 2012 there was \$83,087.80 and this was transferred to a CSU Trust Account.

The first WWTCAA Scholarship of \$1500 was awarded in 2002. Contributions made by our members are received by our Association and at each AGM there is a transfer to the CSU Trust which manages the account and makes appropriate investments with the capital.

Through our members contributions and the CSU Trust, this Scholarship account now stands at \$131,152.80. Since 2002 \$132,000 has been paid out as WWTCAA Scholarships. Each year alumni contributions are added to the fund and since 2013 your committee has passed over \$48,065.00. At this year's AGM \$6000 was committed to the Fund.

Since 2002 there have been 40 recipients receiving a WWTCAA Scholarship from \$1500 up to \$8000 in 2016. In recent years \$9000 has been allocated to student scholarships with two students sharing \$4500 each. The allocation has been to students in various teacher education degrees.

Early Childhood = 3, Primary = 22, Secondary = 7, K-12 = 8

There are 7 male and 33 female recipients with most being from regional country areas. The breakdown has been:

1st Year = 2, 2nd Year = 4, 3rd Year = 6, 4th Year = 24, 5th year = 2,

Honours = 2

The selection of students is completed through two of your committee members liaising with CSU to select and interview potential recipients. This is usually an extensive list into the 100's. The scholarships are awarded at ceremonies at various campuses where the students study. These are Orange, Bathurst, Albury, Wagga Wagga and Port Macquarie.

At the last AGM your committee discussed at length future funding and the possibility of creating a perpetual legacy for the WWTCAA Scholarship at CSU. A goal of reaching at least \$150,000 was established. This would enable the fund to run in perpetuity under the management and investments of the CSU Trust.

As we finally come to the realisation that none of us are under 70 years of age would you, as a WWTC Alumni member make a generous one-off donation to build this Scholarship Fund to at least \$150,000?

Finally, it is anticipated that there will still be three *Talkabouts* in 2024 provided we receive your articles. The committee also decided to allocate \$1000 to Stewart House. and another possible \$1500 to the Go Foundation.

Many thanks to all those members who made contributions throughout 2023 to enable our Association to support organisations providing better educational opportunities for those involved in education today.

Across the Secretary's Desk - Lesley Forbes



Nita Walshe (1967-68)

Momentous week for me as I finally retire from teaching -although I have only been doing relief for the last 14 years. Pulling the plug on a 55 year career (started in 1969) hasn't been easy but I'm ready and will be spending my time with my 1 year old grandson while his mother returns to teaching.

I do enjoy receiving the *Talkabout*. Thank you both for all your efforts in keeping this going.

Steven Nossiter (1960-61)

Thank you so much for your kind best wishes. It is rather sobering to consider being born in the first half of the last century. Never looked at it that way. What is even more sobering is both my sons are now over 50. They are getting old!!!

My best wishes to you and Bruce for the festive season as well and my best wishes to you both for a wonderful New Year.

Roslyn Broom (McGilvray 1960-61)

Thank you both for great communication skills.

May you continue to enjoy good

health and all your pursuits and yes sometimes it feels weird to realise we were born in the first half of last century (sounds medieval/historic perhaps)

Dr Adrian Hurley OAM (1961-62)

I am travelling well health wise.

I was inducted into the Sport Australia Hall of Fame last year. A great honour. Wagga Teachers College played a role in developing my sporting skills for later life.

Merry Xmas to you and Lesley and thank you again for the great work you do for *Talkabout*, which I look forward to throughout the year.

Susan Truin (Dowdle 1965-66)

Many thanks for all that you do during the year. You always produce a top publication and the time you both put into this is very much appreciated.

I always look forward to the *Talkabout* arriving and enjoy spending many hours reading all of the very interesting articles inside, and reminiscing.

Trevor Black (1965-66)

I have not passed the first page of *Talkabout* yet after seeing Erna's message re Mark McCulla's passing. I first met Mark soon after arriving in Fort St John B.C. Canada in 1969.

Being a fellow young Aussie in this frontier town, we hit it off immediately. Then we realised we were both ex- WWTC and our bond became closer. Imagine our surprise when we realised we had both been banned from graduating by, as a following correspondent accurately writes, *that most unpleasant bully*, Hale.

Mark was an incredible friend. We fished, skied, hunted and drank together often. Possible drank together too often. We also enjoyed a few games of curling and golf.

I believe Mark gained his Master's in Education at UBC before excelling in various roles in Special Ed. throughout the Province.

I last saw Mark (although we corresponded regularly) when he and Erna attended a special *graduation ceremony* for the small group of friends who were banned from graduating because they had a couple of beers the night before.

How things have changed.
RIP McCulla.

Garry Funnell (1967-68)

Thanks for your very positive message.

I smiled at your *first half of last century* comment as I frequently say I intend to live in four half centuries being at least until January 1st 2050 in which case I will only be 100 years and eight months! Quite achievable, but sounds outlandish. Three down and only one to go. The privilege of being a '49er!!!

I really enjoy *Talkabout* and am ever grateful to you and Bruce as the mainstays to the publication. I trust you both have an enjoyable & safe Festive Season and prepare for a rewarding 2024.

Please make contact if you are passing through Kiama.

John McGrath let me know his wife, **Kay (Symons 1963-64)** passed away December 2022

Arthur King let me know that his wife, **Margaret King (Wallace 1950-51)** passed away in May 2023

Margaret McGowan (Jackson 1957-58) Interested...but which Neville Keeley on FB (assume it is the WWTC one?) and what are the *Enders*? Given the date I graduated don't think there will be many left from my years. And, for the magazine, anyone going to Gosford will find the Brian McGowan Bridge - and yes it is the Brian from WWTC - my surname used to be Jackson. We married on the last day of College. The late Brian McGowan was the State Member for Gosford for 12 years, then served on Gosford Council. He re-wrote the book for Gosford. Left it a lot better than he found it.

