



A PUBLICATION  
OF THE ALUMNI OF  
WAGGA TEACHERS' COLLEGE

# TALKABOUT



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## UBI IMUS?

(WHERE ARE WE GOING?)

Next year, 2007, we celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the foundation of the W.W.T.C. Our College forms part of the foundation upon which Charles Sturt University was established.

Do the Alumni realise that by 2012 all of the W.W.T.C. graduates will have retired from our careers and we will eventually fade into nothingness; the only memory of us will be our perpetual scholarship. When we formed our Alumni in 1997 and proposed to finance a Scholarship by raising \$20,000 to \$25,000 there were some sceptics, but the \$25,000 was raised and our first Scholarship was awarded in 2002. Since then our Scholarship Fund has reached almost \$52,000 which provides a substantial and prestigious Scholarship.

This year, because we could have been facing financial difficulties with the publication and postage costs of Talkabout, our Scholarship was cut to \$3,000 instead of what should have been \$5,000. Our Scholarship Fund was raised for a Scholarship and should be used entirely for a Scholarship or Scholarships when more than one student is selected.

Professor David Green, when he addressed our Committee, suggested that perhaps we could consider including Charles Sturt University Teacher Graduates in our Alumni Association, and, now that we have our Scholarship Fund secure, we could consider the idea of providing a room of a residential cottage for students training to be teachers.

Each residential cottage - comprising eight bedrooms, two bathrooms, and shared kitchen, laundry and common room - costs approximately \$400,000 to construct. If eight donors were to pay over ten years, for the construction of a cottage the total cost to each donor would be \$5,000 per annum.

The University has agreed to underwrite the cost of construction so that the cottage can be built at the start of the ten year period with the donors reimbursing the University over time. In return the University will allow the rooms to be used as scholarships for students selected by the donors.

The idea of extending our Association to embrace Wagga Wagga Campus graduate teachers and student teachers is a sound one. It would increase our soon to be rapidly dwindling membership to larger numbers, increase our finances and fund raising capabilities.

Michelle Fawkes informed us that since 1975 there would have been approximately 10,000 graduate teachers from the Wagga Wagga Campus. If our Alumni Association were to include these then our membership would be indeed a prosperous one.

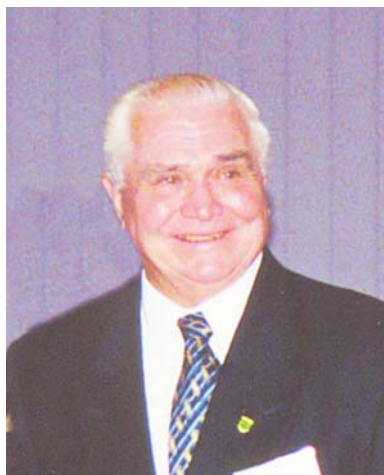
We wouldn't be considering a room in a cottage, we could consider a cottage ! 10,000 members each contributing \$4 per annum over 10 years is \$400,000 - a complete cottage.

Imagine it "C.S.U. & Wagga Wagga Teachers College Memorial House".

We believe the name of our Alumni Association should retain "Wagga Wagga Teachers College " and could be retitled "C.S.U. & Wagga Wagga Teachers College Alumni Association".

Lew Morrell 1949-50.

**A MESSAGE FROM  
THE PRESIDENT**



**The Journey Continues**

This journey which began in 1997 when we celebrated our 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary and saw the establishment of the WWTC Alumni Association has realized its goals and aspirations.

But when we celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary next year in Wagga Wagga on September 28, 29 and 30 we will have reached a crossroads and will need to read the signs to determine which road to take to ensure the future of the WWTC Alumni and that its place in the history of CSU is enshrined forevermore.

September 2007 could be the last major gathering to celebrate a milestone in WWTC Alumni history at which all sessions could be involved. The program is exciting but not demanding. I look forward to the renewal of friendships and the opportunity to share that special relationship that was unique to WWTC.

As to the signs at the crossroads.

One path leads to the amalgamation of WWTC Alumni with CSU School of Education to extend our association to include all Wagga Wagga Campus graduate teachers and support the construction of a residential cottage in our name.

The other path leads to the gradual dwindling of the alumni members until there is no official recognition of the WWTC Alumni. The 2007 anniversary will be a historical occasion – we have some important decisions to make.

I'll see you in September, 2007.

Bob Collard.

President WWTC Alumni Association.

**A MESSAGE FROM  
PROFESSOR DAVID GREEN**

The Academic Senate determined that a graduate of this University should exhibit the capacity to contribute to their community and to the wider society through an understanding of, and a commitment to, values driven practice in their field of study that takes account of open enquiry, ethical practice, social justice, continued diversity, reconciliation and environmental sustainability.

These are attributes that reflect the sentiments expressed in "For the Public Good" and "Excel with Honour", both worthy banners for future generations to march under with pride and dignity.

As an association, you have now generously contributed to establish a perpetual scholarship, and donated the Wagga Wagga Teachers' College "badge" which now graces the University's Great Hall – Joyes Hall. Between us we have opened up discussions with the School of Education on the Wagga Wagga Campus to ensure that there is "no fading into nothingness". The question was posed Ubi Imus to which I could reply that for something sine qua non - that you have arrived.

My glorious dream is that on the Wagga Wagga Campus there should be established a residential complex rivalling those other colleges of St Francis and St Martin's – Wagga Wagga Teachers' College. How can this best be achieved and what is its cost likely to be?

Without committing either party, probably in excess of \$2.5 million for fifty rooms. Can it be achieved? I believe so, with phased building and collaboration. Is it worth it? Again, I believe so. Why should it be done? Because I believe that the University needs to understand and recognise those founding institutions.

I believe that such an undertaking would be a collaborative program part funded by the University with a contribution from the Alumni.

Can it be done? With good will on all sides – YES.

**Professor David Green**  
Head of Wagga Wagga Campus

**LETTER FROM KATE WILLIAMS**



Dear Alumni Association Secretary,

I am writing to thank the Wagga Wagga Teachers College Alumni Association for the generous Scholarship they presented to me for the Years 2005-2006.

The Scholarship assisted me greatly when I was in Sydney completing my final Internship during Term 2 this year. Not only did it assist me with teaching resources for my prac, the Scholarship money from the previous year was used towards the purchase of a laptop computer. This was of great assistance when completing assignments in my final year. I am now a fully qualified teacher, and loving every moment of it.

Currently I am doing day to day casual work, and the experience of going to many different schools has taught me so much.

Next term I have been lucky to gain employment for the complete term at a school in Sydney. Hopefully this will lead to a full time position in 2007.

Without the assistance of my scholarship, I do not feel I could have succeeded to the level that I have done, and I am very grateful to the Wagga Wagga Teachers College Alumni Association for granting me this opportunity.

Yours faithfully,

Kate Williams.

## From Ann's Mailbag



This period from August to November has been very quiet so I have not found a lot of addresses. In here I have entered some of the details which I can recall. Among the names of people who have been able to contact a friend or room mate through me were **Marie Radford nee Dignan (60-61)** and **Helen Schlenker nee Barrett (60-61)**. They were room mates at college. **Helen Richards nee Harrison (52-53)** would like to contact **Shirley Lacey nee Stevens.(52-53)**. Can anyone help? A relative told me that **Francis Bernard Crowe (71-74)** was in the Riverina. Thank you. **Chris and Louise Fox** suggested some names and we found **Maureen Goldspring nee Krohn (68-70)**. **Miriam Foster nee Bowers (Pioneer)** told me that she has moved house. She sent the new address so that she would not miss any of the information about the 60<sup>th</sup> Reunion. She intends to go so that she can celebrate those special times.

I would like to hear from **Chris McSeveny, Elizabeth McLaren,** and **Laurel May Simmons nee Quamby** because I need to check if all are correctly entered. They are all in the **(60-61) session** which still has about 60 more missing from that session. There are still letters not being claimed, mostly because people move and do not tell us, or let us know that they are moving out of the country. **Charles Robert Lucas (59-60)** is a professional writer and sometimes goes to China. **Katherine Wright (68-69)** lives in Roseville. Another couple from **(68-69) Christine Gardner** married **Rolf Mueller** and

they live in Mooloolabar. I wonder how many college students married another Wagga student, while at college or after they left?

**Des Bieler** would like to meet up with **Graeme Wilson** and the **Wilcox's**. They are all in the Pioneer session. **Brian Wade (61-62)** only did one year at college. After various things he became a Health and Building Inspector for Tamworth City Council. From this same session (61-62) was **Gordon Bennett Nolan**. Do you still live in Broken Hill Gordon?

