

2nd June 2023

Norm Rogers,
The President
NBHS Old Boys Association

Dear Norm,

My name is Robert Smith. I completed my Leaving Certificate at Newcastle Boys High School in 1959, making me 81 years of age now.

As I no longer live in Newcastle (and haven't since my early 20's), it saddens me that I haven't been able to attend many reunions. At present I live in Brisbane and probably will for the rest of my days.

I attended Boys High after completing my primary school education at Waratah Boys Primary School, in Georgetown Rd. Waratah. My dad was the headmaster of the boys' primary school and he was also responsible for the Waratah Girls School and the Waratah Infants School, located next to NBHS.

The last reunion I attended was in the late 1990's with my older brother, Edward Smith who is now deceased. I also had another elder brother, David Smith, who attended NBHS and who is also deceased.

All the Smith Brothers did pretty well for themselves with the usual dramas along the way. David was one of the top Commonwealth Bank Managers in NSW and managed Wynyard, Hornsby and Woy Woy branches at various times. Edward was the Chief Engineer at Channel 7 in Brisbane and I owned and ran a very successful English language School in Brisbane for many years before I retired.

I'm still in reasonable health (touch wood) and sincerely hope to get to the 2024 reunion. If I'm correct, that would be about the 69th anniversary of my commencement at NBHS.

I have fond memories of NBHS, the teachers and the school itself. I'll never forget Goofy Goffet, Sleepy Gray, Hank Haines, TOC O'Connor, Slops Mudford, Dippy Denham and Keg McRae and all the other colourful souls that managed to get me through my studies and teach me about life.

F.H Beard who was the Headmaster at the time, was a particularly good Principal with many enlightened ideas about teaching unruly boys how to live and conduct themselves in a civilised way.

For instance he introduced new subjects in the curriculum that would be relevant to the modern student. One was a combined subject that counted towards our final grade in the Intermediate Certificate. It consisted of 50% spelling and 50% Current Affairs. One year I remember proudly topping the year in Current Affairs, though my spelling, (equally important), left a lot to be desired.

He also introduced a special session to warn boys of the dangers of smoking. It was a short series of half-hour movies, probably put together by the Department of Health

and extremely explicit and shocking. I can still remember the sight of a blackened, tar-filled lung being dumped unceremoniously into a hospital waste bag. I am sure it had a beneficial (and hopefully a lifelong) effect on many of the students.

Another thing that F.H. Beard introduced were his "Human Reproduction" seminars for the senior school. These were no doubt aimed at reducing the number of illegitimate children around Newcastle. I think there were about half a dozen episodes, all of which were shown to 4th and 5th year students each year.

Imagine the scene then when the program first kicked off. I was in the audience, apprehensively waiting for the lights to go out. Sufficient to say that with old fashioned parents, no sisters and an education that involved all-boy schools up until now, I knew very little about human reproduction and the female torso.

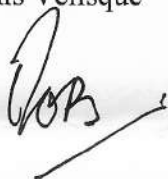
On the stage, the Head nervously explained to the boys that they should act maturely and sensibly during the screenings and refrain from any giggling, or noise till it was over. The lights went out. A hush fell over the few hundred seniors present. Then the movie came on. A picture of a naked female body flashed across the screen and the room went absolutely MAD. The screams, cheers, stamping and banging of seats was deafening. On came the lights and we all got a talking-to but this literally had to be done three or four times before the boys finally settled down and the movie could proceed.

As for myself, I may have been one of the worst offenders – but that was how things went in those days. A sister or two would have changed my life big-time.

Finally, let me say that I found a few things among my souvenirs that I'd like to pass on to you – a list of students in 5th year 1959 and a brass badge, I think from my school hat. I have no use for them now

Thanking you for keeping up the good work Norm and raising the standard high. May the souls of all the departed NBHS boys forever "climb the hill in the morning."

Remis Velisque



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