Paul Sowter (1955-56) We of 1955-56 were impressed by BWells 55. It reads as though there will be future instalments. I'll check it out. The highlight was page 3, Sue de Rome and that revealing letter from the pompous, Hale. Could you add in the next edition that if she had been able to answer the bully with a copy of the Shorter Oxford Dictionary under her arm she would have won the battle. Concise is not good enough but SOD recognises *payed*.

Connie Ross (Forsyth 60-61) Thank you once again for my copy of *Talkabout*. I always look forward to reading it and it's amazing how many memories of fellow WWTC graduates and familiar experiences and places it evokes! Thanks for the invitation too, but I won't be able to attend. John and I wish you and Bruce and all those you hold dear, a wonderful Christmas and every blessing for the New Year. Thanks too, for the work you do to ensure that *Talkabout* continues and we are all kept in the loop.

Nola Bindon (Walmsley 1963-64) Thank you for your encouraging email. I'm still in the early throes of widowhood and can't pretend it's been easy. *Talkabout* still seems a bright spot in the year,

and a pleasant connection with WWTC ex-students of my vintage. I met up with my room mate from 1963-64, Norma Gee (Veness) when we both joined a group of ex Yass High School students for lunch back in the autumn this year; a long and valued friendship.

Dr Les Eastcott (Lecturer) passed away in Goulburn in December, 2023

Ralph Sadler (1960-61) Another edition safely arrived. Thank you. Congratulations to you both for your work on our behalf.

I was saddened to note the death of Mark McCulla. Mark and I shared a room in Kabi for two years, 1960-61, at WWTC. And we both had a unique arrival and departure to our time at Wagga Wagga. Perhaps I could get something to you for the next edition about this. Over the past few years Tony Travers, another 1960-61er, and I have been meeting every 6 months at Crows Nest for breakfast. Our next get-together is June 4, 2024 and we would be delighted to have any one close to the area to join us on that date. My address is ralphsadler@icloud.com

Bill and Wendy Poole (Patroni 1964-65) Our thanks for the work you do to keep the very happy memories of College life coming. From experience we know just how much is involved, especially with a Bulletin as extensive as the one you prepare. Not too many of we oldies would be able or prepared to put in the effort you do.

Every best wish to you for the festive season and all you could ask of 2024,

Geoff Hanratty let me know that his father, **Malcolm Hanratty (1950-51)** passed away on 20 November 2023, aged 91 years. Geoff said his father spoke fondly of his WWTC connections. Malcolm was an active member of the initial WWTC A A Committee that made our Association possible. He, with Lew Morrell (1949-50), conducted the first interviews for the CSU Annual Scholarship recipients.

Below is an email exchange re **David Hartnett (1955-56)**:

Wayne Shaw (1955-56) Ken Bridge sent him this memo. I've included my reply and a web page.

HARTNETT, David 01.12.1938 – 19.01.2024

It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of David Hartnett, 85, on Orange Health Service. Late of Orange and formerly of Lambton, Newcastle. He left us peacefully with his wife Helen by his side. David was a loved husband, father, father-in-law, Poppy, uncle and friend who led a full and generous life and will be missed. David is survived by his wife Helen, their children Robyn and Peter, their spouses Myles and Kristen and his grandchildren Nicholas, Anna, Chloe, Lydia and Mary who will all love and cherish the time they shared with him and will miss his warmth and laughter dearly.

A service to celebrate the life of David will be held at Holy Trinity Anglican Church, Byng Street, Orange on Thursday, January 25, 2024 commencing at 2.00pm. Family and friends are invited to join the family in the celebration of David's life.

David was a year behind us at Wagga. (We were in the Christian Fellowship together.) He was a competent pianist.

He went up through the ranks and retired as Principal of Merewether (Newcastle).

He had 2 sisters who also went to Wagga TC in consecutive years behind him. They all went to Wollongong High School.

K

Thanks for the message. I can recall having a long discussion with him in front of the auditorium one Saturday afternoon. His father was Laurence Hartnett, a brilliant engineer. I can recall riding in one of his cars just before we went to college.



[Hartnett - Historic Vehicles](#)

Elizabeth James - daughter of Shirley James (Cook 1949-50)

Thank you for your publication *Talkabout*. My mother Shirley James and her partner Geoff Gorman both attended Wagga Teachers College in the late 1940s and enjoyed reminiscing about their training and life there. They always looked forward to the reunions and enjoyed reading *Talkabout*. My mother even worked with Chris and Jenny Blake at Mudgee Primary School in the 1970s. Sadly my mother passed away in May 2022 and Geoff in December 2023.

My mother and Geoff were at the college when the training was 18 months - my mother loved the social side of college life probably even more than the learning and she relished the freedom of being away from home for the first time. Her first position was in Narrandera and after marrying one of the local police officers moved to Albury. Five daughters later my parents moved to Sydney where my mother resumed teaching, initially at Yowie Bay, then Mudgee in the central west and then again in Sydney for many more years as an Infants Mistress and deputy principal in various schools. When she accepted her teachers' scholarship my mother could not have known that it would set her up for a career which she would love

and give her personal satisfaction, security and financial independence. She wouldn't have known then of the inter-generational benefits that would flow on to her daughters and their children. We grew up believing that careers and financial independence were a normal part of life for women - so different from a couple of generations earlier. I sometimes reminded her of this and told her how grateful I was that at age 17 she made that decision!

Last week we sold our mother's house at 17 Epping Ave, Eastwood 2122 so I guess it's time to remove us from the mailing list. I have always enjoyed reading *Talkabout* as it gave me an insight into what college life was like for my mother and Geoff. I sincerely hope copies are archived somewhere for future generations to enjoy.

Patricia Smith (Quinlivan 1953-54) of Palmerston, ACT, passed away September 2023.

Norma Davey, wife of Les (1949-50) let me know he is in Warrigal care at Terry St Albion park. He is doing quite well but has a problem reading small print. He doesn't have a phone. So I read him *Talkabout*. I am wondering if he can continue to have printed copy. Les

turned 94 in Feb. I spend several hours with him each day as I am living with my son only a few minutes away.

