Maroon and Silver - A Celebratory Album to Mark the Sesquicentenary of Fort Street High School

Justice Kirby Collection

Date: 01 January 1999
Author:
Type: test
Publisher: Publisher - Was the paper published?

MAROON AND SILVER A CELEBRATORY ALBUM TO MARK THE SESQUICENTENARY OF FORT STREET HIGH SCHOOL 1849-1999
FOREWORD

The Honourable Justice Michael Kirby AC CMG

Like very Fortian, I can remember the exciting moment when I got the news of my selection to attend Fort Street. My mother had promised me ten shillings if I were chosen. It was 1950. I received the news under the large tree which still stands in the front playground of the Summer Hill Public School, where I had been attending the Opportunity Classes. Ten shilings was a fortune in those days. But the greater fortune awaited me at Fort Street. Marvellous teachers. Life-long friends.

Because Fort Street was established as the first model public school in Australia - and a symbol of the best that public education can offer to our citizens - it is right that we should celebrate the School's Sesquicentenary. When I arrived, in 1951, the excitement of the Centenary celebrations in 1949 was still palpable. The Centenary Book by Mr L Ettles Gent, a history master, recorded something of the famous legends of the School. But now this larger enterprise has been completed by the most indefatigable guardian of the School spirit, Ron Horan. A much beloved teacher, himself a Fortian, with unbroken links with the School over six decades, he has assembled this album for the delight and interest, not only of Fortians, their families and friends but of all who watch the history of our country and honour its important institutions.

This book brings back countless memories. Recollections of happy, creative days, lively companions and dutiful teachers who set us on the journeys of our lives. Read its pages and every Fortian will have flashback images of Speech Day. The celebrations of Empire (and later Commonwealth) Day. The solemn remembrance of ANZAC. The tuckshop with its enticing aromas. School debating. The School Song. Sports days. The war cries. The perils of detention. The School fêtes. Memories of the naked Meleagar, whose white statue reminded us of the antiquity of human knowledge. The wonders of Play Day: the glare of the lights and the smell of greasepaint that entered the soul of many a later public figure in Australia. The Coat of Arms. The School grounds. The pride in the past. The hopes for the future.

This book has been compiled with love for the School, its teachers, officers, students, parents and friends. The buildings at Observatory Hill and on Taverner's Hill are filled with the spirits of 150 years of such people. Not every one of them loved everything about the School. No

human institution is perfect. But in a land of many advantages, this was a place of countless opportunities. Truly, it taught us that everyone is the maker of their own fortune. Yet not for private advantage alone. But for service to others that comes with the opportunities, obligations and rare chances that Fortians have enjoyed for 150 years.

As I read this book the overwhelming feeling that I had was not of pride; for that can be a false emotion. It was not nostalgia; for that would condemn the School to the past whereas all Fortians hope that its best days lie ahead. It was gratitude. To the School for the opportunities which it gave to me and countless others. To the teachers and friends of unforgettable days. To Ron Horan for the devotion to and love for the School which he shares with us all. And for this book of images of the long story of Fort Street. 150 years young.

Judges Chambers Michael Kirby
Canberra High Court of Australia
1 January 1999 Fort Street 1951-1955