

DARYL KEEBLE : STUDENT 1959-1965, PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER



Prior to St Albans High starting in 1956 there was a limited choice for your secondary schooling in the western suburbs: you could go to Williamstown High, Footscray High, or Sunshine Tech; and there was University High in Parkville. My brother Ian is five years older than I am and when he started secondary schooling he went to Hyde Street Central School at Footscray for two years and was on the school's premiershipteam-winning football team in 1953. He then went to Williamstown High where he was taught by Doc Walsh who transferred to St Albans High in 1956.

I came from Sunshine and started at St Albans High School in 1959 and started in 1E with Tommy McIntyre; there were forty kids in that class. We had no choice of which secondary school to attend because we were to the west of the railway line and that area was declared St Albans High territory. If you lived on the eastern side of the railway line or had a sibling who was already attending Sunshine High School then you could enroll there, but because we were on the other side of the railway tracks we went to St Albans High.

The Sunshine and Albion Kids who went by train to St Albans were segregated on the train, with the girls sitting in the front three carriages, the boys in the back three carriages, and the teachers were in the centre carriage, and we boys dared not move out of those back three carriages. The teachers who were on the train, and Mr Chilton the woodwork teacher in particular, made sure that the boys did not sneak into the front part of the train. However, going home the boys were the first because at the St Albans end they were in the first carriages. That arrangement meant that the boys had the longest walk to get to the gates when we got off at Sunshine.



FORM 1E

First Row: Cornelia Petersen, Olga Girzoff, Linetta Powell, Wanda Zilinski, Ruth Vadas, Miroslava Wludyka, Ann Pilbeam, Roma Perry, Krystina Wandek. **Second Row:** Ursula Wisniewski, Victoria Walton, Kathryn Parsons, Consuelo Zorzenon, Roslyn Wright, Marisa Perati, Lily Walton, Yulka Vujovic. **Third Row:** Tadeusz Jezierak, Eugen Kaczanowski, Daryl Palmer, Wlodimir Kornienko, Wlodimir Pajda, Imants Pleiksna, Donald McGuffie, Stanislaw Maslak, Yuri Kivimets, Stefan Jurka, Barry Johns. **Back Row:** Leon Kinnersley, Stan Korczynski, Stanislaw Korkliniewski, James Hott, Zenon Kolanowicz, Rex Meany, George Nosiara, Wladislaw Bugiera, Roman Kataryana, Daryl Keeble, Thomas McIntyre.

Daryl Keeble and Form 1E, St Albans High School, 1959.

Of course fifty years ago the trains were different: they were the red rattlers with open windows and open doors all the time and the boys would swing from the light fittings and the overhead baggage racks. We didn't see any danger in that and in all the years I was traveling I heard of only of one boy who fell off the train near the Albion station and he wasn't hurt. There were about 15 to 20 kids who caught the train each morning from Sunshine; it might have been 10 on at Sunshine and another 10 at Albion. Alan Noble used to ride the train and he had the gift of the gab and in 1962 was on the school magazine committee and also an SRC representative. He would have made a good journalist, real estate agent, used car salesman ...

There was also a bus that brought students from the back of Sunshine because Tommy McIntyre and Jimmy Cadzow came that way. The bus started at Sunshine Heights then went down Forrest Street and picked up all the kids in Ardeer and went through Deer Park for the kids from there and then drove down to St Albans. That was one of the Barnes busses.

In the early years of St Albans – the 1950s – there were a lot of bungalows, part houses that were built of weatherboard and asbestos sheet. That's how people started there. There were also a lot of similar bungalows in West Sunshine where the back part of the house was built first and over the years the front rooms were built on as money and materials became available. Neither area was sewered back then so every house had a dunny in the back yard. My grandkids just can't believe that we had outside toilets and even when I was at Sunshine Heights primary school the dunny man would come once a week to change the cans.

