

STEFAN CZYZ: TEACHER

Introduction



My name is Stefan Czyz and I attended St Albans High School from 1961 to 1967. I really enjoyed being at St Albans High School throughout the 1960s. I felt that we had really high quality teachers especially in the fifth and sixth forms. They were very dedicated professionals who thoroughly knew their material. Some names that I am proud to mention - as I knew them - were Mrs Gliddon, Mr Alcorn, Mr Matthews, Mr Ziemelis, and many others. Two teachers that especially stood out were Mr Walsh, the sports teacher, and Mr McLeish. Both I can remember because they related well to the students. Mr Walsh spent countless extra hours with sports and

drama activities for boys at the school. Mr McLeish was an "enigma" who related well to the 1960's type student.

St Albans High was very multicultural in the 1960s and students were generally very co-operative with and tolerant of one another, and this feature plus some very good teachers and also a very supportive general community made it a very good place to be in.

From a personal perspective I received a fair bit of kudos from my sporting and singing activities; however these became somewhat of a distraction to the main game which was getting good results. (Mine were rather mediocre.) But I learnt over my lifetime that life always goes like that - you win some and you lose some.

Coming to Australia



My parents, Ruth and Stan Czyz, migrated from Europe in 1950 travelling by ship and I remember from conversations with them that because the boat we were in (the Fairsea) was always rocking to and fro I lost my ability to walk and reverted to crawling again. It took me a further year before I decided that Australia was stable enough for me to restart my walking skills.

My father, one of five children, came from the town of Luck in far-eastern Poland, which was taken over by the Russians during the Second World War. He left Luck and ended up in Opole, where he was put to work driving German supply trucks. Working for the Germans at that time, even involuntarily, at least meant access to food. Stan recalled being a prisoner of war in both German and Russian camps.

My mother was a teenager in Chemnitz during the time of the war. Chemnitz along with Dresden and Leipzig was one of the heaviest bombed regions toward the end of WW2. The Russian forces moved in. It was a terrible time. After being physically assaulted she decided with a group of her friends to escape to a safer region and walked to Bavaria which was several hundred kilometres away.

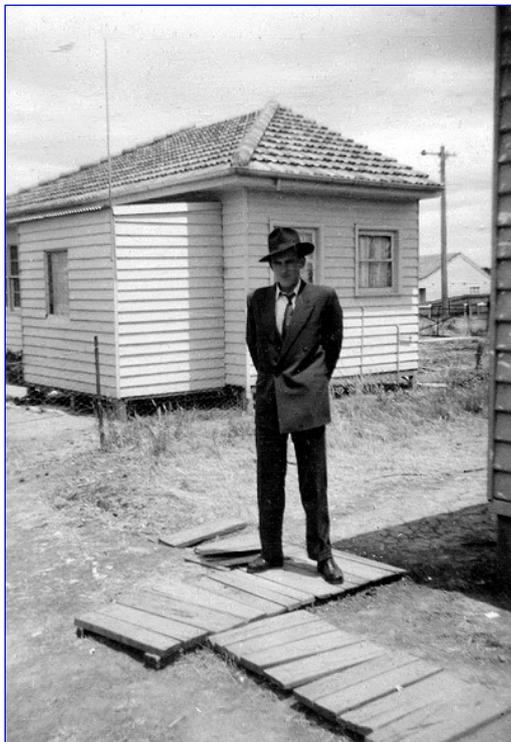
After the war my parents became refugees in Rosenheim near Munich. My father couldn't go back to Poland because of the political and border changes on both the Soviet and German borders and the shame and guilt he felt for his own father's deportation and consequent death in Siberia. Ruth, my mother, would have nothing to do with a Russian occupied East Germany.

Stan and Ruth Czyz decided to emigrate. Their choices were USA, Chile and Australia. They admitted that they knew nothing about Australia so they chose USA and Chile as their preferred destinations. It didn't happen. Australia it was to be. Many years later they confided that their move to Australia was an excellent one.

Stan and Ruth Czyz and their 18-month-old boy Stefan arrived at Bonegilla in 1950 to take residence in their allocated tin shed Nissan hut. My brother, Richard, was born in Rushworth in Northern Victoria. Eventually we moved to Taradale a small town near Castlemaine on the Bendigo railway line. For a few years my father worked around Taradale chopping trees and would ride off to his latest work site on his push bike. Later he got a job with the Victorian Railways and would sometimes sleep overnight in a railway carriage when working in places like Castlemaine and Bendigo.

I can remember in 1954 we visited Castlemaine to witness Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II pass through there in a magnificent train on the way to Bendigo. As a five year old I remember that occasion well because I dropped my little Australian flag and had nothing to wave as the Queen's train went past. I was most upset.

