

# TANIA GARIEPY nee PAVLOV: SYSTEMS ANALYST



## Introduction

I was born in 1948 in a Displaced Persons camp in Germany. My parents were Paul and Ludmila Pavlov, who were of Russian background from Latvia. We came to Sydney in 1949 under the IRO sponsored resettlement program, before being transferred to the migrant camp at Bathurst and then the Greta camp in Victoria. Both my parents started their working lives in Australia as factory workers but during the 1960s ended up as teachers at the St Albans High School.

## Arriving in St Albans

We came to St Albans in 1952. I couldn't speak a word of English but I soon made friends with other children in the street. Heaven knows how we communicated because I was speaking Russian to them and they were speaking English to me.

When I went to St Albans Primary in 1954 we had one Australian in the class, and that was Heather Goddard. They had the best house in St Albans. My grandparents lived across the street from them so I got on very well with Heather.



Grade 1d, St Albans Primary School, 1954.

## Teaching English in Grade Two

I was in second grade when Ivan Volkov came to school. The family was Bulgarian, I think, and Ivan didn't speak a word of English. By this time I had already read all the books the teacher had given so I was teaching Ivan to speak English. I also had gone to school without a word of English and here I was in grade two teaching English to another student.

When television broadcasting was introduced in 1956 the Goddards were the first in the street to get a TV and I would go over to Heather's and watch the Mickey Mouse Club, Spin and Marty,

Rin Tin Tin ... Then after about three months my father couldn't take it any more and went and bought a television on time payment as well.

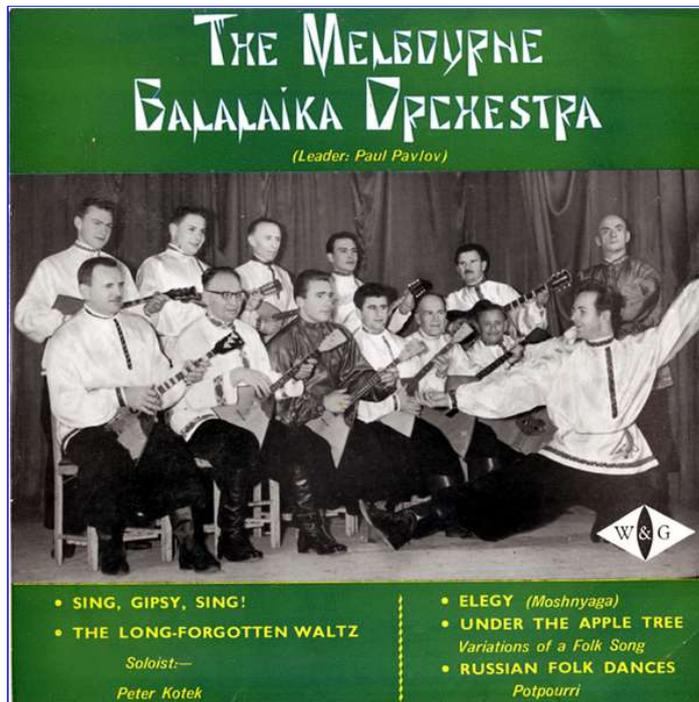
## My Father: Paul Pavlov



My father started teaching at the high school in 1960 when I was in sixth grade at the primary school. I used to help correct the work that the kids did when he was teaching second form. I used to do the test results.

My father's other incarnation was as a musician, because he was a very good balalaika player. He formed a Russian balalaika orchestra and ran that for many years. It was called the Melbourne Balalaika Orchestra; they made one record and played at many venues, including performances on radio and television. He 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.

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He loved music. I would often wake up in the morning to Mendelssohn's violin concerto. I still get tears in my eyes when I hear "Sway" - Dean Martin used to sing that. Dad loved dancing and he taught me to dance as well. He was a great dancer, very musical, a very lively entertainer himself. Mum was more the quiet type. Dad was the life of the party.