Walking to school from the train there was the Nissen army hut along Main Road East about half way between the station and the school and some afternoons we attended classes in there. There was a shortage of classrooms at the school so we were using the Tin Shed on Errington Reserve. The advantage of being there was that if you were quick off the mark in leaving just before 4 o'clock you could catch the earlier train home.

The schoolyard itself was divided into two zones: the front, northern area near the main road, was the girls' half and the back half was the boys' half. The boys and the girls were not allowed to move into each other's yard area. If you did you got the cuts. Even the tuck shop was divided: one side was for the boys and one side was for the girls. It was a rectangular construction with windows opening up in the northern and southern sides. The south-facing side was for the boys and the other side was for the girls and prefects kept everyone in line to discourage the queue jumpers. Mrs Johns was the manageress of the tuck shop and she was from Albion; her son John attended the school. She ruled with a hard rule as well.

I remember that the back (southern) yard and the eastern side of the school grounds were undeveloped: there were no houses there, so when we went on the cross-country runs you could go through the empty paddocks east of the school and run down to McIntyre Road and the Maribyrnong River.

Of course when you were at school you had to entertain yourself through competitions with your schoolmates. Every boy had a pocket knife because that was essential when you were playing the game of "Land" where you drew a large circle on the ground and threw your knife into the circle and where the blade entered the ground you scratched a line in line with the blade. You claimed the biggest segment as your land. The next bloke would then throw his knife and make similar claims. Everyone was trying to get the biggest land by throwing their knife into the dirt. Every kid had a little pocket knife.

There was the game "Pennies against the Wall" with three pennies being tossed against the wall. It was for keeps, i.e. the winner kept the money, with the winner being whoever threw their penny closest to the wall. It probably was our first foray into gambling. The teachers never caught us because it was the prefects' responsibility to detect such unsanctioned activities, but the prefects were often playing with us so they didn't report it to anyone. As long as the school has been going there was the tradition of smoking behind the shelter shed which was strictly forbidden but nevertheless continued in clandestine ways.



Headmaster James Barker (centre front) with teaching staff, St Albans High School, 1959.

1959 was my first year at the school and the school's fourth year of existence so the highest class was Form 4 (year 10). Mr James Barker was still the headmaster then and there were two dozen teachers. Mr Barker left in 1960 and Mr Max Wilkinson came in 1961 but stayed only one year. Mr Brian Torpey arrived in 1962 and was still there when I left the school in 1965.

Tom 'Doc' Walsh was one of the teachers who came by train every day from Hawthorn. He was a bachelor all his life and maybe that's why many people thought he was such an avuncular figure towards his drama and sporting protégées. He had a great big Gladstone bag that was so full he could never close it and it drooped down under the weight of books and papers. Doc Walsh had been a teacher at Williamstown High during the forties which was one of the first secondary schools in the west but had transferred to St Albans High in 1956 when it started at Sunshine. He was an interesting character who promoted sport very avidly and it was almost as if he wanted to create an old English public school atmosphere to better the individual character through sport and competition.

Doc wrote a history of the school's formative years from when it started in the Presbyterian hall in Anderson Street, Sunshine. According to him, when the school started they borrowed teachers from other schools and some teachers worked part time so the school started with only a handful of teachers. Even in that history summary Doc wrote how important it was to be a good sportsman. He taught history, which was his particular academic interest. He must have been educated in the classics as he's the one who nominated the "Truth is Our Light" motto from the Venerable Bede of 597 AD. Do you remember Doc's fountain pens? They had thick nibs and he had several pens with green, black and red ink. I remember he used either red or green to comment all over your pages as he was marking them. You were never in any doubt that Doc had gone through all your pages.

Why was he known as Doc? He wrote that it came about because he looked after his students when they went on their interstate drama excursions, i.e. "doctoring boys away on tour." I remember one day during a game of football one of the players copped a ball so hard that he swallowed his tongue and was choking. Doc Walsh in his Bombay bloomers, those great big shorts with all the house colours down the sides, came and sorted him out. He was a very good Catholic and after leaving St Albans in the mid sixties he went and worked at the Whitefriars Catholic College for Boys out in Donvale. I think he died in the eighties.

