

Melvyn Jaye - SOME MEMORIES OF NORTHVIEW

The class of '62 was the second intake at Northview. In form 1 we were the juniors and the form 2's were the seniors.

The first time Northview had a full school was when we reached form 4 and the new school building was completed. The reason for the delay was that the school was situated on soft clay which could not support a large building and 100 foot concrete pillars had to be sunk into the clay. The building contractor appointed to do this work was Frankpile*. So we watched progress on the building from our prefab classrooms. [Ed. See Personal Story – Alastair Morgan who rose to prominence with Frankpile during his career as an Engineering in South Africa]



Classes in our first 3 years were held in prefabs which were freezing cold in winter and boiling hot in summer. If I remember correctly we were not allowed to take off our blazers and ties in the classroom in summer.

In some subjects such as Latin and Science we had the same teachers for 5 years, namely Larry Cullen and Wilfred Eitzman.

If you made the first team in certain sports which were not divided into age groups such as tennis, you could retain your place in the first team for 5 consecutive years.

I played first team tennis throughout my school career. In the last 3 years Alan Walpole, our Biology teacher, was the tennis master. He transported the team which consisted of 4 players in his small car to and from Ellis Park where all the matches were played on Friday afternoons in the 3rd term.

When I played in the Southern Transvaal Junior Tennis Championships at Ellis Park in the school holidays I found that the tournament director was none other than Larry Cullen, our Latin teacher. He was an exceptional administrator and excelled at his job at the tournament which attracted thousands of entrants throughout the country.

One day during a science lesson in form 3 Eitzman suddenly stopped the lesson, glared at me as if looking at a ghost and asked where I had suddenly come from. I replied that I had been in his class since the first day in form 1!

LIFE AFTER NORTHVIEW

1 Military training

In January 1963 I was drafted into the army for 9 months military service. I spent the first 6 months at Technical Services Corps in Voortrekkerhoogte and the last 3 months at an infantry corps in Lenz. In April Arnold Watkin was drafted into the same camp at Voortrekkerhoogte. We were both ecstatic to see each other and became firm friends during

our stay together. On my first day at Lenz I saw Stan Klaff leading a platoon. With his booming voice he could easily have become a sergeant major had he decided to join the Permanent Force!

2 Working career

In January 1964 I enrolled at Wits University for a CA course and started articles at a Johannesburg firm of auditors. Lectures took place every night and on Saturday mornings. I qualified as a CA(SA) in 1970.

Immediately after writing the Board exam, I toured Europe and Israel for 4 months. While in Israel I visited Louis Kay on Kibbutz Barkhai. He was in charge of the cotton crops – his pride and joy. Louis is now known as Eliezer Kayna.

I returned to the profession as an audit manager until May 1973 when I joined Russell Holdings Limited, a furniture and household appliances retailer listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, as group company secretary. This was before the advent of computers. Between 1981 and 1993 a series of acquisitions occurred resulting in the company becoming Kirsh Trading Limited (Furniture Division), Tradegro Limited, The Rusfurn Group Limited and JD Group Limited. During this time I retained my position as group company secretary.

I officially retired from JD Group in January 2005 but remained on as a consultant until August 2008 whilst training my successors. JD Group is currently the largest retailer of furniture and household appliances in Africa and operates well known chains such as Joshua Doore, Russells, Bradlows, Morkels, Hi Fi Corp, Incredible Connection and Price 'n Pride.

In my farewell speech to colleagues, some of whom I had known for over 30 years, I remarked that it had been a great privilege to have worked with them, sharing many trials and tribulations since the tranquil Russell Holdings era from 1973 to 1982, the turbulent Kirsh era from 1983 to 1985, the volatile Rusfurn era from 1986 to 1993 and then the challenging, but stable, professionally run JD Group.

