Jean Tahija described her life until her marriage as far from conventional. She is the daughter of a policeman, whose thinking, in Tahija’s words, was ahead of his time. “Women,” he often said to me, “should have the same opportunities as men. Every career should be open to them, including the sciences, medicine and dentistry.”

When Tahija graduated in Dental Science in 1941, she was the only woman in her class of twenty-four. She worked as Registrar at the Dental Hospital for five years before leaving for Indonesia in 1947. Her husband was equally supportive of her right to a career, commenting that the Moluccas, with a population of more than five million, had only one dentist. Practicing proved easier said than done. The Dutch dentist at the Macassar hospital refused to employ her, even as a volunteer. Almost four years later, however, an offer to the Jakarta public hospital was accepted. Tahija worked for two years in appalling conditions, grateful for her graduation present from her parents of a set of dental instruments, which she passed to a colleague on her retirement.

Tahija was an enthusiastic horticulturist, establishing a garden at Tugu, which she planted with both native and exotic trees, especially eucalypts and cinnamon. The Cinnamomum tahijanum is named for her husband and herself.

In her autobiography Dr Jean Tahija recollected with fondness her time as both a student and registrar at the Dental Hospital and was proud of the fact that she had been fortunate enough, as both a woman (at a time when tertiary education for women was unusual) and as person from a minority background, to have the same opportunities as men.
G. J. Wylie Conference Centre

"Geoffrey J Wylie, BDS, DDS (Toronto), FRACDS, was born on the 29th September 1917, aged 40 years. Although a practising dentist for only seventeen years, few have made such a strong impact upon their fellow dentists, students and the community at large. Geoffrey loved dentistry. Clinical excellence excited him, and his sense of responsibility for dental health went far beyond the boundaries of his own private practice. He excelled as a teacher and lecturer and his services were utilized widely in Victoria, interstate and overseas by his fellow practitioners; he made a valuable contribution to the teaching of dental students at The University of Melbourne. His enthusiasm and extra ordinary influence will long be remembered with gratitude and affection.

In recognition of his outstanding contribution to the cause of dentistry and in memory of his life and work, both as a dentist and a teacher, friends and colleagues of Geoffrey are launching an appeal during 1980 to establish a fund in The University of Melbourne to be known as the Geoffrey John Wylie Fund. The fund will permit a continuation of Dr Wylie's work in the field of Conservative Dentistry in which he carried out his most significant work.

The above is an extract of a letter sent on 9 June 1980 to friends and colleagues of Dr Geoffrey John Wylie by Professor E Storey, Dean of the Faculty of Dental Science and Dr Lloyd O'Brien. In 1980 the Faculty recommended to Council that the capital in the fund be used to build a centre for postgraduate and continuing education and audio-visual development, reflecting both Dr Wylie's particular interests and the growing general interest in audio-visual teaching materials. This led in 1984 to the "G. J. Wylie Conference Centre" being constructed on the 4th floor of the East Wing of the Royal Dental Hospital in Elizabeth Street.
Having the luxury of so many children being examined, I planned and treated, all while in the company of two experienced private tutors, which was great. I also became expert at writing the WHO standardised exam that Jamie wanted us to carry out to get a better idea of disease profiles in the area. Dr John Boucher and I were sent by the local health authorities to a school with two mirrors, two probes, a headlamp and a bunch of exam sheets to fill in. The school then kindly presented us with too children to examine in one hour. We negotiated that down to 50 and managed to get them done in 80 minutes. Whilst I have not seen the collated data, I would approximate that the average number of teeth per 12-year-old child with untreated carious lesions was 8 or 9.

“There were no tourist sights per se in Ben Tre, but we made our own fun at lunchtimes and in the evenings. At night, the town was pretty quiet aside from the hum of motorbikes up and down the main street. With John and Tony’s guidance, we found the local lake. Alongside the lakeside esplanade there were a collection of coffee shops and I quickly learned to order my favourite – cà phê sữa – hot or iced coffee with milk. Doesn’t sound very exciting, but Vietnamese coffee is roasted in butter and percolated right over your cup so it’s very rich and fresh. The addition of condensed milk makes it even more delicious. On our last night in Ben Tre there was a dinner party – a dinner and get-together with the staff we had been working within the health centre.

“Back in Höhe Minh City”, Amanda found the experience both challenging and rewarding and is particularly grateful to those who made it possible for her to go, especially Dr Jamie Robertson.