The teachers at St Albans were very strict. Ken Lahy was a music teacher and ran the choir and I thought he was quite strict. He took us for sportsday practice marching and you had to march three in a line and I can still hear him saying "I'll strap a broomstick along your backs to keep

you in line". Mr Lahy married Miss Kennedy the domestic arts teacher and they left at the end of the year.

George Strauss came as the senior master in 1960 and I remember him as the French teacher who was also very strict. He was a very intelligent, Jewish guy who had a tough life but fortunately left Europe at the right time to escape the pogroms and genocide. He had a Master of Arts degree but in Australia I think he started off working in a can factory before coming to teach at St Albans. He was probably a good teacher but he was very strict.

Despite the teachers being very strict they were very good in the senior students in years 11 and 12 because they did give us some leeway. I was impressed how they looked after you in those later years; they were progressive. As an example, Ray Clifford was expelled from Sunshine High for hitting a teacher and in the following year he was made head prefect at St Albans, which was fantastic. He was a very smart guy and became a school teacher. I was impressed that a school could make him a head prefect after being expelled from another school. He scored some first and second class honours in his final and went on to do commerce at Melbourne University.

The school was very strict about uniforms. You either had to have the full suit or you had a blazer, jumper, and of course a tie. You had to wear caps and if you didn't and the prefects caught you they would report you to the senior master. I probably didn't wear my cap from home to the Sunshine railway station but as soon as I got anywhere near the station on went the cap because I wasn't going to get caught without it. You had to wear the plain, black leather shoes and they had to be properly polished. Shoes were inspected and pointy-toed shoes were not allowed. I liked sport and phys ed, history and geography. It was mainly facts-driven teaching in those days, so education was about remembering facts. If you had a photographic memory for remembering dates you did alright.

There were a couple of disasters that I remember in my time at St Albans. There was a fire in the paddock at the back of the school and some of the boys grabbed the fire extinguishers from the school and carried them 100 metres to put out the fire. The fire brigade then had to come back to fill up all the fire extinguishers. More serious was a fatality that was not connected with the school but involved one of the students, where a boy was killed in a hit and run car accident while riding his bike down Green Gully. That was John Kasjan who started in the same year as I did in 1959. He was a nice kid.

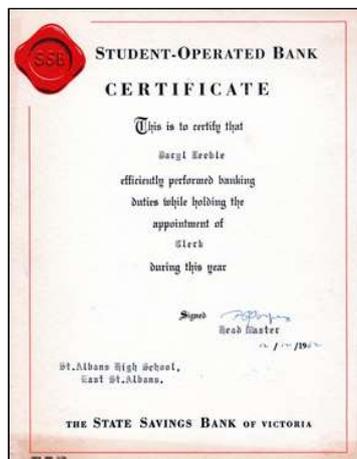
We used to have religious instruction but nobody liked it and there was one teacher who was given a hard time about that; I've forgotten his name. Ray Clifford was an atheist and used to get up and give little lectures on the historical nature of Christianity. Mr Alcorn was a Church of Christ minister at Sunshine and was a primary school teacher in Albion before becoming a history teacher at St Albans. He swapped between his church and teaching positions at one stage but came back and spent many years teaching at St Albans. He was Franklin Bruce Alcorn who may have started off teaching geography but I remember him as a history teacher. He was a really nice guy.

The teachers at the high school were a mixed group in terms of ages and nationalities. When we were in our mid teens there were a few teachers in their twenties so they were not much older than us. Barry Rayner was a maths-science teacher who came in the mid sixties and he was one of the younger ones just out of university and teacher training. He's still around. He loves cycling around the world and comes to school re-unions.

