



# GESTA NON VERBA

ISSUE 4 – 10<sup>th</sup> DECEMBER 2003

Next issues:      **31<sup>st</sup> March 2004**  
                          **23<sup>rd</sup> June 2004**  
                          **15<sup>th</sup> September 2004**  
                          **8<sup>th</sup> December 2004**

## PRINCIPAL'S NOTES.

This is the last gesta non verba for 2003 and 2003 is the first year of the Union's paid secretariat. The secretariat produces these emails, helps coordinate Reunions, maintains members' records and supervises school archives. Current membership now stands at 1,382..... the Union has vacancies for a President, Secretary and Treasurer for the 2004 Year. I would like to wish all ex students and their families a happy and safe festive season and I can assure you that the HSC class of 2003 will be a year to be proud of.

**Michael Quinlan**

## ONCE WE WERE WORRIERS

(or cause for worry!)

Let me take you back to the beginning: to a time when JRAHS first began. It was 1959 and I was one of the first 'Fivers' – part of the first group of students to complete their full five years of high school at James Ruse. Other years were in residence in 1959 but these were students who had transferred from other schools and had not served their 'Fresher' year at the school. To these older boys (for it was exclusively an all male domain in those days) we were the 'fags' – placed at the school to respond to their bidding, to bear the brunt of their schoolboy pranks and to provide amusement to their otherwise mundane existence. They taught us obedience and humility; they taught us about servitude and loyalty and, most of all, they taught us how to survive in a world of gangling awkwardness wrought on us by those strange hormones that, in varying degrees, possessed our bodies.

We outnumbered them but we were a disorganised lot – drawn from primary schools and suburbs near and far – with no prior capacity to form allegiances that might withstand their attention. Some Freshers were particularly targeted – nothing life threatening, mind you, but far beyond the bounds of today's legal tolerance. I was one of the fortunate ones. I had made friends with a boy in my class who lived in the village next to mine and whose brother was among the upper echelon of the older students. Their brotherly association was fairly

strong and my friendship with the younger afforded me with some degree of immunity from the ruling groups' attention. Not that my school mate sheltered behind his brother's higher status:- He was full of spunk and mischief; one of those likeable lads who was into everything and a ring-leader for any action that might be going, even if it meant standing in defiance against his older brother's renegade band.

Uniforms were particularly targeted. Blazer, tie, socks with garters and a straw boater were foreign garb to most of us. In varying degrees we resisted the strict school rules that demanded we be suitably attired at all times. I made a moderate stance with socks rolled down and hat kept safely in my locker. The teaching staff had far worse offenders than me with whom to deal – cut off ties, sneakers, untidy hair and nicotine stained fingers particularly displeased them. The occasional detention was the severest penalty I ever suffered and that was often countermanded by my required presence at football training. Some lads in my year, however, remained loyal disciples to the uniform code and became martyrs to the cause. They bore the brunt of the senior boys' attention. Hats would mysteriously launch themselves out of bus windows; ties would become so tightly knotted in multiple granny knots that they were impossible to undo; and socks would scale flag post and plunge recklessly into toilet bowls intent on self destruction.

Initiations were mild by reported standards and only a handful of Freshers were subjected to any serious humiliation. The school playground – grass and dirt in those days except for the assembly area – featured a number of heavy bench-like seats that, I think, were once tram or railway platform seats. The solid arms of these benches swept down in an 'S-like' curve, such that when two benches were pushed together face to face it left a roundish hole the size of a boys neck and ideal as a set of stocks in which an initiate's head could be securely held while butter, lard, flour or water was applied to selected parts of the body. In response, the teaching staff punished the perpetrators accordingly with permitted disciplinary measures of the time – cane, time detentions and lines.

More by good fortune than design, I managed to avoid 'the stocks' until my very last day at the school. Never backward

in pranks on other students and staff, I was, however, somewhat elusive to detection and retribution. ... So I thought until the December of '63! Then, on our final day of school, in recognition of my contribution to the lesser side of school folk-lore, my classmates unceremoniously stripped me to my jocks, secured me in a set of stocks and left me in the hot sun to contemplate my five years of mischievous behaviour. At one stage I thought the arrival of my Maths teacher heralded my release – but it was not to be – instead, a wry smile came over his face and he strolled on by muttering “*Ah! Stephens – they’ve got you at last. Enjoy the sunshine!*”

These early days at JRAHS were not without their positive contribution. Many years have passed since I’ve been back to the school so I do not know how much of the original infrastructure remains. However, we helped grass the first school oval and plant trees around its perimeter. We established much of the original orchard – an extension of an existing planting on the property. A somewhat robust orchard that withstood our clumsy and sometimes brutal attempts at pruning and survived those out of control rampages from the old rotary hoe that could often be seen pig-rooting through the rows of stone and citrus trees with a small schoolboy clinging desperately to the handles. We helped build animal enclosures – a tangle of wire and post the like, perhaps, will never be seen again. Our parents set up the school canteen and we did our best, through patronage, to ensure its success. We stood proud on the sporting arena and, although few of the outcomes were worthy of mention, began a tradition of fierce pride that hopefully still exists. For a young school, too, we performed admirably academically – not to the level of modern day Russians – but certainly a solid foundation upon which to build the school’s unequalled scholastic reputation.

