Dear Sionians,

Welcome to the 2015 May edition.

Many of you will have fond memories of the College Hall. It had a myriad of uses such as: PE classes when it was too wet or cold to go outside; assemblies; music performances; productions and plays; Sion Day discos; and many other major events. The College Hall served the school community well for many decades. I hope you are not too sad to hear that a beautiful new theatre has replaced it.

On Thursday 19th February, Fr Mark Reynolds, our College Chaplain, was invited by the Sisters to bless and open our Miriam Performing Arts Centre. This type of event doesn’t occur often and so it was an occasion to celebrate.

As many of you are aware, Scripture is central to the Charism of Our Lady of Sion, therefore, the name of our new performing arts centre is inspired by the Song of Miriam as written in the Book of Exodus 15:19-21. Miriam is the first of the few ‘prophetess’ in Scripture. She was the revered sister of Moses, and an acknowledged leader of the Hebrew women when they and their families escaped from Egypt. Ritual singing by women was common in ancient Israel. The particular song that Miriam and the women sang was accompanied with the metallic jingle of tambourines and other musical instruments used at the time. Miriam’s life was one of service and leadership. She expressed all the robust qualities that are best: courage and initiative in a dangerous situation, loyalty to her family, a love of music, story-telling and dance, and intellectual enquiry into questions about authority and social responsibility.

Our Beautiful new performing arts building will celebrate the gift of drama music, dance and performance, and we will gather people from near and far. We hope that prophetess Miriam inspires our students, staff and school community to praise God for these wonderful gifts, and to emulate her leadership style which was one of strength, service, loyalty, intellect and love.

We will have many productions, plays, performances and musicals in this wonderful centre and I would encourage all Sionians to regularly check the College website for dates and booking details.

With every blessing
Karen Jebb, Principal

President’s Report

Announcement - New Past Students’ Association President – Jordan Roberts

Welcome and congratulations to Jordan Roberts, the newly elected President of the Association. Jordan completed her final year of study in 2012 and is now currently studying a double degree in Arts and Science.

The Association would like to thank Emily Webb for her contribution as President in recent years and we know that her interest and passion will mean that she will remain very much a part of the Association as it moves ahead into the future and continues to grow.

Daughter of Sion Award

The Past Students’ Association annually awards the Daughter of Sion prize to a Years 7 or 8 student who is a young, passionate woman with a positive energy and influence within the school and wider community. Additionally, her commitment to social justice in all aspects of her life, she is an empathetic leader and positive role model all students. Last year’s recipient Charlotte Adams of Year 8 received the prestigious Daughter of Sion award at the Night of Excellence.

Charlotte has been elected Class Captain in years 7 and 8, shown a dedication to leadership throughout her school life and aspires to be the Sionian Music or Arts Captain in Year 12. Not only is Charlotte a member of the Jazz and Intermediate band, she also volunteers with the Year 7 band on Wednesdays before school (check). Her involvement and dedication to the creative arts reflects the qualities of an enthusiastic, selfless leader. Social justice is very important to Charlotte and she strives to make a difference whenever she can. As an example, she often helps her Grandmother organise fundraisers for charities (such as Catholic Care and Gatehouse), which have a strong focus on women and social justice.

Charlotte has chosen to donate her $500 to Opportunity International, an organisation dedicated to breaking the poverty cycle. This money will provide financial support and training to families, enabling them to transform their lives and the lives of those around them.

Our Daughter of Sion recipient is a love-ly, softly spoken young woman who does not seek personal recognition for her selfless work. She is honest, genuine and humble, especially when questioned about receiving the award. Congratulations Charlotte!

Jordan Roberts, President
70th Jubilee Celebrations

Sr Stella O’Donnell and Sr Mariana Handley celebrated 70 years in Religious Life earlier this year.

On 20th January 1945 Sr Stella O’Donnell pronounced her first vows in the Chapel at the Sion College in Sale. This year she celebrated 70 Years as a Sister of Our Lady of Sion.

On 25th January Sisters, family and friends gathered in the Box Hill Chapel for a Eucharistic celebration of 70 wonderful years. Afternoon tea offered the occasion for some speeches and a lot of catching up.

Photo below: Sr Stella holding Pope Francis’ Blessing Letter

On the same day 70 years ago Sr Mariana Handley also pronounced her first vows. On January 20th this year Sr Mariana celebrated in St Fidelis Pascoe Vale Parish, where she has lived for many years.