Cheryl Hanily (Dawe 1965-66)

Thanks for your continuing dedication to spreading the news and keeping old colleagues connected. I really appreciate it and I'm sure many others do as well.

I hope you have a happy and joyful holiday season. We will be surrounded by our descendants (and a few strays) enjoying good food, wine, music, and laughter. I can't wait.

Lindsay Brockway (1965-66 our Treasurer) During October 2023, the Teachers Mutual Bank (TMB) wound up its chequing services and from mid November dishonoured TMB cheques. About 25% of cheques received by the Alumni were drawn on the TMB. Alumni members who used TMB cheques need to be encouraged to use electronic banking - possibly a problem for older members. This is a sign of what is to come as banks begin to phase out chequing services and may have implications for our Society Cheque Account, although there has been no information from CBA re cessation of cheque accounts.

From *Historic Vehicles, Moss Vale*

Extract from the paper

re David Hartnett (1956-57)

Laurence Hartnett was David's father

Historic Car Brands HARTNETT

What could have been a truly

Australian-owned car manufacturing business after Word War II ended in abject failure. There were several commercial reasons why the Hartnett venture failed and there's the faint smell of political interference, as well.

Laurence Hartnett, former Managing Director of General Motors- Holden (GMH), was approached in

1948 by Labor Prime Minister Ben Chifley, regarding the establishment of a domestic motor manufacturing company to challenge the dominance of GMH in the Australian market. Both Chifley and Hartnett knew that with GM, it would always have been corporation coming first and Australia coming second.

Ben Chifley told Hartnett that the Commonwealth Government fa-

voured the project and would “give financial assistance to place the industry on a firm basis.”

Laurence Hartnett’s plan was to build a small front wheel drive car, based on a prototype two door sedan developed by French designer Jean Grégoire and which had received a great deal of input from Amilcar (the poor man’s Bugatti).

Museums Victoria Collection

A version of this design was adopted in England, in 1946, by Grantham Productions Limited, but was abandoned by Grantham due to financial difficulties. As a result, the tooling, gauges, jigs, fixtures, patterns and dies were on the market for around one-sixth of their original value.

Hartnett concluded that the availability of these assets would “obviate a delay of up to three years and make production possible within one year of the commencement of a Public Company”.

The Hartnett, as it was to be called, utilised bolted-together aluminium chassis castings rather than the typical steel pressings, both to save weight and to reduce tooling costs. It was fitted with independent suspension on all four wheels and a 594cc air-cooled, horizontally-opposed, two-cylinder engine. This was a very advanced specification for the time.

In 1951 it was announced that the ‘Tasman’ sedan model would be supplemented by the ‘Pacific’, a soft-top sports tourer.

Theodore Bruce Auctions

Hartnett announced the intention to establish Hartnett Motor Company on 7 February 1949 in Chifley’s presence. The original plan was to sell 5000 cars in the first year of production and 10,000 in each subsequent year.

In May 1950 the company announced that it had signed an A£500,000 pound contract with F M Aspin and Co of Bury, Lancashire, to manufacture and supply engines and gearboxes.

Between the launch of the company and the commencement of production

there were almost monthly public assurances that the company was successfully overcoming production issues and that full production was only weeks away.

The Government-owned Commonwealth Engineering Company had contracted to deliver 2000 sets of steel body panels, as agreed in May 1950, with delivery commencing by May 1951. By June 1952 the Hartnett Company had not received a single set.

The original price of the car had been promoted at “less than 300 pounds”, but by March 1951 no cars had been delivered and the company revealed that the expected pricing was now “549 pounds plus sales tax”.

Theodore Bruce Auctions

In March 1952 the first Hartnett was dispatched from the production facility in Frankston, Victoria, with a semi-production aluminium body and cost 695 pounds including sales tax.

Around 100 mostly open-tourers were eventually produced before September 1952.

The first public indication that the company had been facing significant issues was when questions were raised in Federal Parliament.

It’s important to note the Menzies-led Coalition had won a comfortable ma-

majority in the House of Representatives in 1949, but Labor still had a four-seat majority in the Senate. Chifley thus made it his business to obstruct Menzies’s agenda at every opportunity and there was no love lost between Menzies and Chifley. Also it’s important to remember that Menzies was pro-GMH and Chifley was pro-Hartnett.

Theodore Bruce Auctions

Menzies sought to call a double dissolution in the hope of gaining control of both houses and finally had his opportunity in 1951. While the Coalition subsequently lost five House seats to Labor, it still had a solid mandate. More importantly, it picked up six Senate seats, giving it control over both chambers.

On August 28, 1952, a member of the Labor opposition told the House of Representatives that he had failed to be given answers to two questions by the Government. Firstly he asked why General Motors Holden had been granted a £1,000,000 overdraft from the Government-owned Commonwealth Bank, while the same facility had been refused to the Hartnett Motor Company. Secondly he asked whether the Government-owned



Commonwealth Engineering Company had obstructed the manufacturing of the Hartnett car by failing to deliver steel body panels that had been on order for over 18 months.

A cynical Canberra-watcher could be forgiven for thinking that the Coalition Government had tipped the business scales towards GM and away from Hartnett.

In September, 1952, Hartnett called a creditors' meeting and stated that it was in debt to the tune of £63,779; its business was at a standstill and production had ceased. The company began legal proceedings against the Commonwealth Engineering Company and, four years later, in December 1955, received £37,228 in damages for the non-delivery of the contracted body panels. The company had been seeking £170,000.

The whole sorry saga ended when the Hartnett Motor Company was dissolved at a creditors' meeting in 1956. Laurence Hartnett soldiered on with further automotive ventures, including Datsun imports and Lloyd-Hartnett small car production, but his all-Australian dream had ended.

Menzies' dream also ended, in February 2020, when GM announced the death of the 'Holden' brand.



Hartnett... the car you can afford!

