



Chris Callinan (OX 1966)

I was one of five brothers to attend Kostka Hall. I started in 1956. Three years later, my three younger brothers were there, and along with my older brother Nick, the five of us were there at the same time. I remember the original old two storey Tudor building. I would ride my bike from home in Beaumaris and put it up on the bike rack underneath the external stairs. I remember the old desks with the names of past students and dates carved into them.

I got days off class in 1956 to go the Olympic Games (and see Heck Hogan, Shirley Strickland and Betty Cuthbert)

There were the homemade pies made by Mrs Milsom who lived next door the school – referred to irreverently as ‘Milsom’s Muck’.

Mrs Mercovich who took us for elocution lessons – learning to enunciate properly with modulation exercises (what chance of that these days!).

I remember the wonderful ladies – Miss Mitchell who looked after the Preps, Miss Taylor in Grade 3 with her spelling bees. and Miss O’Kelly in Grade 4 who would read great books to us, and we wouldn’t want the class to end.

There were other great teachers like Sam Tully, and I will always remember Fr Fitzgibbon – who taught us French in his broad Irish accent. Vincent Kelly who established the Kostka Choir, and had us singing two and three part harmonies.

Then there was the excitement of the new wing – with the sea views from the upstairs classrooms.

The School concerts. We did Mark Twain’s Tom Sawyer & Huckleberry Finn one year (I was Joe Harper) – I remember doing exams with kit bags between us on the desks

We always played sport at breaks and at lunch time. End to end football British bulldog, Brandy, marbles

Sport was great. I loved the footy – played on the back oval in the famous red triangle jumper.

And our war cry:

*We are the boys of the Red Triangle,
Every team we meet we strangle,
Roll -em Bowl – em, Pitch em in the tar,
Kostka Kostka Ya Ya Ya !*

I remember Johnny O'Donnell who was later to play for St Kilda, was a great kick and could slot drop kick goals from the centre of our little oval. I had a go at cricket in the 9 B's. I bowled 6 wides from an 8 ball over, made a duck – and that did it for me. Athletics was also staged on that oval. We had 3 houses then – I was in Claver, in yellow singlets in Campion in brown, and Regis in Blue.

But the main thing was the friendships which have lasted a lifetime. Last weekend I went away with a group of 15 Xavier lifelong friends, 10 of them Kostka. Among them, my best man, my legal advisors, Surgeon Prof Tony Costello whom I sat next to in grade 4 who operated on me 15 years ago – and has been looking after me since – he is probably the reason I'm still here. Another Kostka contemporary Dick Walker, some years after leaving Xavier established the 'Kostka Naughty Boys' lunch – originally to keep in touch with some Kostka guys who didn't go the distance. It has now been going every year for 32 years and has now expanded to include all Old Xavs of our era. Dick now has a mailing list of over 90 and still gets around 50 to his lunch in Melbourne – And Dick lives in Queensland and organises it all from there. So for me its wonderful to hear my sons and grandsons talking about the friendships they have made or are making from their Xavier connections

When it came to my family, I always wanted my sons Pete and Mike to go to Kostka. We lived in Camberwell, so they used to get the train to Richmond, change platforms and then get the train to Brighton Beach. Pete tells the story of being in his safari suit one winter morning and seeing the Nylex Clock from Richmond station on Minus two degrees.

I hoped that my grandsons would go there and am pleased that Sam and Paddy have had that opportunity. And it has been a great joy to me that Pete joined the teaching staff at Kostka – 15 years ago now – and has been part of the terrific people who have been there over the years keeping Kostka



spirit alive for so many boys, and particularly in Pete's case for his nephew and now his son. Pete now teaches the sons of blokes he was at school with.

It is very sad that Kostka is to close. And I must tell you I have found it particularly difficult personally, as I was asked to join the College Board two years ago by virtue of my role as Chair of the Xavier Foundation. I was involved in the board deliberations and the eventual unanimous decision. I can assure you it was not a decision that was taken lightly by me, as frankly it was not one that suited my family - as the saying goes "I had skin in the game". I would not have voted for it if I did not think it was the right decision for Xavier.

I should also mention that our family also had a Burke Hall connection. We moved to Kew when I was in year 7, so I did year 8 here, and my 3 younger brothers went to Burke Hall. My mother was on the Mothers Committee at Kostka, President of the Burke Hall Mothers, and went on to be President of the Xavier Mothers.

So, let's celebrate that special spirit of Kostka. This has been a key consideration in the wonderful plans for the new year 7&8 building, which will look out on to the Chapel and the Chapel oval and is to be known as the Kostka building. Of course, as we have heard, it's not just about the buildings it's about the spirit.

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Let us give thanks for the wonderful years of Kostka, and make sure we capture some of its spirit for the Xavier boys of the future.