(Amanda Leen was selected by Dr Jamie Robertson to go to Vietnam with the Rotary Australia – Vietnam Dental Health Program. Thanks to the generous support of a GC Corporation scholarship Amanda was able to take up this opportunity and on her return she wrote of her experiences:

“I think it was of great value for me to be exposed to Vietnam in the way of the project, to go to the places as well as meeting and working closely with so many locals. Once in Vietnam, Amanda found herself working with Drs Boucher and Robertson, veterans of three previous trips. The team’s first location was Ben Tre where they were joined by an interpreter and several dentists from the National Institute of Oral Stomatology in Ho Chi Minh City and the Ben Tre Dental staff. Working conditions were rather basic and there were 22, twelve-year-old children to be seen in each morning or afternoon session [but] the general protocol we had ensured things moved along as quickly as possible: examine a child, see what we could do best for them, write it down on a wall chart, give LA where appropriate, then send them back to the waiting area while more children were examined. After not too long, one of the operators would call them back for their treatment. Due to the rate of untreated decay being shockingly high, many children in Ben Tre needed far more treatment than we could give them.”

The dentures were made by Captain Marshall when he was a prisoner of war in Ambon. The dentures were made from aluminium salvaged from old army water bottles and scrap from planes. They were sand cast using standard dental technology under extremely difficult conditions.

The dentures demonstrate the enormous ingenuity and skill of Captain Marshall and the resourcefulness characteristic of many in the profession during war time. They also highlight that creativity and innovative endeavours are often produced under the most adverse conditions. According to the Honorary Curator of the Dental Museum, Emeritus Professor Henry Atkinson, “Captain Marshall, as a dental student would have had some contact with the casting of metal at the Australian College of Dentistry but to achieve this result in the appalling conditions of a disease ridden prisoner of war camp, where he finished as acting medical officer is almost beyond belief.”

The school then kindly presented us with 100 children to examine in one hour. We negotiated that down to 50 and managed to get them done in 80 minutes.

The Oral Biology Section of the School has now successfully moved into its new homes in the new Dental Hospital and the Bio21 Institute. In December, researchers and postgraduate students joined the rest of the School and moved into the sixth floor of the new Dental Hospital to a world class laboratory and some brand new state of the art equipment including a confocal microscope, flow cytometry, bacterial biofilm ferments and surface plasma resonance analysers. This equipment will be used to further our understanding of oral disease and develop new treatment and preventive modalities.

At the end of February the remaining half of the Oral Biology Section moved into the third floor of the Bio21 Institute on Flemington Road. This too is a world class laboratory which offers researchers an exciting and unique opportunity for collaboration in this multi-discipline institute.

Researchers at the School of Dental Science were awarded two National Health and Medical Research Council grants to continue their studies in the microbial aetiology of periodontal disease and the development of novel anti-caries agents. These prestigious and highly competitive grants will enable this important research to continue for another three years and reflect well in the quality of research being undertaken in the School.

Relocation of a core node of the Oral Biology Section and CRC for Oral Health Science researchers to the Bio21 Molecular Science and Biotechnology Institute is now complete. Relocation to these premises provides increased access to collaborative opportunities. Other participants in the Bio21 Institute include the University of Melbourne faculties – Science, Land and Food Resources, Veterinary Science and Medicine and Engineering – and the premiere research institutes: the Walter and Eliza Hall Institute and the Howard Florey Institute. The commitment of the State Government to oral health science research in Victoria has been further demonstrated through the provision of $3.95 million to support the relocation of CRC-DHS researchers to the Bio21 Institute.

And finally, we are very pleased to announce that the CRC for Oral Health Science website is now live! Please visit the new site at http://www.crcoralhealthscience.org.au/
Louise Murray

Recently appointed Curator of the Dental Museum, Louise Murray brings experience of medical history, fine arts and archives to the collection. Originally trained as an artist, Louise studied painting and graduated with a BA from the Victorian College of the Arts in 1984. She was involved in a number of exhibitions in the late 1980s and early 1990s, and extended her studies with a further BA in visual arts and women’s studies from Monash University in 1994, and a Graduate Diploma in information management from RMIT University in 1995.

Upon completion of her diploma, Louise was employed by the City of Melbourne where she was appointed archivist in 1996. Here she was responsible for the management of the city’s archival collection and oversaw the transfer of the corporation’s historic plan collection to the Public Record Office. In 1999 she was employed as curator/researcher by Museum Victoria and worked in the Human and Body Program with the team responsible for the exhibition Medical Melbourne, one of the inaugural exhibitions at the new Melbourne Museum. Medical Melbourne explored five Melbourne based biomedical success stories and simultaneously investigated the lives and discoveries of four Australia Nobel Laureates in Physiology or Medicine. Louise followed this with project work at the Immigration Museum where she undertook research and developed content for the Settling’s interactive database which represented the different groups of overseas born people who migrated to Victoria in the 19th and 20th centuries.

She was subsequently employed by the University of Melbourne as a catalogue with both the Medical History Museum and the Dental Museum, where she was responsible for documentation of the collection and transfer of records into electronic format. Louise also assisted Ann Brothers, Curator of the Medical History Museum on a range of exhibitions and projects including treating the Past – How Medical Melbourne Came of Age, and Being Patient – Care and Convalescence as a Practice in the Past.

Louise is currently working with the Honorary Curator Professor Emeritus Henry Atkinson on the development of the Dental Museum, following its relocation to new, dedicated premises in Swanston Street, and the inaugural exhibition which is due to open later in the year. She feels privileged to work with Professor Atkinson and with such a unique collection and looks forward to representing the many stories and objects that are contained in it.