Coming to St Albans



The family Czyz arrived in St. Albans in 1954 and stayed temporarily with Tadek Ziola and his family in Scott Avenue. Later we moved to a wooden shack at the back of family Dobrowolski's place in Pennel Avenue and shared their back yard with their bee hives. The Dobrowolski children included Tony, Helga, Rose, and Roman (a huge guy), who introduced us to the delights of rock 'n' roll and Elvis Presley. We lived with the Dobrowolskis for about a year and started going to the primary school classes that were being held at the old Mechanics Institute Hall in East Esplanade.

In 1956 we moved to a bungalow at 36 Theodore Street, which became our permanent St Albans family home. The three-bedroom bungalow became very crowded when my grandmother and Onkel Johannes joined us later in 1956. Richard and I were sharing a bedroom with grandmother, "Oma", which was the only way we could all fit into our small bungalow.

Neighbours

In the late 1950s people were very social. They would frequently visit one another sharing some wine and beer, some music and some light social chat and the children easily occupying themselves with simple activities. The Bajzaks were our neighbours, as were the Mullengers. Fred Mullenger had three blocks of land and a big shed where he, as the local blacksmith, would shoe horses. He did horse shoeing for the whole district at the time, or so it seemed to us as we loved to watch him fitting them onto the horse's hooves.

The Strehlings were another local family. Eddie became a prefect at St Albans High and trained as a teacher. He became the principal at Macedon but unfortunately died of a heart attack at the relatively young age of 48. Walter, his younger brother, died even earlier, at 34 years. I believe the Strehling sisters, Katie and Bernadette, are still alive.

The Slawiczkas lived on the corner of Biggs and Theodore streets. Recently they built a lovely



brand new home in their back yard for their retirement years.

Not far from us but across the railway line live Ahmed Ajayoglu. Ahmed's parents ran a chook farm opposite St Albans primary school and then they added a tuckshop to the site. It started out as a wooden shed selling all the kinds of things we the children of the '50s liked: four 'n twenty pies, lollies loose in a bag, and coke in a real glass bottle. I remember paying 1 shilling or 10c for a pie and a coke. Ahmed developed a computer programming business which he still runs today and we're still in regular contact with each other after all these years.

St. Albans in the 1950s and 1960s was a fast growing suburb with muddy dirt roads, hundreds of workers cycling to the station, families starting to own cars and those new black and white TVs and transistor radios. Open gutters (with those wiggly red worms) started disappearing with the upgrading

and tarring of streets. Children made their own billycarts, bows and arrows, had rock fights, bonfire nights, and you could buy your "crackers" at the local milkbar where you could also purchase the most delicious milkshakes. Most children walked to school or rode on their single-g geared bikes. St Albans was a very hands-on and vital place welcoming all groups of migrants as they arrived. In the '50s it was the Poles, Germans, Greeks, Maltese and Dutch who came plus many nationalities who followed.

Growing-up Stories



Richard and I would play a bit of cheeky sport on the way home from primary school. For example, one day we spotted Joe Ribarow walking home innocently. So we thought it was a case of "here comes Joseph, let's see what reaction we can get!" And we started following him and chanted aggressively: "Joseph little whiskers! Joseph little whiskers!" We wouldn't let up until we got a reaction. The first few days he ignored us and we teased harder and harder. About the third day he started getting really angry. That encouraged us all the more and we increased the chorus of our chanting ever louder. It continued for about a week when suddenly Joseph turned white-faced and with a surprising turn of speed he captured one of us and gave him a very red and sore ear. We decided that it just might be a good idea to leave Joseph alone.

The next day an innocent looking Otto Czernik came wandering past. "Well Otto, let's see how far we can get with you!" So off we chorused, "Otto

little whiskers, Otto little whiskers," and Otto copped that for a while. Otto had something Joseph didn't have, namely a handy "swingaround" old fashioned leather school satchel which he eventually used to great effect! After Otto we resigned from our after school sports activity and just walked home normally.

Fireworks

St Albans used to have these open gutters that were up to a metre wide; they were muddy and often had long strings of wriggling red worms growing in them. Apart from smelling occasionally and bogging down a car or two these gutters provided an environment of entertainment for us young boys. Come bonfire season we thought it compelling to purchase a threepenny banger - they were like little sticks of dynamite that you'd never want to have in your hand because when it exploded you wouldn't have a hand left - and stick it in the mud and light it. It would explode like a bomb throwing mud all over the street. Almost as interesting were the times we would throw various sized rocks up to bricksized into these mini lagoons of mud waste and water hoping to displace and disperse as much wastewater worms and mud as possible. These great lagoons of entertainment came to an end in the mid '60s after Theodore Street became a sealed road.

