Each morning the sound of soft whistling echoed through the corridors of Sacred Heart College, Kyneton. John Arthurson had arrived at school to begin his day. A man who whistles – surely the sign of a happy and contented man.

And such was John – blessed with a rich family life, a loving wife, Therese, five children – Stephen, Jacqui, Nicole, Mark, David, two sons-in-law, Chris and Matt, loving parents, twelve siblings and numerous other relatives. Blessed too that he was employed in an area about which he was passionate – education.

John spent over thirty years in education, teaching in a number of schools including Murtoa and Kyneton High Schools, Presentation College Moe, Catholic Regional College North Keilor and Sacred Heart College, Kyneton. He held the position of Principal at CRC North Keilor for eleven years and SHC Kyneton for five years.

John was an outstanding Principal, a passionate educator, a dedicated, hardworking man who was enriched by his involvement with staff and students and who continually encouraged and challenged them to give of their best.

As Principal, John had a great understanding of the educational issues of the current day. He had a breadth of vision and the energy, enthusiasm and passion to implement that vision. He was unafraid to implement change and to address any consequences resulting from this change.

Sacred Heart College was founded in 1889. John was appointed Principal of Sacred Heart College in 2006, some 117 years later, as the first Lay Principal. The transition from a Religious to Lay was a very smooth transition at Sacred Heart. John was a man of Mercy long before his appointment as Principal of a Mercy school. As Principal of Sacred Heart College, he eagerly embraced a spirit that had already been a constant in his daily life.

John’s appointment at Sacred Heart College was tragically cut short by his illness which began in May 2008. He battled valiantly during 2008 and 2009, before taking leave during the 2010 year.

In many ways it was John’s approach to his illness that really defined him as a man of courage, tenacity and deep faith.

In an email written on 5 September 2010 he said, “I am ready for all the challenges ahead – I must thank Mum and Dad for the strong faith they passed on to me.”

While John fought his illness with all his might he also accepted that illness, did not ever complain nor question why this had happened to him. John lived and died as a man of hope and joy, at one with his God.

Although the death of John has left us all immeasurably the poorer, we draw strength from the inspiration of his life.

May John now know the fullness of God’s Mercy and Love forever.

Rest in Peace, John.

Sr Mary Moloney rsm
Principal of Academy of Mary Immaculate and immediate past Principal of SHC Kyneton

Hush – if we listen carefully we can hear the sound of soft whistling coming from the heavens.

Born: 17 August 1954
Called to Eternal Life: 30 October 2010
Over 1,000 mourners – family members, friends, students and staff, colleagues and associates attended the funeral of John Gerard Arthurson on Friday 5 November at St Anne’s Catholic Church in Sunbury. It was a truly fitting tribute to a man who was loved by his wife, Therese, and five children, loved by his parents and twelve siblings, and loved and respected by his school communities, fellow Principals and numerous colleagues in Catholic Education. John brought much joy and happiness to all he met and his warmth and kindness will be remembered forever. May he rest peacefully in God’s loving embrace.

The cycle of MSEI seminars and events continues to reap great rewards for participants of the various networks and the MSEI Board. Recently the Deputy Principals were fully immersed in solid discussions and warm hospitality at Mercy Regional College Camperdown; almost eighty students and staff were hosted at Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe for the second Seeds of Justice Event and the Fifteenth Frayne Speech Festival was hosted by Mercy College Coburg with almost 300 students and staff in attendance. In addition Religious Education Coordinators and teachers were treated to a full day of Religion and History through the medium of Art at the National Gallery of Victoria at Federation Square and St Kilda Road and then at The Academy of Mary Immaculate, Fitzroy. Our presenters on the day were friends and former Mercy colleagues, David Menzies and Charles Watt. The inaugural Personal Assistants’ seminar was held earlier in the year and an immersion in Mercy with Sr Mary Duffy rsm was enjoyed by all.

Finally as 2010 comes to a close, we wish Sacred Heart College, Geelong and Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg, joyous conclusions to their sesquicentenary and centenary celebrations and best wishes for the coming decades. Although not as notable in years, we also wish Maureen Smyth much joy and happiness in her retirement and thank her for her significant contribution to Mercy and Mercy Secondary Education over the past fifteen years.

Wishing you the joys and blessings for the wonders of Christmas.