The school buildings at St Albans were brand new. When we started there was only the one long building at the front with the shorter building at the back where the woodwork room was located. I had Mr Ken Chilton for woodwork and I still have one of my exercise books with drawings of dovetail and lap joints. One of the projects we had to do was a footstool with a lacquered finish. I still have that in the pantry. We also made a card table, that would have been in the second year, which has come in very handy over the years and is still in my possession.

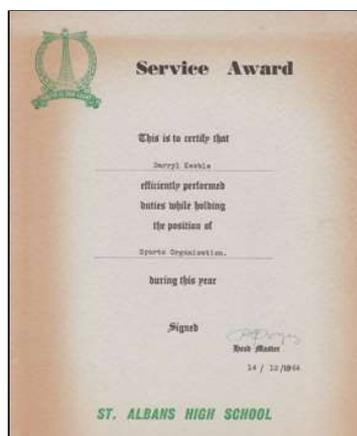
Woodwork was always regimented. If your saw or chisel went into the workbench you were in real strife. The plane had to be laid on its side so as not to damage the sharp cutting edge. Those were good practices then and I still follow them now. You always had to wear your white woodwork apron and have sharp pencils ready.

I remember the Toc H school camp at Point Lonsdale, in the mid sixties. Matthews was an English teacher and the senior master and he was in charge at the camp. He was quite progressive for the times. Apart from study we played sport, walked along the beach, played games and even played football with the Queenscliff high school boys. We had a good time and behaved ourselves, even though one of the students painted the ceiling of this Toc H bunk room like the Sistine Chapel ceiling with God pointing his finger, obviously inspired by Michelangelo's "The Creation of Adam". He was quite a good artist and painted it brilliantly. That guy didn't get into trouble but Matthews paid for someone to paint over it. Matthews treated the senior students very well and with respect.



I received a Student Operated Bank Certificate in 1962 for my part in the school savings program. As in primary school, the kids used to bring their money to school to put into their bank accounts. The teachers used to do the banking at the primary schools then at some stage at the secondary schools the students took over this task, all for the benefit of the State Savings Bank of Victoria though I think the school might have received a donation for their efforts. I was part of that in the early sixties.

I also received a service award for sports in 1964 because I was the house captain for Jacaranda. I think my main responsibility and busiest time was selling Doc Walsh's sports newsletters to as many of my classmates as possible.

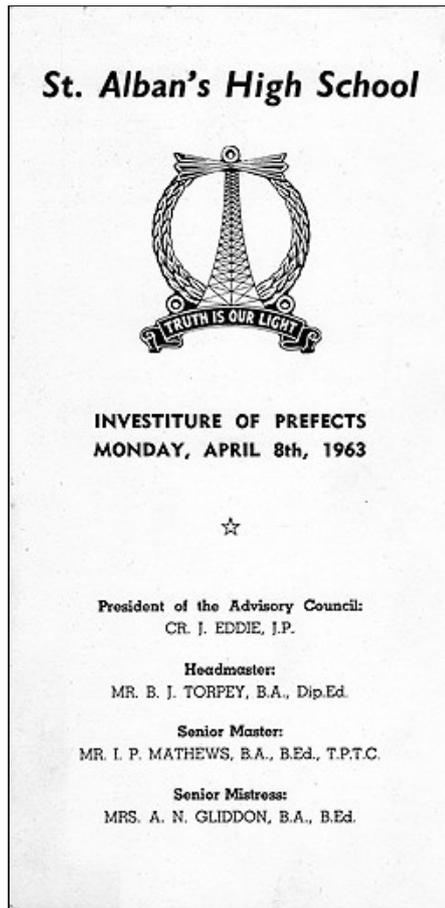


He distributed these roneoed pages to the house captains every few weeks to sell and the profits went towards school excursions. They started off costing a penny and ended up at thruppence. They were all about the athletic competitions and the points accruing to the four sports houses with running commentaries on individual performances and football games and such. Doc loved football and would sometimes organize a discussion evening where some well-known footballer would come to give an inspirational talk to the boys.

