

X1 October 22nd 2012)

These are my memories about some of the personalities at the School. My stay at the School lasted from 1942 to 1950 including a short summer term in the prep school that was there at the time in 1942. I am glad that I have waited so long to compile these memories, since the description of some of them may be offensive to those who may have been alive to read them. They are not meant to be offensive just as those involved may not have intended any offense. On the other hand I would like to have had a better memory of all the good things that went on in the School and those of my classmates who had some influence on me throughout my years at the School. To those I say, "you are not forgotten, just the names!"

Miss Hawkins: (looked to us like the witch from hell) This lady taught us in the 1st Form. She may have taught us other subjects, but Poetry was all I can remember. She used to give us endless poems to memorise for homework and next day rant and scream at any of us who failed, when asked, to recite the overnight poem. One afternoon she asked each one of us in turn to recite the poem of the night and by the time she got to the 10th failure, she lined all of us up and marched us to the Headmaster's office. She was going to ask him to exact punishment on us (that meant the "tolly"), she screamed at us with her rather evil eyes. This was the First Form, and this was our teacher? Acting like a crazy person? I had never, at the tender age of 9, seen anything like this. Hey! Not many months had I come from La Sagesse Convent where the nuns were calm, cool and collected. I had never heard them speak above a whisper!. I could'nt imagine what went on in "Pop" Parsons office. He was not a young man and no doubt the thought of whacking our entire class was not what he had in mind that day. At any rate after half an hour of rather heated conversation, Miss Hawkins appeared, apparently, quite shaken. She bade us return to our classes. We never saw her again!

"Tojo" This teacher looked like he was Japanese.(not a good thing to be at that time time, at least not In England) He could have been from anywhere in Asia. But since we were at war with Japan, Japanese, to our eyes, was what he was. Also, we provided him, in an instant, with a name, Tojo, after the Japanese dictator at the time. No one knew what his real name was because he never told us except that he was to teach us Science. May be it was because of the experience of his class that I took such a dislike to Science. "Tojo: who was a short man, even to us short boys, would come in to class and boom at us like we were soldiers at the front line. He would then yank four of us out in front of the class,make the poor fellows kneel down and extend their arms horizontally to the side. He would then pile books on to their hands and, if any of them wilted, he would cuff them around the head, and woebetide them if they dropped their books. For the life of me I could never understand what this performance was meant to do for us except to instill in us a sense of terror in, and hatred of, Tojo. Well, someone must have squealed, because Tojo, too, soon left us, never to be seen again.

Miss Harris We were in Form 2 and Miss Harris was our Arts Teacher.She was young and very beautiful. She used to give us Art assignments to do and then walk up and down to see how we were doing. There were those among us in the class who were a shade more advanced than someone like me, virtually fresh out of a Convent. David Lawrence, I recall, would, as she walked down his aisle, drop his pen on the ground and, as she was passing him, he would bend down to look up her skirt. I actually saw him do it; I was sitting next to him!, - red as a beetroot.What he was wanting to see of interest up there I could not, at that time, imagine. Anyhow, sad to relate, she also disappeared suddenly, about the exact time, funnily enough,that Fr. Walsh went awol.

Nellie This lady taught us mathematics in the 2nd Form. She was a short lady who was probably 40ish but who were we to tell her age? That's what she looked like to us 10 year olds. Nellie had a disconcerting habit of sitting on a desk in front of us dangling her legs like she was sitting on a park bench. And she used to wear a skirt far shorter than that of Miss Harris. Unfortunately the legs she was exhibiting

were nothing much for us, even at the age of 10, to get excited about. However, I did observe that whenever the time approached for Nellie to step into our class, who should be sitting in the front row, and in front of the desk? Right, none other than David Lawrence, with his head resting sideways on his desk, his eyes pointing forward. Nellie, so it happened, did not stay long. She married Johnny Mescal, the History teacher

Fr "Pop" Steer                      Took us for Latin. He was a great teacher and a wonderfully kind person. He was a short, studious, priest, ruddy of complexion and a shock of dark brown hair hanging over his right eye. He was always very enthusiastic about everything and you could not feel but uplifted when he was around. He made Latin, at least for me, one of the subjects I could take a real interest in. When I was laid low with whooping cough, and had to stay home for 6 weeks, he was kind enough, on his own, to bring some homework for me. We were all rather shocked when he left us to become, we heard, Parish Priest somewhere. Wherever he went, the people there were fortunate.