Would you believe that we actually celebrated British events? One of them was Guy Fawkes day and the other was Empire day. They were celebrated in May and November every year. We thought these days were fun. Often the whole neighbourhood would participate by collecting old tyres, tree branches, various bits of wood and cardboard to build up a massive structure called a "bonfire". As night fell the fireworks began. Against the spectacular backdrop of the blazing bonfire you would hear and see crackers and rockets of all sizes and shapes exploding, fizzing, whirring and sometimes unfortunately maiming. Yes there were accidents! Bonfires and crackers went together in those days, and though none of us got injured we probably got close. The poor St Albans kids of today can never have that experience because all the gutters are now concrete and crackers are illegal.

As a developing teenager I liked to play sport such as football, cricket, and tennis. I also had a bit of a go at tabletennis and athletics especially running events, however I was a very mediocre swimmer.

Singing was a passion of mine and I was gifted with a rare and deep bass baritone voice. I remember performing for St Albans High School on various occasions and I particularly remember old Mr Fehmel our music teacher training us up all year on the musical "The Pirates of Penzance" where I was to be the "Pirate King". The whole cast (there were more than 30) practised every lunchtime day in day out every available week of the school year such that I had memorized all the songs including all female parts and the total musical score when, would you know, nothing happened! Mr Fehmel simply cancelled the performance. I still have the music score with me now.

Parents' Work

As Richard and I were growing up my father (Stan) obtained work with ICI-Nobels as a boiler attendant and held that job for the rest of his working life. My mother worked in a variety of jobs. She was the manageress of Deer Park Groceries, worked in the office at Myers, then had a several miscellaneous jobs, and finally was employed for ten years as a teacher aide at St. Albans North Primary. She was active in community affairs, being the Secretary of the St Albans Senior Citizens Club for many years and President for a while. Ruth organised many of their outings and interstate trips.



Ruth Czyz with German class.

St Albans Teachers

St Albans High was very multicultural in the 1960s and students were generally very cooperative with and tolerant of one another, and this feature, plus some very good teachers and also a supportive general community, made it a very good place to be in.

From a personal situation, I received a fair bit of kudos from my sporting and singing activities. I believe that I received a balanced and well rounded education as a result of my studies and activities at St Albans High which stood me in good stead in my future years.



I really enjoyed being at St Albans High School throughout the 1960s. I felt that we really had high quality teachers, especially in fifth and sixth forms. They were very dedicated professionals and thoroughly knew their material. Some names I am proud to remember, as I knew them, include Mrs Gliddon, Mr Alcorn, Mr Matthews, Mr Ziemelis, and many others. Two teachers who especially stood out were Mr Walsh and Mr McLeish. I can remember them because they both related well to students. Mr Walsh spent countless extra hours with sports and drama activities for boys at the school. Mr McLeish was an "enigma" who related well to the 1960s type student.

Moon Tiger Escapades

My brother Richard was a bit of a scientist. He had discovered a way of using "Moon Tiger" mosquito coils as a slow fuse for lighting crackers, so he'd attach that to the cracker, light the length of coil, put the whole lot in a letter box in the local neighbourhood and be safely home in his room when the thing exploded. Some letter boxes were absolutely demolished! Such was Richard's intent that the neighbours would gather outside, including my parents, after an explosion was heard, only to bear witness to further mailboxes blowing apart. They looked around for the offenders but could see no-one. "Oh those brazen boys are so fast!" To which Stan (our father) carefully suggested "Those crackers must have a very long wick!" Meanwhile Ruth (our mother) quietly slipped inside our house checking that we were in bed so as to allay suspicion. Yes indeed, there we were, two little blue-eyed blonde boys lying innocently in our beds. "What's the matter mummy?" we said fortuitously.

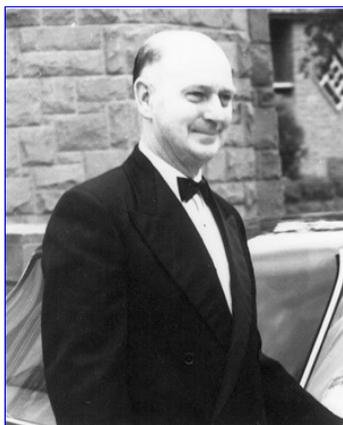
That went on for while until the neighbours started to become suspicious, for you see Richard had been diligently plying his new trade and forgot one important feature. He had wrecked every mailbox in the neighbourhood except for ours. Eventually a huge (6 foot 4 inch) policeman was politely invited to investigate what was happening and he was subtly directed to 36 Theodore Street (our address). I was the older boy in the family and suspicion immediately fell on me,

because the constable took a look at innocent-looking Richard and dismissed him as a suspect. Suddenly my (5 foot 3 inch) mother interjected aggressively "Don't accuse my children! They are completely innocent! Why only a few days ago I checked myself and they were in bed when the fireworks exploded!" Well, every person knows that you don't easily get between a female and her offspring. I knew that I was innocent anyhow and I rested my case. Nevertheless I - not Richard - was given a very stern warning that I would be kept under observation and I would be in dire strife if the problem continued. I hotly denied the allegations and didn't mention anything about my "scientific" brother.