Please remember that there are still quite a number who do not get Talkabout. Tell them about the reunion and where to write if they are interested. Look in the Contacts box below on where to send.

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### In Memoriam

*Years go by, memories stay  
As near and dear as yesterday.*

Janice Walsh nee Parker (1960-61) died 06-04-2006  
Shirley Toms nee Poole (1949-50) died 14-08-2006  
Ross Macdonald, Husband of Marie Smith (1949-50)  
Keith Robinson, husband of Lorna Egan (1948-50)

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## COMING EVENTS

### THE BIG REUNION.

The reunion for our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary will be held in Wagga Wagga in 2007. Please put the dates in your calendar and try to talk some of your peers into coming. We would like to see representation from all sessions. Dates are from Friday 28<sup>th</sup> September 2007 to Sunday 30<sup>th</sup> September 2007.

### 1963-64 WWTC REUNION

To be held in Armidale on 26<sup>th</sup>, 27<sup>th</sup>, 28<sup>th</sup> January 2007. Contact Russell Warfield [russelw235@tpg.com.au](mailto:russelw235@tpg.com.au) or Colin Grant on 02 67722882

### ALUMNI ASSOCIATION MEETINGS

The Annual General Meeting will be held at the Teachers Credit Union Building Homebush. Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> February at 11 am All Alumni are welcome.

### WWTC ALUMNI LUNCHEONS

Friday 24<sup>th</sup> November 2006 at The Masonic Club Castlereagh St Sydney. Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> February 2007 at Icons Brasserie

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# DO YOU REMEMBER “CONTACT”?

# THE ROAD SOUTH

*In 1963 the Principal Maurice Hale proposed a newsletter to make contact with ex-students from the previous 16 years of WWTC with a view to building a record of what had happened to them, or who among them had become famous or done notable things. Mr Keith Swan, who had been on the lecturing staff since 1950, agreed to take up the project and the first CONTACT was published and distributed to a number of ex-students.*

*The following is a selection from the first issue of April 1963.*

## Notes and News

### THIS SECTION

... is limited, not only by space, but also by lack of knowledge, as we have not been able to follow the doings of all our ex-students. We hope, however, that this venture will soon provide us with more exact information.

### STAFF:

Ex-students of earlier years will perhaps be interested to know that several members of the lecturing staff have had more than ten years at Wagga Wagga. They are Mr L G Young, Lecturer in History since 1958; Miss E R Bridges, Lecturer in Mathematics since 1950; Mr K J Swan, Lecturer in History since 1950; Dr D Mackiewicz, Lecturer in Biological Science since 1951, and Mr George Worthington, Lecturer in Physical Education since 1952.

The occasional address at the 1962 Graduation Ceremony was delivered by Dr W G Walker, Senior Lecturer at the University of New England. Some ex-students will remember Dr Walker as a Lecturer in Education at the college between 1952 and 1957.

Mr W K Birrell and Mr L W Orchard, who had been members of the Lecturing Staff for five and nine years respectively, were transferred to Newcastle Teachers College at the end of 1962.

### EX-STUDENTS:

Mr and Mrs Mervyn Whittaker, both members of the “Pioneer” Session of 1957-49, have been overseas for about a year. When they left Australia, Mr Whittaker had been for some years on

the staff of South Wagga Public School, while Mrs Whittaker (June Scott), who now holds the M.A. degree in History of the University of New England, had been for three years lecturer in Infant Education at this College.

Another member of the Pioneer Session, Mr Bernard Thorley, has just joined the staff as a Lecturer in Education. Since leaving College, Mr Thorley has had extensive teaching experience, his last appointment before coming to Wagga being Deputy Principal at Villawood. On the academic side he has graduated B.A. with first-class honours in Psychology from the University of Sydney, and he has studied remedial teaching techniques at Brisbane University, under Sir Fredrick Schonell.

Mr W Grant, B.A., a member of the 1948-50 Session, has been promoted to the position of Principal of Batlow Central School. Mr Grant also spent two years as Lecturer in Education at the College.

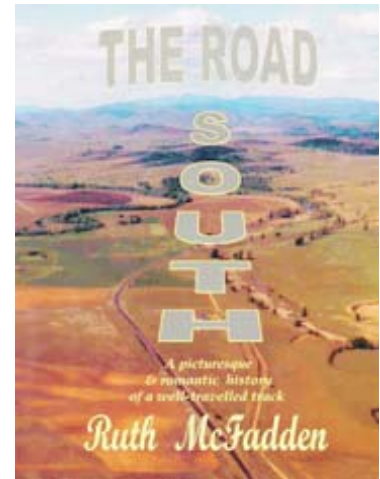
Mr Ralph Bryant, of the 1949-50 Session, was appointed Principal of Lake Albert Demonstration School at the beginning of 1962.

Many ex-students of the College have travelled overseas, one example being Miss Beryle Parnell, of the 1951-52 Session, who wrote from the United States of America in 1962. At that time she was teaching in Colorado.

Another ex-student far afield, though still in our Department, is Mr John Woodger, B.A., of the 1950-51 Session, who is now Principal of Norfolk Island Central School.

Mr Alan Roberts, B.A., also of the 1950-51 Session, joined the staff of Wollongong Teachers College as lecturer in English at the beginning of 1963.

Ex-students of the years 1947, 1948 and 1949 will be interested to hear that late in March, Mrs Murray Rule visited the College and addressed the students in Assembly. They will remember her as Miss Joan Moore, Lecturer in English, and the composer of the College Anthem. She and her husband are linguistic experts doing missionary work in new Guinea.



A Picturesque and Romantic History of a Well-travelled Track by Ruth McFadden. 2005, 92 pp, rrp \$22. Available for Sale at Monaro Books and Music, the Cooma Visitor’s Centre, and the Catholic Bookshop, Braddon.

Ruth McFadden (Johnston 1947-49) was one of our Pioneers. She has recently published a delightful book which was launched in September 2005. It is a fascinating history of the stretch of Monaro Highway between Canberra and Cooma.

The book contains historical and anecdotal stories from Ruth’s extensive research.

Ruth first experienced the road in 1960 when she and her husband moved from the Central West to Cooma.

Ruth said that she has had a love affair with the road ever since and became fascinated by the history of the area and people surrounding the road including bushrangers, pioneers, ghosts and ruins.

Ruth wrote the whole book on her computer, using Microsoft Word and sent it to the publisher on CD.

The Road South is extremely well illustrated and contains many beautiful photos which tell a story in themselves.

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# TEACHING MEMORIES

## TEACHING IN CHINA

My fondest memory of my teaching career was the year that I spent at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages in China in 1978.

Prior to then, I had made three trips to China, the first in 1972 as part of a study group from Sydney University – the first Australians to visit China after the Cultural Revolution – and the second in 1974 as a tourist with my wife Shirley and two youngest sons – my eldest son was hitchhiking around Africa at that stage – because I wanted them to share with me the great experiences I had enjoyed on that first trip. The third trip, as I will explain shortly, was to line up the teaching position mentioned above.

My wife and children were not disappointed. We were treated like VIPs because the Chinese Government was eager to win friends and to impress Westerner visitors with their progress. Throughout our visit, we had a fulltime guide from the Beijing headquarters of the China International Travel Service as well as a local guide from each place we visited. Mr Shu from Beijing was a fluent English-speaker and a very pleasant companion, ready to share a joke and play cards with the boys on long journeys so that everything went well until the last moment when we took our farewell and were about to board the plane to go back to Australia.

Jokingly (and foolishly, as it turned out) I said, “I hope this plane doesn’t get sky-jacked.”

Shu was always eager to add to his very extensive vocabulary and asked me what I meant. Because we had grown to think of him as a friend over the month we had had together, I momentarily forgot about his politics and said, “It’s like when a terrorist group such as the PLO or the Red Brigade take over a plane by force and hold the passengers hostage in return for meeting their political demands.”

The facade of friendship suddenly evaporated as he shouted in anger, “That’s a dirty capitalist lie!”

The next few minutes till we boarded were embarrassingly long. I’ve since wondered what he would say these days if I met him and said, “Hey, you remember that dirty capitalist lie I told you back in 1974. What do you reckon about it now?”

When I returned, I enrolled in a doctoral program at Griffith University with my thesis topic about the relevance of the Maoist model of education for the Third

World. There were two prerequisites to my acceptance into the program. One, I had to be able to read the relevant primary documents in Chinese script, and two, I needed to live and work in China.

