

BARRY RAYNER: MATHS-SCIENCES TEACHER, 1963 - 1965



I started teaching at St Albans High School when I was aged 22, and now that first exciting year in 1963 seems like only yesterday.

I was born in 1940 to Arthur Rayner and Elsie Mary Tennant, in Warrnambool. Dad was born in 1911; as you can imagine it was all horse and buggy days at the time. Cattle and sheep were the chief livestock industries in the area, so dairy produce and woollen mills were the main secondary industries. My father ran a butchering business which his father had begun and built up into a thriving business. Dad retired at the age of 85. My brother was by then in charge and his son was also working in the business. Unfortunately the business could not compete with supermarkets and was closed in 2002.

My great grandfather (Henry Rayner) had been in the British Merchant Navy - in sailing ships. When he and his bride settled in Australia he became a lighthouse-keeper in Williamstown, and also for several years in Warrnambool. I was the middle child of the family, with an older sister Beverley and a younger brother Clive. I completed my secondary schooling at Warrnambool High School in 1958. There were only about 300 students at the high school and only six of us did the Form 6 science course, so my experience of secondary education was significantly different to what I would witness when I came to St Albans.

My introduction to immigration from Europe occurred in 1954, my third year at high school, when I met the first migrant children who came to our school, two brothers from Germany and a boy from Switzerland. It was a great curiosity to us Aussie kids because we'd never met anyone who'd come straight from Europe after the war. Warrnambool High School was a very small school so these kids were very conspicuous. I became friendly with one of the German boys. He ended up becoming a teacher as well. The families had come to Australia and chosen a country town rather than the city as their place of settlement. The parents stayed there the rest of their lives.

My parents and grandparents were all born in Australia. Some of their parents were also born here but originally my family links are in Ireland and England. Warrnambool was a great place to live and being a quiet country town on the coast we spent many days on the beach. We had no car until I was a teenager so the family all rode bikes. My mother would make a large hamper of sandwiches and cakes almost every day during the summer holidays and we'd ride to the beach to join aunts, cousins, and friends for the day. I had my own pony and enjoyed riding with friends out in the countryside and at the beach. Riding the horses through the surf and galloping along the beach are wonderful activities. Most summers of my youth were spent in this way. We never travelled on family holidays - we did not need to.

Teaching as a Career

My decision to become a teacher of Maths and Science was made when I was in Form 4 and there is no doubt it was influenced by a fantastic teacher and person, Mr Laurie Collins, who made Maths stimulating for me. Laurie later returned to Melbourne Boys High School as Principal. After 42 years in education, I still know I made a sound decision then - teaching for me remains a great source of pleasure. Young people are still stimulating and fun to work with.

I trained at Melbourne University doing a degree in Science and teacher training. I had good experiences on my teaching rounds at a mixture of high schools and technical schools. These included Preston Tech, Burwood High School, Syndal Tech, Merrilands High School, and Westgarth Central school.

Coming to St Albans

I was originally appointed to University High School. In the school holidays prior to starting work, the Education Department wrote to me saying they wanted me to go to St Albans. I'd never heard of it, so I looked up the street directory and drove out. I got to the top of the Albion overpass and in the distance I could see this long grey building and a few half-houses. When I arrived - it must have been school holidays still - there was Ivan Matthews and he was very welcoming. The place looked fantastic inside. That was in 1963.

Teaching Duties

I was thrown in the deep end. In those days there was a particular shortage of qualified science and mathematics teachers. In the first year I had Form 6 for Calculus and Applied Maths, Form 5 for Maths 2, Forms 4A and 4B for Maths A and B, and Form 3B for Maths. I taught physics in '64 and '65, and then John Maddox came in 1966 after I left.

I remember there was a fantastic atmosphere in the place despite its isolation. The St Albans township was obviously very underdeveloped, with lots of half-houses. People were working really hard to make a living, often with a couple of jobs. There was a great sense of "let's do the best for our kids". I liked that.