Eugene Lynch
Editor
A small group of brave souls from Sacred Heart College, Geelong, was blessed to have the opportunity on a recent trip to Papua New Guinea to learn the meaning of desiring mercy. The trip, an immersion experience, had a simple goal – to be in solidarity, through our Mercy family, with some of our brothers and sisters in PNG. The achievement of this goal was confirmed in every tear shed by us and our new friends as we parted.

After a long day of flights and a stay with Fr Peter Artiken at the Holy Spirit Seminary in Port Moresby, our guide, Damian Nelson from Catholic Missions, delivered us safely to the small town of Goroka in the Eastern Highlands. We immediately plunged ourselves into the drama, colour and movement of the Goroka Show: the second-largest Highland tribal gathering, or sing sing, in PNG.

We then placed ourselves, 10 students and two staff, in the hands of Srs Mariska and Theresia RSM. The Sisters had prepared an extraordinarily comprehensive program for us and gave generously of their time. Of course all that we saw and participated in was only a fraction of the work that the indefatigable Mercys are involved in. We visited prisons, community education classes, settlements (slums), markets, schools, Sr Cathy and novices at the Coolock Mercy Formation House, enviro-friendly AIDS-support projects and much more.

We spoke with Angela, living with the reality of AIDS, with women prisoners convicted of murder, with little children packed into tin-shed primary schools, with peddlers, with street youths, with the blind, with the deaf... we embraced and were in turn embraced by many, many new friends.

Home during our PNG stay was the Kefamo Conference Centre, managed by the irrepressible Sr Stella FMI, ably helped by Sr Madalena FMI. Sr Stella was bus driver, local negotiator, and personal security and one of the most loving women any of us had ever met.

Catholic Missions had approached Bishop Francesco Sarago of Goroka to organise a visit for us to a remote village. With a mischievous glint in his eye the Bishop handed us over to Fr Chris Stackozrak. Our first meeting with Fr Chris was when he exploded into the Kefamo dining room, introduced himself in a heavy Polish accent, performed a Mr Bean impersonation, and wished us adieu with a loud ’Kiss, kiss!’ He proved to be a wonderful host, an inspiring priest and someone who had a lot to teach us about the heart and mercy.

After an interesting trip to St Bernard’s, Father Chris’s parish, we settled into our shared, smoked-filled hut for two days of meeting the people of Namta, during which, among other things, the Sacred Heart girls taught 150 villagers the Macarena.

Then back to the Mercys in Goroka, more hospitality and opportunities to be with locals and share stories. Then, finally, back to Fr Peter in Port Moresby, where we paid our prayerful respects at the Australian War Memorial and went on a guided tour of New Guinea’s capital city. An early night was followed by a very early start and the long trek back to Geelong was begun.

There was so very much to take in but a brief glimpse into the diary of a participant may hopefully offer an inkling into our overall experience:

“Diary 22.9.2010 – We leave Kefamo for Mercy Works and from Mercy Works to the Goroka Prison; 22 women and 365 men. We visit the women. Girls are apprehensive; some scared. We introduce ourselves. They introduce themselves. They sing a song for us, we sing a song for them and they sing another, a hymn. Mingling, talking and a group photo. Hugs, tears and then we leave. I am reminded once again of St Teresa’s prayer – the hands which hugged were Christ’s and I was privileged, truly privileged, to witness one of God’s small miracles – within these hugs fear is transformed into a brief but blindingly brilliant instance of love.”

And this happened often.

Go and learn what mercy means, Jesus instructed. We went to PNG, met some truly wondrous people and this is what we learned: “The tender mercy of our God has given us one another” (Mercy Constitution). Mercy is our brother and sister embraced. Theologians may argue that mercy means a lot more than this but just for now, for us, this is enough.

Allan Ansell
Head of Religion at Sacred Heart College, Geelong.

Journey into the heart of Mercy

Go and learn what this means, ‘I desire mercy.’ Matt 9:13
On 28 and 29 October this year, approximately 80 students and staff from the Mercy Colleges across Victoria came together at Holy Cross Centre, Templestowe, to attend the second Seeds of Justice Student Conference. Students and staff were engaged in a comprehensive program over the two days, speaking about justice initiatives, sharing ideas, supporting and encouraging one another and gaining further insight into the works of the Sisters of Mercy.

