

## Numurkah Alumni Inc

### Presidents Report

#### Hilary Vella

Dear Members and friends of Numurkah Alumni,

I thank members for voting me in for the second year as president, though I don't think I keep control of meetings very well. There is always a fair bit of catching up and chatter and sidetracking of the business at hand! We do have fun though!

Our membership has stayed at around 47 and we were able to give out 10 \$50.00 scholarships at the end of year assembly, two for each year level (7 to 11) and \$500 for the Dux of the school, Danielle Anderson (a total of \$1,000 in scholarship contributions). You will find a report by Danielle elsewhere in this newsletter, along with reports from the 2008 Scholarship recipients.

There have been a few 'hits' on our blog (with Bill Cantwell's contribution (also found in full in this newsletter) a recommended read. It's an amazing record regarding his time in Vietnam and his resulting career. We told him it wouldn't be too hard and I'm glad he has penned his history.

At the recent AGM (9th Feb 2010), the committee voted to fold the Alumni. The membership drive (late 2009) was a disappointment, with only two new members enrolling out of 50 letters posted.

Not to fear, the blog will remain, and Fay will contact people (via emails) if anything special comes up. We are negotiating with the College that the money we have in our coffers will continue to provide scholarships to worthy students until the money runs out. (As per our constitution).

Our final function will be the 28th March, the date set aside for our yearly gathering. We shall stick with tradition and have another

BBQ. You are very welcome to join us on our last Alumni fling! We shall have our final meeting here and wrap up any loose ends (short and sweet!) Blogging can occur too!

I would like to thank all Alumni members for their contributions during the Club's short life-span. Thanks again this year to the following Alumni committee members: Fay Scadden (Secretary) who does the majority of the Alumni work, Jan Stevens (Treasurer) for keeping tabs on us all, the members who travel from Melbourne to attend meetings, as well as the locals particularly Leigh Robertson (current teacher) for his input and expertise.

*Hilary Vella (McAllister)*

### You are invited to our FINAL Fling....

★ March 28th 2010

★ 10am to 2pm

★ Numurkah Secondary College

★ BYO meat for a BBQ and a salad to share.

★ Opportunity to learn to blog (under instruction!).

★ Everyone welcome....

★ FREE to Members

★ \$20 for Non-Members (which will make you a member!)

### Bangerang 2009

Silver & Bronze members will note that the 2009 Bangerang does not contain a dedicated page to the Alumni. We apologize for this oversight, the hectic schedule at the end of the school year caught our Secretary / Publicist off guard.

### 1956 Gathering

The 1956 gathering organized for Saturday 27th March coincides nicely with our Alumni Yearly Fling. Here are the details straight from the horse's mouth:

Numurkah High School 1956 Class Reunion.

- Saturday 27 March 2010
- Olive House Restaurant
- GV Hwy - Kialla
- 10.30 am till 4.30pm.

Partners are most welcome (and bring along your old photos etc.)

For further details:

- Wendy Gilchrist 0358269593
- Elaine Trickey 0358662658

If you are still about on Sunday 28th, you are encouraged to join with other past students and staff and attend a casual get together at the Numurkah Secondary College (BYO eats & drinks - BBQ supplied).

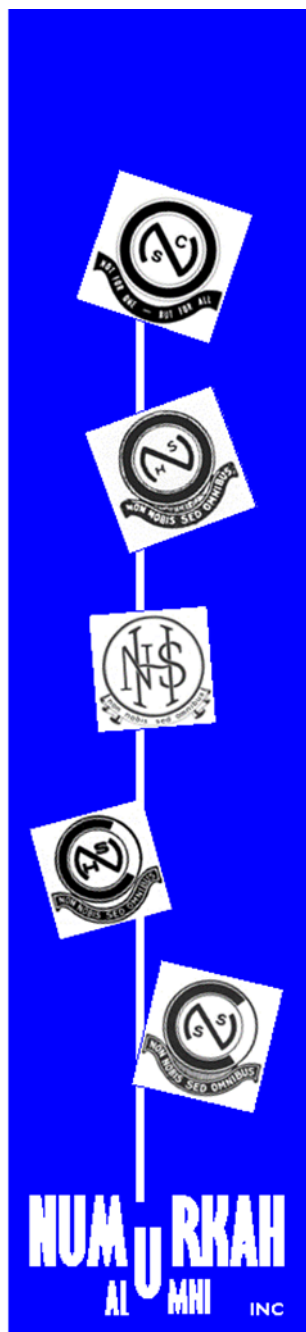
This is the annual Alumni event, held on the last Sunday in March for the benefit of all past students, staff and their partners.

The College will be open and tours available.

A great way to conclude your week-end of memories!!

### Facebook

With the impending demise of the Alumni, a Facebook page has been set up to enable past students to keep in touch this way. If you want to join (first you have to register with Facebook) please feel free to do so.... and of course it doesn't cost you anything - just a little of your time to read very quick messages. If you don't know how to use facebook, find a friend who does and get them to help you.