Many of the parents were obviously professionals from Europe who had lost everything, and wanted their kids to become well educated. There was certainly a complete range of people from different backgrounds. I was teaching maths and physics to the higher forms so I tended to get the kids who were very capable and motivated.



Experience of Diversity

It was really interesting having all the nationalities and ethnic mix; I was fascinated by the fact that I was dealing with all this diversity. The first day when I had to read out the roll for Form 4A it seemed like a never-ending list of exotic names. My mispronunciation of these names caused considerable (but good natured) mirth.

I was in Room 3 for my maths classes and it was also my homeroom. I tried to make the room attractive and with a "maths atmosphere". I am sure that there were 5 rows by 4 desks, which means there must have been up to 40 kids in that classroom. I know there were 38 in one class, and I also had 32 students doing physics in another class - at Form 5 in 1965. How we managed the practical work I don't know!!

They were just wonderful kids and they were great to teach. I can actually remember every one of that lovely class. Some names include Tanya Korinsky, Heather Goddard, Tania Pavlova (whose parents Lu Pavlova and Paul Pavlov were also on staff), Robert Cioli, Cathy Hatjiandrou, Ivan Volkov, Garry Cameron, Katrin and Lorenz Schwab (great soccer reporter with The Age who sadly died a few years ago), Elena Dagys, John Dodson, Knut Werner, John Hemiak, Vlad Turok, Vlad Romanowski (who also died some years ago) and Gerry Kulbys.

When I arrived in St Albans I found so many interesting people ... all these strange names. I was fascinated by hearing some of the stories of people's origins, and there were some very sad backgrounds for a lot of them. I wanted to know where they were from and what was their background. Many of the kids had parents who had met in displaced person camps. There were many students who may have had, for example, Ukrainian and German parents, or Yugoslav and German parents; all sorts of combinations. I thought it was exciting and I wanted to know all about it. Often we heard little snippets but very often people were reluctant to talk about it. Later we became more familiar with specific family backgrounds when we went to some twenty-first birthday parties and weddings, and the parents were very pleased to see us and thanked us for looking after their kids.

Students and Teachers

I taught 4A for Maths A and B, was their form teacher, and obviously bonded very closely with them. When they went into Form 5, I had many of them for Maths 1, Maths 2, and Physics, and I had some of these same kids in Form 6 for Calculus and Applied Maths and Physics.

It was an exciting place. There were some really good, inspirational teachers: people like Allison Gliddon, Ivan Matthews, John Conroy, Eric Ford, and Doug Hill. There were also several migrant teachers who did a wonderful job, in particular Mrs Kriksciunas, Mrs Burden, Nick Bolvari, and Paul Pavlov.

We moved into the situation without any experience, but it was successful because we didn't have to fight classes. There were some difficult classes, I know. The classes I personally dealt with, with one exception, were outstanding. The kids just "ate out of your hands". There was no discipline problem, so you could really get to know them and relax with them and teach them. It was great fun; I enjoyed it. I just loved the whole three years I was there and was sorry to go in the end.

Observation of Students

The kids were really friendly, and, because we were relaxed with them, there was that great spirit in the place. I coached the school baseball team and we had a lot of fun and also success. Alex Slesarawicz (Sash), Wally Kosiak, Glen Brotchie, Victor Eismontas, and Kazimierz Grzankowski were some of the team.



Form 6, 1965.

Many of these young people had lots of ability and were good students, but at times they didn't have confidence. If you get a group where there are a whole lot of talented people the whole group lifts because of that. My Year 5 Maths 2 class in 1963 had students like Stuart Rodda, Peter Bevs, Claude Calandra, Richard Szydzik, Wally Kornienko, Tony Buc, George Nosiara (who became a doctor and married Alexandra Shegedyn but died very young), Nick Woloszynowicz, Janis Apinis, and Hans Jansen - and many more who were very bright. They were demanding but they were wonderful to teach. Most of them also did maths and physics with me in Form 6 in 1964.