In March 2004 I was asked by the group human resources executive to address delegates on the JD Group Retail Leadership Development Programme and to prepare a paper on the topic: *The role of the company secretary and the possible impact on the business process value chain*. With regard to the role and responsibility of the company secretary I informed the delegates that the company secretary is usually the chief administrative officer of the company. Secretary originally meant “keeper of secrets” derived from the Latin word secretarius – a notary, scribe, etc. In the bygone era a secretary was a mere servant without authority to make representations binding on the company. Over the next century his position has developed in leaps and bounds, both in scope and authority. Despite recognition of the increased status of the modern secretary, he is still in law a servant of the company who must carry out instructions given by the directors. The nature of the qualification required by a company secretary is not spelt out. Most company secretaries are accountants, whilst some are attorneys.

The importance of accountants was recognised by no less a celebrity than Elvis Presley who once said “*I don't need any bodyguards, but what I do need are a couple of expertly trained*

accountants". Another famous person, Estee Lauder, remarked "Accountants and lawyers make great accountants and lawyers. We need them but we make the business decisions".

Besides my duties of maintaining the statutory books of numerous companies within the group, submitting returns to Registrars of Companies, Receivers of Revenue and other statutory bodies, I had to take minutes at directors', shareholders and committee meetings. I estimate that in the 35 years I was company secretary I attended over 1 000 meetings. I was privileged to sit around board tables with many eminent businessmen and captains of industry including Ian McKenzie, a former chairman of Standard Bank; Natie Kirsh, one of the country's most influential businessmen and philanthropists; and Mervyn King, a former judge of the High Court and respected businessman who more recently acted as chairman of the King Commission of Corporate Governance.

Extracts from a commemorative publication marking the 21st anniversary of the JD Group read as follows:



Melvyn identifies compliance with corporate governance as an important job function.....Interacting with the Group's independent auditors, merchant bankers, attorneys, transfer secretaries and sponsoring brokers in all major corporate actions, the most recent of which was the acquisition of Profum, is very much part of Jaye's responsibilities.

After retiring from JD Group I joined the South African Jewish Report as administration manager on contract for a period of 19 months. I currently work for 2 small firms of auditors in Johannesburg administering deceased estates on a part time basis.

3 Northview Old Boys' tennis team

In the early 1970's I returned to Northview. This time as a member of the Northview Old Boys' tennis team. We played our home matches in the Southern Transvaal Central Districts League at Northview on Sunday mornings. I was responsible for purchasing the balls and beers for home matches and collecting contributions from the team members. It is noteworthy that it was traditional for the home teams to supply beers after matches and at that time it was forbidden to drink alcohol on school premises. We approached Eric Harrison who was still principal asking if we could bring beers to the school premises. He said this would not be a problem and gave his consent.

Our team played in the second section of the League which we won in the first year and were promoted to the first section. Included in the team were Derek Roux, my brother

Laurence (Class of '64), a former Southern Transvaal Under 13 singles champion, Peter Gray (Class of '66), a former South African Under 16 singles champion and Alan Parsons, a charismatic art teacher at Northview at the time, who was a former Springbok badminton player and South African champion.

I clearly remember one Sunday morning when Laurence and I were scheduled to meet the team at 07:00 at the Doll House in Louis Botha Avenue to go to an away match in Maraisburg but did not get there because we overslept. Alan Parsons duly marched to our house with Paul Nucci (Class of '61) and rang the front doorbell. My sister Ahrlene (Class of '72) who was in his art class was not impressed, especially as Parsons embarrassed her in front of the whole class the following day by asking her to ensure that her brothers wake up in time for tennis matches.

4 Family

I married Judy Ingber in February 1975.

We went to Mauritius on honeymoon and experienced a Class 6 cyclone on our second day of married life. This cyclone was publicised in the April 1975 edition of the Russell Review, a company in-house magazine as follows:

Group secretary for Russell Holdings, Melvyn Jaye, could write a book on his honeymoon which coincided with the devastating Mauritius cyclone. What promised to be a tropical idyll turned into a nightmare. The highlights as told by Mr Jaye are:

The couple arrived on February 3, to hear talk of an approaching cyclone but did not really appreciate what this entailed. In the ensuing days the Jayes were to experience the de-camping of the hotel staff, gale force winds and the sound (and sight) of tall trees being snapped off. Torrential rains were succeeded by an ominous quiet before all hell was let loose once more. At the height of the cyclone the Jayes locked bungalow door was blown inwards by the enormous wind and once again they got no sleep. The electricity failed and communications were completely cut off.