Catching up

This year’s global meeting of the International Association of Dental Research is being held in Brisbane from the 28th of June to the 1st of July and provides our postgraduate students with an excellent opportunity to attend and participate in an international conference. The School’s Research Committee and the CRC for Oral Health Science has offered a total of 25 travel grants to postgraduate students to pay for registration, travel and accommodation. This will help to ensure a strong representation from the School of Dental Science with a number of staff also attending. For more information go to http://www.iadr.org/.

84th General Session & Exhibition of the IADR

1st Meeting of the Pan-Asian-Pacific Federation

Australian/New Zealand, Chinese, Korean, Japanese, and South East Asian Divisions of the IADR

BRISBANE, AUSTRALIA

Meeting Venue:

Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Meeting Dates:

Wednesday, June 28 - Saturday, July 1, 2006

Exhibition Dates:

Wednesday, June 28 – Friday, June 30, 2006

Website of International Association for Dental Research

http://www.dentalresearch.org/meetings/brisbane/index.html

We would love to let other Alumni know what you have been doing since graduation!

Interested?

Please send 100 words and a photo to the Editor, Dent-al, School of Dental Science, The University of Melbourne, Victoria 3010 Australia email: sifonios@unimelb.edu.au

From the 1980’s

Shane McGuire (‘80)

I completed university studies from The University of Melbourne in 1980. My first clinical work was as an associate dentist in rural Victoria. In 1983, the School Dental Service regionalised its operations and I successfully applied as a Dental Officer. This move suited my aspirations for a career in public dentistry and I remained there until the formation of Dental Health Services Victoria in 1997.

I have been most fortunate in being afforded the opportunity in numerous roles within public dental management for the betterment of the less advantaged in our community. These roles have included management of sections of the School Dental Service and the Royal Dental Hospital.

Currently I belong to a group which contract manages dental services from community health centres and rural hospitals. These roles have exposed me to dealing with people at many levels, the complexities of managing large budgets, the evolving and systemic approach to risk identification and minimisation to name a few.

Through all of this I have maintained a close contact with my primary degree (BDS), including continuing to directly perform clinical duties.

In a nut shell, the move to public dentistry has been an excellent one—everyday is akin to a mini MBA.”
20 YEAR REUNION OF THE CLASS OF 1985

By Dr Martin Whelan

On Friday 3rd March, a 20 year reunion was held for the BDSc graduates of 1985. The idea to hold the reunion came about 6 months earlier on the 10th tee of a local golf course where 4 of the graduates were having probably the worst game of their lives. They became the organizing committee comprising of Martin Whelan, Attilio Biondo, Kevin Miller and Chris Harris.

Tracking everyone down didn’t seem to be too much of a problem thanks to the ADA directory and there always seems to be someone who had a contact for that elusive person who could easily qualify for one of those “Where are they now” shows.

A series of newsletter notices leading up to the big night gave us a better than expected response with 33 of the 48 graduates attending. Special note was made of those who flew interstate just to be there on the night. They included from Queensland - Claire O’Grady & Richard Streit; from NSW - Ian Sheridan and from WA - Caroline Marrisen.

The night was held at a function room in No. 3 Station Pier Restaurant. The warm night made it a perfect venue as those attending were able to mingle on the pier at water’s edge as well as within the open modern function room.

For many it was the first time seeing each other since graduating. Some had difficulty recognizing each other whilst others looked almost the same as the day they graduated. It is fair to say, however, that after 20 years many were showing signs of aging with the customary appearance of the grey hairs, ‘beer’ guts and receding hairlines.

There was a mix of general and specialist dentists and some that had even moved on to other careers. Although there was the usual conversation about where people were practicing, most of it was about personal life experiences – whether they were married, had children etc.

And there was reminiscing about those classic moments during the course. Just about all who attended stayed until the restaurant staff politely asked (told) us to leave. A sizeable group of graduates showed they still had the stamina of uni days by kicking on at a bar nearby. The sore heads next day ‘though brought home the reality that 20 years on, you pay a higher price for that stamina.

Some that attended particularly the interstaters. It was really a party atmosphere on the night and was one of the best nights out judging by the comments and emails following the event. We highly recommend attending a reunion to any graduates or even better organizing one yourselves. It is guaranteed to be one of the best nights out you will have in a long time.

If you are organizing a reunion, please contact us for a list of graduates for your year. You might also like to use the newsletter to advertise your reunion. To ensure you continue to receive information about reunions, please let us know of address changes.

From the editors

We hope you enjoyed reading this edition of Dent-al, the School of Dental Science’s newsletter for alumni. We would be very pleased to have your feedback on this issue and if you would like to contribute in any way, or have any suggestions for future issues, we would be very pleased to hear from you.

The next edition of Dent-al will be in June/July 2006. If you have any items of interest, please let us know.

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