## St Albans Teachers

From my recollections, and as mentioned by some of the teachers later on, the teachers were mostly coming from the eastern suburbs and coming to this depressed area that was 123 on the socio-economic scale in

Melbourne. They got to St Albans and suddenly saw all these kids and they were not what they expected at all, because St Albans at that stage was such a variety of people. The people from Eastern Europe came as labourers, except that some of them were doctors, some were chemist, all sorts of professions. So their kids were also those things. The difference in the social groupings were huge - no different to the range in the eastern suburbs in many ways, except that our parents were poorer. But the kids were no different. St Albans was such a melting pot at the time.

You still meet people who recognise the St Albans accent, except, because we all learnt to speak English at the primary school and we learnt it from our teachers rather than our neighbours, we never picked up an Australian accent because there wasn't one to hear. When I was eighteen or nineteen one day at the beach someone asked me where I was from. I used to delight in saying "I'm from Snorbens," whereas the older migrants would always say they were from "San Tal Buns".

The people from the eastern suburbs would arrive here and be amazed, and because of that, they loved us, as they did, because it was so unexpected.

Mr Walsh was a wonderful teacher. He ran the sports program for the boys and organised the wonderful drama events. I had Mr Alcorn for history in the fourth form. At the time there were problems between Indonesia and Malaysia, and there was the issue of communism in China. I'll never forget the way Alcorn presented it all. He was teaching an area that was quite political but he was able to be totally objective about it. These days kids go to school and come back indoctrinated with anything and everything.

Years later I was talking to my girlfriend, and Snowy said that Alcorn was on the side of the communists. I said, "no, no, he was on the other side." Isn't that a real testament to a history teacher that he taught us that subject, which was current affairs at the time, and nobody had a clue as to his personal view. He let us make up our own minds about our personal views. One of the greatest teachers I've ever had.

Miss Taylor was the Senior Mistress at the school when I went there. When the school was having its first social the girls were warned not to wear a cardigan, because the teachers needed to see where the boy's hands were. I believe it may have been the first social they ran, and they were worried about our virtues. The girls were not naive; we all knew who to keep away from and who never to be alone with in a room on your own. It was just something you did; you managed that so as to avoid any problems. We all knew what the situation was and as long as you managed it properly it was fine.

When young teachers such as Barry Rayner started at the school there was a bit more social interaction with teacher. Barry encouraged a more casual and relaxed style of interaction, as can be seen in some of the class photographs, because he was so close to our age.

To a lot of teachers coming out the school was like coming out to a different country. When I went to University High School it was the first time I ever met a Sue. Sue was an alien name to me.

## **Fellow Students**

They were very fun times. I think there would not be a single person who was at the school at those times who doesn't think about it with fondness. Catharine Schwab was a smooth talker. Some of us would try to get out of sport. I was the world's liar, absolutely the worst, whereas Catharine was goodie-two-shoes incarnate. Catherine and I got caught hiding in the toilets to miss sport and at the drop of a hat she would have a story any teacher would believe in. She was brilliant, very clever, very quick on her feet.

Broderick Smith was in my year. Sneja Gunew was the western suburb's Woman Of The Year at one stage. She is now in Canada and has a CV as long as your arm. Eva Ruditski would probably have a CV just as long. She did her PhD in biochemistry. Claude Calandra did well in the medical professions, as did other before him. It was a cross section of people, all sorts, from trades people and university professors.

The school encouraged socialising between boys and girls as long as it was supervised. I still remember Mrs Cameron's dance classes at the Tin Shed. You only got to go to the dance classes by invitation, because Mrs Cameron couldn't open them up for everybody; only a select number of girls got to go to the dance classes. I remember I was in second form when I was introduced to The Pride of Erin and other old time dances. The boys in it were people like Per Becker, Les Cameron, etc. We would die. We would go to these dance classes and it was the most exciting thing in our existence. We had crushes on those guys and here you got to dance with them. It was wonderful. Quite a few romances developed out of those classes over the years. Mrs Cameron and her husband Jack were running the classes at the start.



