

## Year of '57 – Tales Told out Of School

In 1982, the Year of 1957 produced “Nostalgia Notes” for their 25 Year Reunion, and these are given below. Names of contributors have been deleted, and only initials used. Names of students in the anecdotes have been retained.

In November 1954, Harold Beard stood me out in front of the whole school because I had convinced my parents that there was nothing doing at school (swimming school was in progress). Well...?

It was imperative that I remained at home as the first test was also in progress. I heard every ball, and we won by an innings. Because of Harold Beard, I was not allowed to hear the next two tests which we lost. Harold Beard, and not Frank Tyson and Trevor Bailey, was responsible for England taking the Ashes home that summer. Had I been permitted to listen, I should never have let it happen. (DM)

It was 1953 and ‘Jacky’ Shields was the Maths Teacher for 1A. ‘Jacky’ was always well-dressed, and a bit of a trend setter when it came to men’s fashion. Drip-dry shirts were an innovation and on this particular day ‘Jacky’ had on a beautiful white drip-dry shirt. In most cases the drip-dry shirt was opaque, but in ‘Jacky’s’ case, on this occasion, his was transparent. As ‘Jacky’ turned to put up the exam questions for one of his 10 marks term examinations, the class broke into controlled laughter and giggling. Unknown to ‘Jacky’, his beautiful shirt revealed a singlet that had the biggest rip you would have seen.

As ‘Jacky’ was quite a good disciplinarian, no-one had the courage to point out to him his predicament, but it was only second period so someone would surely have mentioned it to him later in the day. (IW)

I often think about the tragic loss that we all suffered by Freddie Smith’s death. I do not think it actually registered when I was at school. I am not sure that I valued any teacher at the time. But thoughts of him and his influence still present themselves even now – after all these years.

My knowledge of him, I think, was unique. By that I mean that some had him as a teacher, and some had him as a commanding officer in the ATC. But I believe I was the only one in our year to work under him as a producer/director. That began in my first year at high school and continued for the following two years, when he produced the reviews.

Now at 40+, 34 seems so young to die, even more so for a man who had so much to offer, who was admired by so many students with whom he had an enormous rapport. (DT)

Adamthwaite, 4A Maths, teaching the rule  $(a+b)(a-b) = a^2 - b^2$ . Reinforcing the point by drawing bananas and umbrellas into the equation and making the class chant “Umbrella plus banana times umbrella minus banana equals umbrella squared minus banana squared”. Then the clincher: “The smell of a sausage plus the scent of a rose times the smell of a sausage minus the scent of a rose, etc.” We chanted as told and the required effect was achieved, for me at least. I’ve not forgotten the rule since. (RHS)

There was that telegram from Ian Anderson which was pinned on the door of the assembly hall the day we sat for the Leaving English paper. The quotation from Macbeth read: “But screw your courage to the sticking place and we’ll not fail”. (JR)

A desk inscription, the alleged author obviously framed by one of the “five percent”: “Doug Magin sat here. And all the world shall say. This was a man.” There were a couple of others which are too offensive to reproduce. (RHS)

Then there’s the instance where the boss called Don Ross “the genius from Lismore”. I do not know quite why he did, but he did. It sort of stuck for a while. (PG)

The time “Spot” Burrows spat out the window, not realising it was closed! (AJ)

Remember the day (1A Maths class, 1953) when we all hid our rulers to thwart the bum-thumping Jackie Shields? How he used to haul us over the desk and go whack! With the edge of a wooden ruler! But we still invited him as guest of honour to our class Christmas party!

Remember the breathless silence as we waited (2A Latin class 1954) for the axe to fall when, after someone had asked teacher Roy Quill what was the latin word for ‘fountain pen’ (in those pre-biro days!), and the teacher had answered matter-of-factly that the Romans didn’t have fountain pens, some brave soul was heard to mutter sotto voce but quite audibly: “They used quills”. (

Then there was the day in third year when my French teacher, Mr Abrahams, gave us for homework a research assignment: “What do French people commonly have for breakfast?”

