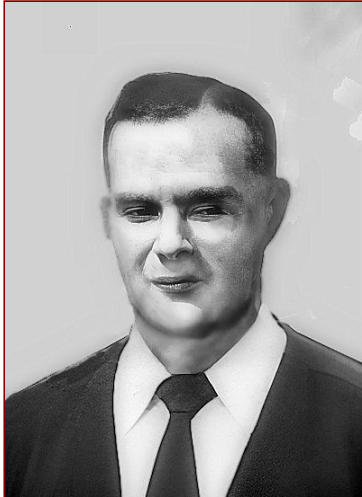


HENRY WILLIAM LAHY: FRENCH AND MUSIC TEACHER, 1956-1959



Henry William Lahy was born in 1928 in Birkenhead, Cheshire, England, to Albert Henry Lahy and Bertha Vickers. The family emigrated to Victoria in 1950 and settled in Deer Park by 1954. Albert Henry was working as an electrician and Bertha was the traditional housewife attending to home duties. Henry William was a bank officer, and siblings were Maureen Mary working as a clerk, and Monatgue Joseph working as a bank officer. Henry soon left his bank position and trained as teacher with the Toorak Teachers' College. He was active in his local community, was a member of the Australian Labor Party, and was elected to Sunshine Council about 1954, but his later political career has not been documented.

Henry William Lahy started as a teacher at St Albans High School when it was first established 1956 in Sunshine. His qualifications were listed as University Subjects and T.P.T.C. (Trained Primary Teacher's Certificate). In that era if you were a trained primary school teacher you could teach at the junior levels of high school, which is how a number of teachers started their secondary school careers. Lahy was engaged as a teacher of French but he also taught music, which produced some nice school highlights. The school magazine notes that:

"During the first term a school choir was formed and after only a few weeks training it performed a varied programme of songs at our first end of term concert. Later the choir took part in a school music festival at Williamstown Town Hall. Although the other choirs at the Festival were from older-established schools and were more experienced, our choir performed well and was complimented on its efforts. The choir also twice assisted at presentations of the Electra Dramatic group, supplying suitable music during the intervals of the play."

At the end of the Term 1 there was a Parents' Night held at which Mr Lahy's choir sang, and possibly one the most important highlights of 1958 was Mr Lahy's production of "Lilac Time".



Mr Alcorn wrote a nice summary of this performance in his Silver Jubilee review:

"It was decided to perform, at the old Sunshine Town Hall, an abridged version of 'Lilac Time'. Miss Kennedy, with her needlework classes, worked overtime preparing attractive costumes and stage decorations. This was an outstanding and memorable concert. Mr Lahy obtained wonderful contributions from his singers, particularly Svetlana Bohudski, who took the part of Lily, and Andreas Kratsis who played the role of Schubert. Vanda Viti found it easy to flirt with Jack McMillen. Joy Deveson's pianoforte playing was an excellent feature of the performance. Julian Castagna and Per Becker held the backstage team well."



1959 was the last year at St Albans for two particular teachers, which was a bit sad, but the good news about them was that Mr Lahy the Music teacher was going to marry Miss Kennedy the Domestic Arts (T.S.T.C.) teacher. Everyone wished them well.

Lahy must have continued his studies while teaching at St Albans, as he completed his university course and obtained his Bachelor of Arts degree from Melbourne University in 1961.

Henry William Lahy married Dorothy Mary Kennedy in 1960 - unfortunately, Dorothy's family history has not been traced. At St Albans she was the Domestic Arts teacher and was sometimes known to teach the boys a bit of domestic etiquette, for example, when a group of lads were heading off for their Trans-Australia

Tour: "Miss Mary Kennedy – Domestic Arts Teacher, St. Albans High School - gave a talk on table etiquette prior to their departure from Melbourne. This talk proved of inestimable value to our boys, teaching them knowledge sadly neglected for them in our schools."

By 1963 Henry and Dorothy were living in Camberwell South and they are likely to have had a son and daughter, but their details are also unknown.

William Henry Lahy died in August 1966 at the very young age of 38 years and was buried at Springvale Botanical Cemetery.

Remembering William Lahy

Lana Malakunis: Mr Lahy was our music teacher and the following songs which he taught us, come to mind ... Eton Boating Song (English), Men of Harlech (Welsh), Pokarekare Ana (New Zealand), Jamaica Farewell (West Indies), and Kookaburra Sits on the Old Gum Tree - a round - we had a lot of fun singing this. He never taught the songs in isolation - there always were mini lessons about their origin - a great way to learn about other parts of the world.

Bob Boorer: Mr Lahy tried to teach us French. He was quite good. Mr Lahy and Miss Kennedy ended up marrying.

Gerry Haumann: As well as being principal Mr Barker was also our science teacher. We had Mr Walsh for history, Mr Alcorn for maths, and Mr Lahy for French. Thinking back now it must have been pretty hard for those teachers trying to pronounce some of those Eastern European names. As for me I was proud to have gone to St Albans High. I always felt the school was prepared to help you if you wanted to be helped. The school is now a far cry from its simple and tough beginning, though I do hope that it still has the same ideals.

Daryl Keeble: The teachers at St Albans were very strict. Mr 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.

Jeff Barlow: I remember Harry Lahy, our French teacher. He was either ex-army or ex-air force and was quite autocratic in his approach; he was not a very approachable person. When the school moved to St Albans they instituted home marching, where the different sport houses would line up for marching practice every day. The idea was to bring some discipline to the kids

- maybe we were an unruly lot. We had to learn to march like soldiers, boys and girls. We had marching competitions on sports days to decide who were the best marching groups. We'd do left wheels, right wheels, and all sorts of things. Harry Lahy would get very upset if kids would march out of step or wouldn't take it seriously.

Vanda Viti: Every time I hear "Advance Australia Fair" I think of dear Mr Lahy. He was our Music teacher and he taught us that song in Form 2, as well as other Australian songs and English songs. I remember thinking why do we sing "God Save the Queen" when "Advance Australia Fair" is so much better? So when Australia finally decided to have its own national anthem I thought surely "Advance Australia Fair" would be selected, and it was, but how embarrassing that some of our Olympics athletes didn't know the words ... but us St Albans kids knew! We even knew the second verse. Dear Mr Lahy, wherever your soul is in the cosmos, thank you. You were a true republican.



Staff 1959, Lahy in back row 6 from left, Kennedy in front row on right.

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Thanks to Lana Malakunis for her contributions.

Article written by Joseph Ribarow.

School photos from Nick Szwed archives.