Along with Shirley and Nick, my second son, I enrolled in the Bachelor of Asian Studies Chinese language course and eventually gained sufficient reading proficiency to satisfy the first prerequisite. Next, I made another trip in 1976 with a student group, specifically so that I could persuade the authorities in Beijing to grant me a teaching position in a Chinese university for the year’s study leave I had been given.

While the student group were sight-seeing, I spent every day camped in the office of the Education Ministry until finally someone in authority condescended to see me. Persistence paid off and eventually I was told I would be given a post. This was to be teaching English at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages.

That Shirley was not that impressed is an understatement. Her intuition told her that the Chinese would not want to pass up the opportunity to have **two** native speakers instead of just one on their teaching staff, and she definitely did not want to teach. I told her that I had been reassured by Beijing that she would not be teaching but would be offered a position to work in the university library, so she was mollified.

Since we weren’t due to start till the end of January, knowing her love of antiquity, I arranged for her to join an ancient history tour of Greece, Rome and Egypt. She had a wonderful time, coming home ecstatic after having trod in the footsteps of her heroes: Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, Caesar, Claudius and Hadrian...

I, meanwhile, went canoeing with a mate. The idea was to trace the Murray from its source to its mouth, but after three days of paddling, he decided he wanted to go home, so I came back to an empty house since Brett was staying at the surf club.

When we arrived at the Guangzhou Institute of Foreign Languages, however, it was clear that the local university people were expecting **two** native-speaking teachers. She was not impressed and had a good weep because she felt betrayed!

Things were made a bit easier by the presence of three other teaching couples: Lutz and Rotraut from Germany, Harua and Yuko from Japan, and Carlos and Soledad from Peru (teaching Spanish). Given that as all three other women were teaching alongside their husbands, it seemed a bit unreasonable to her not to let the Chinese take advantage of a second potential English

teacher. Reluctantly she agreed – as long as I was team-teaching with her and that’s what we did.

Our classes at Guangzhou Foreign Languages Institute consisted of two groups of 21 young university lecturers from all over China who had been teaching English but whose spoken and listening skills were practically zero. Their teaching consisted of writing on the blackboard a passage in Chinese and telling their students in Chinese to translate it into English. We were the first native-speakers they had ever met, so communication between us at first was not easy.

However they were great kids, and because their knowledge of English grammar and the fact that all their non-verbal skills were so advanced, we soon had them speaking and understanding our Aussie English without any trouble. Shirley decided that we should make a regular feature of inviting them, four at a time, to our semi-detached house (the other part was shared with the Japanese couple and their little baby girl) for a Western-type meal, eating with knives and forks and learning more about the West. This was a great success and built up a close relationship.

Because this was right at the end of the Cultural Revolution, they had very little knowledge of the West. One evening over dinner, one of the girls said that she had a question, but was embarrassed to ask because it was obviously stupid. Encouraged by both of us, she finally said, somewhat reluctantly, “Is it true that there are really people in the West who believe in the myth of God?”

We had no cooking facilities in our house, but were given permission to cook our special guest meals in the students’ kitchen which also prepared our own meals: rice and vegetables with a small amount of meat occasionally. We supplemented this with western food from an occasional visit to the Friendship Shop in Guangzhou, so that it wasn’t too unbearable for ever-hungry fifteen-year-old Brett.

It wasn’t all hardship foodwise. Our foreign contingent regularly bicycled the 20 or so kilometres into town and ate at the many excellent restaurants whenever we could. There were also frequent banquets laid on by the Administration whenever they could find an excuse for one, for naturally the top guns would attend. Later, whenever she was asked about how we ate in China, Shirley was fond of saying that some of the best and some of the worst food she ever had was in China – and that was spot on. Boiled tortoise, for instance, is not up to much.

Overall, living conditions were very

primitive but everyone was in the same boat, so it didn't really matter. We had no means of heating, and in the winter, the concrete walls were covered with water droplets. There were regular blackouts every night to save on electricity. The so-called kitchen/bathroom of the house was located over a natural spring, and whenever it rained, water would bubble up to cover the floor ankle deep. We had no hot water except what we heated up in a kettle on a little "stove" which looked like a cotton reel standing on end. Down the hollow middle of this 'cotton reel' structure, you inserted cylindrical blocks of pressed coal. We then poured the hot water into a tub and one after the other had a stand-up bath.

The authorities had all sorts of unreasonable bureaucratic rules, which for the first six months included forbidding students to

associate with Brett, though there were one or two rebels who bravely ignored this. Halfway through the year, the rules suddenly changed; why, we never discovered, and from then on it was okay. They also opened all our letters. I had been warned this would happen, so when Nick wrote us a letter from Taiwan where he was studying to improve his spoken Chinese or Barry wrote from Rhodesia where he was fighting in the war as a member of their SAS - both places which were off-limits as far as the communist government was concerned - we had their letters routed through Shirley's mother who was looking after our house in Brisbane. Obviously the university authorities knew what was going on, but because we hadn't openly flaunted their authority, they didn't lose face and so it was okay.

When I went back to teaching at the Brisbane College of Education, I found it very difficult at first because I felt that what I was teaching the students - the Philosophic and Sociological Foundations of Education (!!!) - did not seem to me to be as relevant as what I had been doing in the past twelve months where I felt we had made a real difference, and in spite of the irritations and barriers put up by the bureaucrats, we still enjoyed and cherished our time there and made some very good friends, a number of whom are still in touch with us almost thirty years on.

Nick Bricknell 1947-49

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## TRAVELLING BY TRAIN - DOWN MEMORY LANE

*Jennie Briggs submitted this article in March but it was held over until this edition, hence the reference to John Riley's experiences on his trip in the GHAN. Ed*

With the quest for contributions of "Teaching Memoirs" seemingly to have reached a hiatus, is our next subject to be "Train Travel Memoirs"?

It is unfortunate that the late John Riley did not find the GHAN experience a pleasurable one, and so far we've only read the first instalment. Let's hope the sequel will provide a more positive read.

My husband and I undertook the GHAN experience from Adelaide to Alice Springs last winter (2005). There was, in my opinion, nothing extraordinary about the Ghan, and prompted by the advice of our travel agent, we did travel Kangaroo Gold Class. Everything it promised was laid on accordingly. The food was good, the bunks comfortable, and there weren't too many rattles or bumps.

Our hostess, Tara, was more than helpful and obliging, and a jolly good sort....in fact when she woke us with a hot cuppa in the morning, my husband still bleary from sleep, on opening the door to see her standing there with the steaming cups, thought for a moment that he must have died and gone to heaven.

So not a lot to complain about travel on the GHAN, but let's cast our memories back to the nights spent on board the old rattler, the SOUTH-WEST MAIL, as many of us squashed ourselves into the dog-boxes for our holiday journeys homewards from WWTC. Not much in the way of travel comfort for second class commuters back in the fifties, with interminable stops for refreshments or whatever at every station en route, making the

journey take twice as many long hours.

It was my lot to alight in the dead of night at Goulburn and wait there in the freezing (always freezing in Goulburn!) rest room for my connection homewards bound on "OLD SMOKEY" to Cooma. Fortunately there was always a coal fire glowing in the rest room grate, but one almost had to sit on it to gain any warmth.

But this mode of transport was what we accepted back then, and although we moaned about it, it really added to the great experience of being a WWTC student. Very few of us had access to a motor vehicle so we just had to make the best of the situation.

I do recall one very unhappy experience I had when we were all aboard and heading for home. The conductor was doing the rounds to check our tickets, and mine was not in my pocket, purse, or any other of my possessions. So, being one of those churlish, aggressive bully-boy chaps, he wasn't going to listen to reason nor weaken to the sight of female tears, and HE was going to have me put off the train at Junee if the errant ticket had not turned up before we reached that station.

I knew it had been in my possession when we were standing on the Wagga Wagga platform waiting for the train to pull in, so the only possible scenario was that I had dropped it there. The conductor finally relented and listened to this possibility, and when the train arrived at Junee, he telephoned back to Wagga, explaining the problem to the station attendant there who obligingly went to look on the platform, and "voila" - there it was in the exact spot I had recalled standing among the jostling crowd of fellow students.

Throughout the ensuing years there have been train journeys of little consequence, but there

was one which was quite an adventure and the experience of a life time.

Our home for sixteen nights in March 2004 was aboard "SHONGOLOLO" (which means millipede in Zulu), the great old train which carried us on our Southern Cross Safari Tour in Africa, beginning at Victoria Falls and ending at Johannesburg. We had dinner, bed and breakfast on board, but each day were taken on a safari or an excursion by a tour guided 13 seater Mercedes Benz bus, according to nationality or language. We shared our bus with three Dutch people, an English couple and an American gentleman. There was also a French group and a German group, but we were the only Aussies. The train is fitted out to accommodate about 80 passengers, but we felt fortunate that our entire group consisted of only 26 people.