My father had been in France during World War II (with some cooking duties), and in commercial life was involved with shipping, a career which necessitated socialising with ships’ captains, eating on board ships, etc. Beauty! Dad’ll know!

With a perfectly straight face he answered: “Oh, a roll in bed with honey”. Of course, I proudly reported this the next day! Der! (RM)

Remember the night before the 5<sup>th</sup> Year break-up, several pupils attempted to lay the foundation stone for the new assembly hall by using the old loose pillar on the south side of the side doorsto the old Hall – this did not amuse FHB at all. The problem was

that once we (Col Picton, Pat Long and yours truly) tipped the thing over it was too heavy to move with the equipment we had available. (RT)

I am not sure what senior year was responsible (I think 1956), but I have vivid recollections of FHB's Morris Minor being advertised in the Newcastle Morning Herald at a ridiculously low price, and his phone in the office at school ringing incessantly with enquiries. Also I remember that very appropriate sign erected over the staff-room door: "THE STAFF OF LIFE IS BREAD, AND THE LIFE OF THE STAFF IS ONE BIG LOAF". (JR)

First year, class 1A Latin. In front of the class the much loved "Pop" Milne, a teacher from the old school who believed in rote learning, using the class chant system. The verb "paro – I prepare". The Latin boys' choir (not to be confused with the Luton Girls), under their able conductor, warm up with the present tense:

"Paro, paras, parat, paramus, paratis, parant".

Then into the verses, becoming more vocal as the enthusiasm grows, until finally arriving at the chorus, which was everyone's favourite (the future tense):

"Paravero" intones Pop Milne, to be immediately echoed loudly by the class

"Paraveris" to be repeated, then "Paraverit"

Into the plurals now and obvious excitement edging into the voices.

"PARAVERIMUS" ..... "Paraverimus"

"PARAVERITIS" ..... "Paraveritis"

Then the good moment, the latin climax.

"PARAVERUNT" shows the cantor, accenting the second last syllable.

The class, their voices joined as one, with the fervour of a stand full of Welshmen at Cardiff Arms Park, fairly exploding into that magic syllable, cry:

"PARAWAAAAAAYRUNT"

Great stuff that. Educational and enjoyable. (RHS)

I remember the introduction of gas heaters high on the back walls of classrooms enabled the production of toasted sandwiches. (CP)

During one of our School Carnivals at Waratah Oval, a group of us, in teams of two, roamed the Oval, the first member inserting pieces of not-wet manure into the pockets of luckless recipients, the second member following up immediately with a goodly squirt from a water pistol.

During the subsequent Assembly, the pain from the six cuts still pulsating on our palms was somewhat assuaged by the "Boss" referring to our behaviour as Horse Play, when we knew, as some of our victims may have, that we'd been using Cow Manure. (TD)

**White Man's Magic:** F H Beard had many firsts. His most notable at school were possibly Sex Education, Current Affairs and a group of 5<sup>th</sup> Columnists.

My first vivid recollection was the unannounced broadcast of Current Affairs on his new tape recorder.

Our period after lunch was Library. Raz Rigby had clumped off in his air cadet boots. The "Boss" was merrily chirping away about Current Affairs on the PA system, and Peter Brothers and myself decided to have a small war with paper aeroplanes.

The appearance of the "Beard" at the Library door was to us like the 2nd coming. He should have been on the mike on his Current Affairs. However, with the new tape recorder, he had taped his broadcast and was doing the rounds checking on classroom attention.

F H took us straight down the middle stairs (a great privilege!) and immediately gave us 6 cuts each.

However, White Man's Magic Machine was too good for him. It was not till about halfway through the caning that he remembered that the lecture and caning were heard all over the school, and we were finished off in TIC TOC's room. When Peter and I returned to the Library, the class, 1E I think, wanted to know about this new miracle, i.e. the Boss at the door when he should be downstairs at the mike, etc. Halfway through our noisy explanation, the 3<sup>rd</sup> coming happened.

This time, straight down the middle stairs, wait in corridor till broadcast finished, and then we were witnesses to the shutting off, rewind, etc of the White Man's Magic Machine, and a further 4 cuts each. (BC)

In or about 1957 some of us had the honour of being taught mathematics by the late Mr Daniel Davies (a Welshman, for some unaccountable reason referred to as “Snoz”) God rest his soul, and, as he wasn’t a bad old boy, it would not take an awful lot of resting.