**"We wish Danielle every success in her endeavors and hope to read a report about her conquests in the next Alumni newsletter"**



Danielle Anderson  
Dux 2009



Leah Pizzini  
2008 Scholar

## COLLEGE DUX 2009

The Alumni was pleased to present a scholarship to the Dux of 2009, Danielle Anderson. Here, in part, is the speech she made at the presentation evening.

*"I would like to express my gratitude to the teachers who taught me throughout my time at Numurkah Secondary College, in particular Year 12 teachers Ms Corbo, Mr Rogash, Mr Elford, Mr Hansford and Mr Thompson.*

*All teachers must be thanked for the patience and tolerance shown to the Year 12 Cohort. They gave up a lot of their time to benefit our studies, offering useful advice, guidance and assistance - especially leading up to exams.*

*I thank my parents and grandfather for the encouragement and support provided to me, without the support of family none of us would be here tonight.*

*I acknowledge my fellow Year 12s. The friendships formed and support shared is a major contributor to the successes many of us have experienced to date and will continue to achieve in the future.*

*At the beginning of 2009 I had no idea what I would do at the year's end. This was a difficult decision and I struggled with it until the closing date for course selections a few months ago. My interest in sports and sciences led me to consider Exercise and Sport Science at Deakin University. I have achieved the results required for this course and will hopefully receive an offer in mid January. If successful I will, in 2010, be studying sport sciences, coaching and human movement.*

*For prospective Year 12 students I offer you this advice, don't take the year for granted, and seize the initiative to achieve the results you are after. It will mean a lot of hard work and effort but it doesn't mean you have to give up your life.*

*I encourage all students to make the most of opportunities offered to you at Numurkah Secondary College whether academic, sport or art based. In the school environment you will not only learn and build knowledge, but develop skills and achieve personal goals. Don't underestimate your potential as an individual or as a school group.*

*Finally I would like to thank the school, and the school community, for providing me with the means to*

*achieve the results to pursue the course of my choice. I acknowledge the support of the Alumni with the \$500 scholarship, this will be a great assistance with the expenses I am about to face.*

*Good luck to all the graduates of 2009 wherever they find themselves in the future and best of luck to the class of 2010 in their future studies."*

*We wish Danielle every success in her endeavours and hope to read a report about her conquests in the next Alumni newsletter.*

## All Rounder Scholarships

President Hilary Vella had the pleasure of presenting students with "All Rounder" scholarships at the College's presentation evening in December 2009. This award is for students who aren't necessarily academic but put in 100% to their classes and college life. Each \$50 scholarship assists recipients with payments for books, stationery and school fees. Your Alumni registrations help us to award these students. \$500 was awarded to the Dux of the School Ms Danielle Anderson (see article below).

Scholarship Recipients:

Year 7:

- Jade Connolly
- Austin Jones

Year 8:

- Tom Lewis
- Adrian Crestani

Year 9:

- Michelle VandenGoor
- Mitch Jones

Year 10:

- Jay Carmichael
- Elliott Small

Year 11:

- Caitlyn Burke
- Belinda Booth

## Past Scholars Reporting

### Leah Pizzini

Hi my name is Leah Pizzini and I was one of the Alumni Scholarship recipients in my final year (2008). My plans after finishing school were

to be accepted into the Bachelor of Physical and Health Education course at LaTrobe University Bendigo and I was successful in acquiring a place by the help of a program called SALT. This course will allow me to become a Primary or Secondary Teacher majoring in Physical and Health Education.

I enjoyed my first year immensely and am currently just beginning the second year. While there are theory components throughout the year there is also a certain amount of practicum to be completed, which involves planning and organizing to teach a class in a primary school environment.

I got to where I am today from lots of hard work in VCE at Numurkah Secondary College, however, without the support and constant encouragement from my teachers I wouldn't now be in the university course of my dreams.

By winning the scholarship it proved to me that I do have what it takes academically, and as a leader, to strive to be successful in the career I have chosen.

The scholarship money helped me purchase a new laptop, a necessity in University life for assignments and research.

The Alumni Scholarship is a great opportunity for Numurkah students, giving them a head start to whatever they plan to become or achieve in their future years. The scholarship is a starting point in helping scared and 'just out of school' student's step into the real world where they have to be responsible for their actions to succeed in their chosen career.

### Kendall Fraser

They say the average person makes seven career changes in a lifetime. When deciding on what to do with my future, choices were many and I looked into a variety of areas, including teaching, psychological science and media, changing my ideal career path a hundred times in just a few years.

The relief of finishing Year 12 was somewhat overshadowed by the curiosity and anxiety which entering the adult world entailed. Still not set on what I wanted to study, I took a year off and decided to find a way to continue my studies so I wouldn't fall out of the habit. I enrolled in a Diploma of Children's Services at TAFE in Shepparton, with the hope it would give me an insight into

working with children if I were to head into the primary teaching field.

I studied the diploma for six months, including completing a three-week practical placement at the ABC Centre in Numurkah. Whilst I felt I was benefitting from the course, I couldn't find the passion I wanted to feel for my career, but I planned to complete the year to gain the qualifications which could be useful in the future.