Now, before you start muttering about reading someone else's boring bloody overseas trip, let me assure you that I am not going to go into minute details about all the things we saw and did, like the awesome view of Victoria Falls from a helicopter, or the majestic animals we spotted, or the wonderful scenery making up the African landscape. But as we have all been educators during our lifetimes, some for more years than others, I would like to share a few experiences we had in that field.

Whilst we were based at the Dete Railway Station in Zimbabwe (which is nearby the Hwange Game Reserve), one excursion was to the Simbala Primary School and orphanage, seemingly set in the middle of nowhere. We received a royal welcome from staff and pupils because "SHONGOLOLO" management regards this school and orphanage in a charitable manner. We carried with us whatever gifts we could muster up at short notice as well as several big boxes of goods

sent by previous “SHONGOLOLO” tourists.

Our inspections of the classrooms left us flabbergasted, as the children had no desks or chairs, the teacher had no desk or chair, and there was very little to show in the way of books or writing implements, except for some chalk and a large blackboard. In fact, the response of gratitude from a Zimbabwe child for the meagre gift of a biro pen was almost embarrassing and very humbling.

The school children were delightful and put on quite a show for us, as well as being greatly taken in by one of our German men who played his piano accordion for them. But sadly, so many of them will not reach adulthood due to the aids epidemic — in fact many had already lost both parents to aids, and if the grandparents are unable to care for the children, then the orphanage had a role to play... under difficult circumstances.

My husband and I befriended one of the teachers and came away with his address and the good intentions to maybe send anything at all that would help, but of course, had we followed this up, it was highly unlikely that the material would be delivered to him or the school. I try not to imagine what might have befallen him, the other teachers, the children, or the school in the two years that have since elapsed.

Further along down the line and having crossed the border into South Africa, we were able to go to a real bank to withdraw some real money at the town of Louis Trichardt, named for one of the early voortrekkers. It was in an isolated area near here that we were taken to the Shangaan Youth Project where kids who do not always respond to formal education learn trades, do computer courses, cooking, arts and crafts, and most importantly are being educated about preventative measures in relation to the contraction and spread of aids. The set-up was impressive, and the kids we met really seemed to be taking a positive approach.

After leaving there we followed a rugged road to a village where the women whose husbands are absent, working in the mines at Johannesburg, have formed a co-operative where they do screen-printing and sewing, and hand process pots from clay taken from the nearby creek-bed... which they sell to willing tourists! They also run a pre-school, and once again we dug into our pockets and bags for gifts. This time we were forewarned and were able to purchase texta pens, coloured pencils, and books (and packets of sweets!) in Louis Trichardt.

On the final day of our “SHONGOLOLO” experience, with the train stationed on the outskirts of Johannesburg, we were taken on a tour of that city, as well as Soweto. Some people may fear the thought of entering Soweto, and I guess we were not taken through the seedier parts, but once again we were impressed with the effort the community is

making towards encouraging kids who have dropped out of school to do something constructive with their time and lives.

A cultural centre for music, arts and crafts was established in a street-shop, but nearby had been an unsightly, littered, rocky hill. That was until it was turned into the Soweto Mountain of Hope (SOMOHO) whereby all manner of arts, crafts, ideas of construction, and the planting of gardens and trees have transformed the area. A grant of ZAR 10,000 (about A\$2,500) from the government helped get the project started, but the enthusiasm and pride of those volunteering their time and effort is almost contagious. So contagious, in fact, that we were probably overly generous in our donations to the cause.

On the Southern Cross Safari Train tour, we visited the countries of Zimbabwe, Botswana, Zambia, South Africa, Mozambique and Swaziland. I have described some of the education processes we saw in place in two of those countries, but what we ourselves learned and gained from the experience is impossible to assess.

Jenny Briggs (Mould) 57-58



*The teacher we befriended,  
with two of his pupils.*

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### More Memories of Curriba

I started school at Curriba with Fred Read as the teacher in 1938-1940 (my recollections are a bit hazy about dates but I think they are right).

Until my brother Bill started my sister Joy and I rode ponies to school. I have very fond memories of learning to ride ready for starting school. I rode all the way around the house and I didn't fall off !! What a pony! !

I found learning very easy with Mr Read, especially numbers. Having gone on to become a teacher myself, I admire all those teachers who taught in the small schools. I know that we all did well on reaching high school.

Some of the highlights of Curriba were the school sports on Empire Day, 24 May, a half-day holiday. We combined with Tibeaudu, also a small school. Sports were held at “Mudda Rocks”, which had been an aboriginal sight many years ago, and most days we were lucky enough to have fine weather.

Another exciting time for the children was the Christmas Concerts, when our parents patiently sat through our entertainments on seats in the playground, while we performed on the verandah, which was the stage. My regular number was dancing the Highland Fling and singing solo or with my sister Joy.

Even our trips to and from school had their ups and downs - horses deciding a canter was too slow, would take off, and still turn the sharp corner to go in the gate while the rider went straight ahead. Another horse in the sulky found a rabbit burrow in the middle of the road, which broke through when trodden on. Down went the horse in the sulky, out came two girls, (Joy and I) but the boy Bill didn't see why he should too!! He was left sitting in the sulky. A neighbour nearby heard the girls calling for help and came to the rescue. Everyone recovered from their fright, with “the boy”, proud of the fact that he “didn't see why he should fall out too”.

I completed my primary education at Curriba and started high at Burwood Home Science, staying with my Aunt, later attending Presbyterian Ladies College, Goulburn, as a boarding student. I went on to Wagga Teachers College to train as a primary school teacher and I returned to Curriba School to do “Prac” teaching. My first teaching appointment was at Woolgoolga.

I married Alan Kentwell in 1954. We had three sons Douglas, Richard and Malcolm. Most of my life I lived in Thornleigh, (Sydney) moving to the central coast for a few years and now to Tweed Heads. Malcolm and his wife Tanya live close by with my two grand children, Bradley and Rebecca. Douglas and Richard both live in Sydney.

Wilma Kentwell (nee Worland) 1950-51

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# LETTERS PAGE

Dear Lew,

I do look forward to reading Talkabout and to hear stories of people I knew at College in the Pioneer Session – so I decided to write a little about my life since 1949.

When I read of Miss Kilgour's story of her Geography Option Group I was moved to get in touch. I was one of that Option that traversed the Wagga district – learning all the fine details of Map reading. In 1952 I married an Ex Air Force navigator and I was able to compare my elementary expertise with his complicated navigation. In those early days the College had only basic amenities and the winter was rather unbearable especially for me having come from the mild winters of far North Coast.

I was also interested to read Maureen O'Neil's story – she shared the room next door to me – and it was quite a nostalgic look into the past to read what her life had held for her – even at college Maureen used to talk of her man Tony, whom she later married. I too play Bridge – so one day we might meet in competition.

We retired to glorious Lake Macquarie and six hears ago my husband died – so although my three children are not living close to me I have remained here and have lots of interests. Now I've just purchased a computer so next time I write you won't have 'long hand'!!

We lived at Tamworth for twenty seven years where Neil was in charge of the Radiology Department and then we moved to Lane Cove for ten years. I taught with the Dominican Sisters at Wahroonga.

I read with sadness of the death of Shirley Bricknell (nee Williams) and I can remember her so vividly. She was a beautiful looking girl with glorious eyes and a "peaches and cream" complexion. My sympathy to Nick at this time of great loneliness.

Maureen Dalziel (nee Lane)

Secretary SRC 1947-49

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Dear Lew and Lindsay,

I look forward very much to the regular issues of Talkabout which arrive every few months. I can assure you that each issue is read from cover to cover soon after its arrival.

I was saddened to hear of the passing of good friends such as Jack Clark, Barry Jackson, John Riley, Effie Langfield (Davidson) and her best friend Moira Brien, etc. Some of the lecturers became close friends as well and this friendship continues on over many years.

I was particularly saddened when I read the remarks of one of your recent letter writers and her scathing criticism of one of our dearest friends, Gordon Young now gone to be with His Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. Like another of your previous letter writers I, too, was one of those many students who became committed Disciples of the Lord, Jesus while attending Wagga College. Gordon Young was NOT directly responsible for my conversion experience (Ultimately, of course God was.)