In my first year I had a small group of students for Calculus and Applied Maths. This included people like Les Cameron, Per Becker, Joerg Dasler, Thrassos Caravatos, Ray Chatterton, Irene Dynak, Richard Wiatr, and Richard Checinsky who did well.

For the last few years of my time at Cranbourne High School before I retired, Ray Chatterton and his wife Allison taught on staff, and Ray actually taught me how to use a computer. So, Ray was with me on both my first day in St Albans (as a student) and the last day in Cranbourne (as a teacher) of my time in the State School system.

In 1964 Stuart Rodda got an exhibition in physics, which, rightly or wrongly, I was grateful to take some credit for. Stewart was just brilliant.

In the humanities' stream there were just so many brilliant students who went on to collect about five exhibitions. Hannelore Henschke and Sneja Gunew were particularly good. I think Hannelore Henschke got two exhibitions, in German and literature (or was that Sneja Gunew for the latter?).



V Troszczy, P Tucker, Mr Rayner, P Becker, M Trumanis, Mr Paterson, L Cameron.



M Bowkun, V Mahorin, G Castagna, R Kiss, Mr Conroy, Mrs Gliddon, S Gunew, R Keegan.



Mr Ford, B Taylor, Miss Murray, I Sharp, H Henschke, I Dynak, V Deka, G Lambert.



Mr Hill, R Wiatr, R Chatterton, Miss Gibson, R Bruhns, R Chechinski, T Caravatas.

Advice for Young Teachers

I worked really hard but was highly motivated by the students so enjoyed the work. I say this to young teachers: if you work really hard in the first couple of years of teaching and put every effort into getting your things right, then the rest of your teaching life is - not easy - but smoother.

I'd spend most of my weekends and nighttime correcting, preparing and typing away at my typewriter, churning out the Fordigraph sheets: notes, revision problems, summaries, tests, etc.

Self Brothers and Goddard

One of the things I remember very vividly was the wonderful supermarket known as Self Brothers and Goddard, because they held all these exotic foods. Beth Baxter was the cookery teacher. I used to drive Beth and Judy Goodwin (German teacher), who were sharing a house in South Yarra. I used to drive them out because I was living in Queens Road where I was a supervisor at a Teachers College hostel. Judy Goodwin later went off to Europe and America. I stayed with her in Philadelphia one day in 1966 when I was touring. I don't know where she is now.

Some days when Beth and I had a free period before lunch, I would drive to Self and Goddards and buy these things like roll mops, cheeses, and meats and we'd make these wonderful Dagwood sandwiches in the cookery centre using all these exotic foods. It was such a wonderful lunch. I think most of the staff felt the same way about Self Brothers and Goddard.

Socialising

We socialised with each other in a variety of ways. I even remember going off and having a picnic down the beach somewhere one Sunday afternoon with other staff and senior students. We went by bus. I think it was in my first year of teaching.



Joan Rayner, Eric Youd and others enjoying a picnic, 1964.

Some of the kids used to go down to the river to swim and I remember on one student-free day staff going down to Keilor for a swim. The Maribyrnong River at Green Gully was one of the local swimming holes and kids used to go off and spend time down there.

After school we would often stick around coaching sport teams or preparing and correcting work, and go home after 5 o'clock. Sometimes we'd buy pizza, go to somebody's home, and have a drink or two - it was 6 o'clock closing at this stage. I had a VW. We'd pile into the VW and go to the Ashley Hotel; at 5 to 6 you'd line up the beers because the pub was about to close. I wasn't a big drinker, but you did it because you knew you had to drink it before 6. Then you pile back into the car and go on!!

Many staff, including people like Ivan Matthews and Allison Gliddon, would get together at weekends at somebody's place.