Hartnett is a new kind of motor car... It stands new in engineering conception, it brings back to Australia something a forward, a genuine vehicle with efficient performance, economical operation, simple maintenance, phenomenal riding comfort and undeniably "franklinish".

In designing this car, the engineers took away their conventional standards to produce an engine and chassis with a power-to-weight advantage far ahead of normal practice. And thousands of thousands of test miles have proved the brilliant success of this design.

Hartnett is every man's car... with the features he wants at the price he can afford.

TASMAN MODEL The most efficient of all the Australian Tasman with four gears in standard.

• Although their seats differ in upholstery, both being made of leather, the seats are the same in design and construction.

• One of the most important items of standard equipment is the 12-volt battery.

PACIFIC MODEL

• The Pacific model, equally as smart and stylish with its top raised or lowered. Provides ample opportunity to enjoy better motoring.

Stacey Fish

Development (Alumni Relations) Officer, Advancement Unit, Charles Sturt University

At last year's AGM, I provided the Charles Sturt Foundation Trust WWTCOA Scholarship Fund reconciliation from 2002. Kirstie in our office has updated this to include current figures and I have included this here.

The report documents the donations over the years, how much has been dispersed in Scholarship payments and a breakdown of the Charles Sturt Foundation Trust Corpus Distribution.

The current figures are:

Total WWTCOA donations over the years is \$131,152

Total Scholarship payments to students is \$132,000

Balance from donations after student payments is -\$847. Foundation Corpus Distribution reallocation of Funds is \$131,152.

**Total CURRENT FUND
BALANCE is \$131,153**

Thank you to your generous alumni who have donated towards the WWTCOA Scholarship Fund. Your collective funds, together with the distribution by the Charles Sturt Foundation Trust, has meant steady growth over the years and has enabled the WWTC Alumni Scholarship to provide financial support to 40 students.

I often reflect on the impact of your Association's circle of giving as I

believe it is immeasurable and I hope will act as a guiding light to others. The many students over the years you have assisted in following in your footsteps into this great career, and then those students going on to lead and guide so many further in their classrooms, is a ripple effect of impact that could be described as a tsunami. The donors within WWTCOA should be very pleased and proud of your efforts. The Charles Sturt Foundation is incredibly grateful for the opportunity you have provided to so many students over the years.

I hope I can continue to work with the WWTCOA to grow your funds so the WWTCOA Scholarship can continue your legacy for many years to come.

Moving to Bunya

Bruce Wells (1955-56)

In January 1962 I rang the Dept of Education to ask if I had a school placement for the school year, and was asked if I could come into the Head Office in Sydney to consider options. My wife Eileen and I went in to the office and sat down with one of the placement staff. He told us that there was an unusually high number of teachers seeking small schools with residences that year. However, he did have one special option that we might be interested in. He said that it was not a vested residence (one that belonged to the Dept of Education) but it was a Government Real Estate (GRE) house. In this case it belonged to the NSW Forestry Commission. The downside was that it had no electricity or maintenance contract. The up side was that the rent was only 2 pounds per week, and that there was electricity available. Another up side was that the house was not too far from the school, and both were in the Taree Inspectorate. We thought for a moment, and then Eileen

said that she could manage the lack of electricity, at least for a while. The officer seemed very relieved, as previous applicants or their wives had refused those conditions, and he was having worries about filling the position.

In those days, a transferred teacher needed to have been in a position for five years before he could be transferred at Department expense. However there was a clause that if the appointment was by Department need, the Department could authorise such payment. As my appointment to Gowrie after National Service Training was at Department need I thought we had a good case. No, I didn't. We would have to bear the cost. We accepted the position. It was then that we were told that there wasn't actually a school building at Bunyah. The school used the supper room of the

Bunyah hall. However, there were plans to remove a closed school building to a site opposite the hall 'as soon as it can be arranged'.

I rang contacts in Taree and managed to find a removalist who could help us. He had to go to Taree towards the end of January to pick up a load of items for Tamworth. He had a ute and a large trailer that he used. Would our furniture, etc, from Nemingah fit on/in that? All we had was a convertible lounge, a light aluminium/laminex kitchen setting and a kitchen bench with doors that I had made, and a few rugs, blankets, cutlery sets etc. Since he would otherwise be travelling to Taree empty, he was prepared to move our items at cost. We happily accepted his offer, which we could just afford out of our own pockets.

So, a couple of days before school began we drove from Brighton-le-Sands to Bunyah. We picked up the house

keys and instructions how to find the house (it's really in Willina, there's a phone connected, it's Willina 4). We arrived at the house, and walked down a concrete path sided by tall grass and weeds onto the verandah. The first thing that happened was that Eileen was stung by a wasp. She sat on the steps, feeling morning sickness and crying with the pain of the bite. I think we slept on the floor that night, seeing by the light of a couple of kerosene lamps we had bought.

The day after we arrived at the house our furniture was delivered. On exploring the house we had found a kerosene fridge in the kitchen. I think it was that day we had a phone call (yes, the phone was working) from the forestry foreman who had been living in the house, but now lived down the road at Coolongook. The fridge was his. He said that we could have it and that he had four cows near the house, and could we keep an eye out if they had any problems and if so give him a ring? Yes, we could. We had a love/hate relationship with that fridge. Turn the wick too high and it smoked, or froze the food. Don't turn it high enough and it didn't smoke, but it didn't keep the food cold. Just right was great, but not very easy to achieve.