However I will be eternally grateful for the love and care shown to me and my friends by Gordon and Margaret Young. They provided for lonely, homesick College students a truly "home away from Home" atmosphere in their own home. They had little children at the time and even suffered the loss of a baby boy while we were at College and, like all our lecturers they were certainly far from rich. In spite of their own difficulties they welcomed a bunch of ratbag College students into their home on Friday or Saturday nights for good, old-fashioned singalongs around the piano, games, fun, lively "debates" and a chat over a cuppa and cake. What a special treat it was to be invited to Sunday lunch, roast lamb and the works. I attended both the Anglican and Baptist Churches while in Wagga and it was MY choice where I ended up.

I was Secretary of the S.R.C. during my second year in College 1949/1950 and as such, shared 2 very small "offices" with the likes of Jack Clark (President) and the Editorial Staff of Talkabout, Mitch and his crew. Those were the times!! You can imagine the sorts of "discussions" that went on around there!! Knowing Mitch pretty well I ( and you) can just imagine what his reaction would have been if he had received a Letter to the Editor "threatening" to "reconsider her subscription" unless he promised to publish or nor publish certain subjects.

I consider myself free to refer to my faith in God in a letter to Talkabout as your other letter writer is free to talk about her faith in whatever or in nothing.

As for the accusation levelled against Gordon Young and his associates of proselytizing I will answer that accusation in Gordon's own words, when accused of "sheep stealing" he would quietly say, "sheep go where they are fed".

Thanks again for Talkabout. Keep up the good work.

Yours sincerely,

Irene Gruber nee Kind 1948-50

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Dear Lindsay,

I always enjoy the Talkabout news, and of course, was overjoyed to find our old 1951 football photo featuring in the July issue.

I must get in touch with Mick Hayes soon, I've tried a few times but he seems to be always out bowling. I remember our footy team well. Gordon Schliebs was captain, I was Vice Captain and Bobby Smith gave Mr Blakemore the works on why we needed guernseys. (They were great too, bottlegreen with a yellow sash and big white felt numbers on the back.)

I also remember George Blakemore came down to see us play one Sunday but the other team didn't turn up because it was a filthy wet day. The umpire made us run out and kick a score before we were declared winners. Fancy getting wet and muddy just for that!! However, George announced at evening meal that we looked "invincible". Thanks George!

We had soccer players (good in the wet), rugby union and league players as well as a small scattering of Aussie Rules players. We copped a bit of a buffeting through the season and finished up playing East Wagga in the final at Bolton Park, Wagga's main AFL oval. They gave us a bit of a work out and led at half time but in the second half, it being a hot September day, they ran out of "gas" and we ran away with the game and won the Premiership. (I must admit they were mostly ex-players just out for a Sunday gallop, when it was fine, and maybe had some "recovery" thoughts in them.)

Unfortunately the competition fell through the following year and the guernseys, I believe, were passed on to the College Rugby Union side. (I wish I could have bought mine!). I tried a few years ago to have a reunion of the team in Wagga but it wasn't a goer. The only replies I got were from Gordon Schliebs, and Larry Lacey (now deceased) who saw my ad in "Education", though I can't remember him playing.

I know a few of the team are no longer with us but I'd love to locate those still living to get an up-to-date photo of them 55 years on. Do you think that it may be possible for me to get the addresses of those who remain?

Yours sincerely,

Ray Fielder (1950-51).

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Dear Lindsay,

I arrived at WWTC and was uninformed of the 1st weekend joke being played out. Because 2nd Year boys were at Nasho training until Easter we Newies were piled



# LETTERS PAGE

into buses and taken to be indoctrinated at the Wagga Demonstration School. One day at a News session a very naïve 6 year old boy said "Well last Friday the man who sleeps with Mummy while daddy is away driving the big truck said....." We never found out what he said as we were laughing so much.

What did I learn at WWTC? I had come from a Nuns Boarding School so believe it was to be able to talk and feel comfortable with boys.

As I majored in singing and acting that was another plus. I was not a top student but had a lot of fun and made many friends. Faye Boxsell had looks, personality and a great singing voice. I was not built so nicely so Faye took the pretty lead roles and I became a character actress which I was able to pursue, later acting in a myriad of musicals here in Canberra. Unfortunately I had a major stroke in 1998 and was invalided out of teaching. I was the only girl in a quintet at WWTC which had Bruce Taylor, Eric Draper, Harry Bunton and Tony Davis and me, Shirley Trent. We were called "Four Beaus and a Belle".

Carole Lutton and I joined the Sydney G and S Society in 1954 and appeared in "HMS Pinafore" and "The Sorcerer", but only in the chorus. Don Talbot came to see us in these shows at the Conservatorium. This was before his Swimming Coach phase.

In 1957 I married Graham and we spent 12 years in Woomera SA in its Hey Day. Graham worked for Weapons Research and 4 children including twins were all born in Woomera. I sang at weddings etc during those years.

My husband Graham and our four children and I came to Canberra in May 1969 and I began work the day the men landed on the moon 21/07/69. This was my increment date and I taught continuously until 1998 when I intended to retire!

I played the lead role of Mumma Rose in "Gypsy" and a girl whom I taught at Downes 3rd Grade ACT played Gypsy Rose Lee. She was Carol Starkey.

PS I was sorry to see that Reggie Byrnes had died of cancer. He was in my section and in Sydney took me to a Ball and to the Harold Park trots.

Shirley Thomas (Trent) 1952-53

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Dear Editor

Enclosed my sub for all the Talkabouts. Your comment reminded me that I've

forgotten to send annual subs. Hope this makes up for the oversight.

The mention of the lectures of Gordon Young reminded me of the day the local Communist Party turned up at the gates. During the 1957-58 sessions Gordon's anti-communist lectures were a major part of the course. The local communists printed their replies, stood outside the front entrance and, as we all boarded buses to go to prac teaching, handed them out along with membership forms for the Communist Party. With some returned soldiers from Korea in the 56-57 intake it certainly led to some lively discussion back at college but as far as I know no official complaint was ever made.

Although I've sent on local press cuttings I've seen no mention of the Brian McGowan Bridge at Gosford. Brian and I were both 'senior' students in the 57-58 session, marrying after graduation and heading for Tocumwal Primary. Brian then took up teaching at a small school at Shepardstown. Our next posting was Nowra. By then Brian had completed his B.A. by correspondence, I had begun mine and we taught at Nowra High and Bomaderry High. Our final move was to the Central Coast. Brian stood for State Parliament and was local M.P. For 12 years, with a marginal cliff hanging win that brought in the Wran Government. His work during that 12 years contributed so much to the development of the Coast that after his death the bridge was named in his honour. Perhaps Brian's finest achievement was the introduction of the Coastal Open Space System which has been continued by local council and resulted in all the ridgeway areas of Gosford now being in public ownership. We are one of the few areas in N. S. W. where private homes do not straddle the tops of ridges. In Gosford we have uninterrupted tree lines where the land meets the sky.

As an item for your letters page I'd like to know if any other teachers in small schools ever had the annual cubby house occurrence. At a particular time during each year there would be a weekend when all the students would come to school, choose a section of school fence, remove palings and construct little cubbyhouses furnished with a variety of seating and fittings brought from home. Each had a door made of a scrap of material or hessian and entry was 'by invitation only'. At recess and lunch breaks the children would visit each other, chatting over make believe cups of tea. . No-one could tell us when this began or why it happened but at the end of the cubbyhouse period all these elaborate little dwellings would just as suddenly disappear, the palings would go back and the school yard would look exactly as it had before.

Good to hear that Talkabout continues. Names from my 57-58 session are rare but I still keep in touch with many of them. Thank goodness for email!

Regards

Margaret McGowan (Jackson) (1957-58)

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Dear Michelle,

Please find enclosed my contribution to the production of Talkabout. I appreciate the opportunity of discovering what has become of colleagues from the 60-61 session and reading articles submitted by some of them. I have taken great interest also in the lives and achievements of personnel from other sessions, many of whom I met during my teaching career.

At the same time Talkabout has afforded the opportunity to gain a broader overview of the history of WWTC where many of us spent possibly the best two years of our lives. I trust that my contribution assists in ensuring that Talkabout continues as a significant vehicle of communication for all those ex-students who are recipients of the publication.

Finally, I attended the "Graduation" ceremony for the thirteen who incurred the wrath of Maurice Hale towards the end of 1961 because they had alcohol in their systems.

One of the thirteen was my room mate who, like the other twelve, returned on the evening in question from a private function and went straight to bed causing nobody any distress or discomfort. They were discovered because one of them had to be informed that he had failed examinations and would have to repeat the year and was roused from his bed to be provided with this information.