I often had dinner, and still occasionally do, with Kath Wright, who was the Secretary and Bursar at the school for many years. She was a wonderful, efficient operator and the school's finances were in good hands while Kath was in that role. She was a great friend of many students, staff members, and principals. Lorna Cameron was another parent and, at that time, librarian at the school who would invite me over for a meal. She was a widow struggling to raise five kids on her own and she still invited me over for dinner. She was on the Parents and Friends committee for some time.

Students

In 1963, the students put on a concert in the St Albans Hall. This was a multicultural performance with most of the 24 nationalities at the school represented. I took photographs of most groups. Vlad Turok was a major performer with the Polish contingent, complete with colourful costume and a piano accordion to accompany a group of complementary costumed girls who sang and danced.



Vlad Turok with piano accordion accompanying Polish dancers, 1963.

I have a story about a very small boy and I've thought about it a lot. One day I went to Ivan Matthew's office; he was usually bright and chirpy, but not today.

"Mr Rayner," he said, "nice to see you. Come in, you're just in time. This boy has done a bad thing and I have to give him the strap. I want you to be here as a witness."

It was my first year out and I was very inexperienced. I thought: 'The strap!' I never thought I would be using the strap. I had to stand there in the office while this little lad got the strap. I was just about in tears when Ivan gave him one on each hand, because he'd thrown a lighted cracker in the rubbish bin during class time. I think Ivan was upset, and I was upset, and the lad was probably upset.

There is another student whom I've often thought about over the years. He was a good student and very nice guy. He had a mop of hair which was always over his face and I told him one day he had to get a haircut. I laid it on the line. It was probably a Friday. The next time he arrived at school he'd had a haircut and he handed me an envelope with a letter inside, from his parents. I thought they might be upset at me, so I carefully opened it and read it. His mum wrote: "Thank you so much for forcing our son to have a haircut. We've been trying to get him to do it for months." I've always had a feeling of guilt about it. At the time it was pretty normal to expect boys to have their hair cut short. I didn't want him to lose his individuality but I just thought the hair was getting too long.

Michael Trumanis, a nephew of Dr Balabin, came to study at St Albans. Michael was living somewhere up in north-east Victoria and really struggling with Year 12. Dr Balabin had encouraged Michael to come and live with him and go to St Albans High. He arrived in the middle of Year 12, doing maths-science. He was behind in studies, but I helped him and he worked very hard. He was a nice guy and became a veterinarian. He married Rhonda Kewish and they set up a clinic in Drouin. They phoned up years later and asked us to visit them because they wanted to renew contact. We've visited several times and remain in contact. Michael and Rhonda are two of the many successful St Albans ex-students.

Ray Haynes was a delightful guy, one of the guys who would always have a chat with you; very friendly, very well behaved.

Cathy Hatjiandrou was a lovely person. She was fairly liberated and a bit of a live wire in the class.

Of course there are many others I've taught in those years at St Albans who have become doctors, engineers, dentists, teachers, scientists - and taken on careers in other fields. I am always pleased to meet ex-students and, whenever I do meet them, I feel a sense of pleasure that they have grown up to be successful, but more importantly, they are still the lovely people they were as teenagers.

I was delighted when Joe Ribarow and Nick Szwed contacted us recently to renew contact with their classmates - those I mainly taught in 1965. I was pleased to have many of these students in Form 5 for Maths 1, Maths 2, and Physics (some in all three classes). Again, there were many talented students and fun to work with. Joe and Nick, Peter Nowatschenko, Lindsay Chatterton, Peter Barbopoulos, David Dusting, Henry Goralski, Lynette Cox, Helen Smith, Michael Hatjiandrou, Leo Dobes, Joachim Simovic, Stefan Czyz, Detlef Beyer, and Vova Karol. A few years later, Vova took Joan and I flying in a light aircraft out of Moorabbin airport - a stimulating experience!!

