

# PAUL PAVLOV: MATHEMATICS TEACHER, MUSICIAN, VOLLEYBALL COACH

## Background



Pavil "Paul" Pavlov was born in 1924, and his wife Ludmila Pavlova was born in 1926. They were of Russian ethnicity from Latvia and like so many many people displaced by the war they ended up in Germany. Their daughter Tatjana was born there in 1948.

The family came to Australia in 1949 as assisted migrants under the International Refugees Organisations' Displaced Persons scheme. They were sent to migrant hostels at Sydney and Bathurst. Ludmila remembers that at Bathurst it was so cold whenever you left a pot of water out overnight it was frozen in the morning. From Bathurst they moved to Greta in Victoria, which is between Benalla and Wangaratta. From here Paul was sent to work on the railways. All the people coming under the assisted passage schemes were under contract to work for a couple of years in places selected by the government.



Paul and Ludmila found that living in the migrant hostel was quite expensive so Ludmila had to find work to help the family to survive and move to an independent life. People housed in these centres were not living there for free - they had to pay "board and lodging" like anywhere else and usually if another family member obtained employment then charges at the hostel were increased. That is one reason why many people found it difficult to save the deposit to buy their own home. Paul and Ludmila started their working lives in Australia as

factory workers but progressed to more artistic and educational careers that matched their aspirations. In 1952 they bought a home in Walmer Avenue, St Albans.

Both Paul and Ludmila started teaching at the St Albans High School in 1959. His specialty was teaching maths and he taught that exclusively, while hers was in needlework but her repertoire include fashion design and in later years she also taught mathematics. Barry Rayner was teaching at the High School in the sixties and recalls that there were several migrant teachers who did a wonderful job in maths-sciences, in particular Mrs Kriksciunas, Mrs Burden, Nick Bolvari, and Paul Pavlov.

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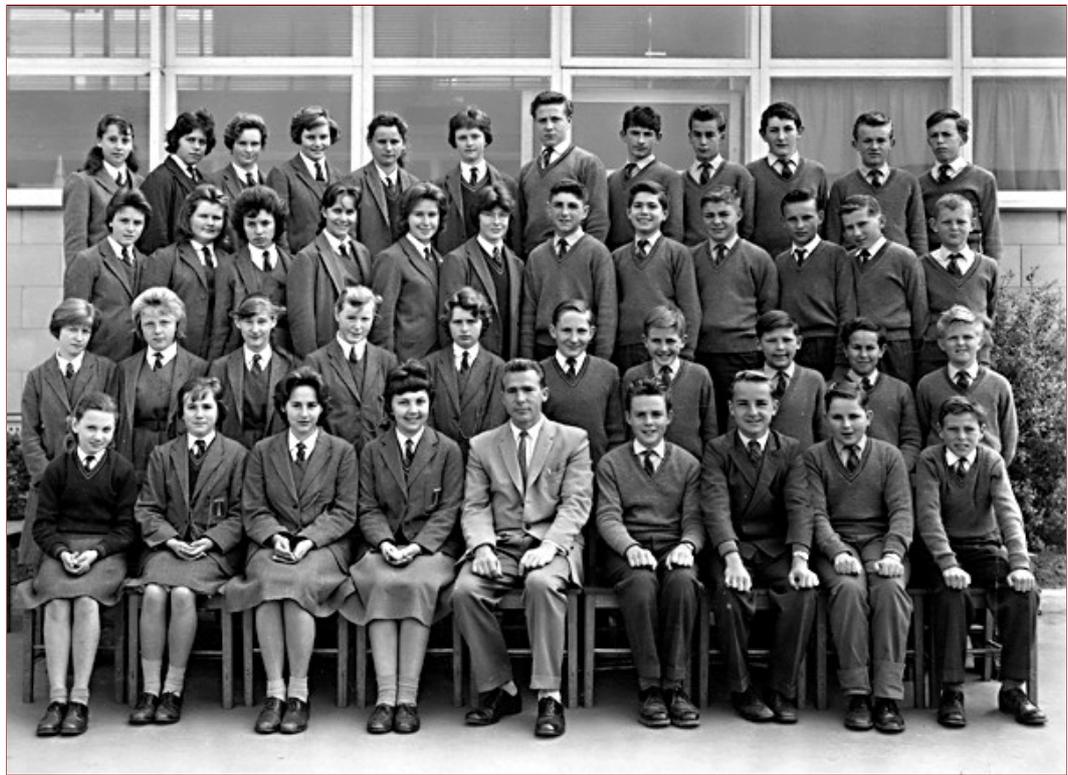
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Paul Pavlov with Form 3, 1962.

