

Rhonda McLiver (nee White)

Ok, so here we go.....

A step out the door of the Tardis to find I have been transported back to January 1972! (Well, most of us were Dr Who 'tragics' and still are no doubt!) What do I see? Crowded under the building are more students than I have ever seen in one place ever before because, you see, I come from the small catholic school diagonally across the road. Everyone seems to know everyone else and I know just four other students! So begins my life at Centenary Heights until waltzing (learnt that in Ms Mackie's class) out the door in a beautiful flowing teal Chinese silk dress at the end of 1976. This is way too real so I dash back to the safety of the Tardis to watch the kaleidoscope of memories play out on the screen!

Life and school was pretty simple back in those days; believe me, I am a teacher so I know! Many of the systems and complexities of today did not exist, just a group of enthusiastic founding teachers involved in the special experience of the first years of a new school. Most of the other students came from Rangeville or South but gradually the five from across the road found their way, formed friendships that endure to this day, and became the first of the 'Radford Scheme' students. The era of Junior and Senior exams was at an end and a range of formative and summative assessment had arrived luckily for me. Life was good!

Memories consist largely of a range of images, people and places which is testament to the fact that it is the people we meet and the relationships we build as we move across this world that are most important. This is illustrated by the story of five Centenary Heights students who went on to Kelvin Grove to become teachers. By that time Bob Dansie and Alf Garone who had been Principal of another Toowoomba High school, were Inspectors and interviewing the prospective graduates. Alf happened to interview all of us and was known to exclaim to Bob in exasperation and I quote, "You always know a Centenary Heights girl because the minute they open their mouth, they all sound like Del!" He was referring to our infamous Senior Mistress, Del Campbell. She was one of a kind but also a fierce advocate for her senior girls. We lived each day to assess her fashion choices, envy her shoe collection, and listen to her latest travel stories and perspectives on world events which masqueraded as Ancient History lessons. Bob shared this story with me many years later when our paths crossed after he had retired and he was pursuing his own love of local area history in many of the small communities across South West and Darling Downs where I have lived with my husband and two children. I shared with him the story and was relieved that

he laughed, of the day four of us got caught out over at the Southtown shops during lunch. This was a definite detention if you got caught. Mr Dansie could see us and thinking he just had to wait on the path back into school and we would have no choice or chance to evade the inevitable. After some discussion and observation of Mr Dansie's pacing, we figured that if we timed it and ran across the road, rolled under the fence and made it to the building, we would be right! Two by two we accomplished the task, made it into class and on the roll for the afternoon. I managed to get a window seat and watch Mr Dansie continue to pace, eventually stopping, scratching his head and then giving up! I had often theorised that this plan would work and was delighted that it did! So you can see my endeavours at Centenary Heights were not all that academically motivated nor productive.

I wish I could say that I remember great achievements and moments but I cannot! I was a dreamer! I dreamt of anything and everything except the lesson on offer! But Centenary Heights and teachers like Del Campbell, Judith Adams, and our many wonderful English teachers taught me something much more precious than facts, figures and (heaven forbid, Maths) and for which I am eternally grateful to this day. They taught me how to think, question and learn. They taught me about social justice and the world which has led to myself and our family's involvement in Australian Aid programs. They taught me that it is the relationships we build, the causes we fight for and the people we become that is most important in this world and I thank them immensely. That is what I do today! I teach. Just for the record though, I am a pretty good Maths teacher these days too. Four degrees later and a yearning to do more, I teach students about the world and how to learn. There is no greater privilege nor a better way to traverse time and space. Centenary Heights has a Tardis full of memories to be shared and celebrated on this occasion of its fiftieth anniversary with many, many more moments and memories to come. Travel well.