When leaving for school by train we used to wait at the Sunshine station and it was still the time when steam trains would come past. Two times a week a steam-driven freight train would shunt into the back platform at Sunshine and it was carrying stock such as a load of pigs. I think they were taking them to the Kensington saleyards. That's all gone now but there used to be an old stock bridge over Flemington Road near the Newmarket railway station and the stock were herded over that into the saleyards. In 1962 when the standard rail gauge went through, the Overland that went from Adelaide to Melbourne used to stop at Sunshine so that people from Adelaide could transfer to the Sydney train. We'd be standing on the station waiting for the school train and watching people in the sleepers getting up and getting ready to change trains. That train would have taken the turnoff at the Albion station to cross the Quarter Mile bridge to get to Sydney.

When we started coming to St Albans, the station was on the northern side of the railway crossing at Main Road. The train would stop there and then return to town because that was the end of the electrified suburban railway system. That new station with the signal box on the south side of the crossing was built later in the days of our travels to the school. Not long after the new station was built there was a body found in an old abandoned well near there, so it was another murder mystery and that was a Sunshine businessman by the name of Kaska who had been shot

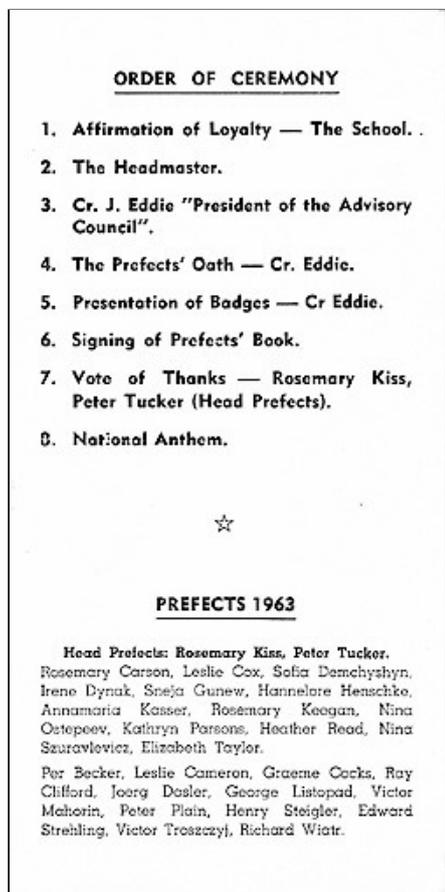
and dumped down the well. That was at the end of my first high school year. I remember being on the train going past the spot and seeing all these police and fire brigade men and lots of boys looking on, south of the railway station where the hotel is.



The high school was very conscious of its multicultural population during the sixties and used to acknowledge it. When I started the majority of the kids in my class were of migrant background and that was the same in all the other classes. Doc Walsh's newsletters would mention that students were from 40 or 50 different nationalities. People took this cosmopolitan mix as normal and it was never a bother - there were no racist overtones whatsoever. At that stage the Anglo-Caucasians were in the minority but there were no bad feelings amongst students. Everyone got on with each other.

St Albans High had pretty good football and cricket teams and were pretty successful in competitions. I think Joe Darul who was of overseas background ended up playing for Footscray in the late sixties. Ray Haynes was a good footballer, a very tough sportsman, and probably one of the best footballers who ever came from St Albans High. He also played with the Footscray and Geelong clubs in the Victorian Football League in the late sixties and early seventies. Ray was in Jacaranda and those house matches were very competitive. Did he play state cricket? His father was a very good cricketer and very active in promoting sport around St Albans. I think Henry Steigler played football for Sunshine and Ray Clifford probably

played there as well.