Writing has forever been a love of mine, and I've always been a keen English student. During my year off, journalism had crossed my mind more than once, but I was unsure how to go about studying it. After researching different university and TAFE options, I found a suitable course at Deakin University. I then discovered 'journalist cadetships', which quickly became my favored option.

Possibly the biggest appeal of a cadetship was that it would enable me to work as a journalist whilst becoming qualified.

I enquired at the local paper in Numurkah as to whether they would take on a cadet, and the response was initially a negative. A few days later, I received a phone call from the editor, offering me two days trial to see if my writing was up to standard.

I took up this offer, and in late September, I was thrown right into the full swing of life as a journalist. I was assisting with interviews and writing stories on my first day, and after proving my worth, I was offered the job as a journalist for the Numurkah Leader.

I exited my TAFE diploma early, and gained credit for studies completed that year.

My journalism studies are completed by correspondence, and as an extra requirement, I study shorthand, also via correspondence. This aspect of the course is completed over two years, after which I will undertake a post-cadetship journalism course at Deakin University.

Scholarships such as the Alumni's provide the building blocks to tertiary study, giving students that little kick start they need. Though I wasn't certain of what I would end up doing when I finished school, I have now entered an industry which I am absolutely satisfied with and that will provide challenge and enjoyment to make it more than just a career.

The scholarship enabled me to start my course at TAFE and it set me on a journey of self discovery. Though I didn't continue in the path of childhood education, I learnt what makes me tick, where my strengths and weaknesses lie, and discovered a career I'm passionate about.

The Alumni should feel a sense of pride that it is able to contribute in such a way to the lives of Numurkah students. I am very grateful for the helping hand given to me. It opened many doors for me, and I thank you for being the key.

### 2009 Yearly Event—Blogged

A small (but dedicated) group of Alumni members attended the blogging day held on 28<sup>th</sup> March 2009. And a pleasant day was had by all culminating in a particularly delicious BBQ lunch. There has been a number of 'hits' on the blog during the year. To help 'techno' challenged persons to understand how to get around the site a new audio clip has been added on the home page... we know so many of you are daunted by this process! The 'hit's for 2009 include:

1954: Lucy (Smit) "Lifemagician"

1986: Leigh Robertson (Teacher)

1961: Elaine Brown (Now Gravina)

1976: Barb Corry (Now Dealy)

1972: Hilary McAllister (now Vella)

1975: Megan McLeod (now Hurtig)

1989: Trudi Stevenson

1971: Wayne Delahoy

A number of people also participated in the 'who am I' competition. But you can take a look at the site to find out the answers...  
<http://numurkahpaststudentclub.edublog.org/>

### Norm Seymour

Numurkah Secondary College Alumni are sad to note the passing of Alumni member Norm Seymour.

Norm was head of the Technical section of the Numurkah Comprehensive High School from 1973-1987 and was responsible for many innovations and developments in the Technical area of the school. To his widow, Margot and family we offer our condolences. Norm is pictured to the right—this photograph taken towards the end of his teaching career.

### Former Student Helps with Speaking Skills

Numurkah Secondary College is very fortunate to engage the services of a past student (attended Numurkah High School from 1958 until 1962) to coach current students in the finesse of Public Speaking.

Public speaking is an art form in itself and is a scary proposition for many of us and yet newly elected College Leaders are expected to address their peers in assemblies and in public speaking engagements outside the school environment with little or no training. Five years ago the College acknowledged these difficulties and decided to approach Don Kilgour to design a specific course to improve the leadership group's communication skills.

Mr Kilgour operates a public speaking studio in Shepparton and has an extensive career in Radio and Television. He also draws on his eleven years experience as Member for Shepparton in the Victorian Parliament and is able to use that experience to help students understand the importance of being able to stand up and speak out with confidence, conviction and clarity.

Students learn how to use a microphone and project their voice so that they can be heard. They are also taught the importance of using the right words in a way that enables the listener to clearly understand their message.

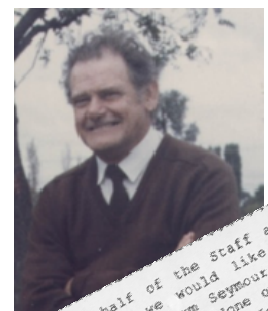
Lynita Taylor, Principal, recognises the importance of Don's work and says, "we continue to delight in the results of the course and marvel at the transformation as each student discovers the skills and confidence to become competent and communicative school leaders. The College recognises that with Mr Kilgour's assistance leaders are developing important life-long, employable, skills".



*Don Kilgour helps students speak out*



*Kendall Fraser  
Alumni Scholar 2008*



*In Memoriam  
Norm Seymour*  
On behalf of the Staff and Students we would like to thank Norm Seymour for all that he has done on our behalf over the past fourteen years in his position of Vice Principal of N.C.H.S. We

### Sport Update

For those who still have a leaning towards one of the college houses, Gray won the swimming & cross country sports but this wasn't enough to stop Tweddle who were triumphant in the Athletics and again the recipients of the overall champion house trophy.