When we arrived at the house we noticed that on a pole just to the east of the house, there was an electrical transformer. It eventuated that our house was the only one in Bunyah or Willina that was not connected to the electrical grid. When we made enquiries of the electricity supplier we were told that the power could be connected to the house at a cost of 112 pounds. For us at the time it was an amount we did not have. The cost of our removal in addition to the set up costs of furnishings and household items had just about cleaned up our reserve finances. We were surviving mainly because Eileen was able to 'make do' with my fortnightly pay to purchase consumables on our fortnightly trips to town, and prepare nourishing meals using all the knowledge that came from her upbringing. We approached the Bunyah P and C Association at a monthly meeting to ask if they could loan us the money to connect the electricity if we repaid them in instalments over a couple of months. They agreed. Shortly thereafter the power was connected. We then had electric lights and could use the appliances

that were still boxed up from our removal. Oh the joy of an electric jug, toaster and frypan! Eileen, by now well into pregnancy, was free of the daily need of a fuel stove and kerosene lamps. She was so pleased by the new arrangements that I arrived home from school one afternoon to find her standing on a chair placed on top of the kitchen table cleaning the smoke stains from the kitchen ceiling.

It took a few months to repay the P and C and to save enough to afford an electric refrigerator. We chose one in Taree and arranged to have it delivered. A few days later it turned up and the driver helped me get it into the kitchen. As we were unloading it I saw on the back of his truck an electric washing machine – one of the early barrel type with a wringer attached. The driver said it had been traded in on a new one by the priest at Nabiac. He had delivered the new one on his way to us. I rang the shop in Taree to enquire and was told I could have it for the trade in price – they were only too pleased not to have to receive it and put it up for sale in their shop. Eileen and I discussed the matter, especially since we were using a wood fired copper at the time. The result was that we had an electric fridge and an electric washing machine on the same day. We thought we were made! The fridge was a very good one. It has travelled with us from Bunyah to Taree to Goulburn and to Wagga and was only replaced by a new one in 2019. We still have it and it still works (2023) with the only replacements being a set of door seals and one thermostat.

Our first child, Susan, was born in the Manning River District Hospital on 27th August 1962.

Eileen continued to make the house at Willina a home, now for Susan as well as the two of us. Our trips to town now included visits to the baby health centre. Our social life included getting together with the teachers and their families from surrounding small schools. We got together once a month so the teachers could have staff meetings and the families could spend time together. We all had children of about the same or overlapping ages, and we all got on well together. We would also get together for weekend social events and sometimes to go to local balls or

dances. It was the custom in those days to settle the children down in rugs or bassinets in the car outside the hall, and for fathers to take turns doing a check around to report who was settled down and who was crying or upset. It worked well for us, and it was not unusual for us to be driving home after a ball as the dairy farmers were getting up for the morning milking.

Quite a big event was the arrival of television in the area. I think it was 1964 when two channels became available, the ABC and the commercial channel 3. We made enquiries about reception, and the Taree Retrovision Store sent out a TV specialist to look at our site. He noted that we were in a hollow, and recommended that we get the best antenna head on the highest pole we could manage, rather than spending all our money on a flash TV set. The result was that we had erected a high, well guyed mast on the garage roof (which was higher up the hill than the house roof) and bought a good second hand 21 inch TV set (black and white, of course). The combination worked quite well and served us out during our stay in that house. I had not realised what a difference TV would make to the community until shortly after its arrival I was asked by one of the parents on my way to school, *Bruce, I saw something about the planets Mars and Venus on the TV last night. They are real places, are they? I mean they are really up in the sky?*

I said, *Yes, Fred, they are really there.* He replied, *I heard about them when I was a kid, but I think they could be real.*

One Saturday on our way home from shopping in Taree we picked up a young man hitching a ride. He wanted to go to his father's house which was not far from the school. He told us he was doing some translation work for Sydney University. He told us his name was Murray, and that he was related to quite a few of the Murrays at Bunyah. At the time the name Les Murray meant nothing to us, but Eileen remembered that she had met his father in a barn dance at Bunyah hall. When I decided to start university studies I realised I would need a study space that would not interfere with the family home environment. I

cleared out a wood room at the end of the garage, put a desk and chair in it, made a sackcloth ceiling and some bookshelves and fitted a light. As time went on we got into a routine where I would come home from school, do any chores that needed to be done and then after dinner go up to my study and do my uni work. The years I had only one subject or two first year subjects I would work until about 10 pm and then go back to the house to get settled for bed. The years I was studying two second or third year subjects, I would come down about 10 pm, say goodnight to Eileen and Susan and later Robyn, then go back up and study until perhaps 2.00am. I taught myself a kind of self hypnotherapy to power nap for about 15 mins between 12.30am and 1.00am so I could keep going. I found I was able to go to bed about 2.00 am and wake ready for the new day at 8.00 am. I promised us that I would not do uni work over the weekends. That was family and friends time. I was able to stick to that promise with only a few lapses. There were also school vacation residential schools I had to attend at UNE, usually in the May vacations.

My course took six years to complete. They were not easy years, especially for Eileen with two little girls to care for as well as me. However we persevered and our efforts were well rewarded in our future life together.

Teaching at Bunyah

Before school started we got to know Alma Murray, the postmistress, telephone switchboard operator, keeper of keys (including a set for me of the Hall and supper room) and general go-to person of local knowledge. I found that the supper room which was serving as the location of Bunyah Public School was fairly long, rather narrow and had a few windows in its outer corrugated iron wall. There was a blackboard fixed to the wall at one end, and a row of small tables each with two chairs facing that wall. One of the conditions of use was to have all school items cleared up and locked in a couple of cupboards before any (usually Friday or Saturday nights) events in the hall. I set up the classroom the day before school began, reminding myself that irrespective of ages or grades, short-sighted pupils sat at the front and long

-sighted pupils sat at the back.

I had a ploy that I been given at College to be used when taking over a new class or school. It was to ask the pupils to write a story or draw a picture of *My Family*. That gave at least an entry into the background of the pupils. One of the children at Bunyah wrote, *There are six children in my family, and Mum says she ain't done yet ...* I found that the Murray families provided most of the pupils. The region was mostly dairy farming, with some cattle grazing. Most of the children were up early in the morning to help bring in the cows for milking. Many of the farms had much better milking sheds than the houses they lived in. The pupils and I settled down together quite quickly, the children and their parents were very supportive of the school and its learning requirements. Bunyah was in the Taree Inspectorate, which included some forty one-teacher schools in 1963. To the east of Bunyah, on the highway was Coolongolook School, to the north were Bulby Brush and Krumbach and Dyers Crossing.

