

## CHAPTER 46      Snippets from *The Muiral* student newsletters

Edition 5/1977 of *The Muiral* contained details of the editorial board (Kevin Luppnow, Michael Vincent and Mark Opperman), the typist (Mrs Tribelhorn) and the 'censor', who remains anonymous. Luppnow and his team expressed their good wishes to the incoming editorial board drawn from the ranks of the Standard 9 group.

A typically wide range of topics appeared in this edition, from reporting on school societies (recovering from the impact of the all-consuming Muir-Riebeek musical show *Fiddler on the Roof*), to a detailed report on the school's outing to the Fish River Canyon in Namibia. Sure to be included in this report was the incident where the Muir contingent was skinny-dipping in a river when a group of hikers, including some girls, arrived on the scene. As the young reporter put it, 'a rapid spontaneous movement towards a deeper section of the river by everyone was noticed'. That the passing troupe seemed in no hurry to move on was the probable cause of some of the gentlemen having to spend up to half an hour in the depths of some very cold water.

Another excursion of an arguably more refined nature reported in this edition was to the 'Willem Wikkelspies' Festival at the 1820 Settlers Monument in Grahamstown. Detailed reports on rugby, hockey, squash, cross-country and tennis matches were also included in this edition. There was a special feature on 'A Legend on his Own' – Robert ('Blikkies') Blignault, who was chosen for the South African Schools Rugby XV. In a biographical sketch it was noted that 'Blikkies' (also known as 'Spud') had notched up 86 tries for Muir in his high school seasons, and 7 for the EP Craven Week XV in three years. He also represented the EP U/19 Biathlon team which won the inter-provincial tournament in Bloemfontein.

It was further noted that in 1977 Muir had three rugby players in the EP Craven Week side: Blignault at flank, Brent Robey at scrumhalf and Bruce Bosman at fullback. The 5/1977 edition also featured a section on 'Sporting Greats' currently at Muir, which included the multi-talented Robey who played at first-team level in hockey, tennis, rugby, cricket and squash – reminiscent of the talented Clive Bosman from two years before. Letters to the Editor, the Hostel Hit Parade, creative writing and jokes would characteristically round off editions of *The Muiral*.

From 1977 to 1983 annual editions of *The Muirite* magazine contained two sections titled 'Highlights and Sidelights', diarised snippets of noteworthy or entertaining events for the year, and 'Snap Album', a pictorial record of life at Muir College each year. Some of these were of a kind that could well have appeared in the pages of *The Muiral*. An example from 'Highlights and Sidelights' in 1981 is dated Tuesday, April 30<sup>th</sup>: 'Messrs King and Whitehead provide "room service" for each class in the school, demanding hair off the ears and receiving excuses off the cuff.' Such inspections would not have been viewed as a highlight in any sense of the word when associated with hair, but what is 'highlighted' in hindsight is the fact that short back and sides was not yet considered 'cool' for boys in 1981. It would happen only later in the decade.

An entry for Tuesday May 12<sup>th</sup> the same year was submitted more in the spirit of a chuckle than a lament: 'The year's first examinations begin. Howlers of the next two weeks: "hors-

de'ouvre" – a meal of horse-meat; "opportunist" – an eye specialist; A "pretext" – an original copy; "rhetorician" – someone from Rhetoricia'. The names of the hopeful perpetrators have been omitted for reasons of courtesy – something not offered in 'Highlights and Sidelights' at the time. From 1984 'Snap Album' was retitled 'In Focus', but fulfilled much the same function.

*The Muiral* Editorial Board could be forgiven for managing only three editions in 1987 – the year of the big move to Vanes Estate. Board member A van der Merwe reported that this year also marked a change in the paper towards something more 'serious', with a cutting back on 'quick humour'. Articles the year before were not all lacking in seriousness, however; one of the topics discussed was 'multiracialism' – not an inappropriate subject for the times in South Africa. Members of staff were to a greater or lesser degree involved in the production of the paper; Messrs V Herbert and R Hart at different stages from a consultancy point of view, and Mrs Tribelhorn in the Secretaries' Office, who had the pleasure of 'deciphering our articles and typing them', it was reported.

It is possible that the more 'serious' approach in 1987-88 meant less popular appeal; after good support from the pupil body for the first edition of *The Muiral* in 1988, sales and support plummeted for the subsequent issues. Teacher-in-charge, Deputy Headmaster Barry Buckley concluded that the current format of the paper did not meet 'the needs and expectations of the pupils'. A new editorial policy and approach were indicated, but sadly, no editorial board was elected for 1989. It would take a further seven years before a pupil newspaper was to re-emerge at the school. When it did, it was called *Roar Fax*.