**Athletic House Winners**  
Tweddle Captains  
Daniel Buzza & Kelly Shelton



### Pictures from 1960 (50 years ago)



*Above*  
Ms L. Mahlsberg—Sportsmistress  
*Below*  
Students from 1960



The Alumni Scholarship is a huge opportunity for students, giving them a head start to whatever they plan to become or achieve in the future years to come.

### Planning a Reunion?

If you are planning a reunion, please shoot your plans through to Fay at [car33rs\\_num@yahoo.com](mailto:car33rs_num@yahoo.com)

#### 1940's

Always the last Friday in January - contact Betty & Brian Heard for more details 0358621625

#### 1950-51

Reunion date: 17-18 April 2010 - Contacts Howard Lowe 0358622224 [howlow@mcmedia.com.au](mailto:howlow@mcmedia.com.au) or Laurie Cook [cookli@bigpond.net.au](mailto:cookli@bigpond.net.au) - Saturday: Registration 1pm & tour of School, 6pm Dinner (2 course buffet) at Shamrock Hotel @\$26 - pre-pay with booking. Sunday: 9am Registration & tour school. 12noon BBQ lunch (pay on day). Bookings required by April 10 2010.

#### 1954

Kevin Walker writes: had a great get together in Bendigo (11th Sept 2009) with Kerry O'Brien, Eric Rivers and Bob Byham. We now come from all over the country SA, Tassie and Vic. We reconnected after the reunion - only one attended and took the trouble to make contact again. I had not seen my old school mates since 1957 so we had heaps to talk about, aided by the reunion DVD and some old school photographs. It was great to catch up after all this time and to see how our life travels have taken us in different directions, and to share knowledge of the whereabouts of different people that we knew and the sad news of those who are no longer with us.

We plan another get together in Tasmania soon. If you wish to join us please shoot an email through to [ca33rs\\_num@yahoo.com](mailto:ca33rs_num@yahoo.com) and the Alumni will pass on your request.

#### 1961

Planning one for March 2011 (last Sunday)... contact Elaine Brown (nee Gravina) [ecgravina@mcmedia.com.au](mailto:ecgravina@mcmedia.com.au) or 0358292376.

#### 1962

Planning one for March 2012 (last Sunday)... contact Janet Stevens (nee Farrell) [rayandjanetstevens@bigpond.com](mailto:rayandjanetstevens@bigpond.com) or 0358621102. 0438621102.

### 1968-73

Have an annual gathering each year in October/November. Contact David.j.bell@telstra.com or 0417501503 or Diane Symons (nee Finlayson) on 0409821040.

This is their 2009 Report: "The Numurkah High School Class of 68-73 held their annual reunion on Sat 7th Nov 2009. Dinga (David) Bell, the convener of this group (and probably still recovering from the arm twisting) said that "unfortunately numbers were down on last year but those who did attend had a great night. With so many activities in our lives....work, friends, kids, grandkids, holidays, retirement etc, it is always difficult to find a day that suits everyone. It was great to see some new faces and to catch up with what's been happening in people's lives. It was also great to re-live many old tales from our time at NHS."

The date of the next reunion will be displayed on the Alumni's blog site when it is known. David regularly corresponds with our Alumni secretary to keep us in the loop.

#### 1973

"Big 50th Birthday Bash" on the long weekend in March 2010! (Sat 6th Mar) Dinner/Dance at the Shamrock, and on the Sunday will be a Picnic/Barbecue at Holmes opposite the hospital. Contact Sue Duncan [chevron-design@bigpond.com](mailto:chevron-design@bigpond.com)

#### 1984

Held another get-together on the 31st October 2009 at the Numurkah Golf Club... contact is Jamie Ward 0354481300 if interested in future reunions (during business hours).

#### 1989-1994

This group held a reunion on the 6th & 7th June 2009 (long weekend) with a 3 course dinner (at The Mary McKillop Centre St Joseph Primary School Numurkah) and the College opened briefly on the Sunday for people to have a look and reminisce... the good and the bad...! Contact: Nicole Watson (nee Austin) 0438623701 or [ndkaca@bigpond.com](mailto:ndkaca@bigpond.com).

### Youth Allowance Rally

As November came into being, the Alumni put out a call to its members to assist with the cost of transporting Numurkah students to a rally in Shepparton to march against the government's proposed changes to Youth Allowance. Members were also encouraged to email parliamentarians to have their input into the situation. As you may recall changes to Youth Allowance criteria mean that students from middle income rural families would need to find full time work (for 18 months during a 2 year period) to secure Youth Allowance for their tertiary education. The costs of accommodation alone can set families back \$20,000 per year, a debt which many metropolitan students do not shoulder. You, as a past (rural) student and community member, can appreciate that this is an impractical and unworkable reality for our current students.

The rally was a great educational experience for students, and Numurkah certainly bulked out the numbers in attendance, unfortunately the jury is 'still out' on a definitive answer to this dilemma as the parliamentary sitting was interrupted by other pressing matters and postponed to a later date (with most changes remaining intact).

