

The Grapevine

Somerset House Past Pupils Newsletter 1 December 2006

End of an era for Somerset House

Mike Taylor retired after 22 years as head of Somerset House at the end of September 2006. Mike, his wife Jenny and their three children joined the Somerset House family in 1984. Mike had come from St Stithians and prior to that from Zimbabwe.

A keen sportsman, having captained Rhodesia in swimming and played league rugby over the years Mike has run ten Comrades and completed twenty Two Oceans Marathons. He has passed on his passion for sport to both children and staff at Somerset House and, unsurprisingly, and despite its small size, Somerset House teams are well respected adversaries in the Helderberg.

Patrick Devine, a past chairman of Strand Athletic Club where Mike is a member, wrote ... "On occasion Mike arranged club runs with a Tayloresque flavour. These runs were mostly off-road, frequently on no roads at all. If there were two paths to choose from, Mike would choose the rocky one, the one choked with bramble, the steep one, the one criss-crossed by rivers and barbed wire. Club members relished these runs from which they normally emerged muddied and scratched but smiling". These sentiments epitomise Mike's outlook on life but they also reflect his leadership skills and account for the loyalty he was able to attract so easily from staff and friends alike.

Under Mike's leadership the school has more than doubled in size and additions to facilities include new classrooms, a swimming pool, tennis courts, a multi-purpose sports hall to two IT centres and a library that is the envy of all who visit it. In addition to having ensured that our beautiful old buildings have been carefully restored and cared for the spacious grounds, old oak trees, gardens and even a nesting box for owls have been added to the campus. Somerset House today is one of the most sought after and prestigious schools in the country.

On top of his many responsibilities as headmaster – Mike loved to be in the classroom. – often the best time of his day. He will be remembered too for being entertaining. On one occasion having



Mike and Jenny Taylor

lost patience with endless repetition in a Maths class he declared that if anyone got the next problem wrong he was just going to lie down in Drama Street and let the next car drive over him! Inevitably someone did get the next question wrong and Mike duly went out and to huge excitement and disbelief lay down in the road waiting for death!

An educationalist to his finger tips, Mike's compassion for children shows in his belief that everyone is important and individuals with individual talents should be nurtured. Although a passionate sportsman Mike has also always been a great supporter of music. At a time when many schools were having to cut down or even cut out music from their curriculum Mike ensured that the school retained an enthusiastic Music Department whose members have developed many talented musicians, a Junior and Senior Choir as well as a school ensemble.

Mike has an holistic approach to education – believing strongly in challenging children and setting high expectations – both in the classroom and on the sports field whilst ensuring that he and his staff did everything in their power to help chil-

dren realise their potential.

In the frenetic world in which we live where our children are besieged by attention grabbing gimmicks, slogans and technology Mike has always been able to keep us all in touch with the real values that we all hold dear ~ integrity, kindness, loyalty and compassion. He lists every child's birthday in his diary and makes a point of seeking out the birthday children as they arrive in the carpark in the morning or of finding them at sometime during the school day.

Jenny has always been deeply involved in Somerset House and as much as Mike will be missed Jenny will also leave a gap that will not easily be filled. A wonderful support to Mike and also a huge contributor in her own right, from working in the library to creating prospecti, writing the weekly Blah and being available at a moment's notice to fill in for an absent teacher.

Mike Taylor, ever the gentleman, always interested and kind, a much-loved headmaster left a school and a community which has been immeasurably enriched by his unstinting commitment, love for children and passion for excellence. 🍷



Past pupils with their siblings who are attending Somerset House

BACK ROW - LEFT TO RIGHT - adults Nicky Retief, Ben Paine, Richard Newton-King, Lauren Dare, Andrew Hodge, Desiree Heiman, Shelley O'Malley, David Weber, Rob Sedgwick, Pip James, Wayne Mudge, William Ribbans, Pippa Carter, Tim Sanders with Bailey Sanders on his shoulders, Jacqui Rutherford and Claire Morris

FRONT ROW – LEFT TO RIGHT (SORT OF!) children Ashley Retief, Connor Paine, Luke Paine, Emma Newton-King, Kirsty Newton-King, Jade Dare, Katelin Hodge, Tristan and Kai Heimann, Megan O'Malley, Kate Sedgwick, Eltanin James, Thomas Mudge, - (in front of William Ribbans) Ian Weber and then there are 3 little boys as follows : Dylan Ribbans, Craig Weber, Richard Ribbans, then Nicola Carter, Ashleigh Rutherford, Dean Rutherford and Chloe Morris.