When I look at some of the old class photographs - there is Garry Cameron, and he was Australian. There's Heather Goddard, she was Australian, and if there's another Australian amongst the girls that would be it. I didn't see many Australians at high school.

A few of the class married each other. Les Cameron married Heather Goddard.

Lorenz Schwab was mad on sports and wrote for the Herald Sun. He ended up as the editor of the Footscray Advocate.

My school friend Elana Dagys, whom we called "Snowy", married a Lithuanian and her kids spoke only Lithuanian at home and had no English when they went to kindergarten. When the first one started, Snowy, being a teacher herself, asked how her daughter was going. "She's a bit quiet," said the teacher. She didn't even realise the child spoke no English. By the time she realised, the child was already speaking English.

## Commonwealth Scholarships

In my fourth form, it was the first time they gave out those Commonwealth Scholarships. St Albans had the highest percentage of Commonwealth Scholarships of any school in Victoria, i.e. the highest percentage of the kids who were in Form 4 at the school. When I found that out I was so proud. Naturally the number of students in higher years reduced as people left to take up trades or go to other schools and all sorts of things. Everybody was always stunned when St Albans did so well at all sorts of things. They didn't expect it.

After I finished my Intermediate year at St Albans High, I transferred to Melbourne University High School in Parkville in 1964 and finished the Matriculation year in 1965. My parents were pleased with my results because I received a first class honour and the exhibition for Russian; my father was especially pleased with that because he taught me to speak Russian so well. I also got a second class honour in physics and passes in chemistry, calculus and applied mathematics, and English. It meant I was able to get into the computer course that I wanted to do at Melbourne University.



Tania Pavlov at University High School, Parkville, 1965.

## Assimilation

Personally, I was happy with assimilation because I thought it went very, very well. I went to Russian school for years. That was at the Russian Church school in Collingwood where I studied Russian history and language. It was not government subsidised. It was up to us - if we wanted to do that it was fine. The rest of the time you spoke English at school. You learnt English and your parents had to learn a smattering of English to get by. Everybody was happy. I'm the first of the anti-multicultural people; I'm totally against it. If you want to keep your culture, you're welcome to it, but not at the expense of the taxpayer. And not at school - at school you are Australian.

## Melbourne University



I got an exhibition in Russian language when I sat for my Matriculation exam in 1965. I then went to Melbourne University from 1966 to 1969. I completed a science degree and the first year of an honours course. The honors year was depressing and I wanted to chuck it in. I went skiing in August and the lecturer contacted me and asked when my thesis was going to be submitted. By that time I had really had it with the university. I thought it was useless, people sitting around doing nothing and getting a PhD for what I considered nothing, especially for computer science. I told the lecturer I wasn't interested anymore. He said, "Put in your name and I'll pass you." That was enough for me, I said that's it, I'm finished.

## Working for IBM

I worked for IBM from 1970 to 1974 and got married in 1974. My husband and I were both working for IBM and we had to leave, because that was the policy them days: husbands and wives could not work in a situation where either one of them could ever conceivably be the other's manager. This meant that if we were both part of the professional staff then you couldn't stay, as simple as that. Since he was already my manager's manager ...

We worked for a couple of companies in Indonesia for seven years, and had our kids in Indonesia. We then came back to IBM and by this time the rules had changed. During my time at IBM I have been a systems engineer, a marketing rep, and a manager. I went back to being a rep rather than on the management side because that had its own drawbacks.

## Postscript

When we came back from Indonesia we bought a house in Maribyrnong. After my father died my mother eventually joined us here.

I have two kids. My daughter studied at Victoria University and is now working for a group selling wine. My son is in the US working for Ernst and Young.

**Tania Gariepy, 2005.**

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