She too was surrounded by Sisters, family and friends. Her long teaching ministry was in Box Hill, Warragul and Melbourne. Also attending were several former students. One being Jillian Wadley nee Duff.

Sr Mariana taught Jill at Box Hill in 1953/54. Jill kindly sent in this photo of herself and Sr Mariana.

Betty Jacka, Notre Dame de Sion student no. 76 1932 - 1938, was the adopted daughter of Vera & Albert Jacka.

Captain Albert Jacka is described as Australia’s greatest front-line soldier. Albert Jacka joined the AIF in September 1914 as 21-year old private and landed on Gallipoli on 25 April 1915. A few weeks later, on 19 May, he helped repel a Turkish assault at Courtney’s Post. During the action he attacked a group of the enemy with his rifle and bayonet and recaptured the position. For this he became the first Australian to win the Victoria Cross in the First World War. In 1916 in France, as an officer at the battle for Pozières, he performed an equally bold action for which he was awarded the Military Cross.

Although seriously wounded, his attack on the enemy was described by the official war historian as "the most dramatic and effective act of individual audacity in the history of the AIF". At Bullecourt in April 1917 he won a bar to his MC for further brave individual work.

Albert Jacka became known throughout the AIF for his bravery. His 14th Battalion was called "Jacka’s Mob". He was courageous, straightforward and unpretentious. Jacka was wounded again near Messines in July 1917 and badly gassed in May 1918. In 1919 Albert Jacka came home to Australia and was greeted by a civic reception. He was most renowned in Victoria where he had always lived. He went into business and did well until the Depression.

He became mayor of St Kilda for two years. Captain Jacka died in January 1932 and was laid to rest at St Kilda cemetery, metres from his old Murchison St home.

Albert Jacka with daughter Betty Jacka
Our Lady of Sion Past Student - 1932-1938

We would be pleased to know any further information regarding Betty and her time at Notre Dame de Sion.

Grand Reunion
Sion College, SALE

As it is the 125th Anniversary of the arrival in Australia of the Sisters of Our Lady of Sion from France, a celebration will be held on the weekend of 7th & 8th November 2015 at Sion Campus, Catholic College Sale, (the first Sion Convent in Australia).

On Sunday 8th November, following Mass in the Sale Cathedral, there will be a luncheon and various stalls of Sion goods.

Please keep the date in your diary.

All welcome.
Memories of a Past Student

School days at OLOS of the 1960’s were rewarding and offered a variety of activities in addition to those in the classroom. Creative dancing classes with Mrs (Mme) Dana were modern, with dance often being individual interpretation. The classes produced self-confidence, good posture ‘nose to ceiling girls’. An end of year concert at the Box Hill town hall enabled parents and friends to enjoy the girls dancing accomplishments. Behind the stage there was always much anticipation and squeals of excitement, which the Sisters managed to curtail marginally.

For the annual school fete, the lunchroom was transformed into a coffee shop and dance hall. Girls danced together to the tunes of the Beatles, Cilla Black, the Supremes and Gerry and the Pacemakers. Form 5 Classroom also took on a new look as a jazz club at the fete, where we tapped our toes to Peter, Paul & Mary, Pete Seeger and others.

Playing basketball (now netball) in the inter school competition on Saturday was a privilege and made even better when we could report a win on the Monday. We competed with schools as far away as Croydon, Burwood and Mentone. Travelling to and from the venues by public transport, without parents or teachers, gave us a real sense of freedom.

A young Nun, the Sports Mistress, Sister Anne Bernadette, who enjoyed sports immensely would tuck up her skirts and almost fly in the air in her effort to win the long jump, this made sports time much more exciting. If not by the other Sisters, this was greatly applauded by the girls.

Extremely large keys on typewriters gave students an excellent chance by public transport, without parents or teachers, gave us a real sense of freedom.

The tuck shop was a place of interest and anticipatory delight, for hungry students and all the mothers who worked very hard on a voluntary basis. My mother enjoyed tuck shop duty and drove from Croydon regularly. She appreciated the camaraderie of other mums and students and was known to make a great sponge and chocolate cake. The students would take it in turns to collect the lunches; such was the popularity of the tuck shop!