At that time, one Philip ‘Champ’ Thompson (whom I believe to be now Professor Thompson), then as now not a large man, was sitting above a manhole in the old cast iron seat and desk, so that the manhole was quite invisible to an eye even as close to the ground as that of the late Snoz (I mean Mr Davies). Snoz used to rely on Champ and a few others (very few) for rational answers to his questions as the lesson progressed.

In particular he relied on Champ Thompson. In fact any time Champ or Lance Evans or a couple of others were away from school, they were sorely missed by Snoz. Outside that coterie of good students, it was difficult for the poor man to get an answer that was anything short of preposterous. Needless to say, this grieved him.

On this occasion, Snoz had been relying on Champ for a series of answers in some complicated algebra thing that I did not understand then, and do not understand now. As a result of a conspiracy between Champ and certain others who will remain nameless, the manhole was quickly opened when Mr Davies turned his back to the conspirators and wrote something on the board, and Champ disappeared down it (to the space under the floorboards).

Mr Davies turned around, posed the question and said “Tampson” (Snoz’s Welsh accent) only to be assured that Thompson, who’d disappeared down the hole and then been duly capped with the manhole, was away ill that day. Mr Davies, not unpredictably, scratched his head, paused for a couple of seconds, scratched his head again and went on with what he was doing.

About ten minutes later Mr Davies then posed another question and sorely tried, for lack of Thompson, generally calling for an answer. During the time Mr Davies had, in the interim, been facing the blackboard, Champ had duly surfaced. Champ was then on his feet and insisted upon answering the question. Mr Davies said, “Oh boy, I was told you were away sick.” Thompson assured him that there was nothing wrong with him and, perhaps a little less than truthfully, that he had been there all the time (well, he hadn’t been far away!).

Mr Davies was a little bit shaken by this, and went on with what he was doing; turned to face the blackboard, whereupon Thompson disappeared as before. Encouraged by what he had previously seen, Mr Davies, in posing the next abstruse question and thinking of someone to answer same, said “Tampson!”. The poor man was then, of course, assured by a large section of the class that Thompson was absent that day.

After seeing him again, Mr Davies cut the lesson about 10-12 minutes short, was visibly shaken and did not appear at school for a couple of days! I will agree that it is not the sort of trick that men in the forties would play on an elderly colleague, but a few 15 year olds, who were then little less than members of the criminal classes, had no compunction. (PG)

Do you remember the day in 2<sup>nd</sup> year when Ben Goldring came to school with a french letter, and we all passed it around the room giving it all sorts of admiring glances? Those were the days when we knew it all! (JR)

Do you remember when:

1. Jake Simpson (Chemistry teacher in 4<sup>th</sup> year) said “Nash if you must sleep, do not snore!”, and “Andrews, you must be earnest!” The latter was quite appropriate; his name was Ernest Andrews.

2. (3<sup>rd</sup> year) Dick Sanders was challenged by our English teacher, Geoff Kerr, to write a poem as good as one that that he was teaching us:

“Here I lie under the sky; Blue skies above me; All birds to love me; Nature and I”,

And Dick came up with:

“Here I sit down in the pit, black coal above me, no-one to shove me, lazy am I”

In retrospect, this seemed rather prophetic since Dick ended up being closely associated with coal mining. There were many other verses, but unfortunately I cannot remember them.

3. Blowpipes and wheat were very popular in 1<sup>st</sup> year, and the floor of the classroom was covered in wheat. Razz Rigby (History lesson) finally caught someone at it.

4. We attended a Girl’s High Sports Day, with the “grand parade” being interrupted by a canine intruder. It was most enjoyable watching the teachers trying to catch the dog. Some of the boys were having a sex education practical with Girl’s High tutors in the upper levels of the stand. I remember that one of the girls was nicknamed “Spanner”, for obvious reasons (4<sup>th</sup> year?)