Paul's other talent was in the sports arena where he promoted volleyball and built up a disparate bunch of "leftovers" into a winning combination - he became coach of the volleyball team, which seems to have started in 1960. The players that year included Bernhard Gerlinger, Tom Ciesniewski, Jerzy Uraniak, Guiliano Castagna, Tony Venes, and Jimmy Collins. They won most of their inter-school games, defeating Strathmore, Sunshine, Footscray, Glenroy, and Bacchus Marsh high schools and Sunshine Tech, but were defeated by Essendon High School. In 1962 the school team was the proud recipient of the competition pennant as they had been undefeated for three years, which was an enormous achievement - they were indeed the "Left Overs Come Good."

*"Having been undefeated for three years running, the school volleyball teams have achieved their main aim, namely in bringing the volleyball pennant to St Albans High School. Incidentally, this has been the first time that a volleyball pennant has been awarded. When volleyball was first introduced to the school it was considered to be a sport for "leftovers", but now, through the fine coaching of Mr Pavlov and the ever-increasing enthusiasm shown by the other students, volleyball can now take its place among the other long-established sports of the school. Now everyone wishes to be in on the act. ... The players would like to thank Mr Pavlov for the valuable time he has spent in coaching us and for his enthusiasm which has inspired every member of the school teams." (Alba, 1962.)*



Back: B Wale, J VandeKolk, B Gerlinger, J Kamiernack, C Kastanioti  
 Front: V Troszczyj, V Dasler, Paul Pavlov, J Castagna, K Kulbys.

By the late sixties there was a girls' team with Janice Keenan, Jutta Heymig, Anna Nemeč, Helen Jiacow, Nijole, Muscinkas, Mary Axiak and Helen Pokusay - unfortunately there are no photos of them in the school magazine. In 1967 the boy's team comprised Eddy Kruk, John Kruk, Stefan Gunew, Harry Swieboda, Richard Jarski and Harold Nowak under the inspired coaching of Miss Slater. Clearly, volleyball had bridged the gender divide.

Some of Pavlov's former students remember him with fondness and gratitude.

**Otto Czernik** remembers the volleyball very well: Mr Pavlov was a good and just teacher and he was a very encouraging coach and motivator to the volley ball teams. I think it was under his guidance that St Albans won the schools' Western District Championship pennant for six years in a row. A couple of years later I joined a group of the senior players who still wanted to continue playing volley ball though we had already left school. We started practising at the St Albans Community Youth Club, which wasn't big enough, so we ended up at West Footscray YMCA. About 1965 we played under the name West Footscray YMCA Renegades and won the championship that season, which was their first ever major win. Paul Pavlov was a fantastic support because he continued to coach us even though we were no longer connected with the high school, and he usually went out of his way to drive some of us to the matches. He'd always told us he'd be happy to help us if we were interested in continuing playing the game, so we accepted that. We joined the Victorian Volley Ball Association in C Grade and very soon were playing in A Grade. We just lost the Grand Final in our final year because several of our key players couldn't make it as they were sitting for university exams. From memory, the team over this time included David Pringle, Tony Vandekolk, Leon and Victor Troszczji, Claude Calandra, Vander Dasler, John and Zbigniew Kruk, and a couple of others whose names I've forgotten. We had enjoyed ourselves tremendously and were grateful for all the support we received from a dedicated teacher: Mr Pavlov

**Phillip Spivey** was another classmate who was a bit of a lost soul in sport as he had tried several without success. Mr Pavlov suggested volleyball and Phillip says he finally found that he was okay at some sport. He later found that he was suited for tennis and ended up playing competition tennis as a teenager.

**David Dusting:** Teachers such as Mr Rayner, Mr Pavlov, Mr Maddox, Mrs Gliddon, and Father Radford, helped me gain a glimpse that life often holds more than what you immediately see before you.