News & Snippets of past pupils:

The Jardim Family

- ❖ RUI and Kirsty ran the old Boarding House at Somerset House from 1988 to 1991.
- ❖ KIRSTY is one of the secretary's at the school. This is news of their family:
- ❖ TYRON (1997) is presently at Stellenbosch University and studying marketing.
- ❖ GABY is at Somerset College and is a prefect for 2007.
- ❖ BIJOU(Daniella) is in grade 6 at Somerset House.

Letter from David Marcos.

I saw a notice in the Rondebosch Old Boys' Union newsletter that you were compiling a list of pupils who had attended Somerset House Preparatory School.

I was a pupil at Somerset House from about mid-1960 until the end of 1961. My family had left the then Belgian Congo in June 1960 to avoid the turmoil which that country saw on attaining independence. I did half a year in standard 5, during which time I learned to speak English, our home language having been French. I then did standard 6 and at the end of the year was very fortunate in walking off with a loadfull of prizes, including the Victor Ludorum Cup. The following year I went into standard 8 at Rondebosch Boys' High school, having received a sufficiently good education at Somerset House to allow me

to do this.

Last year I was in South Africa for a two week holiday with my wife and two children. I had left South Africa in 1973 and had not been back since. We did manage a quick visit to Somerset House and I was most impressed with how well kept the school looked. We were very kindly shown around the school and also managed to see some photo albums in the school library. I was very pleased to find pictures of myself as well as of my two sisters who also attended the school.

Lolita, my elder sister attended the school for a year in 1956/57 when Dr. & Mrs. Haydock were both still alive. She also did the last half year of standard 6 when we arrived in South Africa in 1960. She went on to matriculate at Rhenish Girls' High in Stellenbosch. Today she is a pensioner living in Herzlia, Israel, having worked in the American School for over 20 years.

Nicole, my younger sister was at the school from 1961 to 1964. She later studied at Westerford in Claremont and Eleslie in Sea Point. She is an assistant bank manager and lives in Ashdod, Israel. She has one son.

After matriculating at Rondebosch Boys' High, I attended the University of Cape Town and Rhodes University in Grahamstown where I obtained a B.Sc degree and an Honours degree in Pharmacy. I then went on to do an M.Sc. degree in the microbiology department. My supervisor was Prof. David Woods who later became

the Vice-Chancellor of Rhodes University from which post he retired this year.

In 1973 I sailed to England where I did a doctorate in pharmacy at the University of Bradford and where I also lectured until the end of 1978.

In 1979 I left for Israel where I have been living on a kibbutz since then. I am the head of the R&D section of a pharmaceutical company partly owned by the kibbutz.

Both my sisters and I have very fond memories of Somerset House, of Mrs. Haydock who was always there when needed, of jovial Mr. Webb and his efficient wife, Barbara.

The Newton King Family

- ❖ DR SUSAN NEWTON - KING lives in Cape Town and lectures at UWC. Tel: 021-4242682. She is a world leader in African History and the Khoi San people.
- ❖ NICKY lives in Jo'burg, is Deputy CEO of the JSE and was awarded the "Grand Falcon" by S/H last year. She was Business Woman of the Year 2 years ago.
- ❖ THOMAS works for Standard Bank in their Africa division. He is based in Jo'burg
- ❖ PENNY is a freelance food photographer and interior decorator based in London
- ❖ RICHARD runs the family farm here in S/W and runs a human resources consultancy with his wife.



Farewell to Richard Elliott

Richard Elliott and his family arrived in Somerset West on Yew Year's Eve 1987. He was to take up the post of Deputy Headmaster and Standard 5 teacher in January 1988 at Somerset House. Right from the beginning Richard became very involved with the sport in the school, particularly the cricket and hockey. He arranged sports tours to the Eastern Cape, KwaZulu Natal and the Knysna area. In the classroom Richard will also be remembered for his special brand of sardonic wit.

Each year the Std 5 class, later to be known as Grade 7, went on a trip as varied as hiking the Fish River Canyon, hiking in the Outeniqua Mountains and visiting the De Hoop Nature Reserve. For the past 9 years the children and many of the parents have paddled the Orange River which was an experience not to be missed.

Rich is retiring at the end of 2006 and he and Gill will be returning to Zimbabwe to be with their daughters and grandchildren who all live at Victoria Falls. He is looking forward to doing some fishing on the mighty Zambezi and spending time on the Elephant Hills Golf Course. 🍷

Board Members

3 past pupils on the present Board of Governors:

- ❖ MRS CAROL DOWNES (nee James) 1955-1961 who is the present Chairman of the Somerset House Board of Governors. Her children all attended Somerset House: Stuart, James, Fiona and Caitlin.
- ❖ MRS WILGA DU PLESSIS (nee Daniels) 1955-1961. Her children also attended Somerset House: Sacha, Jean-Pierre, and Francois.