5. Goofy Goffet had us for French in 5<sup>th</sup> year, after Tom Plummer had managed to teach us sufficient by the end of 4<sup>th</sup> year to pass the Leaving. We learnt slang, saw some mildly erotic French movies, and the highlight was being given dictation by a very attractive young girl from Corsica. Goofy bought a box of chocolates for Lance Evans to present, and, to Lance’s embarrassment and our delight, he was rewarded with a kiss. *Toujours l’amour!*

6. The Boss brought a Patrol Officer from Papua New Guinea (an old boy) along to outdoor assembly to tell us about life in the real world. Our credulity was somewhat strained when he produced his hat and showed the arrow hole (4<sup>th</sup> year?). (PHS)

Sex lectures, second year, I think. The Boss explaining genes and chromosomes. No-one was allowed to laugh during these lectures, sex was serious stuff. "Sir", asked some wag during question time, "if parents had different coloured hair, could the child have hair of both colours?" Turning to the board to explain how the dominant gene would prevail, the Boss missed the dozens of fingers pointing at the luckless and embarrassed "Two-tone", a boy with a large patch of white hair amongst his otherwise red thatch. (RHS)

It was in 1957 and I was in the Boys High swimming team which went to Sydney for about 3 days for the Combined High Schools Swimming Championships at the Sydney Olympic Pool. Even if not swimming on a particular day, we still had to stay at the Pool. On the first day Pat Garde and myself were not swimming but reported to the pool (and the teachers in charge) and promptly cleared out. Spending the day touring Sydney City and then across to Manly, we just managed to get to the pool in time for the last event. We were immediately spotted by "Black Mac" (I think he'd been at the pub most of the day) who came up to us and told us what a good job we had done during the day, and that we could now go. (DR)

Many memories are deeply embedded (is that the word?) in my mind – "Razz" Rigby having us copy out Hansard (parliamentary debates) when we had been "naughty boys" (and the hilarious results of copying every second line), the fun when heavy seas caused waves in the Ocean Baths, the pleasures of "Industrial Visits" between sports seasons, the billowing of the Boss's gown as he strode down the Assembly Hall to his piano stool, the daring and debate attached to the showing of an instructional film on sex (so mild compared to today's Family Life films in schools), the joys and sorrows of learning Latin with Messrs Milne, Barbour et al (yet it's still there, much of it!), the wondrous stories of the Goffet youth in Lismore (and the man's genuine concern for our welfare). (BB)

With regard to reminiscences, by far the strangest thing that ever happened at NBHS was to appoint me as Language Master in 1957. (Charlie Goffet)

In first year, I remember my introduction to SP Bookmaking. Another dimension was added to athletic carnivals. I recall laying the grand sum of threepence on my selections in some of the events. (JF)

The vision of you all singing, with the Boss playing on piano, conjures up memories of "Smith House boys..." and "Goodbye, I go to seek a foreign clime", and, less clearly, I remember sex education lessons with the Boss valiantly seeking to enlighten an audience of 200-300 senior boys in the Hall concerning the mysteries of sex and reproduction. (ML)

I have many fond memories of those 5 years at NBHS. One vivid memory is my first hearing of Grieg's Piano Concerto with Dinu Lipatti as soloist. Julian Croft brought the recording to a hobbies period. I was bowled over by the listening experience. That record is surely now a valued collector's item.

In a totally different vein, those marvellous interschool sports carnivals where one could cheer oneself hoarse over such athletes as "Bumper" Farrell, that perennial 5<sup>th</sup> Year student.

Nothing showed me more vividly the value of a good maths teacher than when I was fortunate enough to be taught by W Haines in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Years. Without a doubt, the teacher I had most respect for.

