

Stefan Tomasz YHS 1957 wrote:

For all those who can remember....and what I remember:

I was interested to read Richard (Dickie) Bush's eulogy for Miss Jones in the *Yoga Newsletter* - June 2013.

As YOGA is about nostalgia, I thought not only of her, but of others who had an impact on our lives those many years ago in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

While time tends to mellow and/or distort the memory, the following I remember with general affection. By the way, if what I write does not match what is in the memory of others, then I apologise, in advance, to the living and dead.

Jack Collins

He made Geography interesting. However, the best lurk was to get him talking about his time in the army during WW2. He was stationed in the Atherton Tablelands in Queensland and we knew, when he took his glasses off to clean them, and we could get him to talk about WW2, we were good for 20 minutes resting on our oars. The stories opened our eyes and dreams to places way beyond our closeted world in Yallourn.

Alan Coulson

He was the man who used to get rid of dogs on the school oval by keeping a store of penny-bangers in his desk to throw at them.

He gave me one of the best pieces of advice ever – after his time in the RAAF – to never buy the first model of anything and wait for the bugs to be sorted out and buy the second.

Alan had, in some respects, the misfortune to suffer the Rebecca Myth after George Ellis moved on to Uni High in Melbourne.

Mary Daniel/Thomson

She was another very good teacher of history. One day she went away as Miss Daniel and came back as a Mrs Thomson. I loved her stories of teaching in the East End of London which she used to weave into our history classes.

Jim Dooley

He was a partner to Val Pyers in the rich musical tradition of the school, but also with the tough task of trying to teach others and myself French. He worked very hard at trying to inculcate a love of the French language such as reading to us from French plays and poems. It is amazing, years later, just how useful my school-French proved to be, though, at the time, it seemed about as foreign as the planet Mars. A case of delayed gratification!

He had the fate of being Jim Dooley when the song, "Hang down your head Tom Dooley" came out.

George Ellis

He was a saintly figure who was father to the school in part of my time there. He used Legacy to remind us all of the sacrifices by many in WW2. He liked the "Jamaica Farewell" as a song and it was sung to him for his pleasure often.

Frank Gearing ("Giro")

Frank was our Form Teacher one year (and Science teacher on more than one occasion) who never seemed to be out of his grey lab coat. He was famous for experiments that went awry.

In crowding around him to get a better look at his dissection of the urino-genital track of a rabbit, some liquid was still in part of the entrails, which when cut, sent a nice arched spurt right into the face of one of the girls in the group. Yuk! I remember the look of disgust and dismay on that poor girl's spattered face as if it were only a week ago.

Rupert Harrison ("Rupe")

I underestimated this man at the time. He had been a fighter pilot in WW2 in the UK I think, and he had had an amazing life experience. He taught us English in a way which was years ahead of its time. Little did I know, but he was actually trying to get us to think. On balance, I failed him at the time rather than the other way around. I had the pleasure of talking to him last year and he was into his 90s. Good on him. He could never seem to make many runs in cricket though.

Keith Hollingsworth

He came to the school full of energy and ambition. Keith told us that he aimed to be appointed the youngest Secondary Principal in the Victorian Department of Education. I think he achieved this at age 32. He revolutionised the whole approach to sport in the school and we won many carnivals because he got us involved in training. I see him now, spending hours writing a whole lot of stuff on the chalkboard outside the army huts in the Big Quadrangle first thing in the morning and, after school, overseeing athletics training.

He always seemed to be telling the likes of Iris Ortolja and Sandra Thompson to run faster by making their arms go faster. Not to forget, of course Janice Ipsen ('Big Julie'), hefting those big weights! It seemed to do the trick as they did really well in the aths. carnivals.

Ed Hunkin

Never to be forgotten by me, the challenge to Ed Hunkin – ex-boxer and Methodist minister - by Rod Finlayson, in R.I., in Form 4, to have “an Aboriginal person come and talk to us.” Hunkin said, “Would Doug Nicholls do?” Did he mean Pastor Doug Nicholls, ex-Fitzroy footballer Doug Nicholls? Did he mean, in the future, the Governor of South Australia, Doug Nicholls? Yes, he did.

True to his word – some few weeks later, we had the absolute pleasure of having Doug Nicholls all to ourselves for about an hour.

What champions and outstanding men these two were.

Mary Veronica Jones

Like Richard, I thought she was a wonderful teacher/person.

She was this tall, impressive looking woman who made History interesting.

On one rare occasion, we were all going to sleep just after lunch on a hot day, with our eyes open (or at least this is how we must have looked) and I swear she did a standing jump about 2 feet straight up in the air and thudded down on the bare, wooded boards in Room 8 or 9, shouting, “Wake up!” To see this tall, angular woman actually do this was amazing.

Many of the girls in our class wondered if she had had a broken romance and puzzled why this fine lady was still single. Mind you, while she seemed “old” to us, she could not have been more than 35 I suppose at the time.

Phyllis Parsons (“Polly”)

I had the luck/misfortune to have Polly as my Maths teacher every year from Form 1 to Form 5.

Seen by some as an exacting but thorough task-master (mistress), I found her approach to teaching put me off maths for life.

Such was her hard line class control, with us anyway, that anyone could have driven a bulldozer through the room and we would have kept our heads down working.

Val Pyers (“Pappy”)

What to say? How many happy hours of my teenage/school years were due to the activities he created? There were the choirs, the Dandenong Festivals, the G&S and on and on. In Year 12 we really enjoyed going to his home to do play readings for English Lit. His death, not so long ago, was a sad loss to us all.

Jack Tremain (“Johnny”)

One of my favourite teachers because he busted a gut to try to make what he taught – Geography/History in my case - interesting. I mean, who would take a group of Year 11s to the Yallourn Reservoir and down to the Latrobe River on an “excursion” and describe it as “Geography Prac”?

A solid smoker and a man who enjoyed a beer he was also one who sadly left us too early.

Chris Warrell

He was the lucky man to win the heart and hand of the lovely “Miss Mobsby”, the Art Teacher. This lady had our male pulses racing every time she crossed the Small Quadrangle and bloody Chris won her!

Another good teacher – especially of Accounting – and I know Tony Hoffman came out of the Matriculation Exam in Accounting and said, almost incredulously, “I got the Balance Sheet to Balance” – something akin to solving the mystery of life. He put it down to the great teaching he got from Chris. Later, Chris went on to work in the Faculty of Economics and Commerce at Melbourne University.

There were others of course, but these stand out in my memory.

I was lucky enough – after leaving good old YHS – to actually work with some of the above in an adult capacity, or be in contact with them as a tertiary student or professionally.

Many proved to be not only good teachers but good work mates, and in two or three cases, good bosses!