Ricky Hartman & Margaret Hitchman

- ❖ DR IAN FINDLAY 1964. His children attended Somerset House: Gillian, Jessica and Megan.



Farewell to Carol Downes

Carol Downes retires as Chairman of the Somerset House Board at the end

of this year after an incredible 51 year association with the school. Carol James started in Grade 1 at Somerset House way back in 1955, and tells of playing in the slot that crossed the school grounds, and swimming in the farm dam that served as a swimming pool in those days. Years passed, the wheel turned, marriage and children followed and then Carol and Keith's four children Stuart, James, Fiona and Caitlin also completed their primary school careers at Somerset House.

In 1983 Carol joined the Somerset House Board of Governors going on to become Chairman in 1998 until her resignation at end 2006. With her wisdom, extensive knowledge, enthusiasm, energy and love for our school, we are indeed privileged to have benefited from her hands-on involvement in building the Somerset House into the leading prep school it is today. 🍷



Richard William joined 1975, Rini Orsen joined 1967, Anna Waller joined 1981, Gertie Hobosche

VERGELEGEN DONATES THEIR BEST WINE FOR BURSARIES TO SOMERSET HOUSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Previously disadvantaged children in the Helderberg to benefit from uniquely-funded bursary scheme

The Vergelegen Somerset House Bursary Fund was launched recently with the release of the Vergelegen Somerset House Bursary Reserve 2003 vintage. This bursary fund is believed to be the first of its kind to be established in South Africa.

Through the generosity of Vergelegen, proceeds from the sale of this wine will provide bursaries to previously disadvantaged children in the Helderberg to attend Somerset House, a leading independent preparatory school in Somerset West. For eight vintages Vergelegen will be donating one barrel of specially made wine to sustain these bursaries. Anglo



American-owned Vergelegen is widely acknowledged as South Africa's leading winery.

The first beneficiary of the Vergelegen Somerset House Bursary Fund has been enrolled in one of the higher grades at Somerset House for the 2007 school year. This pupil has an outstanding academic record.

This wine was crafted by Master winemaker André van Rensburg and comprises a blend of Cabernet Sauvignon and Merlot from a selection of Vergelegen's best barrels.

Anyone interested in buying the Vergelegen Somerset House Bursary Reserve 2003 can complete the order form in the enclosed brochure and fax it to 851 2258 or contact Ricky Hartmann at Somerset House - Tel 021 851 7164 or info@somerset-house.co.za. Cost per bottle is R400. ☺



Past Pupils who visited the School recently:

- ❖ BARBARA COMLINE (nee Hill) 1958-1960 "Wonderful experience to be back. The school looks spectacular."
 - ❖ ANDREW and ALEXANDRA LESTER(nee Wood) 1971-1974 Sincere thanks on taking me on a trip through time. Such a beautiful school Thanks very much."
 - ❖ ADRIAN HUTCHINS 1981-1984 Lives in London. "Fantastic to see the changes after 20 years."
 - ❖ DAVID MARCOS 1959-1960 "With great emotion I returned after 45years to a place where I spent a most enjoyable boyhood."
 - ❖ PIETER GERBRANDT STEYN "We must preserve our heritage!!! This used to be my forefathers' Farm.(1790)"
 - ❖ SARAH CARTER 1981-1989 Sarah lives in London and is engaged to Richard Rivett-Carnac.
- ### News of one of the founding families - The Hodge Family
- ❖ PETER 1948-1954 - N.Hodge & Co
 - ❖ ROSEMARY 1955-1959 - Housewife, mother and granny.
 - ❖ ANDREW 1976-1982 - Joined N.Hodge & Co in 1995
 - ❖ MICHAEL 1976-1984 - Vice principal of Prospect House Private School in Putney London
 - ❖ GAIL 1982-1990 - PRO at Easy Hire car rental company
 - ❖ CAROLINE Staff - Teaching at Somerset House Oakwood.
 - ❖ KATELIN 2003 - present pupil ☺

With this our 1st issue of "The Grapevine", I would like to ask all the past pupils to please help us in trying to get our database of postal and email addresses as updated as possible. Please complete the form below if there are any changes to your address.

If you know of anyone who might not have received a newsletter or an email please could you contact Somerset House. We hope you enjoy this first issue of The Grapevine!

Past Pupils Information

Please complete the form below and send it to :
 info@somerset-house.co.za or Somerset House, Drama Street, Somerset West,
 7130 or contact Somerset House Telephone: 021 851 7164 Fax: 021 851 2258
 with updated addresses or any info on past pupils which you might know of.

Title & Full Name:

Maiden Name (if Applicable):

E-Mail:

Telephone (Home):

Mobile (Cell):

Postal Address:

Year Left: Qualification:

Occupation: