

CHAPTER 24

Further reminiscences of Ron Dugmore, class of 1948



In our Matric year (1948) there were some splendid results from the athletics team. The first rugby team was joint log leader, and the cricket team was unbeaten in the Schools league. The swimmers re-gained the Clift cup and the Points cup at the EP Inter Schools swimming gala. The Muir A couple won the senior section of the PE and District Tennis Tournament by beating the Muir B couple in the final.

Class of '48

Our class numbered about twenty eight. As of to-day (2019) I know of at least half who have passed on. Some of the earlier re-unions were fairly well attended but the latter ones saw fewer and fewer able to be present. Only Jimmy van der Riet* and I were at our 70th re-union last year.

One loses touch with many of our school friends and we tend to remember those who were fellow members of sporting teams. Of the twenty eight in our class I kept in touch with half, but there were ten special friends whose paths have crossed many times over the years. Five of us – Tommy Hartzenberg, Cliff Wilkinson, Jack Meyer, Bernie Bothma and I – went on to Rhodes University and were placed together in Botha House. While at school I spent many happy winter holidays with the Hartzenbergs on their farm, Dalveen, near Nieu Bethesda. Tommy was part of Kingswood College all his working life and many fine tributes were paid at his memorial service in November 2018. Cliff Wilkinson became a Headmaster in Wales. We visited them there and he was still doing marathons well into his eighties. Jack Meyer, whose family ran the Woolwashery in Uitenhage, became an Inspector of Art.

The story of Bernie (Fish) Bothma is a touching one. In our senior year at Rhodes he and I were part of the rugby team that toured Rhodesia. No sooner had we returned than Bernie suffered a severe stroke. His speech was badly affected and he was paralysed down the left hand side. I accompanied him in the ambulance from Grahamstown to Port Elizabeth where he lived. I saw much of him because my first teaching post was at Grey High School. Bernie, despite his handicaps, hitch-hiked all over South Africa. He even learned to ride a bike. Some years later I was best man at his wedding. Much later, in the early seventies, he visited us in Graaff-Reinet. He looked very unwell and we called in Hans Loock, School Dux in our year and then our doctor. He shared our concern. After a few days Bernie and his wife returned home but he died soon after.

On the rugby tour to Rhodesia I found myself having to mark my old school centre partner, Eddie Mitchell. After school Eddie played rugby for both EP and then Rhodesia. Tom Hobson, stolid opening bat and front ranker, and I met again on the Edinburgh Castle and we joined three others to buy a London taxi for £60. We toured Scandinavia and limped home many weeks later to sell the taxi for five pounds – one pound each. I spent many happy times with Jimmy Wates who was a daypot and my best friend. I was best man at

Trevor Coulson's wedding. Posted overseas, he was a very successful business executive. Sadly he began to suffer from Alzheimer's soon after retiring to Plettenberg Bay.

Alan Lamont, one of the proudest Old Muirites, always vowed to be the first diabetic to live to 100 years. Unfortunately he never quite made it. Happy memories surface when I think of the Gordon family. Moi, a really talented sportsman, was the youngest brother. He now lives in Australia and visits on occasions, talkative as ever! Neville Gair had a successful military career and he too lives in Australia. Graham Gradwell and I used to steal fruit together and both of us had to attend extra classes in Mathematics. He lives in Plett. Leo Marshall and I used to have regular wrestling matches after prep both head locked by the other..... while the prefect on duty tried to separate us. We made it up after we left school! I could never persuade Solly Isaacson to make the trip from P.E. to Uitenhage for a re-union. Kenny Slabbert who lived in Uitenhage was a regular attender of class re-unions, but he too died recently. Others who always showed an interest were Morton Barnes-Webb, Toekie Diamond, Dennis Carter and Brian Kingwill. Looking back I have come to realize that after school we make many new friends, but those who shared our school days will always have a very special place in our hearts.

* *[Sadly, Jimmy van der Riet passed away late in 2019. Ed.]*