The Alumni Committee would like to recognise two members (who wish to remain anonymous) for their monetary support to help pay for the wages of the bus driver on the day. We thank them sincerely. Caldwell's buses also donated the bus for the day and we acknowledge their support also.

### ANZAC Preparation

Each year the College captains assist the RSL and Community with the organization and presentation of the ANZAC ceremonies for Numurkah and Strathmerton. College Captains Ray Goldsack and Stacey Hickey are pictured below with RSL members.



## What else does a Kid from Katunga do?

The following article was written by one of our stalwart committee members, Bill Cantwell.

When I started at Katunga State School, the Head Teacher was "Mr. Menzies". I thought he was also the Prime Minister of Australia that I had heard about on the radio. He must have gone to a lot of meetings at night time like my dad.

By 1960 when I started at Numurkah High School, my perception of the world was: not "wide" but at least "wider". My understanding of it remained shallow. The 1960's decade was, for perhaps "most", the age of dissent, awareness, public protest and individual freedom. If that age reached Katunga or Numurkah – it must have been after I left to join the Army in December 1965. We were the children of "Returned" men. We were raised on the virtues of conforming – to "mainstream values" I suppose. But really, there was only one stream. It was a stream of insecurity (the "cold war"), McCarthyism (ask me about McCarthyism at Katunga State School), misplaced "patriotism" and xenophobia (the "Yellow Peril"). Hatred of Communism was compulsory, and the "Domino Theory" was an article of faith. The "Cuban Missile Crisis" attracted more attention than the Melbourne Cup, but still there was no "debate" – It was still "us or them". These matters were fenced off, by both the parents and the Department, from the teachers at Numurkah High School. "Debate" at High School came only with a capital "D". It comprised a formal, polite and "adjudicated" contest of arguments between senior students in the Assembly Hall – on subjects of the utmost triviality.

By the time the "real" Prime Minister Menzies committed Australian soldiers to combat (C/F advisory) roles in Vietnam, we were in about Form 4 (Year 10), aged about 15 and almost "combat ready".

When my father sold the orchard I was 17 years old, and I enlisted in the Army (I was not "conscripted"). They couldn't send me to Vietnam until I was 19 years old, so I spent a

couple of years in Recruit Training (at Wagga), Infantry Training (Sydney) and in various Infantry Units in Qld, WA and NSW. I did specialized training in reconnaissance, medical aid, radio communications and parachuting. The parachuting was fun if a bit scary.

I went to Vietnam with the First Battalion in 1968. For the first couple of months we engaged the Viet Cong in guerilla warfare – initially in the Long Hai Mountains (referred to by us as "the Wolverton Mountains").

In May we were sent out of our usual Province to establish a temporary base of operations called "Fire Support Base Coral". There began the most terrifying experience of my life – the "Battle of Coral". Books have been written about the Battle of Coral – I record only a few personal observations.

Intelligence Reports (my father had warned me about "Intelligence Reports") were that defeated North Vietnamese soldiers were withdrawing from the Tet (New Year) offensive on Saigon, in complete disarray. We were to cordon them off. The Intelligence Reports did not mention that a Regiment of North Vietnamese soldiers was moving toward Saigon to form the 3rd wave of the Tet Offensive – and we were directly in their path. Less than twelve hours after we landed on the ground – in the middle of the night – they attacked.

This was not guerilla warfare – this was Ho Chi Minh's "Mobile Warfare" on a large scale. However, the scene – to an independent observer, would have been reminiscent of a scene from WW1:

A few hundred Australian soldiers, crouched or lying in partly built trenches, are defending their position (and lives) against waves of enemy foot-soldiers (a thousand or so) who have partially overrun the position. Additionally: the earth and sky are afire with the modern embellishments of rockets, helicopter "gunships", and war-planes dive-bombing the enemy – perilously close to the Australians.

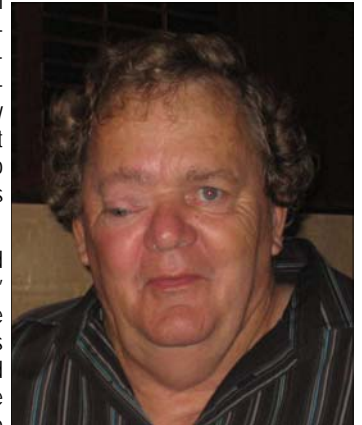
Eleven Australian soldiers were killed and Twenty-eight wounded in that first few hours of battle. I still have nightmares about it, but I remember the universal courage of my comrades: including the mortar platoon and the artillery soldiers whose positions were overrun by

the enemy. Even the Transport Officer (another job not usually associated with close combat) performed with considerable personal courage in re-supplying the soldiers with ammunition. Mr. Fischer was later to become Deputy Prime Minister of Australia (for real). There were many actions of great courage that have not been "officially" recognized. They do not need to be – for we the survivors know!