Thankfully, the intervention of the NSW Teachers Federation ensured that those who should have graduated were reinstated and most went on to contribute enormously to the education of students in NSW and overseas, and some became outstanding educational administrators. The fact that just on 100 attended the "graduation" in Moruya suggests strong support for the notion that the thirteen were unjustly dealt with by the College Principal.

Yours sincerely,

Frank Leonard (1960-61)

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# TEACHING MEMORIES

## CUMMERAGUNJA ABORIGINAL SCHOOL

*Many graduates of WWTC were posted to isolated one teacher schools.*

*Robert Smyth has written of his first appointment and the two years he spent as TIC of Cummeragunja.*

*He writes: "I have shown this to many retired teachers and they all say, 'It sounds very familiar to my beginning!'" Ed.*

I grew up in the Riverina District of Southern New South Wales in Pleasant Hills and Gerogery. My father was a teacher and always taught at small schools in the country. I attended Albury High School and at the end of 1959, I received a scholarship to train as a teacher. I attended Wagga Wagga Teacher's College in 1960 and 1961. After graduation at the end of 1961, I received a telegram advising me to report for duty at the end of January, 1962 as Teacher-in-Charge at Cummeragunja Aboriginal School. Because we had been granted a scholarship to cover the cost of our training, we were 'bonded' to the NSW Department of Education for three years and had no say in where we would be sent. So, here I was .... as green as grass, straight out of Teacher's College ... appointed as Teacher-in-Charge of an all-aboriginal school to a place I had never heard of! It wasn't on any maps we had and the only instructions for getting there, as we didn't have cars in those days, were to catch the Murray Valley Coach from Albury to Echuca, then catch the mail truck to Cummeragunja!

My father had graduated during the depression in the 1930's and his first full-time appointment was to Yallama Gulpa! (after a part time position at Holbrook.) It was a tent town that moved along with the construction of the railway line from Echuca to Deniliquin and was a bit south of Mathoura. He lived in a tent and the school tent was pitched in the shade of a large gum tree. He remembered that, at the time he was teaching there, there was an Aboriginal Mission at a place called Maloga, across the Murray River from Barmah, Victoria, in the Barmah Forest. On making enquiries, we found that the missionaries had left and most of the land was rented out to Italian tobacco farmers and the people continued to live on the Mission grounds in a collection of fibro huts and tin humpies, and the name had changed to Cummeragunja, which meant "Our Home". The people there were descendents of the Goulburn and Campaspe River tribes although in the two years I spent there, I only met one full-blood aborigine named Pluto, (and I'll say more about him later in the story).

My father decided to take me to Cummeragunja in the car, with my bike in the trailer.

We arrived at Barmah and on making enquiries at the little Shop/Post Office/Petrol Station, discovered that all the previous teachers had boarded with the Lawfords. We found their place with the little kiosk out the front and I met Jack and Elsie and their daughter Joy and son John, who welcomed me like one of their own. They were one of the nicest families I've ever met during my life.

We dropped my gear off and drove to the river to find the punt to cross the Murray River to get to Cummeragunja, on the other side. (NSW). We bumped across a terrible piece of 'road' for about half a mile to the collection of huts and humpies and found the school.

Mrs Sophie Briggs was a grand old lady sitting outside her fibro hut two doors up from the school and she had the keys for me.

The school was a two-roomed building with a verandah along the front and two toilets out the back. There was a set of water bubblers near the front gate, with water coming from the two overhead tanks supplying water to the settlement. The tanks were filled from the river.

There were no records other than a letter from the previous Teacher-in-Charge with a list of the students from the previous year and the classes they would be in. There was no duplicator, no phone, a bank Pass Book saying that there was a few pounds in a bank account, an old reel to reel tape recorder, some school exercise books and pencils and a few well worn text books. There was also an old valve radio on a bench but very little reception. There was no Parents and Citizens Association and one lady came each afternoon to clean the building.

Dad and Mum left for home, leaving me with the same statement that Peter Ebeling had left me at the end of his letter... "Best of Luck!" (Peter was the previous T-I-C.)

It seemed that I could have up to 45 students in seven year levels (Kindergarten to Year 6) all in the one small room. The other room seemed to be an open activity room. Each room had a wood burning heater for winter but no cooling for summer.

I had a lovely girlfriend (later to become my wife) at the time, who was teaching further down the river at Barham, so I wrote off a letter asking her to send me copies of the duplicated sheets she was preparing for her little students. I made a hectograph, (a flat tray of gelatine) so that I could make more copies and organized things as best I could for the first day of school.

I had been advised by Jack Lawford to purchase a pair of gum boots as soon as possible, as the only way to get to the school when it rained, was by walking through the mud and water across the river flats.

### The First Day.

During the week before school started, I went to the school each day to prepare work, but I saw very few students. Any children I saw in the distance disappeared very quickly when I rode up on my bike.

On the first day of the term, I was dressed appropriately, long sleeved shirt, tie, long trousers and well cleaned black shoes, arrived early and had work ready for the Kindies and Year 1's and work for all the other classes up on the blackboard....all written in correct cursive writing for Years 4-6 and correct printing for Years 2 and 3!

There was not a student in sight. In fact, there was not a person in sight. It seemed that the settlement had been deserted.. At 9 a.m. I walked on to the verandah and rang the hand bell. I could not see a living soul. As I stood on the verandah, looking directly north across the Murray River, I realized that the land on the other side was actually Victoria! At Barmah, the river takes such a bend that it runs back east for a few miles, making it one of the few places that you can see Victoria, over the river from NSW, looking due north!

I moved back inside and waited. As there was no phone, I could not ring the inspector and ask him what I should do, so I just waited. At about 10 a.m., I heard a slight noise outside that sounded like someone brushing up along the outside wall. Next thing, a girl came in the door, walked to a seat, sat down and hid her face in her hands. I said good morning and asked her where everyone was, but received not a word in answer. She peeped about through her fingers, saw the work on the board, found some books in her desk, and started work. A few minutes later, another student slipped in and did exactly the same. In the next half an hour about 20 students came in, sat in a seat and started doing the work on the board. Not one student had said a word!

At 11 a.m., I let them out for recess and they just sat under the trees in the shade. I changed the work on the board, rang the bell at 11.15 and they all shuffled back in and continued work. This continued until 12.30 when I let them out for lunch. They all disappeared back into the dwellings. Not one student had said a word! I ate my lunch in stunned silence. None of the Kindy kids had turned up. I looked at the work the kids had done and realized that they were quite good at their tasks and had obviously been well taught by previous teachers. I again changed the work on the board and sat down to wait, wondering what this job of teaching was all about.

At 1.30 I rang the bell and was rather surprised to see the students running back from the huts to the school. They returned to their seats and continued to work, again in total silence!

# TEACHING MEMORIES

One of the afternoon tasks was to write a story about something they had done during the holidays. I had been continually walking around the room checking on what the students were doing. I came to the girl who had been the first one to come in and read what she had written. I made a comment about something she had written and without thinking, she started to tell me all about it, then suddenly realized that she had spoken, went red in the face (which is quite hard for an aborigine!) and went silent again. I beamed for joy and exclaimed, "Ah! You can talk!" This was nearly 2 p.m.!! She then, with much hesitation and wariness, told me that they could all talk but that they were just too scared to. I wondered if I was so scary, or just what sort of teachers they had had in the past, but decided that as they all lived on an all-aboriginal settlement and were not used to strangers, they were all naturally shy and reticent. This proved to be correct and by the end of the week, they realized that I was not going to eat them for lunch, and they were chatting away like any other primary school student. The brave girl who came in first was Maxine Briggs. Her cousin Amy was the second and Maxine's sister Maree the third to come in. They were lovely children. Maxine and Maree's mother was the school cleaner.

## School Inspector's Visit

Mr Clarrie Willoughby was the inspector, based at Deniliquin. I received a letter from him asking for the phone number of the school, and asking where the required returns that should have been sent in were. I wrote back saying there was no phone number because there was no school phone. (Not one at the settlement at all. If an ambulance or the police were needed, someone had to 'run to the punt' or row across the river and get to the public phone at Barmah.) I gave him Lawford's number and said that he could contact me there during the evening. I also said I had not sent any returns in because I didn't know I had to and couldn't find any to fill in.

He rang me one evening about a week later. He couldn't believe that there was no phone at the school. He said that he would come down and visit the school the next week and bring a complete set of forms with notes on how and when to complete them. It had rained that week and the track across the flats was impassable. I told him to turn right as soon as he came in the entrance gate and follow a rough track along an irrigation channel to get to the school.