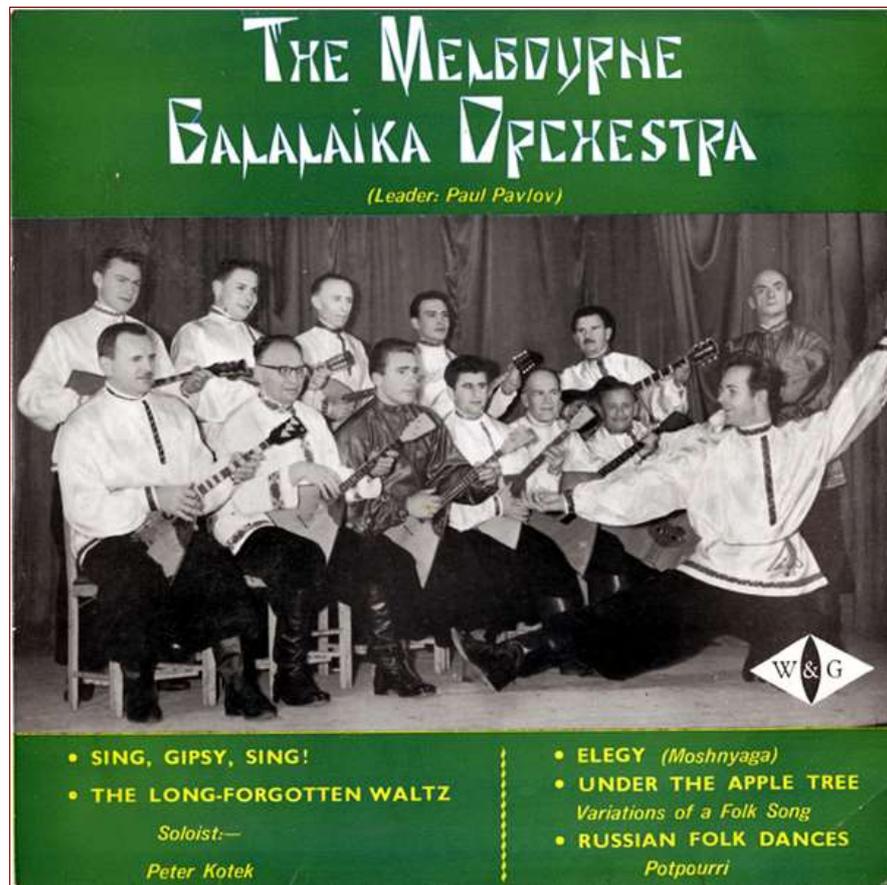
**Henry Goralski:** I had a fair bit of time for Pavlov, but he was a teacher of the old mould. He would often come in with a moody attitude that had nothing to do us. He would always come in immaculately dressed while we were often disheveled and sweating because we'd been playing sport at recess. He'd tell us to open the windows.

**Barbara Teichmann** has fond memories: I loved Mr Pavlov who was our maths teacher. I think it was in Form 1 that we had a maths competition, and I won. My prize was a kitten, which my mother didn't want, but she couldn't really say no. I had to go to Mr Pavlov's place to choose the kitten. I loved that cat.

**Tom Tscherepko** remembers that Mr. Torpey was the headmaster and was interested in maths, but Mr. Pavlov was the best – if he knew you were interested in mathematics he'd pay attention to you.

**Switlana Bohudski:** I remember Paul and Ludmila Pavlov because they lived locally as well as teaching at the school. They were ethnic Russians from Latvia and tried to maintain a happy life as they had in Europe. There was a lot of laughter and there was a lot of song. They played cards, they smoked, and they drank. They had a lovely time perhaps at a time when a lot of the other people were not as positive in their thinking. There were a lot of sad and depressed people. The Pavlovs tried to rise above their circumstances and hence both Mr and Mrs Pavlov ended up teaching despite having been assigned to factory work when they first arrived. Mrs Pavlov was a seamstress and certainly was very good at sewing and she taught needlecraft. Paul taught mathematics. I met Paul again when I was a student at Melbourne University studying Russian and so was he and we happened to be in the same class. He'd been to Moscow University, as far as I know, and Paul Coverley our lecturer of linguistics had also studied at Moscow, but Coverley was from Scotland. We used to have some very lively discussions about the nuances of language. One would say that this is the way it used to be and the other would say this is the way it is now. Pavlov studied in Moscow pre war but Coverley studied there during Soviet times and the language had changed – the intonation, the pace, the usage. It was nice meeting Mr Pavlov on a professional level rather than as student and teacher.

