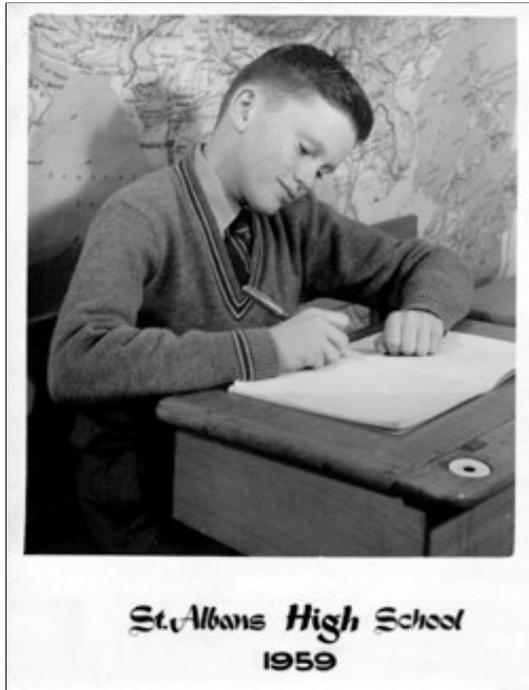


BOB BARKER, STUDENT 1959-1964.



During the 1950s I lived in Armstrong Street, which runs parallel to Glengala Road in Sunshine Heights. At that stage there was only the one bridge across the Kororoit Creek and that was at Derby Road. To cross from Glengala Road to Durham Road there was a small, and old, footbridge.

Sunshine West in the early fifties still had lots of empty paddocks. I remember seeing some of the European people gathering prickly artichokes in the fields and cutting off the heads. I assume that artichokes were part of their cuisine and maybe that was a handily available supply but it wasn't a food I was familiar with. These days you can buy fresh artichokes at your local supermarket. Living off the land was still popular: many people still grew vegetables in their back garden and had some fruit trees; many people raised chooks and maybe a few ducks. Teenage boys loved the adventure of fishing

and playing in the local creek. It was a time when everyone's dad had a .22 and everyone went rabbiting out in the fields. Rabbit was a staple during the depression but many people who survived on it then by necessity can't stand it now. But as kids we thought it was okay – underground chicken. Rabbits used to sell for two shillings a pair in the depression but now they are about \$12 each.

We had a car but we weren't one of the first to get a television. I went to neighbours to watch black and white TV and eventually we got an Astor 17 inch. We had a good childhood.

Daryl Keeble, John Black and I were at the same primary school for a while, but when Sunshine Heights state school opened I ended up having to go there, because I was on the western side of Kororoit Creek and the school was just up the road from home. We got back together again at St Albans High School. One thing that sticks in my mind was that most of the boys had 'Gladstone Bags' in which to carry their books and whatever. They were just the same as most men had in those days. The only down side I can remember is that they were a little difficult to manage when riding a bike. I did ride my bike from Sunshine to St. Albans, along with a few mates in the latter years at the school.

I remember the first year we were going to St Albans that they still had the Albion railway crossing at Ballarat Road because that was before they build the bridge over the rail line. The Sunshine station also had no overpass, so there were gates at Sunshine and at Ballarat Road in Albion. They put the overpass over that in 1961. Furlong Road used to be an open crossing and it was just a dirt road. It didn't really go anywhere on the western side because there was nothing there. It was mainly open paddocks and thistles. That had been used by some farmers as pasture land but later much of the land was bought by ICI who set up their production plants in that area.



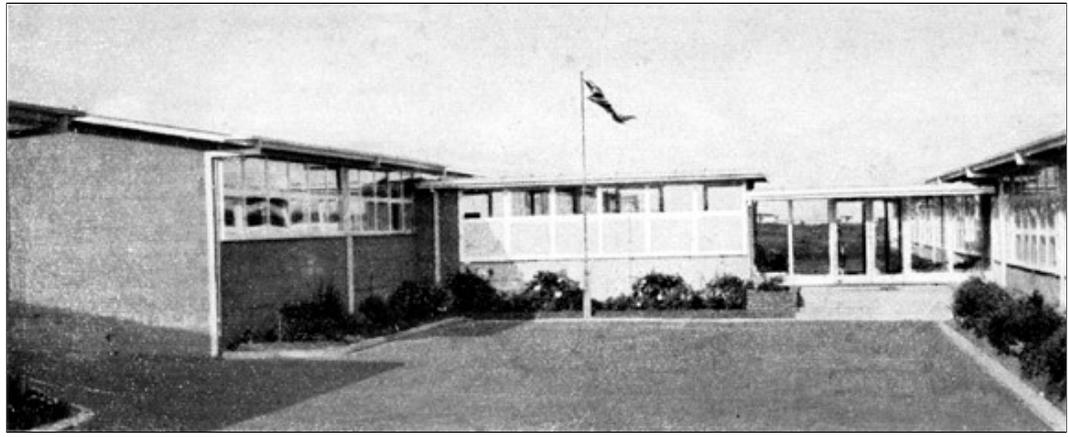
Main Road East, view from Collins Street to railway crossing, 1950s.