He remembered the advice and made it into the school. As with all strangers, the children suddenly went silent when he came in. He tried to talk to them but got no response. I was rather embarrassed and told him of my first day, so he just said, "Carry on and I will just observe!"

The students were exemplary that day and worked on solidly. At lunch time, he gave me all the forms and notes, told me I knew more about teaching aboriginal kids than he did, showed me his brand new Holden station wagon, explained all about this new radio it had which could be easily removed and taken in to the house so it couldn't be stolen, hopped into his car and drove off—straight across the flats!!

I yelled out STOP!! But he didn't hear me and drove straight into a large water filled mud hole and we watched as the station wagon sank down well above the door sills and there it sat.

The inspector, dressed immaculately in his suit sat there for a few moments, then took off his shoes, rolled up his suit trousers, opened the door and got out!!! The muddy water must have flowed straight into his car, but there he stood!!

Meanwhile, when he drove off, I called all the students to me, donned my gumboots, and started off across the flats before he had reached the mud hole. As we sloshed across the paddock, a group of young men who had been watching the proceedings, started off towards the car. They reached it before the kids and I did. They stood around the car in a complete circle, reached down, took hold of the car and lifted it and carried it out of the bog-hole. I was dumbfounded. Clarrie ran around enthusiastically thanking each of the men and shook their hands, mud and all, then turned to me and said, "Sorry, I forgot!", got back in his very muddy new car and drove off into the next bog-hole!! The men followed and eventually pushed the car all the way to the gate so Clarrie was able to get home!

He only came to visit me one more time that year and rang to see if it had rained in the month before he came.

## Student Behaviour.

The students were basically very shy and well behaved. Like all kids, arguments broke out every now and then and there was some bullying by the older and bigger kids. One of the biggest boys was Buddha Bux. He was part Indian, part aboriginal and quite surly at first. He was prone to bullying, often picking on the girls. I had warned him on several occasions and he took very little notice, until I got to the point of threatening to find the cane and use it if he continued to bully the other students. I hadn't needed the cane up until this point and had never used one before. (They didn't have 'cane giving' as a subject at Teacher's College!)

One morning, as I arrived at school, I was met by a very angry Mrs Briggs who told me in no uncertain terms that I would have to do something about that Buddha Bux for punching her daughter Maxine.

When Buddha arrived, I called him into the spare room and asked him what had happened. He quite openly told me that he had waited behind a bush after school and when Maxine came along, he lashed out and punched her in the face, because of some trivial incident that had happened during the day. I asked what my warning to him was and he just held out his hand!! I had found the cane behind the cupboard a few days before. I got it out and gave him one stroke across the fingers. The cane shattered into tens of little pieces. He laughed out loud and thought it was a great joke!!

I looked around and saw a feather duster with a thick cane handle. I said, "Right. I'll try this one." He thrust out his hand again and said, "Great! I'll bust it too." I slammed the cane down on his gnarled hand hard enough to break any normal kid's fingers. He just grimaced, grit his teeth, and thrust out his other hand and grunted, "Well, have a go at that one too!" I slammed that one too! He whipped both hands behind his back and spat out between clenched teeth, "You Bastard!!" I'm sure he considered trying to flatten me, but his hands were hurting so badly, and he considered my 6'3½" height, and just stormed out of the school, trying to slam the door off its hinges as he left.

I just stood there completely drained for a minute or so, wondering what I was doing, trying to run a school on my own at the tender age of 20!!!

For the next week, student behaviour was exemplary! Nobody even looked sideways and Buddha stayed home! !

On the following Monday, Buddha bowled in and slumped into his seat. I beckoned him into the spare room, (there was only a folding glass wall between so the other kids could see what was going on) and said, "You can come back on two provisos. Firstly, I want an apology. I have a birth certificate saying my parents were married. Secondly, you will have to do what I tell you". He just grunted and went home again.

Two days later he came in before school started. He walked up to me and said, "Sorry Sir...and You's the Boss!"

I did not have to touch the cane for the rest of that year, while Buddha was there. He became my right hand man. Whenever any other student didn't do what I told them to instantly, there was this deep voice from the back of the room saying, "You heard him!" and the student would jump to obey!! Buddha became an excellent student, ceased all bullying and I was sorry to see him leave at the end of the year.

*(to be continued in the next issue)*

# HISTORICAL MEMORIES



## My ‘Roamin’ in the Gloamin’.’

*This is the final episode in the series Dawn Stewart (Andrews) 1950-51 has written for her family research..*

*Her stories about “the barefoot kid” have provided a wonderful insight into what it was like growing up out in the “backblocks”.*

*We are indeed fortunate that Dawn has permitted us to publish her stories and has allowed us to eavesdrop on her childhood world.*

*Ed.*

Some time ago I became a ¾ centenarian and I was ready, because a couple of years back I peeked into the diary of Noel Coward and read “How foolish to think one could ever slam the door in the face of age. Much wiser to be polite and gracious and ask him to lunch in advance.” I took his advice – but why stop with lunch? I am now gadding about with old friends from Mitchell C.A.E. days – and new ones – lunches, group exercises card and birthday parties, and any other reason we find for a get together. My E.B. Ford has been replaced by a small new 5-seater – my Bluebird – and I zip around several times a week watching its little icons dancing around in front of me, sending important messages. The RTA remembered my birthday too – “A Guide for Older Drivers.” I dutifully read it and put it away – somewhere – until the time is right. My roller door became heavier – so – a little motor, a remote control and I have power in one finger.

Our group also goes on regular coach trips, so on my daughter’s fridge is my social planner which tells her “No child-minding on this day – except for emergencies.” A recent coach trip had

an unexpected surprise for me – homeward bound. We stopped at the Bull Camping Reserve near Linden for a bush afternoon tea and the coach driver informed us that the reserve was once an encampment for regiments during and after the building of the original Great Western Road over the Blue Mountains. From my family research, I knew I walked the same ground as my Great, Great Grandfather had walked in 1837 when he was attached to the 80th Staffordshire Volunteers – supervising work on the road while the new one down Victoria pass was under construction. The Reserve was originally called 17 Mile Hollow (distance from the Nepean) and a third son was born the same year, same place. In 1844, the 1000 strong 80th marched through Sydney Town to embark for restless India. I count myself fortunate that No. 1251 had resigned by then, because my great grandmother, born 10 years later, was Australian – and I am here, and not somewhere else – or perhaps nowhere – considering his previous occupation.

Again from the past, the barefoot kid taps me on the shoulder and asks “Do you remember.....?” And I do remember – social occasions and family stories – in another time – in another place.

Out there, we had no real mountains – just Mt. Oxley and Gundabooka, reaching above the tree line and there were no large expanses of water to delight the eyes – just the Warrego or the Darling in flood – infrequently. There were no golden sands – just the red that scorched our feet as we scampered from shade tree to the next in the fierce heat. Nor were there lush green fields inviting us for summer outings – just struggling grasses bled of their moisture by the constant heat. Our roads were bush tracks. In dry weather we left long trails of billowing dust behind us, as drivers strove to stay on course while lurching across the deep corrugations and in wet weather we slipped and slid and sometimes bogged to the axle.

The rains could come at a most inopportune time. Two weeks before I was due to be born, wet weather arrived, so my Mum and Dad decided to

go through to Bourke in case I arrived early. They left home at dawn to drive the 80 miles in our 1926 Model T Ford.

On the 8 mile stage to the main road, one of the coils failed and that meant only 3 cylinders were working. My Dad coaxed the car along to Enngonia, where the storekeeper, aware of my Mum’s condition, gave him the use of the 4 coils from his own car in case of further trouble. The next 40 miles required slow and careful driving, but there were no major problems until they reached more black soil country with its natural water courses that drained the excess from the plains and fed it into the river. That last 20 miles was the horror stretch. Chains were useless, as the clogging, cloying mud built up to the mudguards, locking the wheels, and each time that happened, the mud had to be cleared away by hand. Then the T Ford developed another problem – the overworked low-gear band kept slipping out of place, so my Dad would have to put my Mum on the roadside, remove the floorboards and reset the band. He dealt with these problems time after time, because he had no option. At 2am the next morning he got through – 21 hours on the road and the distance finally covered. My Mum was safe at last, with medical help at hand. Soon afterwards, I took my first breath in hospital, instead of somewhere on the side of a muddy road, with my Dad as a stand-in midwife.