This is just the start of my James Ruse story. A wealth of anecdotal memories remain to be told of those fledgling years, should readers of *Gesta non Verba* be interested. No doubt, others of that era have their own tales or variations to disclose. What say you?

### **Alan Stephens (1959-63)**

### **Article published in Hornsby Advocate October, 2003 Anthea Spinks (1993)**

When Anthea Spinks left Pennant Hills to backpack into Mozambique as an aid worker, her family was “terrified” for the 25-year-old.

The third world country was struggling in the wake of devastating floods and more chaos was to follow.

Eight weeks into an office job collating field data for World Bank funding applications, Ms Spinks was thrust into the crucial role of allocating aid when the area was hit by another wave of floods.

“She was effectively doing a quartermaster’s job,” her mother Sue said this week.

“Bags of rice and blankets were arriving and she was one of two people in the office who had to work out who needed it most. She had to hit the ground running.”

The former student of James Ruse Agricultural High School did a great job and World Vision offered her a senior salaried position as an emergency aid officer, with several field workers under her control.

It was a dream come true for a girl who, at age 18, spent a year in Brazil on an exchange program.

“She said she wanted to be an aid worker when she came back from Brazil,” Mrs Spinks said.

“She lived with a well-to-do family, but they had a social conscience and encouraged her to see the poverty. I guess it set her on the road to the career she has chosen.”

Mrs Spinks said her daughter was one of a host of young idealistic Australians helping to reshape Mozambique.

“We think she’s never coming home. She has a fantastic life.

“I flew in there 10 days after September 11 and then I felt she was probably safer there than we were in Sydney. She’s doing good work and I’m proud of her.”

### **Life in Sakhalin, USSR – Andrew Legge (1991)**

The autumn air has hit the paradise that is Sakhalin and the daily temps are now down to around 5 degrees, which is much more my kind of thing. The pace of my work here has slowed to the extent that I can write this message.

I even had time to track down a hairdresser to get myself looking a little more respectable for my next venture out into the wilds that is Russian construction sites.

The thing about shops here is that they look exactly the same as the apartment buildings, the banks, the government building, the schools...in fact all the buildings look the same and there is a distinct lack of advertising on these buildings. So unless you know where to go, you simply will not find anything unless you start wandering into a building and hope that you don’t wander into someone’s lounge room.

But with my contacts on the island I was able to get someone to draw me a map to a hairdresser only a few blocks from my apartment. Once inside it looked like your conventional Australian shopping centre hairdressers, the rack of mags, pensioners getting that blue rinse and hairdressers with larger than life hair.

Things were going well until I got in the chair and the hairdresser asked “*âãĩõũâ ñóâãõĩúóãĩ èàóêãóùøé?*” What you ask? That was what I was thinking? I have a hard enough task explaining what I want when they speak English! So I decided on the old “find a picture in the magazine” trick.

First magazine I pick up, flick through, come across a picture of Kevin Bacon.....  
Well, enough said.

Once we got through that episode I decided to simply go for a ‘Yuri Gagarin’ number, all the kids seemed to be spotting one, and there were enough statues of the man around town I figured it couldn’t go too badly ... I then started to have visions of me walking out with something that resembled Peter Cook during his footballer’s perm phase, but no I opened my eyes to find that Svetlana was doing a superb job. I even got the wash and head massage at the end.

So I walked out of the parlour with my new Yuri, proud parlorto to be one of the people. SO if you are looking for a good hairdresser, start at the statue of Lenin, down two blocks past the jail with the large holes in the wall, hang a left at the

billboard advertising what appears to be some form of electronically heated bike pants, past the vacant lot with the wild dogs, third door on the right and say "Svetlana give me a Yuri'.....just get the pronunciation correct.

### **Andrew Leigh (1977)**

Being a very old-boy (Year of 77) it has now probably been more than 15 years since I had any real contact with anyone I attended school with (is that a good or bad thing???) and become more intrigued in "who did what" as the years progressed. I note with interest the 3 long term teachers mentioned all commenced at Ruse during my tenure and are still there – maybe we weren't that bad after all!!!

Recently becoming a dad for the 2<sup>nd</sup> time (I now have a 20 year old and a 20 month old – a future Wallaby despite open heart surgery at 4 months) and another on the way, a sense of family and history has entered my life – thus joining the union!!!

