

KEITH ROBERT ROBERTSON: COMMERCE AND SPORTS TEACHER, 1960s



Keith Robert Robertson was born in 1938 in Tempy, south of Ouyen in the Mallee district, Victoria. His parents were Henry William "Ginger" Robertson and Alice Elizabeth McLean, who were wheat farmers and raised six children. Ginger or Ginge Robertson played with the Tempy football club and received lots of accolades in the local press: "Ginger Robertson played a magnificent game for the winners. He stood out among the whole 36. His uncanny marks were a source of constant delight to the Tempy supporters. He has an undoubted genius for football and should go far in the game as he has youth on his side. He was a deciding factor in Tempy's win and should be a tower of strength to them during the season." (Ouyen Mail 6 June 1932 p3.)

Keith Robertson followed in his father's footsteps regarding football prowess and "made his mark by taking out the club Best and Fairest and finishing runner-up in the Mallee League award." He received a letter of interest from the Collingwood Football Club but did not respond apparently because his career of choice was to become a teacher. He moved to Melbourne to study Commerce at Melbourne University.

Keith Robertson married Gwenneth Catherine Cattanach in 1961. Gwenneth had attended Ouyen High School and obtained a teaching bursary in 1955, so she also was a teacher.

Keith Robertson started at St Albans High School in 1961 with qualifications in B.Comm & Dip Ed. He was the Form Teacher of 1A in 1961.



North Melbourne League Team 1962. Robertson in front row second from left.



FORM 1A

Front: H. Borkovec, M. McFerran, K. Mallshew, P. Barnes (Form Captain), Mr. K. Robertson,
H. Schulz (Form Captain), G. Gaut, W. Malinowski, L. Chatterton.
Second row: A. Newland, S. Morris, S. Koschade, A. Masiarz, A. Terawskyj, R. Yankovic, R. Stephenson,
S. Coster, G. Anders, R. Kuc.
Third row: U. Schindler, J. Baulch, H. Sawczuk, Y. Eder, H. Davidson, B. Reid, G. Ilott, G. Snooks,
J. Worden, J. Knott, H. Goralski.
Back: Y. Correwe, K. Roukicek, H. Cocks, S. Whitley, E. Schonfelder, A. Sharp.



(Back) I Sharp, P Metha, H Steigler, P Becker, F Richardts (Second) V Manic, M Neskov, A Lubicz, D Pringle, V Beka, J Darul, G Listopad, E Strehling (Front) L Cameron, S Hubik, P Plain, Mr K Robertson, R Ciolli, R Clifford, I Volkov.

Robertson was probably involved with the controversy regarding the demise of soccer at the high school in the early 1960s. Leo Dobes recalls ... "I remember particularly a teacher called Robertson. Apparently an Aussie Rules player who was said to have played for North Melbourne, he railed against the un-Australian behaviour of those who preferred to play soccer at lunchtime. For some time, soccer balls were banned from the school."

Even some other teachers shared this view. Victor Mahorin argued the case for soccer. The sportsmaster argued there were not enough boys to make up a soccer team because of the numbers required for all the other sports. David Worland was the assistant sports master in 1963/64 and stated ... "I became involved in school sports, which was interesting as the school's policy at the time seemed to be that students were encouraged to adopt Australian sports and that meant playing Aussie Rules football, rather than soccer. I don't know whose policy it was – either the school or the Department, but in the early days I believe that soccer was discouraged, which is crazy when you think about it."

Robertson was Principal of Rutherglen High School between 1984 and 1992.

Keith Robert Robertson died in October 2020.



Ian Sharp, a former student at St Albans High, shared his thoughts about his former teacher on Facebook: "Keith taught at St Albans High School in the early 1960's when he was playing with North Melbourne. He was a gun winger and gained Victorian selection too. We all looked up to him and were rapt when he coached our senior footy team in 1962. We were only Form 5 and 4 boys playing against more established schools with mainly Form 6 boys, so we struggled for wins, but that didn't matter to us. One match we had Keith as our coach and Bobby Skilton as the umpire, can't remember whether we won or not but we were as happy as Larry on the bus trip home. He also attended 'sportsmens nights' at the school, Alan Killigrew was there with him one night, both spoke to us about the VFL game. There were always lots of questions, my only clear memory is him telling us he didn't drink milk, preferred a beer. Not sure why that stuck

with me, but I think milk consumption declined in our group afterwards. We also faced up to his bowling at the Teachers v Students match. I opened the batting, the headmaster bowled donkey drops, then we had to face Keith ... he took it easy on us ... until he batted, he belted us around for a bit till he retired. Only match the staff ever won I think. He was a great role model for us young blokes. A few of us trained at North in 1967, Keith had moved on, but we got to meet some of his old teammates who spoke highly of him. I met him again when I was teaching in Sunraysia, at one stage I was at the Catholic School trying to teach Dale Weightman Economics I think, and later had a run out in the Millewa playing with Bambill where one of my team mates was Keith's brother, Alan, a classy player too. I was sorry to hear of Keith's death, he made a big impact on us. Condolences to the family."

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Article written by Joseph Ribarow.
School photos from Nick Szwed archives.