

PARADISE, Ilma, NGHS Teacher - Fond Recollections by a Former Student (1945-1949)

The person at school I most remember was Miss Paradise. Who could forget Miss Paradise - English teacher extraordinaire?

I started my secondary education at Newcastle Girls' High School in 1945. I, like most young first year girls, was over-awed by the size of the school, the number of pupils and, most of all, the staff. The great majority of the all female teachers were spinsters and seemed to be so ancient - to a 12 year old 40 year olds were ancient. I guess it was due to the war that most were unmarried.

The one who stands out most clearly in my mind was, as I said, Miss Paradise. First of all her name was so unusual - who had ever hear of such a surname? She was a rather large woman and wore heaps of make-up. (I came from a home where lipstick and rouge were a no-no.) Her ruby red lips and heavily coloured cheeks, her vaseline-smear~~d~~ eyes-lids - I guess no eye-shadow back in those days, and the powdered face were a constant source of amazement to me. Her sparse hair looked as though it had been bleached but something had gone wrong.

She always dressed smartly in houndstooth check ensembles - a sheathlike dress with matching long coat with a narrow black patent leather belt to match her high-heeled black patent shoes. She was continually hurrying, weighed down with a bundle of folders, books and papers. She also seemed to always have a boiled lolly in her mouth which was quite audible as it rolled around her teeth.

I remember Miss Paradise for another reason. The war was in progress then and many visiting English soldiers would be fed

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and entertained at the then so-called Tech College up opposite Union Street. Miss Paradise would take a group of girls to the Tech College after school now and again to help prepare the meals. I remember peeling stacks of chokoes and getting sticky hands until someone told me to peel them under running water. For our help the young first years would be rewarded with a bottle of drink - quite a bonus.

Yes Miss Paradise stands out quite clearly in my memory bank. She was quite an English teacher - and quite a character.