

JOYCE MARION GRIMSLEY 25.12.1916-24.3.2010

Joyce - always known as 'JO', was not a member of the Canberra & District Historical Society - or I don't think she was, but she was one of the pioneers of early Canberra and a person who influenced for the better the lives of her many students including mine. She was a well loved and respected person.

Jo never married and one of the stories that was told was that her fiancée, a pilot, had been killed in the Battle of Britain. Whether or not this is true I don't know.

Jo was the PE teacher at Canberra High School between 1942 and 1974. I first met her when I went to Canberra High in 1949 as a pupil in First Year and again in my adult years when I was appointed to Canberra High in 1959 as an Art Teacher.

Sports Mistress is a title that is totally inadequate for duties she carried out at Canberra High. As well as the usual PE and sports she created programmes that included all members of the school. Perhaps one of the most important was the Royal Life Saving Programme that was held for the three weeks after the final examinations. People were not forced to join in, but if they chose not to they remained at school to do school work, with the result that around 98% of students joined in. I worked my way through the various awards up to the highest one that one could do at that time - the Award of Merit - which I did twice rather than school work. I also completed my Instructor's Examination and when I went back to teach at Canberra High at Jo's *suggestion* I sat the Royal Life Saving Examiner's Examination along with Hockey Umpire.

Jo also had a hand in teaching students to dance. The weeks prior to the School Socials, all PE Classes were spent learning - the waltz, Pride of Erin etc etc. We did not have a school hall so the small Girl's Tuckshop became the dance floor and music provided by a wind-up gramophone player.

Canberra High had four Houses - Gowrie (green), Lyons (white), Denman (red) and Fisher (purple). I belonged to Fisher and at the beginning of the year I brought in my white blouse for the boiling in the school copper with the appropriate colour dye. Mine of course, was purple. Other days were set aside for Denman and Gowrie. Jo was in charge of this work.

Sports Carnivals and Wednesday afternoon interschool and house sports were a major part of the school year. Amongst the events were the team ones that included Captain Ball, Tunnel Ball and another which meant the ball was passed over and under and I cannot recall its name - probably OVER & UNDER.

On a Wednesday afternoon the interschool sports consisted of Hockey, Tennis, Football, Basketball, Cricket and probably a few others. Some were Summer Sports and others, Winter. The school also entered teams for Saturday Sport. In the case of Women's Hockey and Basketball this usually took place on the sports ground at Acton.

Every year there was the intercity school sports & debating competitions held over several days, followed by a dance. We visited Parramatta High one year and they visited up the following. The reason for choosing Parramatta was that it was the only co-educational school in Sydney at the time. Competitors were billeted by families.

Jo was the basketball person. Miss Dunicliff was the hockey mistress and Girls Supervisor. Both always attended the school dances held in the Albert Hall. Both always wore long frocks. Both were always integral to the organization and celebrations Fourth Year Farewell to Fifth Year Dinner Dance held at the Albert Hall and other important dates in the School Calendar such as Speech Night (also held at the Albert Hall).

One grand event I recall and I can't remember what it was for except all schools eventually became involved. This event required all the students to carry out movements to music. One of the problems was that those at the rear or to the side heard the music at a slightly different time - it was provided by a gramophone. Jo did solve the problem and the day was a great success.

Jo's staff room was really a large cupboard with a window at one end. It was above the boiler room and I believe that the early staff were paid in addition to their normal salary, around 10/- a week or fortnight compensation as danger money.

I moved into this staff room that held around four or five teachers. It became a focal point for many of the staff who lived in either the men's or women's staff rooms. The urn was always boiling in our staff room and a cuppa tea at the ready for anyone who wanted one. Rus Rix who taught Japanese during the war and was a member of the Philharmonic Society, Terry Steinmetz an English Teacher and Ralph Wilson whose name is remembered at Gorman House were three of the regular visitors. The conversations were always of great interest.

The main staff rooms were the Ladies on one side of the main entrance and the Gentlemen's on the other. I made the mistake of entering the Men's Staffroom and was quietly picked up and put on top of a high cupboard. Students who came to the door would have seen a pair of legs dangling down from the cupboard. Arthur Martin was one of the ringleaders I think. But it was all in good fun.

The school library was under the bell tower and the lady there Miss Firth (I think it was) absolutely terrified me. In First Year we learnt the dewy system and were not allowed to browse through the books. Instead I used to call into the National Library (then in Kings Avenue) on my way home, where we were allowed to go to the stacks, select and read. An area of magic.

Jo lived at Havelock House, where she had a room that was larger than most. It may have been two rooms, but whatever - it too, I believe, became of focal point for good conversation and good food.

Jo is the last of my teachers to die, but the legacy she gave to many of us continues and I hope that I have been able to pass on some of the lessons that I learnt from her. Farewell Jo.

Ann Gugler (nee Austin)