Finally, I cannot help but mention that odoriferous experience the day a load of fresh fowl manure was delivered, courtesy of Halliday's poultry farm. It may have helped the school gardens, but my God, what a smell permeated the classroom! (DD)

I still remember the 4<sup>th</sup> Year chalk fights between periods. Do you also remember our 3<sup>rd</sup> Year Maths teacher? Molesworth was his name. He used to have long black hairs growing on the top of his nose and used to continually pat them down with his finger. Then there was Jake Simpson for Chemistry. I used to sit in class and count the number of times he used the words "infinitesimal" and "ostracize" and a couple of others which I have forgotten. (JR)

Did anyone ever marry a girl from Girls' High, or anyone from Bank Corner? Do Current Affairs still continue? If so, how long do they last? Has anyone ever used their French? Did in fact the Headmaster's car get sold, and the school get an offer for secondhand bricks? Is Hansard copying still a Library punishment. (JL)

Cadet camps. The early morning sounds of Reveille and the Sergeant Major striding through the tents bellowing "Wakey. Wakey, hand off snakey!"

Tim Poyner treading slowly and gingerly across the parade ground with an unexploded 2" mortar bomb that he had found, in his pocket.

The whole contingent being struck down with dysentery caused by dirty tea buckets – queues at the "Bog". (RHS)

The very poignant remembrance service for Fred Smith in the Assembly Hall.

The first day of high school. Class 1C met for the first-time, and the roll was to be established by Mr McFarlane (Black Mac). He asked us to stand in Alpha order and provide our names. The "C" group was difficult for him. It contained two people called

Clarke, both with an “E”, and the first initial for both was “L”, first name for both was Lionel, second initial was “D”. At this stage of the questioning Mr McFarlane said, just audibly, “shit”, before discovering that the Clarkes had different second names. Somewhat different modes of speech had been used in Primary School. (DG)

Another memory is the phrase – “esprit de corps”. Have you ever found yourself being critical of a group who lacked co-operation – like my Rugby team or my Water Polo squad as I do – and that phrase flashes through your mind. I hear myself echoing the old Boss – “the trouble with you is that you have no esprit de corps!” It was probably because I had a 5<sup>th</sup> columnist present!! (DT)

“Filthy Feet” Hunter.

You may well ask how any student could be in a position to judge the sanitary condition of their English teacher’s lower extremities.

Les Hunter had me for English during the years when my interest in study was hibernating, or at least was overwhelmed by my devotion to music, girls and the Cadet Unit. As I recall, that period was post “Wind in the Willows” and pre “Macbeth”. He did a good job on me and turned my marks around from a marginal pass to a respectable “A” at the Leaving Certificate. More importantly, he developed my appreciation of the written word, and my most pleasant memory of the Leaving year (mind you, pleasant memories were few) was studying Shakespeare in the sun during “Stu-vac”.

Les was a big, happy man with slicked-back, centre-parted hair, a chubby face and a wide beaming smile. He had impressively muscled legs, the lower parts of which he displayed under the classroom table when he leant back, eased up his trouser legs and had us read William Henry.

Perhaps it was those impressive calves, raised a step high on the podium of authority, which drew our attention to his socks. In any case, I took it upon myself to keep a detailed and written record of the nature and condition of his hosiery – my scientific aptitude being misguidedly applied in English! I was chief observer and recorder, as my second row position at the centre of the class gave me an ideal opportunity to record the design of his socks, and such details as the condition of the invariably inadequate elastic attempting to grasp his ample legs.

Things went well and we soon observed that apparently identical socks were being seen day upon day – hence the nickname.

Eventually, when I was entering the latest observation in my log, he asked why I was taking such an intimate interest in his legs, while making to step up the aisle to examine my work. Somehow, I managed to find a plausible explanation, and from that day observations were less rigorous and not recorded.

Curious isn’t it, when I check my corporate attire I see several apparently identical pairs of socks! (DC)

The prefects of 1957 were responsible for the introduction of the afternoon detention marching squad. One afternoon, Maurice Brookes and I were on duty and one of the “kids” turned up to march in bare feet, and Maurice and I had him marking time over a pile of stones! What bastards!

