



GESTA NON VERBA

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PRESIDENT'S NOTES.

Welcome to the first issue of Gesta Non Verba for 2005! A special welcome to new members of the Union from Year 12 of 2004; we hope you will participate in the activities of the Union and remain part of our school community.

Recently there was a Back to School day, which was a success due to the efforts of Robin Legge and volunteers from the school. Many ex-students were pleased to meet up with each other, and see all the new buildings.

Many members spoke to me during that day, asking about further Union events for this year. If anyone has suggestions for events or activities, please email Robin Legge: exstudents@jamesruse.nsw.edu.au. Suggestions which have been made so far include organising a City To Surf team, a Union dinner... if anyone wants to volunteer for assisting with the organisation of events, also email Robin.

Remember, the Union is dependent on the active participation of its members, so volunteer and help make our Union work for you!

Carmen Kong (1997)

A friend remembered: Why I still miss Slacko.

At the end of last year, a few old James Ruse friends gathered at the home of Mr and Mrs Grahame and Rena McIntosh to remember the passing of their son Andrew ('Slacko') McIntosh, himself an ex-Ruse student (1990), who died in November 1994.

At the time of his death, Andrew was perhaps my closest friend; that is to say, I spent more time with him than with any other. Unlike others of our group, we were both enrolled in fairly 'casual' degrees and we made great use of all the free time to develop our snooker skills at the RSL. Usually Slacko would give me a sound thrashing but I did win one or two (by sheer luck no doubt). Free snooker, cheap beer ... ah yes, those were great days indeed.

Slacko was not the type to talk much. Many of our games were spent in relative silence with only the occasional flatulence of other (much older) RSL patrons to disturb the quiet. Such silence was never uncomfortable though: just two friends quietly enjoying each other's company. For every terrible shot from me, Slacko always had a smile and I in turn managed (for the most part) to avoid frowning as he sank ball after ball after ball ...

I think it would be very difficult (probably impossible) to find anyone who didn't like Slacko. He was one of those rare souls who seem to be able to get on well with everyone. With a smile and a laugh he would happily get involved in whatever was going at the time.

In the years since his death, my parents have often commented on the fact that they can still remember so vividly the way Slacko would walk up the hallway and say, "G'day Mr Unwin, G'day Mrs Unwin". I too can still hear him. I can still see him jumping out of his car ready for the action of the day.

When Slacko died it was like the light went out of life. It simply did not make sense. Looking back, the years afterwards seem like so much dark blur. Thankfully for me, I now have a very patient, very loving, very wonderful wife who has helped me to feel truly good about life again. Even so, the impact of Slacko's death on my life (as on that of so many others) was and is one which will never be forgotten. A character so warm should never have been taken so early.

At the closing of the eulogy at Slacko's funeral, Andrew Leigh said "We'll miss you Slacko". Ten years on, that is still very true.

Trevor Unwin (1990)



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Colin Anderson

Anyone who was at James Ruse from 1963-1967 or 1970-1972 will remember Colin Anderson. While he was always recognised as a highly unique individual, it was only many years after leaving James Ruse that I began to realise just how remarkable this man's story truly is.

In his Ruse days Col was a flamboyant teacher of English. He was deeply involved in extra curricular activities such as the sketches and speeches that enlivened formals and farewells. These were sometimes hilarious, sometimes touching, but always appropriate – always, just right. In the classroom he had the knack of putting things in a way that students of the era could “dig” and he often used his acting skills to bring set texts to life. But above all he was synonymous with the annual Musicals.

Thirty years later, when Col was awarded an honorary Doctorate of Arts from Charles Sturt University, the citation for the Doctorate referred rather unkindly to James Ruse Agricultural High School as an “unlikely arena” for such a flowering of the arts. But in his early days, Col's entire life story would have seemed improbable.

Colin Anderson was born in 1937. He grew up in the hard industrial city of Newcastle and attended Newcastle Boys' High School. Like James Ruse, it was a selective school, but in the 1940's and 1950's it was an uncongenial environment for little guys who wore thick glasses and liked Shakespeare. Col's memories of it are not happy ones.

