

# Our Lady of Mt Carmel

## Mt Pritchard, NSW

### *A break in the journey*



In August 2004 I spent two lovely days at Our Lady of Mt Carmel Primary School in Mt Pritchard, facilitating Reflection Days for their Year Two and Three classes. Not only were the children a beautiful, multicultural group to work with, but also the visit gave me a chance to reconnect with people from many points along my teaching journey.

In June of 1981, I did my very first teaching prac at OLMC as a clean-shaven but woolly haired seventeen-year-old. I vividly remember being so nervous that my hands shook so that I was unable to put sugar in my tea without spilling it, so started to have my tea without! My co-operating teacher at the time was Miss Connie Arancio, who was still on staff some twenty-three years later. She loves the school so much she couldn't contemplate ever leaving.

And there was Sr Anne Mayberry, one of my all-time favourite grade partners, who after a time away from teaching, was back working in Special Education. Anne was a gifted Religious Education Co-ordinator and it was only seeing her do the role for a year when we taught together at St Mary's Liverpool that I felt I could approach such a position. Anne is also a talented artist, particularly in the areas of lead lighting and woodwork. She also had one of those terrific pre-Vatican II religious names, which she refused to divulge. For the rest of the executive the pursuit of the name became like a modern-day Rumpelstiltskin quest.

When I did a teaching prac at St Joseph's, Moorebank in 1982 (where I was later to return as a teacher and REC), I was invited to visit a few classrooms, one of which was John Galvin's. I was blown away by John's teaching and he left a lasting impression on me. He was and is a genuine character and really encourages children to be risk takers. Like Anne, John had taken some years off teaching and like Anne he returned to it with the same passion he'd shown all those years before.

I mentioned elsewhere in this book a conversation I had during bus duty with Margaret Austin, at St Joseph's, as we discussed my decision to leave teaching to pursue the life of a wandering minstrel. She commented that teachers who are mothers often get a natural career break when they take leave to raise their children, whereas for male and religious staff this is obviously not the case.

For Anne and John and me and many, many others, the love of children and the desire to teach are part of the core of our being but the day-to-day life of teaching, its paperwork, its politics, and its meetings can take its toll and distract us from this core.

As teachers we are gifted with many skills that can be utilised in many ways. Sometimes we owe it to ourselves to explore other options and expand our horizons. Sometimes the journey to another type of vocation can be richly rewarding in many ways. And sometimes that journey can serve its purpose by allowing us to "re-create" ourselves and remind ourselves as to our true passion and calling.