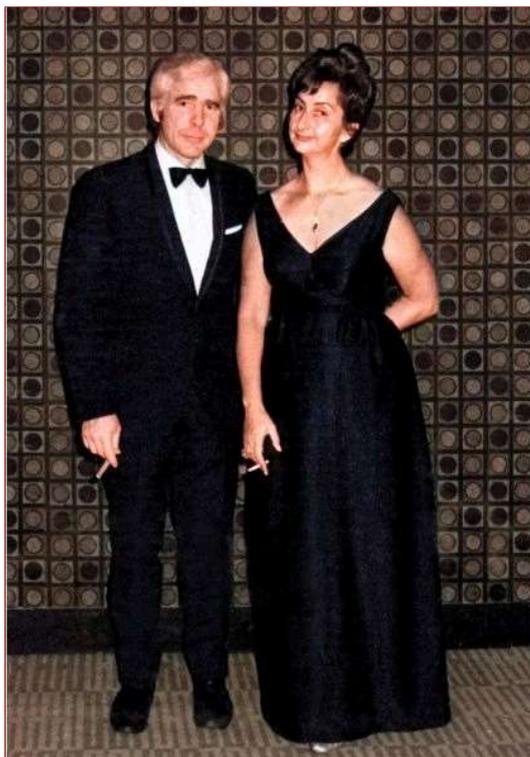
Paul Pavlov's other incarnation was as a musician. In the words of his daughter Tania, he was a very good balalaika player. He started playing at age six years and at twelve years was an established member of a 50-piece orchestra. His musical talents were expressed quite early once he had moved to Melbourne, where he formed a Russian balalaika orchestra in 1952. It was called the Melbourne Balalaika Orchestra; they made one long play record but played in many venues, including performances on radio and television. In fact the band was more cosmopolitan than its Russian origins. Dimitri Moshnyaga was a graduate from the Rumanian music conservatorium and was a talented composer and music arranger. Piotr (Peter) Kotek was a baritone soloist who graduated from the Polish conservatorium and also had experience in Germany and Austria; he was already performing at Melbourne concerts about 1950 and with the Balalaika Orchestra at the 1952 Red Cross Concert. Pavlov ran that band for years until the Russian community fragmented and it became too much of a hassle. Then he played as a solo artist at the Troika on Friday and Saturday nights. That was his enjoyment and entertainment. He loved music.



Paul Pavlov (in grey shirt, front row) and The Melbourne Balalaika Orchestra.

There is a report in The Argus of Pavlov and his balalaika putting on an impromptu show at the Fitzroy Gardens in 1953:

*"The fresh green Fitzroy Gardens rang with laughter and music yesterday as migrant artists rehearsed for the grand European night to beheld at the Town Hall on Melbourne Cup night. These carefree Russian dancers with their brilliant national costumes and light music, rivalled the trees and birds for spring beauty. Paul Pavlov played a balalaika while Galina Zeatzewa and Tamara des Fontaines whirled over the lawns. Anthony harmonised with Eugene Saporoschenko, who played a domra. Galina has just begun a career with the Borovansky Ballet. Tamara was a ballet dancer in Russia and is now with the Ballet Guild."*



Pavlov surely must have been one of the earliest St Albans movie stars because there was a television program made in 1958 that was titled "At the Balalaika" which was a live presentation of music, including the Melbourne Balalaika Orchestra conducted by Paul Pavlov, with tenor Ernest Marsaus and Russian folk dances by The Four Cossacks.

Pavlov taught at St Albans for a number of years and then went for a year to Broadmeadows. From there he went to Sunshine and worked at St Johns College until he retired. He stopped work in 1983-84 after he had a heart attack. He was a very conscientious teacher. He only had the heart attack because he had a cold and then he contracted pleurisy, which he also had when he was young. Paul was sick for ten years and died in 1995. He had a good rapport with students from St Albans High, some of whom he continued to coach in volley ball

even after they'd left school, to the extent that about fifteen years ago [1990] we still used to meet a few of his former pupils at the hotel in Ballarat Road. They'd come to talk with us and discuss what was happening.



### **Paul Pavlov in retirement.**

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Thanks to Ludmila Pavlova and Tania Gariepy for family background.  
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