I remember taking some of the commercial girls classes when teachers were absent. Tom Scarff, David Worland, and little Smithy would be their regular teachers and get away with murder. They'd say: "Sophie, your fingernails need cutting," or "Ingrid, tomorrow I want to see your hair washed and tidied up," or "get that button sewn on," or whatever. The girls would do it. When I'd walk into their class, and because I was young and inexperienced and obviously vulnerable, I didn't know how to handle the class. The girls would look you up and down and smile at you, and I used to blush. I was slightly scared of them. The boys didn't worry me at all.



Back L-R: Franz Pichler, Vladys Romanowski, Knut Werner, Wally Kosiak. Fourth: Robert Ciolli, Andreas Engert, John Hemiak, Albert Van der Kuyt, Kazimierz Grzankowski, Vladys Turok, Lorenz Schwab. Third: Gary Cameron, Leonid Troszczyi (both standing), Ira Dworjanin, Kaye Ashlin, Catherine Hatjiandreou, Jan Griffin, Tanya Korinsky, Jacky Handel, Karin Frede, Ieva Radiskevics, Ilse Jamonts, Ute Klewer. Second: Slowko Muc (standing) Olga Girgoff (almost obscured), Christa Albrecht (back-partly obscured) Valerie Davidoff, Alexandra Shegedyn, Elena Dagys, Tania Pavlova, Barry Rayner, Katrin Schwab, Heather Goddard, Maria Jaciow, Danuta Sackus. Front: Gerry Kulbys, John Dodson, Ivan Volkov.

When I arrived in '63 Peter Plain was doing Year 12 but he had not done Maths 2 at Year 11 and he really wanted to get Maths 2. I would go round to his place in Deer Park on a Friday night and have dinner with the family. I would teach him the maths before we ate. I did that for many weeks because he was really keen to do well and his mum and dad were very grateful. I enjoyed doing it. I wonder what happened to him and his sister Sheena? After I left the school Peter came back and taught Phys Ed for a while.

I know Ahmed Ajayoglu was a student at St Albans. His father, Mohamed Ajayoglu, was a teacher at St Albans for a while and was also at Sunshine High when I was working there.

There was another character I had in Form 3B of my first year. The whole class was lively but he was a real devil. I had all these other classes and they were just a breeze to teach. One day this lad was playing up so badly that I picked him up by the scruff of the neck and pushed him out the door. He was quite theatrical about it and decided to fall against the lockers and made a hell of a racket as he fell to the floor. I thought I was in trouble. For about a week whenever Ian Torpey (the Headmaster) walked down the corridor I quaked in my shoes. It was the only time I've done that sort of a thing to a student - even though I didn't use much force. I don't know if it really made a difference, though it may have, because from then on he was quite well behaved.

A few years later I was teaching at Sunshine and was at Lynch's petrol station in Hampshire Road getting petrol when a police car pulled up. This great big cop got out of the car - it was this ex-student. He ambled towards me, shook hands, and we had a lovely chat. I reminded him of our incident and he had no recollection of it. However, I felt as though I had been cleansed by confessing.

Networking with Colleagues

I still get together with some of the old colleagues once in a while to catch up with what's been happening:

David Worland had been a friend from my training days at university when we were at the same hostel, and we have always remained close - best man at each other's wedding - and are still in frequent contact. He was a commerce teacher at St Albans but ended up as a lecturer and researcher at Victoria University.

Frank Magee eventually went to Assumption College in Kilmore. Tom Scarff is in Ballarat.

Nick Bolvari literally was the key man for the school, as he supervised the allocation of lockers and keys to students as well the maintenance of locks for the whole school. He was a good French teacher and was always devising ways of getting students more involved with their language studies such as making up crossword puzzles.

Ian Smith married Leone Geer, a cookery teacher at the school. They are now retired and living in Buninyong. Ian had a loud roar at times but was really a "softie". He tells a story against himself when he yelled at some kid in class and had to rush out of the room because he had dislocated his jaw by opening his mouth too wide!

