Mullumbimby High School Ex-Students Association Inc.
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THE GREAT ESCAPE
As everyone knows, this is the time of the year when school days end, whether it be at Year 10, 11, or 12. But first, you have to go through those dreadful days of the exams. It may have been worse for some than others, but did anyone on earth look forward to the final - or any other - exams? It is said that there is a lot of pressure on Year 12 these days to do well to qualify for the next stage, whatever it might be. We can’t be sure of this, as every era brings its own pressures to bear. What we do know however, is that this prelude to the only qualification to becoming a member of our august group - calling yourself an ex-student of Mullumbimby High - should propel Year 12s joyfully towards our mailing list, in sheer relief.

A great escape, indeed, with new doors opening to the wide world. As the current generation of Year 12s labours through their exams, we will be making contact with them to invite them to join us, and in due course, we hope to be able to introduce some of them. On page 2, read about how one of last year’s graduates has fared in his first year out from school.

AGM
A final reminder that the AGM is on Friday 19 November in the school library at 2.00 p.m. A reunion dinner will be held at the Bowling Club that night, open to all ex-students and ex-staff and their companions. Please give it some thought, let the Secretary know if you can come and we’ll tell the chef.

All members are welcome to attend the AGM, but you must be a voting member to be an active participant, rather than an observer. Anyone wanting to convert their membership from Associate to Voting can do so, but it must be done by Friday November 5. Contact the Secretary so that the necessary steps can be taken before the AGM for you to have a vote at that meeting.

Thanks Sam
Sam Askew is the teacher who guided us in the technicalities of preparing the newsletter for addition to the school website. There were various things we had to learn and Sam was a patient teacher. Bad luck for us, Sam has been transferred to the Southern Cross High at Ballina and along with our thanks for his help during the past 12 months, go our best wishes for his new appointment. And hello to Helene Safajou who will be helping us from now on.

for the John Pearce Auditorium will also see its logical conclusion with its installation during the AGM weekend. This is a great success for members, and our thanks go to Nic Van Horton who will be in charge of the installation. This is a very worthy contribution to the life of the school.
Tradition of achievement

Comments in the last newsletter about high achievers from the school over a range of activities prompted reactions about other successes. One of these referred to the recent accolade for Ed Wilson, who has distinguished himself on numerous fronts throughout his life. He is a successful novelist, poet, botanist and artist. He has 21 books behind him, including 11 books of poetry. His latest book (published by Woodbine Press this month) is titled New Selected Poems: A Collection of Flowers 1967-2009. Botanical illustrations are by the late Elizabeth McAlpine.

This collection is quite an achievement in itself, but in addition, Ed has recently achieved a visual arts prize, which he says is “in the form of the Medal of Distinction 2010 from the Royal Art Society of New South Wales in their (130th) Annual Spring Exhibition.”

Ed was elected as an Exhibiting Member of the RAS (NSW) in 2008, and the annual spring exhibition is part of a tradition started in 1880 with an exhibition in the Garden Palace, Royal Botanic Gardens. Ed says, “Alumni of RAS include Arthur Streeton and Fred Roberts, although my work is much more in the naive style.

“My painting was called ‘Church at Berrima’, inspired by a stop-over at Berrima at Christmas time on the way to Canberra to see the exhibition from the Musee D’Orsay.

“My wife was happy looking at second hand shops. Not being a shopper, I went for a walk and found this beautiful old stone church set in a copse of pine trees (plus a Van Gogh cypress pine in front), surrounded by a dry landscape, with natural vegetation behind.

“The painting was part homage to Van Gogh’s ‘Church at Auvers’, in high colour tones, with vertical brushstrokes in the foreground, and decreasing texture beyond.

“In the Van Gogh painting, he had a peasant woman walking up one of the paths towards the church. At one stage I was going to have a convict woman on the single pathway (after the old Berrima gaol), but settled on a colonial lady instead, at the door of the church.”

Ed has sustained an active connection with the school over a long period. He often returns to contribute to creative writing classes and to talk about his latest book or collection of verse. He serves as a fine role model as an alumnus of the school.

Another accolade for a member has gone to Stan Thompson whose contribution to cricket was recently acknowledged by Cricket Australia. Anyone who has played cricket over the generations will know of Stan. As a player with the Mullumbimby-Brunswick side, he was formidable with both bat and ball, but did more than distinguish himself on the day, with his work in the admin. of the game at all levels. An oval at the Brunswick Heads sports field is named for Stan, an honour bestowed by the FNCCC. The recent recognition by Cricket Australia is for 50 years of service to the game, with a 50 year badge and certificate. Well earned, Stan.

Youngest Member

Last year we were able to contact the Year 12s as they escaped the end of year and their school lives. They were all invited to become members of the association having attained the only pre-requisite for joining - they were all ex.. Ben Franklin took up the offer and he is our youngest member. At school Ben was a member of the SRC, and now, as a TAFE student he is doing a course in Event Management. We asked him how his year had gone and what he is looking forward to.
The TAFE course for Events Management has no exams. “There are just assignments for each topic,” explained Ben, “so you need to pass each assignment, and so far I have successfully completed each topic. I’m loving the course and how flexible it is.”

To prove how flexible it is, and how accommodating the teacher, Ben spent the winter at Perisher Valley skiing (see picture) with friends and family. “It was for fun with friends and at the same time my TAFE teacher set up my course by email.”

There has also been plenty of time for Ben’s passion for the surf where he goes a lot with his friends. “This year, I don’t think I’ve had a day without my friends, so basically I’ve hanged with friends everyday.” No wonder Ben has enjoyed himself. “This year has been the best year of my life, travelling, studying, meeting new people and loving it.”

And what comes next? “Next year I’ll be in Canada snow boarding at Big White in British Columbia with heaps of friends and family. I’m very excited.”

Who wouldn’t be excited? Good luck, Ben. With all these experiences of adventure holidays, you will be well qualified to manage events, for sure.

Nostalgia

Finally, some nostalgia once again. Where would our memories be without the family photo album? This one comes from a lifetime ago, and shows one of the school’s most talented singers (ever, we old timers reckon), Les Black (left), with, we think, Peter Young (correct us if we are wrong), in costume for a performance of what looks like a Gilbert and Sullivan operetta, Pirates of Penzance.

The subject of this piece of nostalgia is appropriate as the new sound system is about to be installed in the auditorium. In days long gone, there was no auditorium, and everything took place at the School of Arts, known now as the Civic Hall. Back then, that old hall catered for everything - concerts, meetings, dances, balls - but apart from its central location, didn’t have a lot to recommend it, unlike today.

The town and district has always had a very strong musical life, and the equipment that we will soon be installing at the school will ensure that coming generations will continue to have good support in developing their talents in this direction.