The theme for this event was Justice in the Marketplace, an idea taken from the 2009 Mercy Justice Conference: Embrace the Other – Welcome Difference. The program was centred on the four focus areas of Justice for the Institute of the Sisters of Mercy of Australia (ISMA), namely Women and Poverty, Eco Justice, Asylum Seekers & Refugees and Indigenous Concerns.

Students were passionate about their response to the speakers, the workshops and their desire to make a difference in their world and at their own school. This is what they had to say:

“It was a great experience, being able to see the passion and determination from everyone there who wants to make a difference. The different schools that involve themselves in these projects over the years are amazing. Our guest speakers were confronting with the experiences that they have had.”

Alicia, Emmanuel College Warrnambool

“It was absolutely fantastic to experience a program like this where everyone is involved, enthusiastic and determined to make a difference. THANK YOU

Student evaluation form

“Great that the program linked the four justice areas of the Sisters of Mercy. Good to know that you are a part of a “Big Family – Big Tradition” which cares for others.”

Staff evaluation form

“I really enjoyed the experience of being able to learn more about important social justice issues. I feel like by attending Seeds of Justice I have more insight about these issues and am able to use the things I have learned towards making a difference, even if only small. The more small things we do, the better.”

Breanna, Emmanuel College Warrnambool

“We worked in groups on the issues we found most compelling, to brainstorm small ways of changing big issues. The conference involved prayer, active meditation, creative responses, reflection, group discussions and a panel of guest speakers. We took away different ideas to act upon in our wider communities and were able to take away ideas from a wider range of Mercy schools, connect and bounce ideas off one another. The hope was to form students and staff in Mercy charism, raise awareness of contemporary issues in social justice and facilitate new links between staff and students of Victorian Mercy schools. The conference was both educational and inspiring.”

Kathleen Dillane, Lauren Jones, Erin Love, Julia Heagerty and Eleni Courvisanos, OLMC Heidelberg

Students, Staff and Committee members were most grateful for the presentations by guest speakers:

Sr Sally Bradley rsm, Kerry Joyce and Maxine Mathews from Exodus Community who spoke on Women and Poverty.

Sr RoseMary Baker rsm who shared her past experience in PNG and her recent work with Asylum Seekers particularly those in Immigration Detention.

Sr Mary White rsm who spoke of her studies and work at the Centre for Ecology and Spirituality at Glenburn and her passion for promoting a new cosmological story.

Special thanks to Annalee McKew and the girls at Sacred Heart College Geelong who set up the Fair Trade Stall which was extremely well supported by the students and staff in attendance.
It is not often in life that one can say that they have had a “magical” experience but that is the word that comes to mind when I reflect on my ten days in Rome for the Canonisation of Mary MacKillop. I was fortunate to be one of ten teachers chosen to accompany 68 students (one from every Catholic Secondary school in Melbourne) to Rome for the Canonisation. Sylvia Rienks, our 2011 College Captain, was the Academy representative.

Our group stayed at a wonderful hotel, Hotel Leonardo Da Vinci, a seventeen minute walk from St. Peter’s. When I reflect on the most memorable aspects of the week, I think first of looking over St Peter’s Square the day before the Canonisation and seeing the banners of each of the Saints to be canonized the following day. It was a deeply poignant moment to realise that there was a banner of an Australian woman hanging from the walls of St Peter’s. “Remember this day”, I said to the students, “This is history in the making. This is something you will be able to tell your children and grandchildren.”

The Canonisation the following day was beautiful and inspirational as was the audience with the Pope later in the week. Another wonderful moment was the celebration of the first Mass in acknowledgment of Saint Mary of the Cross at the beautiful church of St Paul Outside the Walls. This was a distinctively Australian Mass, celebrated by Cardinal Pell, and numerous Bishops and priests. There was not a dry eye in the Church as we joined together to celebrate “our” Saint. Seeing the particular joy of so many Sisters of St Joseph was especially moving.

During the week we also had time to explore Rome – ancient Rome, Vatican Rome and modern Rome with its piazzas and squares. We also had one memorable day at gentle Assisi.

It was an absolute joy to spend ten days with the students chosen to go on this pilgrimage. We were with young people of faith and joy who had much to teach us. Without doubt, we were with the leaders of tomorrow – young people who will make a difference in years to come.

