

ANDREW WEBSTER: TEACHER

"Something will always turn up"



Mr. Micawber always maintained that in times of difficulty something will always happen to sort out the problem and this appears to have been the story of so many of our lives, including mine.

After being schooled in my senior years at Melbourne High School and then spending four years at Monash University, I was not ready to begin work at St.Albans High School in February 1967. Being a student was easy since there was only a responsibility for one person, but being a teacher was going to be hard because teachers were responsible for more than just themselves.

Teaching at St Albans

When I was posted to St.Albans I had to look up where it was and it turned out to be a forty-five minute drive from my home in McKinnon, a drive that now would take double that. I knew one other teacher at the school, Jocelyn Crawford with whom I had trained at Monash and so I turned up there at the start of the year.



Andrew Webster with Form 4e, 1967.

My first class, 4E, had 44 students in it. I was meant to teach them History and Geography although I'm not sure they learned much. They were mainly European with German, Polish and Russian predominating. In theory they came from cultures that valued education and generally they did.

We had Inspectors in the classroom then and fortunately the students thought that they were being inspected rather than the teachers.

I loved those early years but made lots of mistakes which were often hard to rectify. Most days the younger members of staff would go to the Deer Park pub for lunch; ham steak was the best item on the menu. Although it was hard work there were many highlights, the best being a trip to Central Australia organized by a visiting American teacher named Mick Lamb. The mixing of students and staff and was much more casual than what would be expected today.

Being Called Up

In 1967, the government of Australia informed me that the Vietnamese were my enemies and that I had to join the army and become part of the invading force. I told old Pig Iron Bob that the Vietnamese were my friends and that the government would have to look elsewhere for cannon fodder. In the end they didn't want me as they said I was basically mad and could confine my patriotic activities to teaching. I find this episode very ironic in view of the present ethnic make up of St. Albans High.

I stayed at St Albans until the end of 1971, then took a year off to travel but returned early due to affairs of the heart. Eventually I left the school in April 1973 and spent the next three years working and traveling overseas.



Teaching staff, 1972.

London

I did a bit of teaching in London and Madrid but basically spent the time looking and learning about the people in other countries.

One day in September 1975, I was walking down the Strand in London when I noticed a headline in one of the shops that catered to Australians abroad. The headline was, "Hawks and Kangaroos in Grand Final." Not having seen a live match of real football for three seasons I thought, "If I went and got a plane ticket now, I could be in Melbourne by Saturday morning and go straight to the

MCG for the game." (I was an MCC member and so entry would not be a problem). So that's what I did. North Melbourne won the flag.

Fitzroy High

On Monday morning I went to 2 Treasury Place and asked if I could have a job with the Education Department. They said I could start at Blackburn later in the day if I wished. I didn't like the sound of Blackburn so I contacted one of my old colleagues, Adair Bunnet, who said that her school needed a Geography teacher and that I should call the Deputy Principal who turned out to be an old teacher of mine. He said to start at Fitzroy High in the morning and that he would call Blackburn and tell them. In those days teachers were in such short supply that they would take anyone.

I stayed at Fitzroy for three years until 1978 and during that time I married a girl I had met in Nairobi in 1974. Also during these years I took up distance running and long distance hiking, pursuits I continue today. Fitzroy had a young, strongly left-wing staff who also liked to party and teach but not concurrently.

St Albans West High

After three years at Fitzroy I was eager to be promoted to Senior Teacher but to do so I had to change schools and ended up at St. Albans West High School which soon turned into King's Park High School.

In 1976 I had begun teaching at University High School Evening School and after three years at King's Park I transferred to Uni High day school in 1982.

Marriage



In 1985 I took half a year away from teaching and circumnavigated the globe bringing my tally of countries visited to 102. In 1987 my first child, Katherine, was born and a year later in 1988 I married again, this time to Ruth Forster.

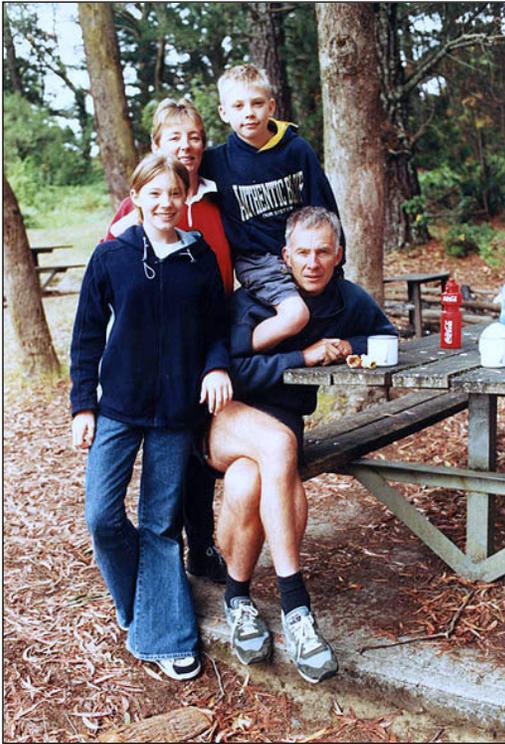
Coburg High

University High was a fine school but after seven years there I was again interested in promotion and moved to Coburg High School in 1989. My second child, Jonathan, was born in 1990. Coburg amalgamated with Preston Tech in the early nineties and became Coburg-Preston Secondary College. Soon this school joined with Coburg East Primary and became Coburg-Preston P-12 and then eventually Moreland City College which occupied the old RMIT University site.

In 1995 I moved from my long term home in North Carlton, which I had bought for just me, to a big house in Clifton Hill which was more suited to a nuclear family of four.

Andrew Webster and family, 2001.

Retiring to Teach



In 2000 I reached the grand age of 54 years and 11 months and like most teachers I resigned at that age. I resigned on a Thursday for one evening and then went back to school on Friday on contract until the end of the year. In December Moreland City College, which was shrinking quite rapidly, did not require my services any longer so I took a seven year contract at Northcote High School where I worked for five wonderful years and finally retired. This is what I am now except that I work at Victoria University on Tuesdays and Wednesdays as a sessional English lecturer. So, I'm still technically a teacher but never again will I have anything to do with adolescents.

One day in 2005 I rang St. Albans High to speak to a teacher and while I was waiting for them to come to the phone, I casually mentioned that I used to work there in the 'sixties and 'seventies. Very quickly I found that I was part of the 50th Anniversary Committee. Hence this little story.

Andrew Webster, 2005.

Future Plans



In the next forty years, (I will live to at least 100 as longevity is in my genes - my parents are both still living after a fashion in their late nineties), I have a lot of things to do. My house renovation needs to be completed; my auto-biography needs to be written; I have to win an age section in the Puffing Billy fun-run; the narrow gauge railways of Victoria need urgent help; there are thousands of books in my home, unread; my wife and I need to complete the grey nomads grand lap and we still have at least one great trip left in us; the childrens' schooling has to be completed; the Demons have to win a premiership; I want to achieve a golf handicap; there are many hikes I have never done; my train room needs attention; I have thousands of slides to store on disk; there is much food and wine to be consumed; Everest still has to be climbed by an Australian over 60. My constant amazement in retirement is how on earth I ever had time to do any paid work.

Andrew Webster
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Andrew Webster at the school's 50th reunion, 2006.

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