Next morning, the Americans dropped in a bulldozer (under a "Sky Crane" helicopter) so that we might bury the enemy dead. Our dead were, as usual, gathered into "body-bags" and placed in helicopters. They were flown by RAAF transport planes to burials in Australia (if the family paid the fare) or in the nearest Commonwealth War Grave (Malaya). I am reminded of Eric Bogle's song "No-man's Land". It concerns the burial of a fallen soldier ("Young Willie MacBride") in "Flanders Fields" during WW1. In a reverse of that situation, our Vietnam soldiers were not the mourners by the graveside. Our soldiers were the bereaved far away – with no opportunity to grieve, to mourn, or to pity. For the war moved on to another day – to perhaps another "contact" with the enemy. Indeed, the Battle of Coral continued relentlessly – though with fluctuating intensity, for weeks. "Coral" was part of the wider battle including the nearby Australian Fire Support Base of "Balmoral". My 20th Birthday passed without death or celebration, and we eventually returned to our permanent base at Nui Dat. Twenty-Six Australians had been killed and a Hundred wounded at "Coral/Balmoral".

The continuous patrolling Operations left all of us, in varying degrees: undernourished, underweight, chronically tired, emotionally numb and intellectually flat. And dirty. One of my rare personal contacts with the Americans was in a "safe" area near a large village. We had been out in the jungle for about four weeks, we had dug trenches and we had not had an opportunity to wash at all. We were greeted by some American soldiers with the question: "How did you guys get so dirty?" We were confused and speechless! We learnt that the American soldiers had hot meals and showers brought to them by helicopter!

Sometimes on Operations we did get to wash. On one occasion, we had moved into a safe Fire Support Base out in the jungle somewhere. We went down to the creek and had a wash – next to some artillery soldiers.



*Bill Cantwell—The Katunga Kid—Jan 2010*

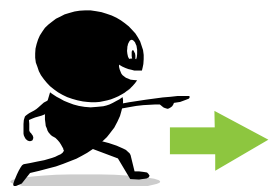
We're on the Web!

See us at:

[numurkahpaststudentsclub.edubl.org.org](http://numurkahpaststudentsclub.edubl.org.org)

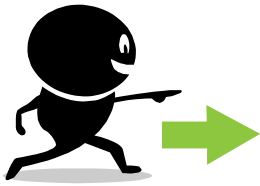
OR

<http://www.numurkahsc.vic.edu.au/>



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*The Katunga Kid continues....*

The enemy bullet went through my Right eye – across behind my nose and lodged in my Left jawbone.

One of them called out "Hey Bill! What are you doing here?" It was Peter Dealy from my Form at Numurkah High! That was a catch up! Like having a trip home for a few minutes. I enjoyed the update on the Murray League even though I was a supporter of the Picola League. In fact: any news from "the outside world" was more than welcome. Generally, out in the jungle, we only knew what we could see or hear with our own faculties. One story that did miraculously reach us in the jungle was that: an American athlete at the Olympic Games had smashed the long jump record. It was true!

My memory is a little hazy on the point, but I think it was not long after catching up with Peter that I was shot. I was the "forward scout" for Charlie Company at that moment. Nobody was keeping scores – but anecdotal evidence was that forward scouts had a high casualty rate. The enemy bullet went through my Right eye – across behind my nose and lodged in my Left jawbone. Two of my comrades were killed and five of us were wounded. The enemy was still firing over us from a bunker position, when about five of my comrades moved forward under this enemy fire to retrieve us. They were "pinned down". Pete got a "smoke grenade" to work – picked me up and carried me out! He saved my life! They retrieved us all. Back a little from the "front line", one of that "rescue" group; "Doc" Clark, was now in a state of shock. "Doc" was the Company medic. He told me years later that: what started his brain going again was the realization that I was drowning on my blood. He immediately found a scalpel and: on the jungle floor he performed a "trachy" on me (cut a hole into my "windpipe" so that I could breathe). He saved my life too! "Doc" had been an electrical salesman, and had run a transport

business before he was conscripted. The Army made a good call when they allocated him to Medical Core! He is revered by all who served with him.

My mate Daryl copped the job of carrying me to the helicopter. I wasn't looking real flash I suppose. Something happened to the first helicopter, and Daryl had to carry me through the jungle to another one. When Daryl returned to Charlie Company, he told them to "forget Bill – he's dead!" When I went to a "Coral Reunion" about 15 years later they were saying to me "But you're dead!". Daryl, who then and now comes from South Gippsland ("via Mirboo North"), is a very good mate.

The Army had "lost" me for a week or so, the helicopter had carried me to the American "21 Evacuation Hospital" at Long Binh. There, I awoke on the Operating Table, and I knew nothing! According to theatre staff: they told me that I was "in Vietnam" and I replied: "Vietnam – that rings a bell!" When they told me that I had "been shot", I replied: "I am very tired and I am going back to sleep – wake me up if anyone starts shooting!" That is how we lived – and you can't stop living.

