

## **John McLennan**

### **(1955 - 1958)**

*My memories of Newcastle East School are fond ones, although some of the lessons which I learned there were a little painful.*

*Newcastle East was quite an adjustment to the small country school at Paterson which I attended up until second class. Moving to 23 Parnell Place in 1955 (the year of the great flood in the Hunter Valley) with my mother, Sylvia McLennan, after her divorce from my father, I commenced third class at Newcastle East where Mrs Forbes was our teacher.*

*She was a kind and considerate teacher and she would reward the class for answering questions correctly by giving them sweets from her lolly jar. No doubt this early encouragement helped to stimulate some of us to improve our scholastic abilities.*

*Remaining at school for the remainder of primary education, which was completed in 1958, it is interesting to recollect that the people with whom personal friendships were struck in those early days remain friends today. It is not that we encounter each other very often these days but when we do it is as though time has stood still and we are able to converse so easily.*

*Parnell Place is only about one kilometre from where the old school was situated in Bolton Street and I would walk to and from school with John Groves who lived in Scott Street. John and I developed a friendly rivalry in our academic studies at school and we would often play together with his toy soldiers and meccano set at his home or swim at Newcastle Baths. We did not start out being friends, however, and our earliest encounter was in having a fist fight on the corner of Bolton Street outside McGavin's butcher shop. Needless to say, John sent me home with a new black eye and to save me from getting a more fearful hiding at home at the hands of my mother its cause was stated to be a fall down the stairs at school.*

*Friends at school included Kerry Gardner, Warren Krum, Tony Evans, Ian Parsons, Peter Housdon, Ross Dickinson, Bruce Wilson, David Clausen, Ray McCarthy, Colin Russell and Dale Kemp. Kerry and I received six cuts of the cane from the headmaster, Mr Baker, for fighting in the school playground (probably over a disputed decision whilst we were playing cricket in the playground) - it was our first and last experience with the cane and we have been good friends ever since, having played cricket together at high school and upon leaving school. It was a pleasant surprise to learn when I was first married, to discover that the house we bought at Glendale was next door to Kerry and Linda Gardner.*

*Peter Housdon was the son of the then Anglican Bishop of Newcastle and my mother recounts the day that I returned home after playing at Bishopcourt with Peter, that I referred to his father as "Mister" rather than "Bishop", explaining to my mother that Peter still called him "Dad".*