Perhaps twelve months after I began teaching at Bunyah a school building was removed from the site where it had closed, and transported by truck to Bunyah. As I had experienced this type of event while I was at Gowrie I found it very interesting, and was able to make suggestions about the refurbishment of the building. Once it was erected opposite the hall on an area of land loaned to the Department by a local farmer and reconditioned and fitted out we moved in. The pupils were much better motivated to their learning experiences by the new school with its bright colours, new furniture and places for all the learning experiences they needed, as was I.

In the playground the parents had built a weather shed, a timber shed closed on three sides, to provide shelter from rain and hot sun. I also used this as a work station area from time to time. We found that the need to find areas for groups of children to work apart from the others arose quite often. This was especially so when lower division (infants) and upper division (primary) were doing activities that would interfere with or distract the other group. I considered the school building design, and decided that the veranda, which was closed on two

sides, could become a second room if the other two sides could be enclosed. I suggested that to the School Inspector when he next visited. However, he informed me that the Department would not approve adding an extra room to the school. So the littlies continued to do their special activities on the veranda subject to weather conditions. The following year a new Inspector was appointed, so I raised the matter with him. He thought for a while, said it would be a good idea, and suggested we consider how we could get around the Department's requirements. Perhaps we could request to close the western side of that section of the veranda for winter, so as to hold out the strong westerly winds and rain. Then, perhaps the following summer we could request to close the northern part of the section of the veranda to keep out the hot summer sun?

In general, there are some managers who use *the book* to find a way to get things done, and some who find reasons to stop things being done! The separate work stations were very useful when Eileen did some work as a sewing teacher for the girls while I taught the boys basic wood work.

Bunyah School was close to Horse Creek, that needed to be crossed over via a low level bridge on the eastern side of the school. I had to cross the creek each morning and afternoon. When it rained upstream it was not uncommon for the bridge to go under water. It was usual for Alma from the post office to be aware of the creek rising and to call me with, *The creek is coming up!* We would then pack up and I would get away with the children I took to and from home with me before we were cut off. A year or so after I started teaching at Bunyah we had a very wet winter, and this happened quite a few times. The District Inspector commented on this and directed me to find another, if longer, way home. So next time I had a call from Alma that the creek was coming up I told her I was going to go home via Krumbach, a detour of about 40km. At the end of that school day we headed off on the long trip home. It took about 30 minutes before we were on the road from Coolongolook to Willina. However, there was water over the road on the small culverts on that road. Then I came to a larger concrete culvert that

had water flowing quite well over it. By then I had a new car, an Austin Freeway station wagon. As we crossed the culvert the running water banked up on the upstream side of the car. Water started to come in through the doors, and then the car started to slide a little sideways. Fortunately we were across before we reached the side of the culvert. I was somewhat quiet as I dropped off the Willina children and arrived home – quite late. I had rung Eileen, or told Alma to ring her (I'm not sure which) so she knew I would be late home. The first thing I did was to ring the Inspector and report that I had followed his directions, but that I wasn't happy about the culvert. He listened carefully, then made it plain that in future I was to close the school early and go straight home if the creek was rising.

In the playground behind the school building we erected a set of PE equipment. There was a scrambling net between two upright large posts well set into the ground. The net was about 2½ metres square, had a mesh of about 300cm and was as taut as we could get it. There was a set of three monkey bars of different heights and a set of four or five short posts about ½ metre apart in a line, so that they formed a sort of steps. There was also a balance beam and quonset hut-shaped metal climbing frame. The children enjoyed them immensely, despite a number of trips and falls that sometimes, *knocked the breath out of me, sir!* We played tunnel ball, over and under ball and throw and catch with different sized balls and bean bags as well as the usual chin ups, press ups and running and dodging exercises. For team games we played a form of soccer with amended rules including, strictly no barging so that the littlies could play with the bigger children. I focussed on events that involved all of the children, and left the spectator events for the Small Schools and PSAAA Carnivals. We did some PE activities every day, exercising all of the large muscle groups. We always put on musical items for the school Christmas concert, with every child singing or playing a musical instrument. I found that a drum made of a cake tin with a car tube covering allowed enthusiastic drum beating that was inaudible for more than a metre, but allowed for enthusiasm and parental pride. I had the older children memorise a piece of Australian story verse for the Concert, and found that we – children,

parents, and I – enjoyed the learning and the performance. I remember that *The Man From Snowy River* and *Said Hanrahan* were particularly popular.

After I had been teaching at Bunyah for a couple of years I requested an inspection for a promotion list position. The then District Inspector informed me that he didn't give promotion list places to teachers in charge of one teacher schools because they often lacked ambition but that if I moved to a school in Taree he would be quite pleased to give me the list. I was sure that we couldn't afford to move to and live in town just then, even if we had wanted to do so. There was, however, another option. I was listed as a two year trained teacher, which meant that I had completed a two year teacher training course. Beginning teachers were on an incremental pay scale so that at the completion of each year's teaching, should they be deemed as efficient for the position, they would advance one salary increment. However, if a teacher was to study for a university degree they could move beyond the ceiling of a two year trained teacher. At that time a B.A. degree was based on nine year-long subjects. Completion of five subjects would mean a teacher was assessed as three year trained, and moved to that incremental scale. Completion of the degree earned four year trained status, and moving onto the graduate teacher salary scale. A graduate teacher on the top increment was paid the same salary as a two year trained teacher in a deputy principal (class 4) or a principal class 3 (2 – 5 teacher primary schools).

So it was that in 1965 following the DI's comments that I decided to start a correspondence B.A with the University of New England. I completed my degree in December 1971, having reached three year trained salary status the year I reached the top of the two year trained scale, and four year trained status the year I reached the end of the three year trained scale. I hadn't planned it that way it's just the way it happened. During the six years of my studies, several important developments occurred. A new DI was very pleased with my development as a teacher, and asked me to mentor new teachers appointed to one teacher

schools in the Bunyah region. They would come to my school for a day a week for their first month or so and I would go to their schools for a day or so in that time. We would share ideas and hints about teaching methods. I think we all learned a lot from these experiences. They certainly helped me later when I became a Teachers' College Lecturer.

