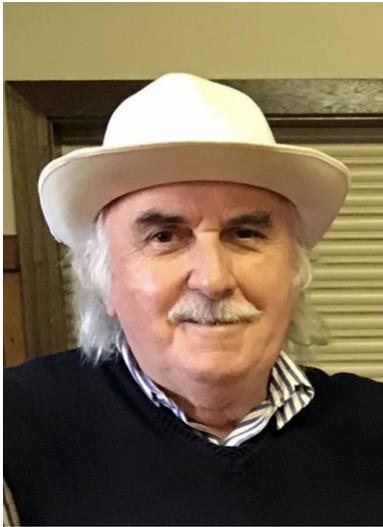


PAUL LEDNEY: PRIMARY AND SECONDARY TEACHER



Introduction

My parents, Dimitrij and Margarita Lednej, my older sister Anna, and I arrived in Australia in 1951. My parents were born in the Ukraine, while Anna and I were born in Germany. We had been living in one of the displaced persons camps in Germany after the war, as were hundreds of thousands of other people in similar circumstances. My mum and dad were originally from the Ukraine but they were a couple of the smart and lucky people who managed to escape from an area that was taken over by the communists at the end of the war. They escaped to the American-controlled part of Germany, and from there sought to find a new home. They thought Canada was a desirable destination but the opportunity to come to Australia came up and they took that.

We arrived on the SS Protea, a freight ship that had been adapted for transporting people. Men and women were separated on the ship and the young children were accommodated with the women. On deck there were only ropes as guard rails along the sides and mum was always scared that Anna or I would go over the edge, but we never did. In fact I learnt to walk on the ship.

From Bonegilla to Girgarre

On arrival in Melbourne we went to the Bonegilla migrant reception centre, from where we were soon sent to Girgarre, about 40 kilometres west of Shepparton. This was such a huge metropolis it had at least 450 people living there. My dad had been allocated to carry out his two-year work commitment at Christiansens, the Scandinavian-based company that now was operating the cheese factory there. This small town became the biggest cheese producer in Victoria and, where cheese was once synonymous with Cheddar, the European influences resulted in the production of a wide variety of speciality cheese that a more cosmopolitan population was seeking.

We lived in an unnamed street locally known as Church Street that was about three kilometres away from the factory. Every day dad would ride his pushbike to work, and that was the common mode of transport. It was whilst we were here that my younger sister was born.

Leadership in Cheese Production



My father became a leading hand at the factory, and part of his job was to make sure the maturing cheeses were turned every 48 hours. He also tested the quality of the cheeses by taking samples with a special auger-like tool. In the fifties that factory was the pace setter for hygiene and had even won awards for their standards. The factory was meticulous about hygiene and whenever I would visit dad at his work I had to go through a strict hand-washing routine and don a protective gown so as not to introduce any undesirable bacteria. All the workers were dressed in white garments. The cool rooms had regulated temperatures and there were huge vats of milk, 20 metres long, with great combs stirring the milk. Eventually that

factory was taken over by Nestle and then even later, with all the international takeovers and rationalisations that have been occurring, the factory was closed down.

Moving to St Albans



When we came to St Albans I was living in Glendenning Street. I don't think mum was too sure about coming here, but dad had bought a block of land for fifty pounds and that was going to be the place for our new home. Our block was like it was in a little village of Poles, Germans and Ukrainians. I hated the place at first because I missed the good times and fun I had with my mates in going swimming, cycling and yabbing. In the country you could go off for three or four hours at a stretch and enjoy yourself and your parents would be confident that you were absolutely safe.

From Catholic to State School

I started at the Sacred Heart Catholic School in Year 5 and was there to Year 8, which was their top class. I left Catholic school after Year 8 and came across to St Albans High School in 1964, starting in the third form. Gerry Osadcuk was one of the tallest guys in the class with whom I had a fight but after that we became the best of friends. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do with my life and consequently was not particularly concerned about academic achievement. This caught up with me a couple of years later when I had to repeat year 11. Mum wasn't happy with me and told me to make up my mind, because the family had moved to Melbourne for better opportunities for the children and she didn't want me to waste that

opportunity. So I repeated year 11 and I was with the group of senior students who graduated in 1967. In year 12 I was Form Captain, so I had the confidence of my fellow students.

High School Teachers

The St Albans teachers were absolutely sensational as far as I remember. Two particular teachers that stand out for me are Bruce Alcorn and Norm McLeish, both of whom were solid as rocks in my development as a person.

I had Alcorn for History. I admired Alcorn, and he made a statement to me that moulded my life. He was a genuine person who was always calm and composed in his behaviour. He took me aside one day and advised me to consider some changes, which proved to be beneficial for me and I've been grateful for that advice ever since.