St Albans in the early fifties was a small place and you would number the houses in the low hundreds. There were not many people there; about a thousand, so I'm told. In 1959 when I walked from the station along Main Road East to the high school you could see all the housing development through there on the Keilor side because thousands of people had moved in over the decade, but there was nothing to the east of the school; it was just empty paddocks. Errington Road was in the wide open spaces and that's where we had our cross country races. There were only a few houses along Taylors Road which was the northern perimeter of the township.

During our era the newer building on the front was added and that was where the music room and girls' subjects like domestic science were held. I think at that stage Mrs Ludmila Pavlova had started as a craft or needlework teacher and Miss Gwen Bowles did the music classes. Miss Bowles must have come from Brighton because another old classmate told me that she is a member of the Brighton Uniting Church. She left St Albans in the early seventies and ended up as principal of MacRoberston Girls School.



St Albans High School, main entrance from Main Road East, 1962.



St Albans High School, western quadrangle, 1960.

I studied German rather than French and was taught by the much less authoritarian Frau Sturesteps. Mrs Sturesteps sticks in my mind because she was one of the German teachers along with Mr Ziemelis. She was of Latvian nationality and was in her fifties so she must have been one of the older members on staff. When you started at high school you had to select either French or German as your language study and I chose German because I thought it might be easier to pronounce. These days children start learning other languages in primary school but that wasn't the practice in our era.

I think that we students gave Mrs Sturesteps a hard time because she wasn't the strict disciplinarian that other teachers were. She gave me some good marks one year. In fact she gave me the top mark in the class for reading in German, which was above the marks received by some of the German kids in the class. I think it was because they were reading very casually in their regional accents whereas I was a non-German who was really trying to pronounce it properly. But when it came to the German grammar and all the declensions I really lost it. I found it hard to understand how the grammar worked, and there were lots of *der, die, das, dem, die, das*; it just went on and on. Although I liked studying German I lost interest in the subject because I couldn't get round the grammar and Mrs Sturesteps couldn't impart to me how the grammar was constructed. The German kids just waltzed through it.

My brother Peter, who is three years younger than me, was also a student at St. Albans. Just recently he has put a YouTube video of the "St Albans High School Sports Day 1962". It can be found at www.youtube.com/watch?v=W34kPnSbYoo. It was taken by my Grandfather and although it centers on Peter there are some reasonable background views of the school and the sports. My Grandfather wasn't the best photographer but the movie is better than nothing at all. When I left at the end of 1963 Peter then transferred to Sunshine West High School which was new and had just opened. It was not that far from our home in Sunshine Heights.

After high school I started night school at Footscray Tech studying electrical engineering. You couldn't sit for Matriculation at St Albans High in its earliest years because there weren't enough students to warrant running a class. So even in the early sixties some of the St Albans High students had to go to other schools to complete their final Matriculation year and some finished their secondary schooling through evening classes because they had already started working.

I went overseas in 1967 before I finished the Tech course because I had relatives in England and decided to visit them. I was fifteen months away from Australia and twelve of those were spent in England. The jobs I had over there provided me with transport so I could travel to my jobs as well as going sightseeing. I was working up in Yorkshire which is in the north of England. I then came back to Australia reality in 1968. I thought the wages over here were better than they were in England, because I was struggling to save when I was in England but over here I was able to save a lot more. Before long I had a new car and some of my former classmates had new cars. It was the days of Volkswagens with the indicators that popped out the side. When I came back I decided to do something new so I joined the police force. I was about fifteen years into that and caught up with a couple of St Albans guys in the force including Al Pum and Henry Steigler. When I saw Henry again I was really surprised because he had two or three rows of ribbons on

his chest. He had gone to the States and served in the military and was awarded a whole lot of ribbons. I remember Henry as a prefect back in 1963 and he'd done alright for himself.



School athletes (L-R) A Holland, O Rowe, Henry Steigler, Nina Diakonow, Joe Darrul; 1959.

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Bob Barker, 2016

(This article is based on joint discussions with Bob Barker and Daryl Keeble in March 2016. Thanks to Bob and Daryl for sharing their memories; Joe Ribarow, March 2016.)

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