Once in 1963, the bell interrupted sports time, and students were required to change into indoor shoes and go in pairs to the Chapel. This was in the old chapel next to the original Sisters’ quarters. Archbishop Daniel Mannix had recently died and was lying in repose in the chapel. We filed in quietly in pairs, looked at Archbishop Mannix with our heads bowed, made the Sign of the Cross and then left, making room for the next couple. Looking back, it was a moving and surreal occasion of great pride (no slouching), where the hard work from three terms was modelled and admired by the mothers especially and other students. I recall Miss Reglar whenever I see frayed hems. Just a twinge of guilt is there when I buy a garment off the shelf.

Sewing with Miss Reglar made a great impression. Her attention to detail led to all clothes being hand made for many years. The idea that clothes were individual and ‘not to be bought off the hanger’ was tattooed onto our thoughts. To this day, ‘the sleeves are sewn into the garment, not the other way around’. ‘Zips are sewn in by hand’ and ‘the only hem is a straight hem’ and ‘a full skirt on the bias always sits better’. The mannequin parade in the assembly hall was an occasion of great pride (no slouching), where the hard work from three terms was modelled and admired by the mothers especially and other students. I recall Miss Reglar whenever I see frayed hems. Just a twinge of guilt is there when I buy a garment off the shelf.

In Form 5 (Year 11) students were invited to dancing classes on Saturday nights at Marcellin College, (a nearby boys’ school). Poise and grace (and sore toes) were developed as we learned the Fox Trot, Pride of Erin, the Quick Step, the Waltz, to name a few. The classes brought interaction skills with boys who looked even more apprehensive than us. The final dance night was a joyous event; having made many friends. Being able to enjoy different dances with them seemed to open up a newly found social window in our young lives.

A sense of unity came from knowing that many of the Sisters and lay teachers had also attended Sion. This instilled a link in the chain, strength of togetherness, and we very much enjoyed a story from the past. Our ‘lessons’ from Sion have been lifelong, and are stronger than ever today, as they say in the classics, ‘Those Were The Days My Friends’.

Remembered by: Judy Oliver (nee Mahony) and Catherine Bayliss
OLOS 1962-1966

1963/1964 Back L-R Felicity Quinn, Pauline White, Angela Callanan
Front L-R Veronica Dodd and Susan Norris
40 Year Reunion 1974

Midway through 2013 the reality of the next year’s 40th anniversary of our last year at Sion was looming. A committee was formed and our convenor, Heather Rose (nee Kennedy), gently urged us on to organize a reunion we wouldn’t forget. Meetings were held, tasks assigned and with the help of Robyn McCann, a date was fixed.

Through invitations via email, a Facebook event page and word of mouth 40 past students, including three from interstate, attended the reunion on Saturday 22nd November 2014. To our delight, four past teachers also attended: Patsy Crotty, Tricia Hynes, Jeanette Wallis (nee Byrnes) and Joan Hutton (nee Seedsman). The current Deputy Principal of Sion, showing great patience, led the excited group on a tour of the school. On entering the old cookery room Jill Dickinson (nee McLinden) reminded us that our first lesson was how to make cordial!

At the end of the tour all the reminiscing, laughter and chatter continued over a cuppa while a slideshow of memorabilia put together by Cris Lumley (nee Long) played on an overhead screen. The day did not end there. Carmel Geary (nee Treacey) very generously offered her house for the ‘after party’. And there, over pizza and wine, we continued reminiscing. A rendition of ‘Sion Forever’ to the music of ‘The Eton Boating Song’ was sung by Patsy and Heather adding a ‘cultural’ note to the evening. The night finally wound up at about midnight. Thanks to former classmates for responding to the call for old photos and mementos. We would also like to thank Sandy Nicholson, the archivist, for her enthusiasm in helping to make our reunion a resounding success.

Marg Coghlan 1969-1974

Meetings

The next meeting of the
Our Lady of Sion
Past Students Association for 2015
is being held on
Thursday 17th September
All meetings will be held in the
Ratisbonne Board Room
and will be held at 7.30pm

Communications

Would you like to receive the
Newsletter electronically?
Please email
paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au

Like us on Facebook

https://
www.facebook.com/SionPSA

Or follow us on twitter
@SionTweets

Reunions

Are you celebrating a 10, 20, 30 or even 40
year reunion this year?
For assistance in organisation of a reunion
Please email Robyn McCann at
paststudents@sion.catholic.edu.au

From the Archives

Photo taken 1950 or 1951—Basketball Championshp at Exhibition Building. Past Sionians Team who met after work/university to play basketball. They stitched their own uniforms, blue with a pink border.


Thank you to Sr Patricia Watson for supplying further information on this photo.