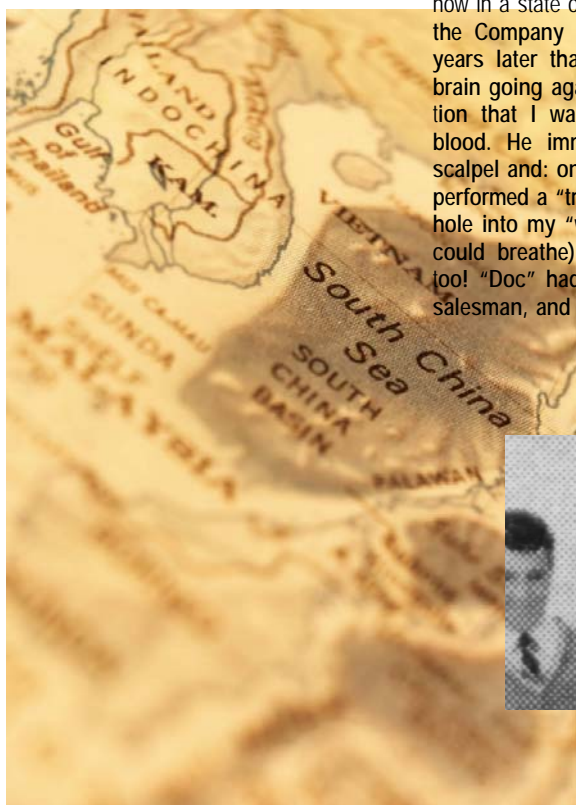
After a short stay at the Australian hospital at Vung Tau, they sent me back to Australia. Heidelberg Repatriation Hospital became my home until they closed the Ward for Christmas in December 1968. At Watsonia Barracks Major Anderson (Officer Commanding - Personnel Depot) asked me what I intended doing when I "got out". I told him I was "going back to school", and he replied that he would give me a Discharge "next January in time for School". This was a huge favor. Watsonia became my "halfway house" where I learnt to be a civilian – where I learnt to live in the city – with civilians. There were many Vietnam Veterans who were thrown

straight back into civilian life and couldn't cope. Pete (who was awarded the "Military Medal" for his bravery), became an alcoholic. Like many Veterans he was restless and nomadic. He finally settled in Cairns because that's where he was when someone stole his car and all his "worldlys". Years later, when Pete was dying in hospital, it was "Doc" Clark who sat by his bed for days – because he wasn't going to let a mate die alone.

I approached the "Repatriation Department" for assistance under the "Soldiers Children's Education Scheme". My dad had died a TPI (he had been a POW of the Japanese). At 20 years of age I was still a "child". My brother Bob (now Dr. Rob Cantwell of Newcastle University) was studying at Monash under that Scheme. The clerk asked what happened to me. He suggested that I should be assisted under "The Disabled Members & Widows Training Scheme" (known as "Dimwits" for short). "Dimwits" it was and I studied Year 12 (missed Year 11) and then Law. There were five hundred Australian soldiers killed in Vietnam, and three thousand wounded. So far as I can find out – there were only four of us on "Dimwits". It wasn't a Secret but nobody knew about the "Dimwits Scheme". My six "gap years" made it difficult and I am sceptical of the benefits of even one "gap year". I was fortunate enough to practice law for about 30 years, mostly in "litigation" (court work). This kid from Katunga is now peacefully retired in Melbourne, and enjoying life.

I would like to thank the Alumni for this opportunity to share some of my experiences with my real peers – the ex students and teachers of Numurkah High School.

You can find this story, and other memories, on our blog site: <http://numurkahpaststudentclub.edublogs.org/>



## David & Ros sail into the sunset after 25 years

Ros McCracken (nee Hansen) attended high school at Numurkah from 1961 to 1965 and was an active member of our Alumni committee up until her life took on a new chapter earlier this year.

The following article is from the Numurkah Leader, we gratefully acknowledge their assistance and gallantly acquiescing to our humble pleas for help with articles about past students.

*"WHILE, across the nation, other men potter about their sheds pulling apart lawn mower engines, scratching together parts to make billy carts and cubby houses, and crawling under their cars, Katunga dairy farmer David McCracken has spent his time in the shed working on his one big dream.*

*On a Monday in March 2009, 25 years of "tinkering" came to fruition for David, as he watched his creation - a luminous white, 16.5 metre*

*long yacht - as it was lifted from the shed onto the back of an oversized truck, ready to be transported to its foamy resting place in a marina in Melbourne.*

*Men swarmed over her as they prepared her for her voyage, attaching cables and chains to the two cranes that eased the Rosabella into the sunlight, while David and son Rodney tore around to ensure things were running smoothly.*

*David's wife Ros stood back, surveying the process, camera in hand.*

*"For the past week, I've just been churning about this moment," she admitted, never taking her eyes off the men as they worked. "I didn't sleep a wink last night - I was just so excited, and nervous. It still hasn't sunk in, that after 25 years, David's finally finished her, and she's going to see water for the first time!"*

*David and Ros bought the plans for the Rosabella in 1981, thinking they'd "get around to it some day". "He's worked on it in spurts, depending on how much work he had to do around the farm. It's certainly*

*kept him out of the pub!" Ros laughed.*

*"He really got into it about five years ago, though, and he retired two years ago, so since then we've watched it take shape before our eyes."*