Some time later, we obtained the service of the Bush Nursing Association sisters. They came and left regularly – some couldn’t bear the heat, the isolation or our simple life style, and if, by chance, one liked our area, she could be whisked away by some lonely bachelor in need of a wife and family. It was a great comfort to have a B.N.A. sister in case a baby was over-anxious to join our small community or a sheep objected to being de-fleeced and diverted the stroke of the handpiece, causing a deep gash in its shearer. My one trip to sister was because of a temper tantrum by that other barefoot kid. He threw a glass jar on our concrete path, and a piece of flying glass sliced through a large vein under one of my ankles. There I was with my blood soaking into a white sheet that was changing its colour by the minute – and

# HISTORICAL MEMORIES

my Dad miles away. I was taken to see Sister the next morning, but it was too late to sew my two bits together. She put me under house-arrest for a few days – and that other kid was allowed to roam free until I mended.

To help defray expenses for the sister and the surgery, we would have bush picnics – family fundays. We had the usual attractions – age races, food stalls run by the ladies and stepping the 100 yards for the men. On one occasion, for his event, my Dad paid 2 bob for his marker nail while I stood and watched with a hopeful look on my face. It worked, because he bought one for me too. At the starting line, I put my head down to cut out all distractions, and slowly and so carefully, counted out my 100 steps, then pushed my nail into the claypan. When I looked up, I found I was only half way, and some of the men were laughing. My Dad too, was aware of my shortfall, but he didn't laugh. Instead, he beckoned me on, and told me to put my nail somewhere behind him. Yep! You guessed! When the measurement was taken, I was the winner and for the first time in my life I was rich. I clutched my 10 bob note in my hand, and with a self-satisfied look on my face I strolled amidst the losing contestants – and my Dad didn't even ask for the return of the entry fee. I decided not to chase the rooster or the greasy pig in case my note got dirty, or I tore it, or worse still, lost it in the chase.

After our picnics, we usually had a dance. The first couple of hours were set aside for parents and friends to dance with the kids and they would swing us up high into the air at the end of the dance – and we could do big slips and slides on the floor with the help of "Pop's Floor Dressing" when the band stopped playing. When our time was up – out to the cars to be lulled to sleep by the music. On those occasions, not even the rain could send us away early. My Dad would drive us towards home until the claypan became dangerously slippery or we bogged. He would stop right there, and we would sleep – my Mum and baby sister in the front seat, the other 3 kids in the back, and my Dad curled up in the boot. At first light, he would walk home and bring the tractor back to tow us, while my Mum steered the car. She wasn't much of a driver –

she once took out the back wall of our vehicle shed – but she couldn't get into too much trouble with the tractor providing the power, my Dad in charge of the tractor and its speed, and gluggy mud an effective braking system.

We were part of a three-way village cricket competition – with a shield trophy. The teams were composed of oldies, the inexperienced and boys, with occasionally a fleet-footed female to make up the numbers. The games "hotted up" somewhat when universities and colleges were on vacation with some experienced players to help out. We also enjoyed our tennis if we could find someone to roll and mark the courts, and at the drop of a hat, we could burst into song and dance if a piano was nearby and someone who could thump out a tune.

The barefoot kid missed many family outings because of long years at boarding school, but well remembers one special weekend when our Dad took us to Cunnamulla to a race meeting. He threw a couple of swags in the back of the ute for us to sit on as we drove up north, and booked a room at the hotel so we would have a comfortable base for our stay. Off he went to the races while we went shopping (no shoes needed – we were already well-shod) and then on to the park to test the swings. There was to be a race ball that night. My Mum had hung up her gown to discourage creasing and the clock ticked away until near dance time. The ballroom was right next door to the hotel, and we thought our parents would have lots of trips up and down the stairs to ensure their kids were not wrecking the room or squabbling. 'Twasn't so'.

While my Mum was prettying herself and before my Dad shaved his bristles off, he went down and parked the ute nose in to the other side of the street directly opposite the hall doorway. He then rolled out the swags and hey presto! – there was a big bed to sleep four, just near the tailgate. This meant we could watch the ladies arriving in their lovely ball gowns, accompanied by their spruced-up escorts. When our Mum or Dad appeared in the doorway, we would give a wave to say all was well. And as our four faces watched

over the tailgate, we had fun singing along to the songs we knew, and dancing our fingers in time to the music – and we would clap our hands when a "with-it" couple did some fancy dance steps and could change our minds as often as we wished to select our "Belle of the Ball". We knew that when we fell asleep our parents would continue to keep a close watch over us.

On the way home the next morning, our Dad turned off the main road to visit a very large sheep station "Tinnenburra". By the conterminous system of land acquisition, it grew to a million acres and probably shore over ¼ million sheep annually, in good seasons. The shearing shed was built during the years of blade shearing and was huge. The barefoot kid walked the board to count the stands but gave up before the end. We were invited by the station cook to stay for lunch and my plate was piled so high I couldn't see over the top of it while sitting down. I tucked right into the bits I liked best.

In late afternoon we made our way homeward with well-rounded tummies and lasting memories of the ball we kids had almost attended. And I saw myself "Waltzing" – "Drifting" – "Dreaming", wearing a sky-blue gown sometime in the distant future, attending my first ball.

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The barefoot kid has gone – back to her own time, roaming on the black soil plains and the red sandhills. In her pocket she carries the words of a poem "Memory" – the spark for my scribblings. The grownup kid sits and watches her grandchildren, whose ages range between 8 and 23, working towards their own goals in life. The ¾ centenarian is "Roamin' in the Gloamin'" – looking forward to another outing with good friends, and another lunch – somewhere – with You-Know-Who.

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By the way, the grown up kid did wear her first ball gown, but sky-blue was a no-no. It was white for the 1951 Graduation Ball at W.W.T.C.

Dawn.

# NEWS FROM CSU

## CSU is part of the Orange community

Story:- Elizabeth Heath

Charles Sturt University (CSU)'s academic excellence and work within the Orange community was celebrated and highlighted last month with a series of events culminating at a special Community Day held at the University's new Orange Campus on Saturday 9 September.

The Orange institution has been part of the City of Orange since 1973 but has only recently been added to the CSU family.

CSU Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Goulter says CSU has embraced the Orange Campus and will keep it growing. "Building on its tradition of excellence in agricultural research and education, the Orange Campus of CSU is now an integral part of a broad spectrum, research-focused University."

The Orange community was invited to visit the campus and see how the University and its staff have incorporated their work into Orange and beyond. Head of the Orange Campus Professor Kevin Parton says "we are always open to the public but the Community Day gives everyone a reason to visit."

With some outstanding modern laboratory and teaching facilities, CSU now offers a range of programs in pharmacy, nursing, business, agriculture and ecology from its Orange Campus.

In August, CSU launched the new Bachelor of Clinical Science, a pre-medicine and pre-dentistry degree which will stream young people from rural Australia into guaranteed places at Sydney University.

### History of the Orange Campus

- 1973: Orange Agricultural College.
- 1990: Orange Agricultural College joins the University of New England.
- 1994: Orange Agricultural College linked with the University of Sydney.
- 2000: Orange Agricultural College formally dissolved.
- 2006: Orange Campus formally transferred to Charles Sturt University.

### Key Staff

- **Professor Kevin Parton:** Head of the Orange Campus and Head of School of Rural Management. Kevin describes himself as "an economist interested in evaluating the environmental consequences", his range of research interests include risk management, decision analysis, research management, economic evaluation, climate and the economic value of forecasting, and the effect of climate change on health - more specifically, the relationships between climate, weather and disease. His research has revealed that weather affects the incidence of various insect-borne diseases such as Ross River Virus.
- **Professor Mark Burton:** Dean of the Faculty of Health Studies. Mark Burton was born in Orange. He commenced full time medical research in 1983, examining new treatments for liver cancer. In 1985 he was appointed Raine Research Fellow with the University of Western Australia at Royal Perth Hospital. In 1988, as a Senior Scientific Officer for the University Department of Surgery he assisted with the introduction of the first treatment of liver cancer using Selective Internal Radiation Therapy. Some years later he was instrumental in the formation of the Lions Cancer Institute which he served as the Scientific Director until 1993 when he accepted an academic position with Charles Sturt University.

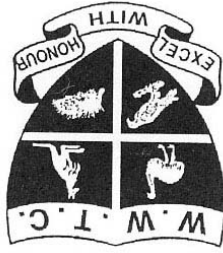
### CSU has a new website

[www.csu.edu.au/alumni](http://www.csu.edu.au/alumni)

The alumni site incorporates the many great features of CSU News as well as all of our publications including "Talkabout" and an Alumni Spotlight. This section highlights an individual alumnus who has excelled in their field. Do you know someone who could feature in the Alumni Spotlight? There is information about benefits and a "Keep in Touch" letting you update your details quickly and easily.

Pop on and have a look.





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