Stevenson                              Otherwise known as "Stinks" He taught us science. He was also in charge of the Boarders. We, as a class, did not take to him much. Jack Cronin who joined us later as a boarder was of similar mind

Groundman Hawkins              . I bring him in because McDonnell, in the Upper 6th, wrote a brilliant little poem about this man. I wished I could remember it. Hawkins, better known as "Fingers" looked after the sports field, and all equipment. He was a tall man with reddish curly hair and a thin pencil of a moustache. He must have salivated rather a lot because his mouth and chin were always wet. Although he was Groundsman, it was rare, as far as we could observe, for him to be found anywhere but in his shed where the equipment was kept. We began, at some point, to conjecture what he could be possibly doing in there that took practically all his time. Rumors did circulate, almost on a daily basis. Well McDonnell's poem ended with the words, "and the memory still lingers, how.....  
.....Fingers"

Joe Linnane                              He was our Sports Master. Also taught us Geography. He was a very likeable personality and I particularly enjoyed that part of his class that strayed off the subject matter. He encouraged me a lot in football, although for the amount that we played, he never organised us into any kind of training rhythm. Once, he had me out in front of the class and asked me to repeat "around the rugged rocks the ragged rascal ran". I did no better with that than with any other "r"s. I started playing football in the 1st Form in the outside left position because no one else wanted to play there, but eventually after watching Hendon FC and Arsenal a few times I switched to left back. Joe entered my name into the annual year end School magazine with the inscription that read something like "best right footed left back ,,,,,,,". It sounded to me a bit like I was a freak, but, finally, considered  
just to appear on paper, was a great honour.

Dawson                                      I recognised his picture in one of the photos of the teachers. I don't know what year. The photo reminded me of an incident that took place in his class one afternoon. Dawson taught us one of the subjects that I disliked, neither Maths or Science. He was a tallish Irishman, with a very broad Irish accent, Some of us, including me, sometimes had difficulty understanding him. He could also, if so inclined, have quite a temper. This particular afternoon he asked a question of Peter Broe who was sitting in the row nearest the door. Peter did not respond, nor did he look up. The question was repeated. Still no response from Peter. So Dawson, in full flow, strode up to Peter and told him - "git yerself oop, yer crazy fool, oi'l wurm yer ears fer yer". Which he promptly proceeded to do. When he was finished, Peter just stood there, as if he were a cast iron statue. Not a word did he say, not even when Dawson asked him what was the matter and would he now sit down, which he didn't. In his turn Dawson started to get worried, what was wrong with this boy - he must have been thinking. By now visibly shaken he rushed out of the room to call for reinforcements. I have forgotten what exactly happened after that, but Peter Broe, it was discovered, suffered from Asthma, and that afternoon he was suffering from a severe bout of it! But that was not the end of it. Dawson came back and saw that we were still standing around lined up against the walls of the room. So he must have decided on the

sympathy vote. "Did yer tank I hurt 'm?" he asked Demolder at the back. "No, sir," replied O'Connor next to him. "I wus'nt askin' you, I wus askin' Demolder" "What about you?". He asked Grant, "No, sir," replied Murphy. "What! d'yer all tank oim bossoiyed or some tan?". Just then the bell rang for end of class. Dawson filed out blinking his eyes and shaking his head For us, after he left what started as a giggle ended up in roars of laughter.

Johnny Mescal He was a gentle soul who taught History. He was also the HouseMaster of Challoner House of which he appointed me Captain in 1948. He was personally very helpful to me and I learned a lot from him. He was a bit lack lustre but I liked him.

Fr FX Dent It seems that everyone has a tale to tell about Fr. Dent. I explained before how he had a very intense way of speaking like that day he was reciting the Goldenhair poem. Sometimes he tended to illustrate his points with various inflections of the head One day, for instance, in response to some chatter at the back of the class, he asked, "**WHY IS IT**", rolling his eyeballs, "**THAT EVERY TIME**" tightening his cheeks, "**I OPEN MY MOUTH**", pursing his lips, "**SOME FOOL**," arching his eyebrows, "**SPEAKS**". He must have wondered what he had said, looking around the class, because we all collapsed into laughter.

Jerry O'Donovan Our French teacher. Like the French, he loved it if you were fluent in the language which, regrettably, none of us was. Except Jack de Lane Lea who was French and with whom he could spend half the class chatting while we nodded off. When it came to the 6th Form and our last chance to excel in the exam, I was disappointed to get not even a pass in French. I should not have been. I was, I already knew but had not yet experienced it, ill equipped to go out into the big world and chat away in French. Sometime that summer I accompanied my parents to Paris. Whilst there, it fell to me to ask for destination instructions. I asked a gentleman wearing a beret, a sure sign of a Frenchman, "pardonnez-moi ou est le Eiffel Tower" "I dunno, mite," he said, cockney as he was, " bu' I fink it's o'er there" pointing to the Eiffel Tower over my shoulder.

D.K O'Shea He was a late arrival at the School, but in time to shepherd us through our final year of English. He was a tall jovial gentleman who used to gleam at us as if we were his prize possessions. I don't know if he was ever aware of it, but we called him 'DK shitbag shagger O'Shea". It was a shame that he was saddled with guiding us through some of the most boring books in English Literature. Apart from Shakespeare's Macbeth, what could be more tedious than Coriolanus, The History of Henry Esmond, and William Morris' News from Nowhere? At least, that is what the splendid Upper 6th of the year 1950 thought of them. Anyhow, boring and tedious as we found them, we all passed, and not just with a pass. So DK.....O'Shea did us proud, - or we him!