Second year (1954) and Kevin Botham sitting up the back of the classroom with a portable radio listening to Rising Fast winning the Melbourne Cup. (JR)

As a teacher, I’ve often looked back on the seemingly endless patience and concern of Bob Haines (“Hank”), my Maths teacher, and have used parts of his style to develop my own teaching style. He currently works at Newcastle CAE. (BM)

Oscar Anderberg racing across the quadrangle with an out-of-control Kipps generator (hydrogen sulphide gas) clutched to his chest, his bravery applauded by dozens of science students hanging out of the upstairs windows. (RHS)

The incident that sticks most vividly in my mind was the day of the fete, in third year 1955, when a bunch of us were getting together madame Za Za’s fortune-telling parlour in the little cleaners’ storeroom under the middle stairs. There was no door knob on the door, a fact we had carefully noted and accordingly warned everyone concerned. But as more and more of us crowded into that tiny room, not much bigger than a wardrobe, preparing heaven only remembers what mystical paraphernalia, somehow, without anyone noticing, the door swung shut.

It was a dramatic moment. There we were: five or six of us irretrievably locked on the inside in the dark. But we did have a torch, which, resourceful souls that we were, we voted to leave switched off to conserve the batteries. After all, we could be locked in there for hours, days, weeks and even – horror of horrors! – miss the entire school fete! Happily, not all of us were in the room. One fortunate person (Peter Jennings, as I remember) happened to be on the outside, which made him the one-man rescue mission.

He raced for the Boss in his nearby office, and, while we on the inside were bravely debating how long the air would last, we heard the Boss’s voice on the other side of the door: “Are you all right, boys?” “Yes, sir!” answered the brave martyrs as one. How friendly, how familiar, how everything’s-going-to-be-all-right the Boss’s voice sounded! “Is there a ventilator in the wall?” Risking the batteries, we switched on the torch. Yes, there was. So we weren’t going to die of asphyxiation at all. No headlines proclaiming: “FIVE SCHOOLBOYS DIE IN BROOM CUPBOARD” after all. How disappointing!

Resourceful gentleman that he was, the Boss raced off to get the caretaker (or, more probably, sent some passing lad who was no doubt completely unaware of the gravity of his mercy mission) while we incarceratees stoutly counted the hours (well, minutes) (OK, seconds) until we heard the sound of a screwdriver in the hole where the doorknob shaft should have been, and the door swung open, and we stumbled forth into the daylight to the rousing, welcoming cheers of an enormous crowd of one – the one who didn't get locked in – and, of course, the Boss, who had a few words to say.

The door was well and truly wedged open and Madame Za Za (Ken Longworth) lived to tell everybody's fortune after all. But even she/he, I think, would to this day be completely at a loss as to how to answer the question the incident still poses: how on earth did the school cleaners ever use a broom cupboard that had no doorknob? (JH)

In 1954 we had in second year a chap called Oakley. Whether he was born during an eclipse or under a black cloud or given a black kitten at birth, disasters always seemed appended to Oakley.

One particular day during recess we were watching some other second years using the vaulting springboard as a slippery dip. All was going well as each boy slid down the four or five feet and landed on his feet without mishap. Then came Oakley's turn. He mounted the makeshift stairs and paused at the top of the slippery dip. The look on his face was of magnificent anticipation of the glorious three second trip down to ecstasy.

Away he went down the slope, and I have never seen a face change so much in three seconds! His face, from being ecstatic, had changed to one of absolute mortification and one displaying the hallmarks of a tragedy of immense proportions! Some of the other boys must have noticed the drastic change in Oakley's expression because we shuffled forward to see the cause of the matter. Oakley turned his back to us to reveal the genesis of his trouble – his short grey school trousers were ripped completely and nearly severed from his body! As most of us only had one pair of school trousers, we did not see Oakley at school next day, and we often wondered what his parents said when he got home from school. We were sure that it was the thought of this after effect that caused the look of absolute grief on his face halfway down his descent. (IW)

I reckon that one of the best though is Peter Jennings (I think he's a professor or something, too) and the time the Boss decided he'd have a ,ah, uniform day, and Peter, being the beautiful lad he is, remembered a school tie and stuffed it in his motor bike jacket pocket. The only thing he didn't remember was that, when he went to put his tie on before assembly in the quadrangle, he was only wearing a tee-shirt under his motor bike jacket, but he put his tie on anyway! When challenged, of course, for being "naked on parade", what Peter said was, "Well, the instruction was to bring a tie and put it on, and it's a tie isn't it?" It is no discredit to anyone that nothing ever happened to Peter over that! (PG)

Physics, a beautiful, rational discipline was my best subject by a slender margin over chemistry, and Bill Storer, without doubt, set me on my career path. Bill was tough, bloody tough, and this characteristic, coupled with his knowing my dad and my wanting to keep on side with them both, ensured that I toed the line, learnt to spell "gasification" and "parallel", and to recite all the definitions and formulae.