On leaving school he worked for 5 years as a clerk at the Newcastle Abattoirs. He may have remained there except that one day he announced to his shocked father that he wanted to study English at the University of New South Wales on the Newcastle University College campus. Working class boys weren't supposed to go to University in those days. It just wasn't done – but he did!

In 1963 a nervous young man turned up at James Ruse to commence a teaching career. Like all young men at the beginning of their careers he struggles to make it work. He had difficulty in controlling classes and it was in response to this that Jim Hoskin suggested that it would help to raise Col's

standing and confidence if something could be found that he could do that nobody else could. Col's reply: “I like doing plays”. The Boss approved the idea and the first Gilbert and Sullivan musical was put on later that year.

Col found his feet and began to find personal fulfilment in his Ruse life. Half a lifetime later in a speech at a 1992 reunion of the JR class of 1967, Col said “if Ruse helped to make you what you are, let me tell you that you made me what I am. I treasure very deeply my time with you. You taught me to revalue myself, to find a self-respect I had never known before, to find an identity that I have clasped to my heart. And when I say you, I include my colleagues – Elaine Peterson, Leslie Lino, John Dixon, John Pearman, Graham White and, of course, this wonderful, grand, extraordinary man, Jim Hoskin. He – and James Ruse Agricultural High School in general – turned my life around and I will always be aware of and thankful for that.”

In the mid 1960's Col was involved in the highly successful satirical television series *The Mavis Brampton Show*. For an ex-abattoirs clerk life must have begun to seem very sweet. I rather suspect that the period of effortless happiness that comes to most of us in adolescence, came to Col not amongst his scornful classmates in Newcastle, but a decade later while he was still a young man in the far more sympathetic and liberal environment of metropolitan Sydney and Jim Hoskin's James Ruse.

In 1968 Col resigned from the Department of Education and set sail (as was the fashion of the time) for England. He sailed from Darling Harbour where a large contingent of his students sung and chanted some of his own material as they waved him off. In London he taught, acted, directed and travelled the length and breadth of Europe seeing the sights – and, of course the plays – of all countries. In 1970 he returned to Oz; where the Boss moved quickly to re-engage him. So there he was – a bit older now, a bit more worldly, a bit more hardedged. But still full of volcanic energy and very, very determined to make his mark on the world.

It was at this time that I first became properly acquainted with Colin Anderson. I will confess that I was an impressionable 15 year old but I WAS highly impressed. I liked Col and looked forward to his periods immensely. At first he entertained us to catch our attention. But then, more and more, he challenged us.

He resumed his interest in the JR musicals and in other extra curricular activities. During this period he also spread his wings in the educational establishment as his talents were sought by the Education Department for in-service workshops and demonstrations. He took my class right through 4th, 5th and 6th Form and the exam results were good.

In August 1972, Col was offered a lectureship in Drama Studies at the Riverina College of Advanced Education in Wagga (later to become Charles Sturt University). He should have taken up the appointment straight away but he stayed with his 6th Form English class right through to the HSC. He gave a brilliant and very funny address at our farewell luncheon and left James Ruse on the day that we did.

Col reached Associate Professor status at Wagga. On leaving the University in 1992 he has worked as an actor and as a

dramatic and musical director and producer in Australia, Great Britain, the United States, Denmark, New Zealand and Malta. In 2000 Charles Sturt recognised his contribution to the Arts by awarding him an honorary Doctorate of Arts. Still lively and well, Col in “more or less retired now” and lives in the inner Eastern Suburbs of Sydney.

More information on Colin Anderson can be obtained from:

The Charles Sturt University citation for his honorary Doctorate of Arts at:

<http://www.db.csu.edu.au/division/marketing/ne/newsm187.htm>

the interview with Col published in the JR book on the 40 Years of Musicals

the speech given by Col in 1992 which is published on the 1967 Year Page of the JR Union Website.

Ron Lovitt (1972)