A few nights later there was a mysterious small explosion in the letter box of 36 Theodore Street, St.Albans.

Richard now had new horizons to conquer. He was onto a good thing with his moon tiger invention and yes I potted around with the activity as well. But Richard had a passion for fine-tuning his newfound expertise to other environments, moving from the local neighbourhood to the high school. He mentioned his crafty invention to a few of his school friends and pondered upon how it would work in the classroom. (This was the year of 1965 at St.Albans High School.)Richard's plan was to approach one of those smaller classrooms in the arts-sciences wings that was left unlocked during recess and to set up his experiment in the waste paper bin at the front of the room. The intention was for the penny banger to explode during the lesson preceding his and for Richard and his friends (one of whom was Alex Babauskis) to have a laugh following this action. Of course this required a skill which Richard hadn't quite perfected, notably to know precisely how long it would take for the moon tiger to burn through to the wick of the penny banger. Time went by and no explosion occurred during the preceding class. The next group moved to their desks. Richard noticed that the paper bin was still smoking a little bit, but assumed or maybe desperately hoped that this attempt was just a fizzer. Everyone settled down quietly and their teacher Mr Silcairns methodically started writing on the chalkboard with his back turned towards the class. Suddenly KABOOM!!! Wastepaper rocketed out of the bin and floated all over the classroom!

Mr Silcairns, it was reported, jumped 40 centimetres into the air, was shocked, then sprinted to the outside door searching for the larrikin who'd thrown the cracker into the room! He couldn't see anyone! In the classroom, everyone was sitting there like stunned mullets! Mr Silcairns threw his hands up in despair and hurried off to get the Vice Principal. A few minutes later along comes Mister Psychology himself - the one and only - Mr Matthews, bald-headed, angry, and determined.



Mr Matthews was a bit of a psychologist and he had his special technique to get to the truth.

"All right," he said, with his deepest voice, "who did it?"

Everyone was silent. So out came his special technique, which was to eyeball every single person in the class as he went down the aisles repeating the same question:

"Did you do it?" and of course the answer was "No, Mr Matthews."

"Did you do it?" "No, Mr Matthews."

He proceeded down the aisles pretty fast because he was a busy vice principal and wanted to solve the matter quickly. Matthews was heading towards Richard whose face was turning bright red. He continued to rapidly repeat his question.

"Did you do it?" "No, Mr Matthews."

"Did you do it?" "Yes, Mr Matthews."

"Did you do it?" "No, Mr Matthews."

"Did you ... Did someone just say 'yes'?" Mr Matthews was already five rows past as he turned back.

"Yes, I did it," confessed a red-faced Richard.

Mathews took Richard off to be disciplined, and Mr Rayner turned up by chance and had to witness Richard being given the strap. I don't remember Richard doing any more with crackers after that. It might have been contrition, but I suspect he was trying to figure out what sized saw would be the quickest to cut down the local goalposts a few years later.

The Three Stefans - Year 1961

One upon a time there were three Stefans: Stefan Czyz, Stefan Mykytyn, and Stefan Suchadolski. This story goes back to 1961 in my first year at the high school, when Doc Walsh used to run the sport programs. We were allocated into one of four houses which competed against each other: they were called Wattle (gold), Jacaranda (purple), Waratah (red) and Kurrajong (green). In those days we had no meetings prior to the sport. We were allocated a sport at the beginning of the season and turned up for that activity on the scheduled day which was usually a Friday. One particularly nice, hot and sunny Friday the three Stefans got to talking about the weather being too hot and how playing sport would be oh so uncomfortable! The three Stefans knowing the district quite well were negotiating alternative arrangements amongst themselves. Stefan said, "I don't feel like playing sport. Why don't we wag school and have some fun?" Now consider this! St Albans in 1961 had no such thing as a local swimming pool (Sunshine pool had just been opened). The only realistic options were the "Biggs Street" river or a pond or two. After about 10 seconds of conversation (we were good decision makers) we set off toward the old primary school near the railway line.

We continued to the pond in Margrave Street near the culvert under the railway tracks, where the McAuleys used to water their stock once upon a time and where the Pacific Can factory was later built. It was then a substantial pond, a place where generations of (mostly) boys somehow found enjoyment and entertainment in splashing about naked in the cool, often muddy waters. We had a great afternoon of swimming and camaraderie, regarding this adventure as totally justified in respect of the weather conditions and we trudged off home being totally satisfied with ourselves.