Finally the taxi summoned to take them to the airport got stuck in two feet of water on the road and had to be towed out. Water entered the boot and damaged their clothes.

Who said something about romantic island holidays!?

Judy is a teacher and holds a PhD degree from Wits in stress management in addition to her BA and TTHD degrees. Judy also has a connection with Northview, having taught guidance there for 3 years in the late 1970's. She also taught English, Afrikaans and guidance at several other schools and has been principal at two schools, all based in Johannesburg. She coached public speaking and debating at most of these schools where her teams won numerous awards. A protégé was the first South African to win the English Speaking Union's International Public Speaking competition held in London in 2001. At an international education symposium in Washington DC in 2009 she was awarded the prize for the best contribution from the continent of Africa for her speech entitled **No educator has the perfect class**. Judy featured in the Wits University's WitsReview magazine January 2010 edition under *Alumni Achievers*.

Judy has been training manager at the Voice Clinic for the past 11 years.

We have 3 children, Jocelyn, Tamara and Gary. Jocelyn has BA, BA (Hons) and PDM degrees from Wits and a teaching degree from UNISA. She taught at Edenvale High for 3 years and for the past ten years has taught English and History at King David High, Linksfield. Jocelyn is married to Gavin Angel, a cardiologist in private practice. They have 2 daughters and a son, aged 5, 4 and 2.



Tamara qualified as a doctor at Wits. She is a GP in private practice with a special interest in treating allergies. Tamara is married to Cecil Levy, a paediatric nephrologist who heads the department at the Johannesburg General Hospital. They have 2 daughters, aged 4 and 2.

Tamara's wedding.
I-to-r: Gary, Judy, Tamara (the bride),
Melvyn, Jocelyn, Gavin (Jocelyn's husband)

Gary is a CA (SA) and served articles at the same firm as I did. Since qualifying he has worked for McKinsey & Company, an international firm of business consultants and Standard Bank in Johannesburg. He is currently studying at a Yeshiva in Jerusalem.

We are truly blessed to have 5 beautiful grandchildren, who occupy much of our time.



Jocelyn's wedding.
I-to-r: Gary, Tamara, Melvyn, Jocelyn (the bride), Judy



Jaye Family – Great Niece (Tanna) 1st
birthday. Tanna being held by her
Dad, Bradley in centre of picture.

4 Communal activities

In the early 1970's I was a member of the Hebrew Order of David and served as secretary of Lodge Kadimah for a period of 5 years. Judy and I later joined B'nai B'rith where I served as president of Lodge Shalom for one year and Judy served as secretary.

Judy has also served as chairperson of the PTA of King David High, Linksfield and has been an executive committee member of several Gauteng education interest groups. She has served on the committee of Waverley Shul, where our whole family are active members.

5 Recreation

I continued to play league tennis for many years after leaving school, and club tennis until the age of 48 when I developed eye problems, which are now fortunately resolved. Between the ages of 12 and 35 I played tennis almost every Saturday afternoon and Sunday morning at Balfour Park. Balfour Park was a sprawling club boasting magnificent soccer fields, cricket and hockey fields, bowling greens, 18 all-weather tennis courts, squash courts and a swimming pool. It was a sad day when it closed to make way for a shopping centre. All that is left of the club is the name of the complex and a small soccer field used for junior players. It is not surprising, therefore, that I dislike that particular shopping centre.

I occasionally go to Gym.

Our recreation now consists mainly of watching movies and going to the theatre. I am also an avid armchair spectator of all the major sports on TV and enjoy reading with a special interest in autobiographies.

MELVYN JAYE, Johannesburg. February 2014

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