**Essays on Mount Crosby -Assistant Teachers of the Sixties and Seventies**

Whereas the headmasters and principals of the Mount Crosby State School have been well recorded and we know something of each of them, the assistant teachers (who were mostly but not all ladies) are less well known, and I have it among my things to do to address that situation.

It was usual since the inception of the school for an assistant teacher to look after the younger children and, given the cultural pressure for women to resign after marriage, and the fact that Mount Crosby was an unusual posting, they generally had a short tenure. Though each only taught us for a year or so, it was at a formative time, and they live as large in my memory as anyone I passed in the days of my youth.

How rich must be the entirety of assistant teachers that attended the school when my sample of just three years carries such a wealth of character? Among my memories are four teachers that influenced a generation of young Mount Crosbians:

Miss Marion Bourke (c. 1965 - 1968), whose adventurous spirit can be gauged by knowing her next posting was to Kathmandu with her new husband and envoy. Her memorable postcard from Rawalpindi would scarcely have caused more amazement at Mount Crosby had it come from Mars.

Miss Hoepner (c. 1969 - 1971), who announced the sixties in Mount Crosby by arriving in a new Volkswagen Beetle and a beautiful bob of bottled red hair. She was peerless in owning the sixties at Mount Crosby and lived up to her obvious nickname "Hoepcat". She might also have come from another planet - it was hard for me to tell.

Mr Cruice (c. 1969), who probably couldn't believe he had been sent to Mount Crosby where there was already a headmaster, and is best remembered for his tendency to throw stationery at students who, by and large, were as quiet as church mice (and stationary).

And Miss Contolian (c.1971), a gentle Mediterranean beauty that taught me a poem about how many days are in a month, only to be superseded by the groundsman telling me how it could be done on my knuckles. Practical, yes, but the pleasure was all in learning the poem.

About forty years after my infant schooling was done, I attended a "back to Mount Crosby" day at the Sportsground. There among an adoring group of grown up children was the embodiment of my grade one memories - our dear Miss Bourke - who after all her adventures had retired just a couple of years before that. There were hugs for everyone. I suppose at first Miss Bourke might have been surprised at how deeply we all felt about her being there; but soon it was clear, we were meeting a sort of schoolday "deity", and everything I heard after that confirmed that my thoughts at five were right.

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