Les and Garry Cameron were recruited by North Melbourne and they both ended up as captain-coaches of country football teams. Lorna Cameron was their mother and she was the librarian at the high school for a few years and ran the Tin Shed on Errington Reserve for many decades – that's where the school held its extra classes so many years ago. I always wanted to get away early from those classes because it was the last class of the day and I never liked stacking chairs and trestle tables. Doc Walsh would say "You're a selfish person because you always want to rush off" but I wanted to catch that early train home.

On Monday mornings there was always a formal assembly where you pledged your loyalty to the queen and sang the national anthem. You always took off your cap for that and afterwards the headmaster or senior master would tell the boys to put their caps back on.

I remember Vanda Viti who married Pepi Bogнар. Vanda was a prefect when I started in 1959 and because she was one the first intake of 1956 she was always one of the school seniors. She had a natural flare for the drama productions that occurred through the school. Like myself, she became a primary school teacher and was teaching

around the region and that's how I came across her in later years. She was a terrific person but a

heavy smoker. I remember visiting Vanda and Pepi out in their country retreat in Rocklyn where Pepi treated us to some home-distilled spirits. They were very happy out there in the bush and they planted a lot of trees on their block. Vanda passed away a few years ago.

Tania Pavlov was another contemporary at the high school in the sixties and she was the daughter of Paul and Ludmila Pavlov who were teachers at the school. They were Russian nationals from Latvia and they also started at the school in the early sixties. Mr Pavlov taught mathematics and was also a senior house master ... for Wattle, I think. He started the volley ball teams at the school and developed them into competition winners. Tania transferred to University High School and did very well there.

Dennis Thornton was at the high school and there was a Dennis Thornton who played cricket club in Albion but I don't know if they were the same person. The high school's Dennis Thornton was from St Albans. He was a 56er and must have liked drama because he went on that Trans Australian Tour in 1957 with Jack McMillen and the rest of Doc Walsh's troupe. There was a builder by name of John Thornton who was building bungalows around Sunshine and St Albans and his son Richard was living in St Albans and working in real estate. In the early fifties you could buy a block of land in St Albans from \$100 to \$300 and I noticed that in 1965 that you could buy a block for \$2,000. Those prices seem very cheap now but would still have been a fair bit of money in those days.

Raising funds for the school assembly hall became one of the biggest projects in 1964. I remember penny drives as part of the money making activities for the school. You used to bring your pennies to school and make a long line of them along the asphalt driveway and they would stretch twenty or thirty metres long. The school held a big fete with various competitions and just about every class spontaneously decided that selling lollies was going to be the great money spinner. Pantries at home were raided for produce to sell at the school stalls. A lot of that was going on to raise £10,000 as the school's contribution to building the assembly hall that was going to cost £40,000. It ended up costing more than double that figure.

I finished at the high school in 1965 and had obtained a bursary to do secondary teacher training at Melbourne but ended up doing primary school teaching. That was at Melbourne Teachers College. I started teaching in 1969 within the western suburbs which was home territory because I was born in Sunshine. 1969 was a memorable because my teaching career coincided with man landing on the moon. Since then I have taught in several schools, the last one being at St Albans South. Teaching in the seventies was interesting because all the schools got Gough Whitlam's disadvantaged school's packages and there were lots of young enthusiastic teachers who finally had access to money for education. It was fantastic. I found the kids in Sunshine, St Albans and Albion were terrific to teach.

People knock the western suburbs but I've always found the people to be terrific. I taught at Sunshine Heights and started teaching European kids and it was like St Albans High all over again because I remember many students were from the former Yugoslavia and other parts of Europe. Later there were many Vietnamese kids and they were also terrific kids to teach. The Vietnamese settlement in Australia was as hard as the earlier refugee migrations – the mothers were working all day and half the night in their little garage sweat shops sewing garments probably for \$1 per hour. I wasn't around long enough to teach the African kids as they are some of the newer arrivals.

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Daryl Keeble, 2016.

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

Memorabilia, Albas and Doc Walsh's newsletters supplied by Daryl Keeble.
School photographs courtesy of Nick Szwed.