Unfortunately, I had been selected for the Wattle cricket team. The cricket captain had noticed me missing and was apparently looking for me. My absence was promptly reported to Doc Walsh, who investigated the matter. When he next saw me at school he came directly to the point: "Stefan Czyz, where were you on Friday afternoon?" I tried to suggest that I had actually been at school but participating in a more obscure sport such as softball. (You know they didn't realize that the other two Stefans were missing and that was their sport for the day so I thought that I could figuratively pretend that I was actually there.) It didn't work. I think that Harry Schultz and Ahmed Ajayoglu had something to do with it! I had to confess. Doc Walsh didn't like the fact we'd wagged school, so we were sent to the abominable Mr Strauss who gruffly meted out our required punishment. It was also discovered that, apart from us, several other lads had made intelligently inspired decisions and also disappeared for that afternoon. Doc Walsh said: "Well, we can't have pupils taking off like this so we're going to have assemblies from now on and all house-captains will have a list of all participants and these lists will be ticked off before sport begins!"

The significance of the three Stefans was that we went off and had some fun and we were the ones that caused those dreary old sports assemblies that occurred for many years afterwards.

Norm McLeish

I really enjoyed being at St Albans High School throughout the 1960s. I felt that we really had high quality teachers, especially in fifth and sixth forms. They were very dedicated professionals and thoroughly knew their material. Some names I am proud to remember, as I knew them,

include Mrs Gliddon, Mr Alcorn, Mr Matthews, Mr Ziemelis, and many others. Two teachers who especially stood out were Mr Walsh and Mr McLeish. I can remember them because they both related well to students. Mr Walsh spent countless extra hours with sports and drama activities for boys at the school and Mr McLeish as an "enigma" who related well to the 1960s type student.



Mr McLeish was a "larger than life character" at St Albans High, teaching there in the '60s and '70s. He taught us English, Phys Ed, and a few other subjects. He was a dramatic individual who many years later admitted that teaching at St Albans High was a great "lesson of life" for him. One of McLeish's main characteristics was that he had a way of relating to the students very, very directly, and one way he did that was to give students various nicknames, which were often joke names. He came up to me one day and said: "Czyz, you are a 'has been'." My brother Richard came along just at that moment and McLeish turned to him: "Richard, you are a 'never wazza'."

I asked what he meant about me being a 'has been' and he replied, "You have great potential, and now you are already choosing laziness and starting to go downhill." He was referring to the fact that in the previous year (1964) I had achieved 8 firsts and a second in athletics due to natural ability but that now I was resting on my laurels and hoping to continue winning without training. He was right! By the way my real nickname was "Czyzy," and for a period of time when both my brother and I attended high school I was nicknamed "Big Czyz" and Richard was called "Little Czyz."

McLeish was a keen jogger who got into this good habit years ahead of the current aerobic fad. I trained as a marathon runner for over 20 years being inspired to start by McLeish's great example back then and, to tell the truth, his quip about me being a "has been" motivated me to excel in a few areas. For instance my best marathon time was 2 hours and 41 minutes back in the 1980s. I remember McLeish boldly challenging Joe Attard (head prefect and house-captain) to a racing duel over one mile at the time. I think Joe won.

Another McLeish story ... It was 1963 and we were in form 3a. The flavour of the week at one stage was those little wads of paper being shot across the room by elastic bands. I'd already figured that if you didn't want to get whacked in the head by little bits of paper you made sure you got to the back seat. This particular day we came into a McLeish English lesson and I'm in the back seat ready to raise my lid, so I had good cover from the front, there was no one behind me, and from my position I could see the whole class.

Mr McLeish was late for class so we were in full flight with rubber bands and paper missiles. Barbopoulos fired a lot of long distance shots in the hope of getting someone, but his favourite strategy was get within six inches at the back of someone's neck and give them a real pazzunger: "OUCH!!!" Everything suddenly stopped when McLeish arrived, but then he turned his back on the class and started writing on the board. As soon as his back was turned a myriad of papers started flying across the room again. One piece dropped near his foot and he'd look around quizzically, but everything had stopped again. It was like a comic routine, because every time he turned to the blackboard to write something there were papers flying across the room, and when he turned to face the class it stopped. After the third round some students actually aimed at the blackboard and struck. That got McLeish going at his dramatic best.

"All right - that's enough of that! What's going on here?"

Well form 3A got the classic, full-on psychological treatment: "I didn't expect this of you. You, 3A of all forms, the elite form! How could you?" We hadn't really thought of ourselves as being particularly "elite" but his strategy worked.

McLeish collected all the rubber bands and bits and pieces and we had to swear never to do it again. Surprisingly he never gave us after school detention for that. After that episode I can't remember any more rubber band and paper missiles being used in our form.