The community Bunyah Public School served was not a very rich one. Most of the families were subsistence dairy farmers or very close to that. On one visit the DI commented that many of the children were not wearing shoes and suggested that I should try to improve the situation. I brought it up at the next P and C meeting. One of the parents commented, *Bruce, I can afford to have my kid's teeth fixed, or I can afford a pair of shoes, but I can't afford both.* This was far from an isolated circumstance, so we settled on the children wearing shoes (if they had them) for the DI's visits, otherwise there was no concern. One year I had a girl in sixth class, let's call her Sal. Her father was a share dairy farmer, and she had a brother aged about eight years who had muscular dystrophy. The family were German immigrants who were only just keeping their financial heads above water, and who had a limited control of the English language. Towards the end of the school year I had a visit from the School Inspector. Among other things, he was checking on the number of children who were ready to go to high school. I told him that Sal was a little young and that I was inclined to keep her another year, given that her grasp of English and mathematics was not really strong enough for her to do well in high school. He looked at her and said something I have never forgotten. *I wouldn't worry about that Bruce! she's a pretty little thing and will just get married.*

My daughter Susan was then a baby, and I thought that if anyone thought it was OK to deny her the best advantages of an education I would be rather displeased. I spoke to Sally and her parents, and she stayed with me another year. When she went to high school her maths and English were up to scratch and the extra year of maturity suited her well. Much later I heard that she became a Registered Nurse.

I have commented on the problems of floods and their effects on teaching at Bunyah. There were other weather related events that interrupted us. These were bushfires. Some years I would get a call from Alma to say that fires had broken out in the local area. If they seemed dangerous I would send the pupils home (often Alma would spread the news and the parents would come and get their children) and I would go home, change into my old RAAF blue boiler suit heavy boots and slouch hat. I would then join the locals fighting the fires where needed. I remember one time being cut off by a fast moving grass fire, and having to run around its edge to get clear. I am told that one day

when I finally got home I went straight to our laundry tubs which were kept full of water during fire times, and just stuck my head under water. I was told that when Susan saw me, she ran to tell her mother that Daddy is drowning himself! One year the fire season occurred during university exam time. I had to teach school in the morning, fight fires in the afternoon, then drive into Taree in the evenings to sit UNE external exams in the home of a local clergyman who was the invigilator. This went on for a week. Fortunately Eileen was her ever supportive self, and somehow I got through – even managing to pass the

exams. I only have blurred memories of how we coped.

Of all of the eventful times I had teaching at Bunyah, one set of circumstances stands out clearly from the others, and it is something that I will cherish as long as I draw breath. I was privileged to teach Susan and Robyn in their early years. To see and be involved in their learning, and to be able to share time with them both in and out of school over those years is a treasure beyond measure. At the end of the year I graduated from UNE I put in an application for a secondary school maths teaching position, but that's the beginning of another tale.

A Tribute to Lex Bittar OAM (1953-54)

From Hansaard a tribute from Dr JOE McGIRR (State Member for Wagga Wagga)

I would like to acknowledge Alexander "Lex" Bittar, who passed away last year after a lifetime of service to Wagga Wagga. A lifelong Wagga resident, Mr Bittar attended South Wagga Public School and Wagga High, later returning to both schools as principal and deputy principal. In a 41-year-career, he also taught at Tarcutta and Leeton before working in departmental roles. Thousands of students benefited from Lex's passion for education, but he also improved lives in activities outside of work. He dedicated 18 years to Meals on Wheels, was chair and co-founder of the Wagga Education Centre and was a charter member of the Central Wagga Lions Club. During all of this, he found time to be active in the sporting community. In recognition of his immense services to

Wagga Wagga, Mr Bittar received an Order of Australia medal in 2014. He was the devoted husband of the late Doreen Bittar, proud father of Jenni and Paul, and grandfather of Will. Lex's dedication to his community continued even after he left it, with donations to Meals on Wheels accepted in lieu of flowers at his funeral in December 2023. Vale, Lex Bittar – a true servant of our community.



Official opening of the Wagga Education Centre (Lex Bittar room)

Lto R: Doug Phipps, Principal Mount Austin Primary School, Lex Bittar, Wal Fife (local Federal Member for Farrer), John Ferguson (Chair of Board)

From John Ferguson (1967-68)

I first met Lex 50 years ago when our respective wives Doreen and Judy, who were both teaching at Mount Austin Public School discovered we were both looking for a squash playing partner.

This started a lifetime of playing squash, tennis and golf together until both of us succumbed to knee replacements.

Lex was quiet of nature, unassuming in style, fiercely determined, ever supportive of a just cause or friend.

But he would not tolerate fools easily!

Many Wednesday afternoons at the Morgan Street Squash Centre we hammered the ball against each other taking out the frustrations of the day's work. One afternoon stands out in my memory as we walked to our cars in the carpark. Out of nowhere a teenage youth appeared in the carpark yelling a barrage of insults at Lex.

He was an ex-student of Lex and one of a very few that failed to graduate from South Wagga Public School.

Lex handed me his Slazenger and with one fearsome step forward and threatening look, the youth was last seen running across the carpark and down the Morgan Street footpath.

From then on I had even greater respect on the court and made sure I gave Lex plenty of room to play!

Later that year Lex asked me if I had met an American Dr Bob Bialozzer playing tennis at the Bolton Park Tennis Club.

Bob was a lecturer at the newly formed Riverina CAE and treated every match he played in as a Davis Cup Challenge Round between the US and Australia,

We met with Bob and he produced a rather large Australian government document, the Karmel Report.

Little did we expect that this particular meeting would change our careers and directions in Education for the next 25 years.

