Alumni Newsletter

Welcome to Marian College’s inaugural Alumni Newsletter. For some time our Stewardship Council has been keen to develop an exchange of information amongst former students and staff of Marian College Ararat, formerly known as The Brigidine Convent School.

Having gradually developed a significant database of names and addresses, we decided that the upcoming 120th anniversary of Brigidine Sisters in Ararat was an ideal time to launch this communication. We hope you will enjoy its contents and be inspired to contribute!

We plan to distribute this newsletter twice annually, providing some up to date information about what’s happening at the school and sharing some life stories about past students and staff.

Reunion organisers will also have a ready forum for notification to relevant people of upcoming events. This publication will be available online, so we would be most appreciative of email addresses for future distribution. That will allow us to do our bit to save paper and reduce our impact on the environment.

Please let us know what you think of the communication and or provide suggestions for future ones by dropping a line to principal@mcararat.catholic.edu.au Enjoy!

Bill Slatter
PRINCIPAL

120th Anniversary Celebrations
November 21st to 23rd, 2008

In November we will celebrate the 120th anniversary of the arrival of Brigidine Sisters from Ireland in 1888. On such a significant occasion, the students and staff of Marian College will hold a special Liturgy on Friday, November 21st at 9.30am followed by a morning tea for visitors to the school.

Father Brendan Davey, our Parish Priest will celebrate a Mass of Thanksgiving for the work of the Brigidine Sisters in Ararat over the past 120 years at The Church of the Immaculate Conception on Sunday morning, November 23rd at 10.30 am.

Following Mass, visitors will be welcome to walk through Marian College (formerly the Brigidine Convent School) and also St. Mary’s Primary School where some items of interest will be on display, representing the passing of the years. Both schools will be open until 1.30pm

Reunion - 1950s and 1960s
November 23rd, 2008

People attending the 1950s and 1960s school reunion are invited to meet at the Ararat Trotting Track from 11.00 am onwards on Sunday November 23rd. Enquiries to Mr Kevin Beer on 0428 351 816 or frothy@tadaust.org.au

Mass will also be held on Saturday evening, November 22nd at 7.00pm for anyone unable to attend the Sunday service.
My Memories
The Brigidine influence on my education meant that I had a founding stone to build my life on after completion of secondary school. There was openness to people and the school was supportive of its students. The school was always well kept and neat mostly because of the respect that the students had for the school and the virtues that had been taught to them through the Brigidine spirit during their time at the school. Sure students had messy lockers and desks but the overall appearance of the place was one that people could respect and be proud of.

As a small school we held our own even in sporting competitions. I remember our senior team 'knocked off' St Patrick's from Ballarat and they couldn't believe it as we barely made a team and they had four or five teams. One for the country lads to put in their references!

Life's Journey
After completing Year 12 at Marian College I joined the Australian Army as a soldier in January 1995. To cut a long story short I went part-time army and found myself at the seminary studying for the Priesthood. Over the years I kept my reserve duties up with the army while doing my seven-year course at the seminary. Coming up to Ordination I found change diocese. I made a little bit of history, as it was the first time the Ordinariate had ordained its own priest. I did three years in the Parish of Mary Queen of Apostles in Goulburn NSW during this time I also started working at the Royal 2nd Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment in Townsville and did an overseas deployment to East Timor. I am currently still working as the Chaplain to 2RAR in Townsville.

The Future
We have to see where God leads me. At this stage I have many years left in the Australian Army as a Priest to serve.

Marcia Byrne
Marcia O'Brien nee Byrne started school at the Brigidine Convent in 1965 and has enjoyed a fulfilling career in education.

My Memories
Growing up on a farm near Maroona, I boarded at Marian College, then known as the Brigidine Convent, for ten years. In those days there were no kindergartens so our mother taught us the basics of literacy and numeracy at home enabling us to go straight into Grade 1 when we started school.

I remember my education at Ararat with great fondness. The Brigidine sisters were more than just teachers to me, as weekly boarders they nurtured and cared for my sisters Kerin and Angela and myself from the age of five. My father Neil Byrne would drive us from the farm each Monday morning and pick us up on Friday from my grandparents and Auntie Peg's house which is directly across the road from the Church.

As boarders, the Brigidine sisters cared for us, fed us and educated us. Boarders lived together in the dormitory that at times housed as many as 28 students. We learnt to share, be tolerant and care for each other. Those early years of education were influential in my own career choice and after many years working with children, I still love my job and believe that education is pivotal to a good and productive life.

Life’s Journey
I attended the Brigidine Convent in Ararat until Year 10 from where I transferred to St Martin's in the Pines, Mt Clear where I completed Year 12. From St Martin's I attended Ballarat Teachers College and thus began a career in primary education. In 1977 I married Peter O'Brien and we have two daughters, Kathleen and Eloise who are now 25 and 20 years of age. For the past years Peter and I have lived in Lara near Geelong.

I still have strong links with Ararat where my mother, Irene Byrne lives as does my sister Angela Reynolds. Other siblings are in Melbourne, Merimbula, Singapore, Geelong and Maroona.

The Future
Life has been good to me with a precious family, good health and hopefully, many happy years ahead.

Anne Marie Joyce Thomas
Anne Marie Joyce nee Thomas was a student and a teacher at Marian College and also sent her 8 children to Marian College.

My Memories
I have very fond memories of my time both as a student and teacher at Marian College. As a student I found the Brigidines very relaxed. Discipline seemed to come second to caring; Mother Dorothy and Mother Thomas (Thelma) were two teachers that I foldly recall, especially their sense of humour. I remember working in the old Monash Building (which has long been demolished) and having hot chocolate drinks at recess. I also remember when the nuns moved from the Convent within the school to the house.

Playing netball, tennis and softball was always fun and the girls basketball team enjoyed practising against the boys to improve their performance. As BCA we were most competitive against Pipe Band. (We used to put Rosary beads at the goal posts to assist with accurate shooting... umm!)

As a parent I found Marian to be a welcoming school for my children and they all did very well. As a teacher I loved the students in my care.

I believe the Brigidine motto of ‘Strength and Gentleness’ says it all. Caring and supporting the most vulnerable has always been very important as well, of course, as caring for all those more capable, independent and with an already healthy self-esteem. I think the education provided prepares the students very well for life after school. It educates for the whole person, spiritual, physical, emotional and intellectual.

Life’s Journey
I completed Further Education: TPTC at Geelong Teachers’ College, obtained my BA (ED) at Deakin Uni and Grad Dip (RE) ACU Aquinas Ballarat. I have taught at various schools in the Ararat District.

Kevin Joyce and I married in 1965 and we have eight children: Michelle, Matthew, Danny, Frank, Therese, Jimmy, Brendan and Rosie. All our children attended Marian College for their secondary education and all have done extremely well.

The Future
I have been very fortunate to be involved with the WYD Group and the subsequent Ararat/ Stawell Youth Group and this has kept me in touch with some of the wonderful young people at Marian College. It has also been great to see the development of the school since I and my siblings started attending 50 years ago.