Judy Sandwell (Art and Needlework) married Barry Hocking, who was a maths teacher at the school. We were close friends with them. Sadly, Judy died of a massive heart attack in 1979. Barry is now retired.

Norm McLeish has passed away. A keen sportsman, he was always challenging the boys to push themselves further through sport and he supervised the junior football teams. He took up marathon running and entered many of the competitions around Melbourne.

Donata Gerbec from the office married George Gunton - also now retired and living in Gippsland.

Doc Walsh was another lovely guy who spent a lot of his time encouraging kids to take up drama. His production of the Winslow Boys was excellent theatre that had many of the school's bright sparks involved. He was the senior sports master for most of the boy's sports and his enthusiasm encouraged many would-be athletes to extend themselves. He left St Albans for a position with the Catholic College in Donvale. He has also passed away.

After St Albans

When I left St Albans in 1966 I went overseas for a year. I taught in England and travelled around Europe. I came back through Canada and the USA. One of the special memories I have is looking down from the ship as it was leaving Port Melbourne in January 1966 to see a large group of my St Albans students who had come down to say farewell to me.

In 1967 I came back to Australia and taught at Sunshine High School. I was there for about 6 years. It was an excellent school too and again I have many fond memories of my teaching there.

Marriage

In 1969, Joan Butler (who taught at St Albans from 1964 to 1967) and I were married and now have 3 adult daughters: Karyn, Janine and Suzanne.



The marriage of Barry Rayner and Joan Butler, 1969.

Working in the West



Working in the west was great. I had three pretty ordinary years as a senior teacher at Lyndale High School out Dandenong way. It was a pretty interesting place but I had some bad experiences - mainly dealing with difficult students in my role as Head of year - whereas I'd had wonderful times at St Albans and Sunshine.

In 1975 I transferred to the brand new Cranbourne High School in 1975 - and remained there for 19 years until I took a voluntary redundancy package in 1995. It was most satisfying to help create a new school.

In 1979 I was on a teaching exchange in Orillia, Canada, which provided our family with a year of wonderful experiences. I remain in contact with many friends in Canada.

I was appointed Assistant Principal at Cranbourne for more than 10 years and at times became Acting Principal.

For the past 9 years I have enjoyed teaching again - at the Peninsula School, Mt Eliza - working mostly 2 or 3 terms each year (replacing teachers on leave). It is amazing that after 42 years, I'm still having fun and being paid to do what I love doing - teaching young people. I don't remember all the names and faces of those I have taught but I do remember most of those I taught at St Albans. I guess it was my first school, but also very special.

Reunions

I have caught up with a number of ex-students in recent years and it is always great to see them. A number of them came to my retirement function at Cranbourne in 1995. Ivan Matthews also came and made a speech relating some wonderful memories of that period in our teaching lives. Stuart Rodda, Claude Calandra, Peter Bevs, Sloko Muc, Victor Eismontas, Alexandra Shegedyn, Ieva Radiskevics, Wally Kosiak, Thrassos Caravatas also came along.

Leisure Activities

I try to have one overseas holiday each year and I also help a friend with 4WD outback safaris - taking tag-along tours to most parts of Australia - again at least one each year. My main leisure activity is cycling and I have completed ten Great Victorian Bike Rides, Around-the-Bay in a Day, several NSW, Tasmanian, and Queensland rides as well as a number of long distance rides in Europe, Asia, and North America. Recently I spent ten weeks cycling in Europe - riding in and around Amsterdam, Paris, Provence, Berlin, London, and Ireland, and then seven of us rode from Land's End to John O'Groats in England/Scotland.

Barry Rayner, 2005.



Barry and Joan Rayner in 2005.



Barry Rayner and Max Greenall, 2008.



Barry Rayner (third from right) and Cancer in Kids fundraising group, 2010.



Barry Rayner, in Oxford (England) beside the canal, 2015.

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