

MY NAME IS LOUISE PARKER AND I AM INTERVIEWING MR. WARWICK LEAN OF 7 DALRYMPLE STREET, BELMONT NORTH ON HIS EXPERIENCES AND RECOLLECTIONS OF RATHMINES PUBLIC SCHOOL. IT IS HOPED THAT THIS ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW WILL HELP FORM AN HISTORICAL ARCHIVE AND RESEARCH RESOURCE WHICH WILL BE USED BY THE SCHOOL FOR MANY YEARS.

L.P. Mr. Lean, you were the teacher at Rathmines Public School in 1953. Could you tell me what classes you taught please.

W.L. I taught the Infants Classes which consisted of the Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd, which was a total of 27 children.

L.P. Right, and where was it situated?

W.L. It was situated behind, I think, what was the General Store, which was owned by a family called Potter. It was, I also think, the Community Hall.

L.P. Right. And it was situated closer to the lake than were the current shopping centre is?

W.L. Yes, it was on the lake side of that road, I can't remember what the name of the road is.

L.P. Right, and the Infants Classes, of Kindergarten, 1st and 2nd, you had 27 children, you had I believe the Catalinas used to fly over and wave to the children.

W.L. They were still, a couple of planes were still in operation, yes, very low over the school usually when the kiddies were at recess or lunch and yes did throw bags of flour, whether it was bombing practice or not I don't know (laughs) but it was very good.

L.P. I am sure it entertained the children.

W.L. Oh, it was wonderful.

L.P. Yes. Can you describe the hall itself to me?

W.L. It was of galvanised iron construction. The area from the roofline to about one metre down the wall was completely open. When it rained we moved to the centre of the hall until the rain ceased, and we swept the water out and continued on with our lessons.

L.P. (Laughs) Just a small inconvenience!

W.L. Just a little.

L.P. Right. I believe the building was also used for meetings.

W.L. Yes, we knew this because of the comments that were sometimes written in the books the next morning.

L.P. Hopefully by their own parents.

W.L. No, not usually, usually some snide remark or something I had to tear out.

L.P. Oh, right. To your belief, you were the only teacher in this hall?

W.L. As far as I know, I think after I left, another portable was erected on the current site and the Infants teacher moved up there and I think it was a woman.

L.P. Right. The R.A.A.F. Base, did it play an important part in the School - were there many children from the R.A.A.F. Base do you know?

W.L. We had quite a number from the R.A.A.F. Base and because of this our enrolment used to fluctuate. We could one day lose six and the following day we'd gain five or eight or whatever on account of the...

L.P. On account of the movements of the R.A.A.F. personnel...

And the children, what would they wear to school? Not a uniform...

W.L. No, not a uniform and in this situation in the winter, whatever kept them warm, ah overcoats, later in the year I was supplied with one kerosene heater and four gallons of kerosene which was my winter supply.

L.P. To last the whole winter - four gallons - goodness!

During this time Wangi Power Station was under construction  
- were many of the children from the construction workers?

W.L. They could have been but I don't think so.

I think possibly the majority were from the R.A.A.F. Base  
and the Mine.

L.P. And the suburbs that fed the school children were...

W.L. Well we had Rathmines itself, Buttaba, Fishing Point,  
Balmoral.

L.P. Would you be able to tell me about the materials that were  
used, and where they were supplied from?

W.L. We had very little materials, most of what we had we had to  
make ourselves. My future wife was very much involved in  
this. Being very artistic, she made a lot of charts, a lot  
of concrete and I used that word as "material" - the Doll's  
House in which the building was constructed and she made the  
furniture and everything was lined and oh there was  
wallpaper and the kids got a lot out of it.

L.P. Yes.



W.L. But it was extremely heavy, because it was made out of hardwood and, we couldn't afford softwood.

L.P. Especially when you are paying for it yourself.

W.L. We couldn't leave anything in the Hall. We used to pack it up every night and take it home because of the meetings and whatever was held there.

L.P. No safe storage?

W.L. No storage - safe or otherwise.

L.P. Right. And I believe you supplied your own radio for the children?

W.L. Yes, we did, yes. But when the batteries ran out, that was it.

L.P. And the materials were basic reading and writing and plasticene...

W.L. Yes that's it, reading, writing, arithmetic - the three "r's", um, today...

L.P. Was it much different to today?

W.L. Well today, Kindergarten particularly, the emphasis is on play - it was very very formal in those days - you taught everything - vastly different as I said, from today - you taught the kids to read - you taught the kids to spell - you taught tables - they learned them by rote.

L.P. Yes. And the Principal at the School at the time was a Mr. Samuel Johnson.

W.L. That's right.

L.P. And he had the older children.

W.L. Yes, the Primary.

L.P. Up in the other buildings where the current school is?

W.L. Yes, I think that building is still there.

L.P. Yes, it is. And on a Friday afternoon sport you used to have to walk your children from down near the lake and up to the school and back.

W.L. Yes it was the only day or the only time we could get together. And I could talk to Sam Johnson about any problems I might have or we had - apart from that we didn't see each other.

L.P. So you basically were on your own.

W.L. Virtually, yes.

L.P. Yes, right. Mr. Lean could you describe to me the houses that were along the route between the two schools - were there any there that are there now.

(At this point the school bell rings - Mr. Lean is currently Principal of Redhead Primary School)

W.L. There are and I think it is about three, maybe four - on the high side of the road one of the families in there was a family called Butler - their daughter was Doreen - she was in my class. Two others that come to mind were brothers with a surname Minter and I think one was Neville and I can't think of the other - and that family came from Balmoral.

L.P. Right.

Thank you very much for assisting us in this it will - all of the tapes together will form a valuable historical record for the school to draw on in future years and be very interesting for them... Thank you very much.

W.L. Thank you.

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