If time permits I will get somewhat more involved but at this time family and work (I have my own IT consultancy) will dominate my time.

Thank you and all who contribute to this Union for keeping the spirit alive.

I look forward to meeting you all.

### **James Groves (2000)**

Myself, OCDT James Groves, and OFFCDT Chris Baker (2001) will graduate from the Australian Defence Force Academy this Thursday, 11 December. I am graduating as an Army officer cadet and will head across to RMC Duntroon next year for my final year of officer training before heading out into the greater army as a Lieutenant. Chris will graduate as an Air Force officer cadet and will move on to RAAF Tamworth for a further two years of pilot's course before being promoted to Flying Officer in the RAAF. We are the first Ruse old boys in a few years to graduate from ADFA, although the school has a long relationship with the Academy.

### **REUNION - CLASS OF 1972**

A reunion has been planned for the 1972 6<sup>th</sup> Form (1967 First Form) for the weekend of 13-14 March 2004. It will be held at Dooralong Valley Resort on the Central Coast west of Wyong. The main reunion event will be on Sunday 14 March with Morning Tea commencing at 10:00 am followed by a barbeque lunch.

However, you are strongly encouraged to book into the resort accommodation for Saturday Night (and Friday Night) if you can! Special activities will be arranged for the Saturday and there will be a Dinner and JR Trivia Night on Saturday Night. There will also be a display of JR memorabilia. The resort has excellent recreational facilities to keep wives and kids (and us) amused whilst not reuniting.

Further information may be obtained from our website:

<http://groups.msn.com/JamesRuseAHS-6thForm1972/reunion72hsc.msnw>

Among other things the website contains a number of class photos, a list of the people contacted so far for the reunion, a list of people we might need help in finding and the latest available details regarding the reunion itself.

If you are interested in attending please contact one of the contact people listed below so that you can be added to the mailing list. It will be essential for you to advise your attendance in advance.

Ron Lovitt:

Phone: (02) 9796 1330 (weeknights)

email: [ronlovitt@hotmail.com](mailto:ronlovitt@hotmail.com)

Mick Randall:

Phone: (02) 9896 5816 (Home)

email: [mrandall@parracity.nsw.gov.au](mailto:mrandall@parracity.nsw.gov.au)

Grant Kennedy:

Phone: (02) 4351 2611 (at Dooralong – ask for Grant)

Mobile: 0409 005 479

email: [grantkl@bigpond.com](mailto:grantkl@bigpond.com)

Hope to see you there!

### **YEAR OF '83 REUNION**

A reunion for all students associated with the year that completed their HSC in 1983 was held at the Epping Club on Saturday 25<sup>th</sup> October.

After 18 months of work by a small, but dedicated team, we were nearly sunk before we started, with a hail storm on Saturday afternoon cutting power to a lot of the area. We were told that if power was not restored by 6.30pm then the evening would be cancelled. We had a nervous half hour waiting out the front of the club.

Luckily ol' JC smiled down upon us – I'm talkin' about JC Hoskins of course, and right on 6.30pm the lights came on! I'm sure he went up to the big guy, just like he used to do with the Department of Education and duly got his way.

When we considered early leavers and those who joined for the senior years, we had just over 150 people in our year. We ended up with 86 people at the function and we were pretty happy with that. Disappointingly, there were a few people we were unable to locate. However, it appears that all but 3 of us are still around somewhere.

The students of that year are spread far and wide – US, Sweden, UK, Ghana to name a few. Attendees travelled from Melbourne, Brisbane, Canberra and rural parts. There were plenty more who wanted to attend but were unable.

We had no official formal part of the evening, but we were treated to a short speech by Mr John Skinner, our beloved Year Master, topped off with a R-U-S-E cry!....aaah, take me back to Englefield Stadium!!!

It would be nice to have more teachers at the next one.

A fantastic night was had by all and the partying continued long after leaving the Epping Club at midnight. We visited one of the old stomping grounds afterwards. Epping pub looks a lot different from 20+ years ago when we first frequented it, but the beer still tastes the same! (OK, you 4

unit maths freaks probably just worked out we were under-age when we went there, but only a little bit!!!)

Many old friendships were re-kindled and hopefully will continue until our next re-union, which will be for 25 years.

Re-unions are a blast (is there an up-to-date word for "blast"?). I encourage everyone to attend theirs when they get an opportunity. A word of advice for those doing the planning, start early, it takes longer than you think, but it's a lot of fun! We started our own website, but the school now provides this great service so encourage all your contacts to list here first and keep contact details up to date. Another great resource is the website: [www.schoolfriends.com.au](http://www.schoolfriends.com.au).

We opted for the canapé style service (no sit down meal) with fixed price for food and drinks to 10pm. This encouraged everyone to keep mingling and made for a great night. I would thoroughly recommend anyone organizing a reunion to contact the club and view the facilities.

Glen Paine