

FROM THE ARCHIVES

1943 - 1944

NANCY ARMATI [nee BRAZIER 1944] was a member of the School from 1943 to 1944. On leaving Grammar she attended Queensland University where she completed a B.A. degree in 1947. She returned to Townsville where she joined the Grammar staff for two years. Marriage followed plus a few career moves before she joined the staff of St Anne's School in Townsville. This school was later to become part of what is now The Cathedral School in Townsville. Nancy rose to become Deputy Principal at that institution and was, for a long time, in charge of the archives there. She became somewhat of a legend to the many students that passed through the gates of The Cathedral School. In spite of working with another school in Townsville Nancy has a long association with the Grammar School. Her father **FRANK BRAZIER** was a Trustee from 1954 to 1973 and Chairman of the Board of Trustees from 1970 to 1972. Her two brothers attended the School and her niece **ANNA BRAZIER** was Dux of the School in 1975. She now has two grand-nieces in attendance at Grammar.

Nancy writes of her years as follows:

"It is 67 years since I began my two years at the Townsville Grammar School in 1943. The war had come very close to North Queensland and the life of the city had changed dramatically. Some schools had been closed early in 1942, re-opening later in the year. Others had been taken over by the army and the air force, and then relocated in makeshift surroundings in other areas. St Anne's and St Patrick's were moved to Ravenswood. The Grammar School, where I was enrolled for my senior years, was set up on the McInnes estate at Whyte Street, Rosslea. The classrooms and dormitory filled the old house. An old galvanised iron coach house served as the Science room and laboratory. Later a temporary building was erected for two more classrooms. There was a stage at one end and morning assemblies were held there.

There were three girls and seven boys in Sub-Senior. Following tradition the girls were addressed by the teachers as Miss Burnett, Miss Sundstrup or Miss Brazier, while the boys' surnames were used. When two lads had the same surname, a Latin additive helped to identify them. For example, Tertius Johnston was the third of the name.

Girls were expected to sit in the front desks. On one memorable occasion, we looked up as the lesson began in the Science lab to see a huge carpet snake coiled around the beam above us. The class was hastily evacuated and the unfortunate lieutenant of the School cadets [Bill Wilson] was called to shoot it. [All snakes were considered dangerous in those days]. His aim was good. After some clearing up, classes were resumed. There were wet days when we had to tuck up our feet as water coursed through our Science lab.

Most of the day students rode a bike, walked or came to school by bus. One lad even rode a motor bike. All over the roads were the squashed corpses of cane toads - some as big as dinner plates. With the heavy military traffic their casualty rate was high but their numbers kept increasing.

During the years at Whyte Street, the staff was at a minimum. In our senior year Mr Whight taught us Maths 1 and Maths 2, his own special subjects. But when the Latin teacher, Mr Bliss, left at the end of 1943, he also took on Latin. He had done it at school but never taught it. There was no Senior Science teacher [Mr Blank had enlisted in 1942] so he undertook to teach Chemistry and Physics. Not only had he never studied Physics but he also had the greatest difficulty in obtaining suitable textbooks. With preparation just ahead of his classes he managed to steer us through - a superhuman effort when you think of his other responsibilities as Headmaster.

At lunch time we gathered around the piano in the "hall" singing popular songs like 'Deep in the Heart of Texas', 'I've got spurs that jingle jangle jingle' and 'Mairzy Doats' at the top of our voices. Shirley Aitcheson and Freda Parker could play anything we wanted to sing including the "Call Over" songs like 'Forty years On' and the two school songs 'In 1888, our Grammar School was founded' and 'Aurum Lapidis Argentum' which we proudly sang in Latin.

We had one tennis court where we often played after school but since balls were so scarce, there were many anxious moments when we thought we had lost one. No-one wanted to have to tell Mr Whight.

The netball court was a rather uneven strip of grass (mowed weeds) in front of the house, but there we played our Interhouse Netball matches. There too we practised furiously for the ball games, an important part of the YWCA sports held annually at the Sports Reserve. Competition was fierce between teams from business houses, sports clubs, the high school, St Pats' and St Anne's (down in Townsville from their wartime location at Ravenswood). There were individual footraces, relays and high and broad jumps. I remember Tommy Whight exhorting the broad jumpers (the boys practising for their competition, I suppose) to remember their Maths II and "to project themselves at an angle of 45° to reach the maximum range".

The Whight family lived two doors from the School. Daughters Margaret and Ann went to primary school but David was just a toddler. At the end of 1943 Mrs Whight went into hospital for the birth of their second son Patrick. Exams were over, and a resourceful Mr Whight asked our parents if we three Sub Senior girls might help out by minding David and doing some housework during the day. So Norma, Zoë and I swept, dusted, washed and ironed and looked after David every day from 8:30 until 3:30 when Mr Whight took over. I think it was only one week.

I have memories of one rather disastrous attempt to make a chocolate cake in celebration of Mrs White's return home with Patrick. We must have used too much of the precious rationed butter because the cake went straight through the wire cooler when we turned it out. Time has blurred the rest of the incident fortunately.

Amazingly the School's results in public examinations did not suffer. I feel we were privileged to be part of the School during an unusual and challenging time."

Nancy (Brazier) Armati



Form VI A 1944 at Rosslea.
Left to Right.
Back Row: C.B. Kelly, K.R. Johnston, Mr T.B. Whight,
A. Johnson, G.S. Aslett.
Middle Row: I. Malpas, Z. Burnett, N. Brazier,
N. Sundstrup, R.M. Linnett.
Sitting: R.E. Grant.

MR BILL MULLER
School Archivist