McLeish and another teacher, Doc Walsh, spent an extraordinary amount of time doing extra curricula activities with students. Walsh was particularly good with sports organisation and especially with training the football teams. He'd sometimes shout us a milk shake after the match or take kids for a trip. McLeish would stay behind after school and help out.

I met Norm McLeish again in 1995 and visited his home in Ferntree Gully. He was living a sort of bachelor's existence at the time as his wife had already passed away. He had a son, Perry, who was about 15 years old living at home. McLeish died in about 2003.

Sex Education

We were given some introduction to sex education in our middle years at the high school, in the mid 'sixties. It would probably be more accurate to say it was about reproduction as part of biology lessons. "Big Smithy" was the one who must have drawn the short straw and was allocated to introduce the topic, and I remember him as being redder of face than usual as we filed into class, or perhaps that was just my imagination. He'd quickly pinned up a couple of large posters representing male and female components of the human body. 'This is the male reproductive system,' he said pointing to the first diagram, 'and this is the female,' pointing to the second and mentioning a few words for body parts. 'Now you know. Any questions?' And that was our sex education program for the whole year! By the way, nobody asked any questions.



Prefects: Stefan Czyn is on the right, second row from the back, 1967.

Prefects

Prefects don't exist any more at St Albans but that was one effective way of the school organising itself in the 1960s. I was a prefect in 1966-67 and we actually had specified duties, one of which was checking that students leaving the school during lunchtime had lunch passes. Males and females were segregated in the school yard and prefects enacted a kind of supervisory role. We also supervised the canteen area where I can remember a Mrs John as the manageress. The prefects were the school leaders in one sense - the leadership of the sixth formers. We would actually get together as a group and do some community activities. Maija Svarts got us down to the community centre doing things with the elderly citizens of St Albans.

The male head prefect was Joe Attard whom I would quite often see diligently supervising all the cigarette smokers behind the shelter shed. I would sometimes assist younger female students with private counselling sessions around the school.



This essential service landed me quite often in vice principal Mrs Gliddon's office, having to engage in long "chats." The section between the girls and boys toilets could be described as "hormonesville" and I would quite often actively volunteer, out of the goodness of my heart, to sacrifice my personal time with assistance in this area. I'm not sure when the prefect system was phased out, but recently I noticed their presence in "Harry Potter" so maybe there will be a revival.

Ledney's Point

In the 'sixties we had competitions with Sunshine High and Maribyrnong High in the A Grade high schools competition. We'd play cricket in summer and football in winter. The competition was pretty intense as the schools tried to defeat each other. In 1966 I was playing for the St Albans High School tennis team.

From the tennis court we could see the football field with the St Albans players in purple and green jumpers, and Maribyrnong with their gold and red. We suspected this might be a one-sided match, because our school had a serviceable and enthusiastic team who could basically mark and kick the ball and had a little bit of team work, but Maribyrnong had nearly fifty percent of their team playing in the Richmond, Collingwood, or Footscray seconds, and a couple were actual league players. Our one league player, Ray Haynes, wasn't playing, so we had just a good bunch of try-hard players.

The match progressed and Maribyrnong was scoring lots of goals. When our tennis match was finished I went over and asked how they'd gone. "It was a tough match," exclaimed Joe Attard. "They scored 36 goals and 41 points, and we scored a whole point." Do you think I cared about Maribyrnong's 36 goals? No! I had to ask the obvious question: "Who kicked our point?" It was none other than the mercurial Paul Ledney, whom I'd never thought of as a great football hero previously, but on this day he had kicked one hundred percent of our side's score. Ledney, the St Albans football hero of 1966!

The following year I repeated Form 6 and played football rather than tennis. The football team didn't improve simply because of me, but the winds of time had changed. We played against Maribyrnong again on exactly the same ground. Guess what? After a long and hard fought match we lost by the narrowest of margins. We lost by ONE POINT! Where were you Ledney?

The Best Paper Plane

I made the best ever paper planes while at St Albans High but there would be others who would dispute that. Otto Czernik was a good plane-maker and he taught me. I was impressed with his skills and asked him to show me how he did it. I followed his moves but my plane looked quite different so it became another model. After assiduous practice and applying some knowledge from physics I discovered that the heavier the paper the longer it goes. This expertise was put to good effect one year at the Olympic swimming pool.

We used to have inter-school swimming competitions and I remember that year that Jutta Schwartz and Richard Szydzik were our champion swimmers. They were our best chance of getting any glory in the pool as they would be just about guaranteed to get into the top three positions against any competition. In fact Jutta usually won all her events whereas the rest of us were pretty hopeless. I was way up the top with the rest of the St Albans crowd cheering our school whenever we could.