Form 6 with Mr Alcorn, 1967. Paul Ledney is third from the left, second row from the back.

McLeish was a hard-working guy and I liked his style of teaching and something clicked for me. I remember in Year 10 he was giving some award for best work in English and the final choice was going to be between Broderick Smith, Ray Haynes and myself. In the end the award was given to Smithie though I couldn't help but think that it was good recognition for me to be there in the top three when at the age of five I couldn't even speak English, whereas the other two were of Anglo background.

Playing Football

I enjoyed playing football and one of my personal highlights was being best on the ground at a game we played on Errington Reserve. As well as taking us for

English, McLeish was also a keen sports teacher and was umpiring that match. I played in the school football team that played against Maribyrnong High, whom Stefan Czyz and I agree should have been called the Footscray League Reserves because they had several players from the league level and St Albans didn't. That was in 1965 when we played on the Maribyrnong High School ground. My claim to fame on this occasion was that I kicked the point that was the only score by our side on that day. On one of the few occasion that the ball actually came toward me in the full forward position someone tripped me when I was going for the ball. I was given a free kick and was looking to score our first goal but hit the goalpost. At the end of the match Maribyrnong had scored 36 goals and 41 points and St Albans had scored 1 point, and I had scored that.

I really enjoyed the football and played with the local team and also at teachers college. Unfortunately I experienced problems with the cartilage in the knee and had to have an operation. The surgeon advised me to give up football and skiing, so that was end of my football career.

Taking up Volley Ball

So I took up volley ball instead and ended up playing in the state league in the late '70s. I'd also played some volley ball at school, but when I started training with the new club I was told to forget everything I had been taught at school because it was all wrong. For some months all I did was train and watch the others play the matches. When I had the chance to be part of the playing team it absolutely engrossed me. After playing numerous games I discovered that volley ball is supposedly the worst sport for stress on the leg joints, but I survived it.

Teacher Training and Work

After High School I enrolled in Teachers College and completed the two-year training course to get my Teachers Certificate, but then the three-year Diploma of Teaching course was introduced, so I did an extra year to qualify for that. It was here that I really developed an interest in art. We did art as a subject at high school but I hadn't been that interested in it while I was there. By the time I finished my teacher training art was my speciality.

My first job was in a brand new art room at the Newport West Primary School, which was officially opened by Lindsay Thompson, the Minister of Education. I really liked working there and was there for about 4 years before moving on to Essendon. At that stage the class performance of teachers was scrutinised by inspectors from the Education Department. They said very positive things about my work and suggested I consider becoming an art advisor within the school system. When the opportunity came up I applied for the position and got it. My job was to promote and support art across all schools, including primary and secondary

within the state and the Catholic systems. I even became a representative on the advisory panel looking at the white and green papers on the proposed changes to the education system.

It was in 1979 that I applied for the Bachelor of Education course at Melbourne University. I completed that over four years part time, which gave me the accreditation to work at secondary school level.

Unfortunately these specialist advisor positions with the Education Department were also being 'rationalised' so I took up a position with St Albans Primary School.

Changing Directions

Then I decided I wanted to change what I was doing. I took the package on offer from the Department and left in 1994. I decided to try the courier business, so I bought a one-tonne refrigerated van and started transporting specialist deliveries like blood samples, medical supplies, and perishable goods. After two years of keeping meticulous records I concluded that I was really making a loss and couldn't understand how other people survived. It's a pretty competitive field and I couldn't see my prospects improving, so I got out of that line of work.

Returning to Teaching

Some of my school teacher mates who had made their way up to principal level were encouraging me to come back to general teaching because they were looking for staff.

I'm a teacher who left teaching and then went back to teaching. I've known Stefan Czynz a long time, and he's been such a staunch friend that he's also weathered the trials of both my divorces. I'm sure that he'll be there if I ever have a third divorce, but first I have to meet the right woman. As you can see, I am a resilient person.

Stefan and I went to the same teachers college, the Melbourne Teachers College. After I finished that course I started teaching in the western suburbs, then transferred to northern Victoria, then down to Geelong, and finally came back to the west.

At the age of 28 I went to Melbourne University to complete a Bachelor of Education so I could teach in the secondary school system. They gave me secondary certification, so I was now qualified to teach at primary and secondary levels. Lately I've been doing secondary teaching.

In 1984 I thought I'd take a year off teaching because I had a few problems, so Stefan took time off as well and we'd play golf all year, literally.

Family

I was teaching at Newport when I met Kathy, whom I later married. She was an amazing athlete and joined me when I was playing volley ball. So we became a volley ball family and really enjoyed that activity together. I married a girl younger than me - when I was in Form 6 she was in Grade 6. After we divorced I was on my own for ten years then I met this woman in Ballarat who was even younger than my first wife.