There were a number of educational innovations mentioned but two had the most bearing on our careers:

* Locally run and community-based Education Centres

* The Disadvantaged Schools Program
Lex quickly saw the opportunity for Wagga Wagga and district by applying

for an independently run Education Centre.

He collected a few of his educational colleagues to write a submission.

110 Grove Street, Lex's home became the public office. This was before computers and I remember Lex's perfect Copperplate writing of many draft submissions. It was through Lex's persistence, drive and enthusiasm that an application for an Education Centre was made to the Australian Government.

Mid 1974 Lex announced that the submission had been successful- only 1 out of 5 NSW successful applications out of 100s made!

And so was born the WWEC.

Lex was elected its first Chair of the Board of Directors.

He guided it through the purchase of a ramshackle but wonderful 1890s building at 102 Peter Street, set up of the legal and financial aspect of the Centre,

And recruitment of staff.

He saw the Centre through the political upheaval of the 11 Nov 1975 where it looked like Nothing would save the Governor General nor the Education Centre program.

He guided the WWEC through some halcolyn years where it became the hub of performing multiple roles for teachers both government and non government, the NSW Dept of Education, the Catholic Education office and over 180 different educational and community organisations.

He oversaw expanding of its services to a wide range of schools and educational institutions in a 100 km radius of Wagga and later as an employment agency with the setting up of Job Club and the Job Pathway Program.

It became a social centre for a wide range of activities including welcome to new teachers nights, staff Christmas parties, and Seafood and Wine tasting evenings. It was a very social place which Lex enjoyed to the fullest.

During the late 70s it was obvious that the Australian Government's policy to funding of Education Centres had changed. The Razor Gang had swept through Wagga and it

was widely predicted that Federal Government funding to Education Centres would be cut.

The high regard and strong reputation of Lex at this stage can be illustrated when I received a phone call at the Education Centre from Wal Fife's office in Canberra for Lex to contact him. Wal was not only the local Federal Member but also the Assistant Minister for Education.

Funding to Ed Centres was saved. And it was acknowledged some time later that it was only through Lex's compelling arguments and persuasive oration that the Government rescinded on its decision to cut funding.

Lex was extremely perceptive and astute. He realised that any aspect of education was dependent on government support and funding and that it was naive not to keep all politicians fully informed of its roles and achievements.

As recognition of his service Lex was made a life member of the WWEC and had a lecture room named in his honour.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program had also come into existence through the Australian Government's report into education -the Karmel Report.

Each of the 10 Dept Of Education regions were provided with extra funding and staffing betterment to many isolated, low socio-economic schools.

Lex joined the Riverina Region DSP committee as chair in the late 1980s.

He quickly set about streamlining the funding procedures and initiated regular school visits by the committee. He also realised that many of the existing programs although offering great benefit to the students would be of little use later in life if they did not possess the basic tools of sound literacy and numeracy skills.

So the emphasis of the program in Riverina schools changed, with the state committee following shortly afterwards with the emphasis be-



Lex Bittar receives Life Membership of Riverina Education Centre 1990

Lto R: John Ferguson, Doug Phipps, Lex Bittar, Maurie Beaton (Principal Wagga High), Kerrie Green (Exec. Dir Ed Centre)

ing placed on the explicit and systematic teaching of literacy and numeracy.

Lex was asked to join the state committee on which he served with distinction until his retirement in 2002.

Two short stories on school visits with Lex.

We arrived at an isolated Central School one morning, typically quiet town with the school not far from the local shops and pub. As we alighted from the car a local approached Lex and offered to look after the car.

It was a sort of valet parking.

There had been some government car damage reported so Lex agreed.

When we arrived back the car was intact but the parking attendant had brought back a mate!

Lex slipped them both a tip, thanked them in his usual polite way and they went on their way. Lex looked at me and stated he would make a depart-

mental expenditure claim for parking fees!

I laughed as the nearest car park station was 500 km away. I knew whose pocket the fees were coming from.

On another occasion we visited a small one teacher school in a village surrounded by towering grain storage silos. It had been an exhausting time meeting with the school committee during a hot afternoon. Lex suggested we drop off at the local before continuing on our way.

No convincing needed!

We pulled in alongside several vehicles but were surprised to see the bar deserted except for the barman. We ordered as he looked at us and inquired who we were. After a brief conversation he turned to the back door and shouted its alright to come back in.

They are not the police!

We enjoyed our drink but as we left Lex noticed a few unusual items in one vehicle like a fax machine and a VCR. A quick inquiry to the local School Director found that several local schools had been burgled.

The local police were notified and several school items were recovered when the police did raid the pub.

Lex influenced many policy decisions of the DSP.

As, throughout his career the decisions had far reaching results for thousands of students and teachers statewide.

Lex Bittar made a difference!



Gathering at Mercantile Hotel, The Rocks 22 February

Ken Little and George Manojlovic (above) and a spritely Margot Phillips at 93 years (1948-49) at right: a great chat was had by all. Thanks Neville Keeley for organising.

A bunch of ex WWTC folk (era early to mid sixties) are embarking on a 4 day cruise aboard Carnival Splendor next June. Why not join us? I'm sure there's room for you. Details are as follows:

4 day Moreton Island cruise, ship: Carnival Splendor, departs Sydney 20 June 2024, returns Sydney 24 June 2024

cruise contact: Nimoy - npaddyfoot@carnival.com, group booking # T5P7Q3

An appeal to each of you:

Another edition of *Talkabout* is entirely dependent on your submitted contributions

The cupboard is bare for the next edition!

As many of you know, the Riverina Regional Archives has an extensive collection on the region, including a large one incorporating documents and photographs from the Teachers' College from before its inception until its closure. Our Alumni Association has contributed a substantial amount of funding for this collection to be digitised and this growing volume can be viewed via the following URL.

<https://csuregarch.intersect.org.au/collections/show/2>

Talkabout past copies can be found at:

<https://alumni.csu.edu.au/news-and-events/newsletters/wwtca>



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