For some reason they had sheets of paper up the back and kids from another school were making useless darts that just flopped to the ground when launched. Because we were up the top there was a lot of distance between me and the swimming pool and I decided to make my special long distance dart to see if I could reach the pool. There was a bit of a lull swimming wise and I thought this was a good time to throw my dart. This one flew up and it caught everyone's eye. It

floated this way and floated that way and just kept flying. After about 15 seconds everyone noticed and started cheering. Torpey looked around but he couldn't see it coming. Everyone else was cheering as it floated all the way to pool and they gave a resounding cheer when it landed in the water. I thought that was one of the best long distance planes I had ever flown because it must have been airborne for at least 40 seconds. Torpey was looking around trying to spot the perpetrator of this distraction. I just sat there quietly and kept mum.

After that at school everyone was making paper planes but none could match my achievement.

Deciding to Leave School

It was 1965 and it was towards the end of term 1. I'd completed a very mediocre fourth form, just bumbling through as probably a lot of students did with a few hormonal problems thrown in. (One of my worst results that year was a 13% for maths.) After I started fifth form I was doing absolutely nothing school-learning wise. I wasn't studying in any subject and during April I suspected I would fail because I wasn't doing anything. I felt very annoyed and uneasy about the whole deal. I was a sixteen-year-old without money who was sick and tired of not having any. So it was all about lack of money. My parents were very typical European parents, pretty tight with money and thought they were doing a good job sending me to school. One sunny morning I decided not to attend my class and to clear my head by taking a walk around the local streets thinking of what to do next. The night before I was looking through the paper and saw this really beaut job in Albion packing boxes for £10 per week. I thought of what I could do with £10 and decided to really think about it because I knew that I was getting nowhere academically at school. I was walking down the street thinking that a job packing boxes looked really, really attractive and seeing myself spending that £10 (perhaps attracting some nice "chicks") whereas school looked absolutely unattractive, just a never-ending long, long road to nowhere. I was pretty convinced that I would quit school because I could handle packing boxes much easier than studying. But mysteriously a series of events occurred ...

We had a local policeman who drove around St Albans in a little grey Volkswagen. He saw this vagabond student walking around during class time and stopped beside me.

"Hey you there! What are you doing?"

"I'm walking around thinking," I reply.

"Oh, are you now?" he accuses me. "I don't think you are walking around thinking, I think you were intending to steal things. I think you were walking around casing places to steal stuff, and I think you've already been at it. How about you show me what's in your pockets?"

My pockets had just bits and pieces of rubbish, nothing of any consequence that would have been acquired through theft, but he drove me back to school anyway. As he walked me to the office all the students in the classrooms on two sides could see me being escorted back to school by the police. We came up to Torpey's office and there was an elderly woman waiting there.

"Mr Torpey, I caught this boy walking around the streets," said the policeman rather proud of himself.

Mr Torpey was surprisingly agitated and angry with me. "Is this the boy who was in your back yard?" he asked the lady nearby. She had a really hard look at me and said: "No, no, no. Not that boy, Not him!"

Mr Torpey was not mollified. "I won't deal with such rubbish," he said. "Go down to Mr Matthews; he will deal with you."

Deal with what? I thought. (I thought that I was merely walking around the street thinking about my very immediate future.)

The policeman left and I ended up in Matthews' office. If I thought walking around the streets thinking was a difficult task, going through Matthews' psychoanalysis session was far more difficult.

"Hello, Stefan. Sit down and make yourself comfortable."

I was definitely uncomfortable, like a trapped animal wondering what was going to happen next.

"Sit down, Stefan, and tell me your story."

So I told him my story of leaving school for a job packing boxes. This set off the alarm bells in Matthews ("I've got save Stefan!") so he said: "Relax, Stefan. You look like you've got a few problems. Tell me about them."

I had to bring my mother for an interview. "We'd better keep Stefan at school; he's got potential," said Matthews as he convinced her to give me sixty cents a week pocket money. So instead of getting £10 a week I got 60¢ a week. In 1966 that could buy me a chiko roll, a couple of dim sims, and maybe throw in a bottle of lemonade. It certainly wouldn't pull any "chicks"!

So, I definitely wanted to leave school but events conspired to keep me there. The outcome was that I ended up remaining a student for a further 8 years, finally becoming a school teacher (at age 25) and never getting out of the education system until the year 2002.

Matthews, however, was a very caring person and kept an eye out for me after that. When I mentioned that my bike wasn't working he brought half a bike from home so that I had spare parts to fix mine.

He became our language teacher in Form 6 and was very good on stories. One school afternoon he took Lindsay Chatterton and myself out to play tennis at the Sydenham courts. We had a few sets and then came back to school. That's the sort of Vice Principal he was.