*The yacht, which will sleep eight people in three double cabins, and two single cabins, has been beautifully fitted out in Tasmania oak, and David and Ros envisage they will call the vessel home for a good portion of their retired lives. "This has been David's dream. He's sailed with friends for the past 20 years or so, but he's always had this desire the sail his own yacht. It's a great achievement for him," Ros said.*

*The Rosabella will sit in the marina in Melbourne until April 1 when the McCrackens will embark upon their first big maritime adventure, sailing to Rosslyn Bay in Queensland, which is to be the yacht's home port.*

*"We'll go around the Whitsundays after that, and then who knows where?" Ros laughed."*

### Post Script from Ros:

We left Melbourne aboard "Rosabella" on Sat 2nd May, bound for Rosslyn Bay (Yeppoon) our home port. Arrived at our destination on 8th June - just over 5 weeks! Spent two weeks hunkered down at Coffs Harbour waiting for the storms and heavy seas to abate - better than the alternative though!

The trip was certainly a challenge for us both, and an experience for me (who has only ever done a bit of day sailing in the bay) and probably not one I would care to repeat in the near future. There were plenty of great times though (these were mainly in marinas or perfect anchorages!) and we met some very interesting people along the way.

Home is now "Rosabella" and we have settled into our new "live a board" lifestyle well - and the weather is just amazing - blue skies, sunny, and around 25 - 28 degrees at the moment!

Will try to get together a proper report and some photos for the next meeting. Perhaps I could have a go at posting on web site - will see. Maybe I could inspire some students to follow their dreams and never give up - after all, ours did take 25 years!!

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**Pictured: David and Ros McCracken with their new 'home' Rosabella. Thank you to the Numurkah Leader for the photo.**

# Member Roll Call

Name	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	
ALLERT Sonia (Strachan)		Z*	Z*	Z*			
ALSTON Janice		B	B	B	B	B	
BROWN Elaine (Gravina)		B*	B*				
<b>BRYANT Sue (Nalder)</b>			S	S			
CANTWELL Bill	B	B					Committee Member
COOK Roslyn Dawn	B	B	B	B	B	B	
CORRY Barbara (Dealy)		B*	B*				Committee Member
COSENS Margaret (WATTS)	B	B	B	B	B		
DEALY James		B*	B*				
DEALY Peter	B	B	B	B	B		
DELL Jack			B*				
DENMAN Gail (Jenkins)	Z	B	Z				
DICKENS Mary		B*	B*				
<b>DODD Graeme</b>	S	S	S				Committee Member
DUNCAN Susan			B*	B*			
DUPLEIX Karen	B	B	B				
EDGE Herbert George	B	B	B	B	B		
FARRELL Janet (Stevens)	Z	Z	Z				Treasurer
FINLAYSON Diane (Symons)		S*	S*	S*	S*	S*	
FINN Janice (Jenkin)	B	B	Z				
GILMOUR Margaret (Clayton)		B*	B*				
GREAD Joy (Hutchins)	B	B	B				
HALL Leah (Boyd)		B*					
<b>HANSEN Kevin</b>	S	S	S	S			Vice President
HANSEN Roslyn (McCracken)	B	B					
HARRISON Lynette (Radcliffe)			B*				
HAYWARD Lucy (Smit)		B	B	B	B	B	
HEARD Anne Marce (Crowe)		B*					
HOPKINS Bronwyn (Atkins)		B*	B*	B*			
HYDE Alyson	S						
KENNEDY Heather (McLauchlan)	B	B	B				
MARTINDALE Elizabeth (Hine)	B	B	B				
McALLISTER Hilary (Vella)	B	S					President
McALLISTER Wendy	B	B	B	B	B		
MILLER Brian		B*	B*	B*	B*	B*	
MORRIS Irene (Cracknell)		B	B				
MORTIMER Denise Boldiston		B*	B*				
<b>NEWTON Diana</b>	S	S	S	S			
OTTREY Julie (Wilkinson)	B	B	B				Committee Member
PURCHASE Patricia (Young)	Z	B	B				
ROBERTS Allan		B*	B*	B*	B*	B*	
ROBERTSON Leigh	B	B	B	B			Committee Member
<b>SAXTON Robert</b>	S	S	S				
SCADDEN Fay	B	B	B				Secretary, Publicity etc
SEYMOUR Norman		B*	L				
SHARP April (Halliday)			B*	B*			
<b>SHEARSMITH Margaret (Callingham)</b>			S*	S*			
STEVENS Ray	B	B	B				
TWITT Susan (Helmores)	B						
WALKER Kevin		B	B	B	B	B	
WALLACE John		Z*	Z*	Z*			
WATTERS Helen (Aberton)	B	B	B				
WELLS Faye	B						
WESTON Ann (Blunsom)	B	B	B				
WILLOUGHBY Stephen	Z	Z	Z				Committee Member
WRIGHT Julie (Mercer)			B				

**B** = Basic Membership, **Z** = Bronze Member, **S** = Silver, **L** = sadly passed away recently.

**\*** = subs were paid in Mar/Apr (otherwise paid in Oct/Nov)