Fr.(Doc) Ward Of all the teachers at the School I liked him the best and got the most enjoyment out of his classes. I enjoyed Latin so much that I was shocked to find out that it was reckoned to be a dead language. Why, then, did someone like John Norman, who left around 1945, return to the School a few years later to study up on Latin which he needed to get into Law School? Dead or not, Latin was certainly not one of my black list subjects. What I liked about it was that here was a language where a sentence could contain a great economy of words, put together in any haphazard that came to mind. Like, "Tum Pater Aeneas puppi sic fatur ab alta" - then father Aeneas told us that the poops were lofty. Of course that was not the translation, But who cares so long as you were aggravating Doc Ward. He did not seem to mind. He was one of the few with a great sense of humor

Norman Scutt He was in the front line with all the other Prefects when I had my first day at School in 1942, He came back to teach during about our last year or so. But he used to pop in and out throughout. There was nothing not to like about Norman Scutt. He was always very helpful and very encouraging. I remember once, when we were playing cricket and when I came in to bat, Norman happened to be the wicket keeper. Do you know what? Whilst keeping wicket he was actually giving me instructions as to how to bat! He was great for the School and it is with much regret that I heard of his passing. Too soon indeed.

Bert Metcalfe                      There was a second occasion, after the Eddies Snack Bar incident, when I was sent up to "see" Mr Metcalfe. I no longer remember which of the prefects caught me, but one of them did, and it was for playing football on Woodside Lane outside the School gates. I got another 2 on each. The fact that over 8 years I only got the Tolly twice must say a lot for my attention to the School's rules. There were others of us who received it more often than twice and more than two on each. I know that Terry Mackerness must have had it about 6 or 8 times by the time he left in 1950. Why he had it so many times was beyond me, because he was not really a big rule breaker. The only rule I knew him to break was smoking, which he did often. Funnily enough, he never got caught for it! You would think that my only memory of Bert Metcalfe was his use of the Tolly. I know this, at least I believe I know it, He never administered the cane to any of us. May be I am wrong, but I never heard of it. The cane was the ultimate punishment which was reserved for the Headmaster, "Pop" Parsons. What the crime could have been to deserve the ultimate punishment was not well publicised, -but one of them was to **jump over the fence and trespass on the property of the London Underground!** One of my other memories was when Bert once assembled the whole School in the playground, and, in front of the entire School, expelled this one boy for stealing. I even remember the name of the poor fellow. I also remember two occasions when he organised boxing matches to allow the contending parties to settle the differences. One match was between Tony Jollye and Ron Muchmore and the other, a year or two earlier between Evans and Walker.

In my last year at School there were 11 of us whose names I can remember: McDonnell, Mackerness, Cronin, Phelan, McDonald, O'Connor, Hughes, Murphy, Brunner, Martin, --me .I thought Ronnie Lawrence was in there with us but, apparently he left a year earlier.

Do I, after 62 years, believe That FCGS gave me a good education? That's question No1. Question No 2, do I have good memories of the School? And Question 3 is do I have any regrets?

To answer the first question, I say a definite yes. The School taught us, gave us sports, and fed us. No mean task bearing in mind that for the first three years the country was at war. Considering how difficult it must have been for the School to recruit quality teachers, I think we turned out fine.

Fortunately, by the time I joined the School, the blitz was over. Well not quite. In 1944 we started being hit by those pesky V One doodlebugs. These would come over like drones, - we would wait and listen, the engine would stop, and bam, someone's house had copped it. Luckily these V Ones did not exactly arrive in clusters, just one or two at a time. This is not to say that people were not nervous. On the contrary, everyone was nervous, rather like having the Sword of Damocles hanging over us. The subsequent arrival of the V 2 rockets added considerably to the unease. These beauties would drop out of the sky without warning whatsoever. My parents decided at this juncture that my mother and I should join those who wished to become evacuees --in other words get out of London. So in the summer of 1944 I ended up in some town near Manchester, We were allocated (the exact Government term was billeted - we were billeted by a billeting officer) to the house of a mother and son in Heaton Mersey. Nice people but it was not long before I felt pangs of homesickness, or, should I say, School sickness. There was talk of my being enrolled in Manchester Grammar School. As far as I was concerned, this was careless talk. I wanted nothing but to get back to London. So we did arrive back in London early October 1944 and back to FCGS it was. I was therefore able to continue my education at the School and conclude it there in fine style.

The Upper 6th gave us the opportunity to acquire some of the skills that would stand us in good stead in later life. That only one or two of us did actually go on to University was not the fault of the School. I wanted to, but money, or lack of it, interfered with that idea. Also the fact that in a relatively short space of time, we would be receiving letters in the Post inviting us to join Her Majesty's Forces was kind of unsettling for us. What, by the way, were those skills?

***Belief in teamwork and belief in ourselves.***

If I did not have good memories, to answer Question 2, I would not have have sat down and put my

thoughts of some of those memories to paper. In short, I have only good memories of the School.

Regrets? Well, I can't play the piano like Mozart, and I can't paint like Toulouse Lautrec, but I can still stand and I've had a good life. **Thank you FCGS!!!**