

## Martin DeVries YHS 1969wrote:

'I can still recall many of my childhood exploits with your brother, Martin Francis and my brother Ernie, racing billy carts, climbing the big tree in your front yard, going up the bush catching lizards - we used to take your dog - going to the pool, etc, etc. indeed, I still harbour many fond memories of growing up in Yallourn - it was a great place. Unfortunately, our family left in 1970 and moved to Perth (nicer climate but nowhere near as much fun). Since then, I regrettably lost all contact with everyone I knew in Yallourn. When I finished high school in 1974, I joined the Navy (to see the world) as an officer cadet and been there ever since. Navy put me through university (Uni of NSW where I met Lorraine. Spent 1978 -1992 sailing the seven seas and seeing places I would otherwise have never seen - | am also indebted to the Navy for transporting me from one golf course to the next. In between, married Lorraine in 1983 and spent the next year and a bit in UK before returning to a year and a half in Perth; then moved to Sydney in 1986 and bought a house (when house prices in Sydney were still affordable for mere mortals). Moved down to Canberra in 1992 and have been here ever since - a good place to raise a family - far better than Sydney, but nowhere near as good as Yallourn. In the mid to late-70's I visited Yallourn on several occasions for old times' sake - but by then the town's demise was clearly evident and quite saddening. Despite trying, I was unable to find any of my old school friends or what had become of them. But the world is a small place and about a year or so ago I was at a Defence function here in Canberra and seated at the same lunch table as an Army colonel who looked vaguely familiar. I think I looked familiar to him too, and it eventually transpired that he was Peter Hutchinson who was a classmate of mine all through primary school and 1st year at YHS – I was even more surprised to learn from him that Ian Lynch (same year classmate) was also in the Army, All those years without knowing the other was also in Defence – quite incredible. I have caught a bout of nostalgia - been surfing the net trying to find all sorts of stuff about Yallourn. One thing I did suss out was that Yallournites are just that, forever - they all seem to have very fond memories of the place (even despite the coal dust) - at least that's what some Melbourne University academic reckons, and that seems good enough for me. The other kid your brother Martin, Ernie and I used to play with from up the hill a bit was Ronald Gloss (in my year all through primary school until he went to PNG in Grade 6 - regrettably, never heard from him again). Both my parents are still alive - Mum is 68 and still very active with charity work - does lots of sewing and doll-making. My Dad is 79 and doing it tough with arthritis but otherwise good. Took many years but I finally convinced him that cricket is a good game, and now he is a cricket addict. But I just cannot get him interested in getting a computer and going on the WWW – just too much Dutch stubbornness in his blood."