How we met was a bit of a story because that was when I had the courier business with the truck. A friend and I had heard about these dances in Ballarat and thought that would be a way of meeting some single girls. It happened that a job came up to cart some crates of berries to one of the large grocery stores in Ballarat and we thought that was a good opportunity to go to the dance as well. We were dressed to impress in maroon jackets, black pants, and crisp white shirts and bow ties. When we turned up at the supermarket the staff were very surprised to see a couple guys all dressed up wanting to see the manager, and I'm sure they were all wondering what it was all about. The manager invited us into his little office and then we told him we were delivering the berries he'd had on order.

We made a good impression when we got to the dance all dressed up in fine gear, because all the other guys were in casual clothes and we were the only men in more formal attire. The women certainly noticed us, because I later married one of them through meeting her on that night, and she told me we really stood out when we walked through that door.

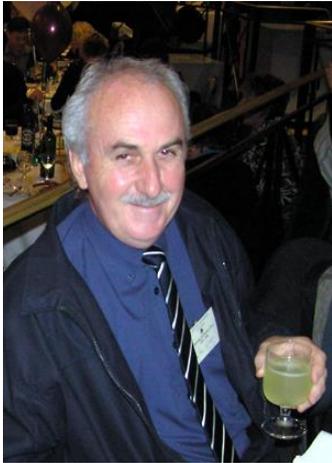
At the age of 46 I had my first son. He is now 10 years old, and I'm 56 years old.

I am now living in Port Arlington in a house I designed and had built. I'm planning to go to the Ukraine to visit where my parents come from. I want to take my ten-year-old son and show him the country of some of his forebears. He is a gifted child educationally and I am sure he will enjoy the experience. Dad and mum still live in Glendenning Street, though dad's health is not the best.

Finale

Although I'm now retired from teaching in terms of full time work, since 1979 I have still been working in contract positions and casual relief positions. I'd be no good completely retired.

Paul McCartney has been quoted as saying: "I'm now 60, and you have not yet seen my best years." I think that is a very good quote, because it sums up exactly how I feel.



Paul Ledney, 2006.

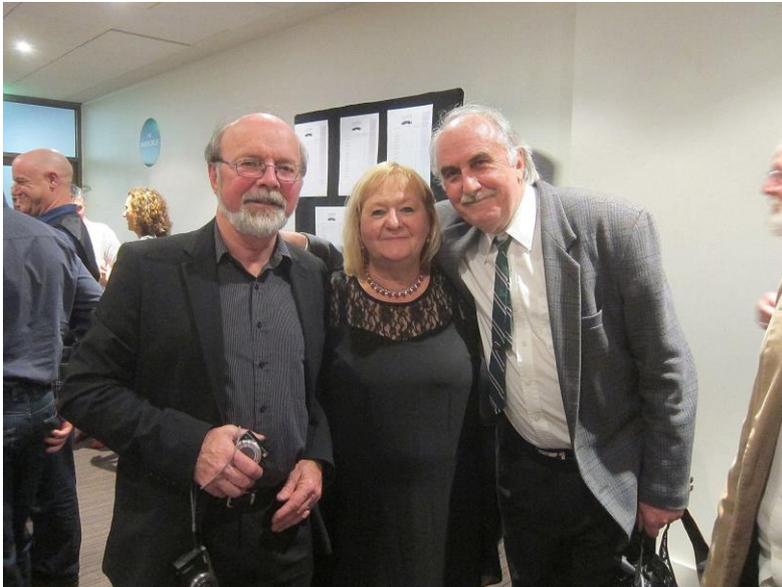
High School Reunion 2006



Ledney & Szweds: Jutta, Nick, Luba, Paul, Anna, Victor, 2006 School Reunion.



Paul Ledney with Luba Uwarow, 2006 School Reunion.



Paul Ledney with Victor Szwed & Luba Uwarow, 2006 School Reunion.



Paul Ledney with Maria Green & Nick Szwed, 2006 School Reunion.

2012 Update

In 2005 Paul moved from Portarlinton to his old western stomping grounds and settled in the newer district of Cairnlea, which he discovered as one of the west's success stories because of the lakes and old trees. Paul moved because he wanted a home closer to his work. He also wanted to down-size while still having a back yard for a vegetable garden. He describes himself as the world's greatest exponent of solar power with a rooftop of panels that have made him independent from the power companies. In 2012 Paul's son, Paul Ledney jnr, was dux of year 10 at Ballarat High School, making his father extremely proud.



Father and son working on the garden 2012.

Information compiled by Paul Ledney and Joe Ribarow.
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