When it came to term exams I had a sure-fire method of tipping the paper. You see, Bill was tough but fair, and he would give us almost all the questions, suitably salted with red herrings, over the weeks leading up to the exams. Bill would set a question on the board (towards the end of the lesson, as I recall) and then would set-to, privately solving it in his own neat hand using red ink on a piece of departmental paper, while we stumbled over it ourselves. Bill would then write the solution on the board and rub it off before we could copy it fully, while telling us that we were dunces and would surely fail.

What happened to his solution? He would screw it up and toss it in the waste paper bin – from where I would furtively retrieve it after the lesson. These treasures were filed, studied very carefully, and quoted verbatim when required in the next exam.

The study of science does make one observant! (DC)

Adamthwaite again – 4A Maths. Frustrated with the class' chatter and inattention he states "the next one to speak gets the cane". One of the quietest, best behaved class members, John Harris, who was focussed on his work, didn't quite hear and asked the nearest classmate: "What did he say?"

"Who spoke?" shouted Adamthwaite, amazed that his threat wasn't heeded. "I did" admitted George Washington and paid for his deafness and honesty with a caning. (RHS)

The epitome of schoolboy villains, Geoff Roach, was a well-known occupant of the detention class in which his favourite trick was to get out of the window, whilst the teacher wasn't looking, and come back through the window when pandemonium had broken loose over his sudden disappearance.

One day Geoff was sentenced again to detention, but in lieu of putting down his own name, he put down my name! After 2 weeks of absolute purgatory for me, even Geoff's normally non-existent conscience surfaced and the matter was resolved with the cane. There is some doubt whether the cane did work in this case as Geoff had a habit of pulling his hand away as the cane was in mid-descent – much to the detriment of "Whiskers" (aka the Boss) blood pressure and kneecap! (IW)

Snoz, aptly named because of his remarkable proboscis, gave me my first lesson ever at NBHS. I was wide-eyed, dead keen and proud to be there, freshly attired in short greys and suitcoat (embellished with the school pocket, which I still keep amongst my

memorabilia), and seated in the second row; a position which was to become customary over the following years. Snoz taught Maths to some of us who had sensibly declined the Latin option, and that first lesson was algebra.

Snoz, as many will remember, was a small but remarkable physical specimen with one disabled arm. The most popular explanation for his affliction was that he was caught in machine-gun fire during a world war (the first, I think) but I never confirmed that story as we were all too inhibited to ask him.

When we were in first year, blackboards were still black, and the ones at NBHS were remarkable counterweighted window-like contraptions which went up and down. The teacher would complete a "board full" and with a deft hoist, propel one board up to the ceiling (and the other downwards) before filling the second board.

The way the blackboards went up and down was an excellent measure of the mood of the teacher. Snoz, in his very first lesson said, "I'm not a well man, boys" and asked for a volunteer to offer the first tablet of wisdom to heaven, and a front-rower obliged. This was a plea we heard frequently over the following lessons, and the reminder of his affliction, I am sure, helped keep us orderly.

However, as would be expected, it wasn't too many weeks before the outlaws of the class began giving him strife, and then we saw a different Snoz. With a flick of his remarkably powerful good wrist, the blackboard would be launched to the upper limits of its constraints and would surely lift the dirt from between the floorboards of the classroom above. Next lesson, calm might prevail, and the assistance of the front-rowers would be enlisted again, Funny thing, we never did hesitate to assist him, although, after a few months, it was with a wry smile.

Snoz taught us a lot – I caught myself using his expressions as I helped my daughter with logarithms last week. Indeed, he wasn't a well man: I heard he died immediately after retirement while aboard ship at the start of his big trip. (DC)