Academic Achievements

I tended to like playing sport such as football, cricket, and tennis. I also liked to sing, although after puberty my burbly bass baritone voice was not suitable for "pop" singing at the time. From a personal situation, I received a fair bit of kudos from my sporting and singing activities. However, these became somewhat of a distraction to the main game, which was getting good results, whereas I've already mentioned mine were rather mediocre. But I've learnt over my lifetime that life always goes like that - you win some and you lose some.

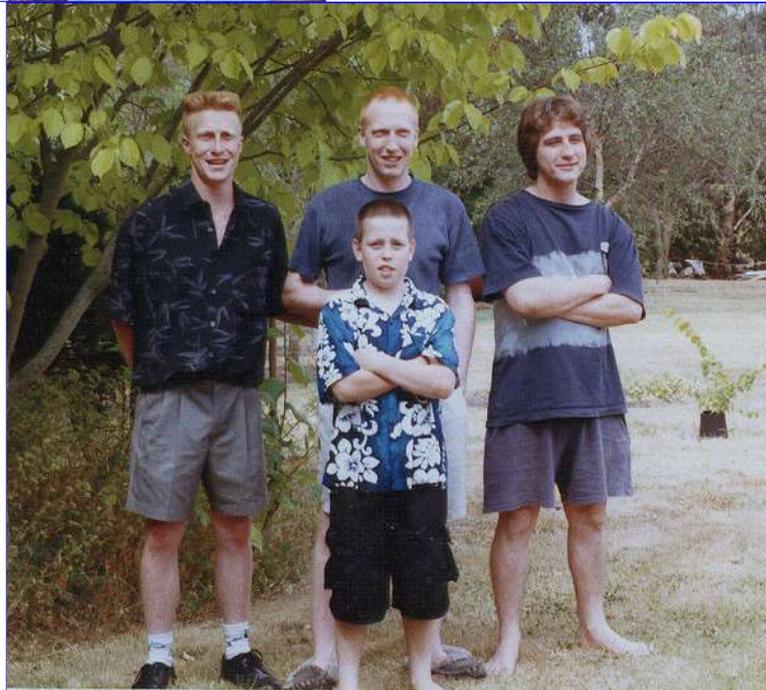
During my matriculation years I became a prefect and house-captain of Wattle (gold) which was one of the four sporting groups at that time. The other houses were Kurrajong (green), Waratah (red), and Jacaranda (purple). I achieved some extra-curricula awards during 1966 and 1967. One of them was second prize in the state for German poetry recital, called the Goethe prize. I received special awards for my services as principal St Albans High School vocalist and for coaching tennis.

I got by academically studying English, English Lit, German, Biology and 18th Century History. I do remember Detlef Beyer recommending English Lit at the time suggesting that you only had to read books and that was supposed to be easy. I went on a very steep learning curve the following year. My academic achievements, alas, were rather mediocre.

Eventually I was accepted to Melbourne Teachers College (Primary). Our group was the first to complete the brand new three-year Dip.T. course, which started in 1968. I didn't go out teaching straight away but continued my studies for a further three years at the University of New England in NSW, majoring in Philosophy. I met my present intimate partner, Anne, at UNE, and we later got married. We both entered the teaching service and we raised four handsome young



boys: Simon, Daniel, Marcus and Ashley who this year (2006) is studying in year 12 at Sunbury College.



Stefan and Anne Czyz's children.

Postscript

I'd been looking around to buy a few acres out in the country but not too far away from town when a friend told me about some property that was for sale in Sunbury. I came out to have a look and was impressed by the area, and on the spur of the moment made an offer. That's how we bought our few acres in Sunbury in the 'eighties and then we built our home there in that beautiful little valley location with some really old gum trees and a little creek at the bottom. And yes, we are visited by the occasional wallaby or kangaroo who thinks the grass is much greener on our side of the fence, and who could disagree with that?

At present I am 57 years young (as at April 2006). I am a self funded retiree deriving income from a variety of sources including property and shares with franking credits. Five kilometres out of Sunbury is my living circumstance on 2.5 acres of semi rural property. Of my four sons, one remains to complete his studies in year 12.

I am now a devotee of my Beloved Guru Adida Samraj and my quest for the remainder of this bodily life (and beyond) is to practice Ruchira Avatara Bhakti Yoga in The Way Of The Heart in order to become blissfully and unqualifiedly happy. My connection with Adida Samraj's Free Daist Communion started back in 1986 after reading His instructional text, "Easy Death". Now I am free to study and practice the subtler and happier points of conditional and eternal existence.

MAY THE FULL STATE OF HAPPINESS AND LOVE BLISS SPREAD TO YOU ALL - OM
SRI DA LOVE ANANDA HRIDAYAM!



Stefan Czyz, 2005



Stefan Czyz as teacher, Coburn Primary, 2002.

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Marilyn and Bruce Anderson with Stefan Czyn singing a song; 2005.



Stefan, Richard, Marianne, Barry Rayner, Barbara, 2005.