May the abundant blessings of God and of God’s friend, Mary MacKillop, be with us now and in our journey through life.

Sr Mary Moloney
Principal, Academy of Mary Immaculate
It was with great joy and excitement that Our Lady of Mercy College and the local community of Heidelberg came together to celebrate the OLMC Centenary Community Fair on Saturday 9 October 2010. The weather was very kind to us – perfect conditions for a community event such as this.

It was a fitting and fun way to bring to a close all the centenary celebrations of 2010. The day was very successful not only in terms of the funds raised for the charities but also because of the community spirit that was witnessed and enjoyed. The funds raised during this community event will be directed to two projects, one local and one global. The first is the Olympic Village Exodus Community in Heidelberg West, where the funds will go towards a soup van project. The second is run by Sr Denise Coghlan rsm in Cambodia, who works with the Khmer people to oversee a range of aid and development programs.

The cake stall was one of the many highlights of the day with somewhere in the vicinity of 1000 cakes being donated and sold. The café was a delightful place to sit and enjoy a great cup of coffee made by the OLMC student barista team or you could enjoy a great variety of food prepared by parents and be entertained by our performing arts students. The second hand books, clothes and Bric-a-brac stalls offered many delights and the plant stall inspired many to get back to the garden. The rides and amusements were very popular with the younger crowd and the warmer weather meant that the snow cones and cold drinks were very much in demand. There was something for everyone.

The success of the Fair was possible due to all the hard work and support of many members of the OLMC community. Staff, parents, past pupils, students and friends of OLMC were all involved. There was a strong group of committed parents who gave countless hours to prepare and organise this fantastic event and many others who donated time and goods. To witness how the community came together to ensure the success of the Fair was truly a delight and a fun day was had by all.

Marie Jenkins
OLMC Centenary Coordinator
Frayne Speech Festival

On Friday 27 August, Mercy College Coburg hosted the 2010 Frayne Speech Festival. This event on the Mercy schools' calendar is a great celebration of the joy and power of the spoken word. Twelve schools attended on the day, more than 300 students and staff from all directions of the compass joined us and participated in Voice Choir, Debating and Public Speaking. The combined efforts of Mercy College teaching and support staff, along with a crew of more than 30 student helpers ensured a smooth running of the day. Particular thanks go to Ms Anna Nanni (Head of English) and the English faculty for coordinating the program and adjudicating the events.

Mrs Liz Monahan, Principal

The MSEI Board extend sincere thanks to Mercy College Principal, Mrs Liz Monahan, and the staff and students for hosting the Festival and for offering such warm hospitality to guests and participants on the day.

The results for the Speech festival were:

Voice Choir
First place: Catholic College Bendigo
Second place: Mercy College Coburg

Debating
First place: Catholic College Bendigo
Second place: Our Lady of Mercy College Heidelberg
Best overall speaker: Angus Killick, Catholic College Bendigo

Public Speaking
First place: Emily Smith, Catholic College Bendigo
Second place: Jessica Loganathan, OLMC Heidelberg

1. The jubilant Voice Choir from Catholic College Bendigo sporting their winners medals and trophies
2. Public Speaking Winner, Emily Smith from Catholic College Bendigo with fellow Public Speaking Finalist, Jacob O'Connor
3. Winning Debating team from Catholic College Bendigo
4. Smiles all round from all the winners from Catholic College Bendigo
5. Debaters from Our Lady of Mercy College, Heidelberg competing in the Final against Catholic College Bendigo
The Annual Mercy Education Dinner was held at The Centre Ivanhoe in early October with over 100 guests attending a most enjoyable evening.

Guests were treated to the wonderful entertainment provided by St Aloysius College with two students performing on the evening. As the proud Principal of St Aloysius College, Mr John Davidson, wrote in the College Newsletter:

“This year the entertainment for the night was provided by two of our very talented students at St Aloysius College. Thuy Tien Nguyen and Serwa Ampem-Lassen performed brilliantly and we were very proud of their musical abilities. Thuy Tien performed a variety of classical piano pieces and Serwa performed two songs. The girls performances were very professional and they received many compliments on the night. Congratulations Thuy Tien and Serwa.”

During the evening, Congregation Leader, Sr Kathleen Tierney, paid tribute to outstanding contribution to Mercy Education made by Patricia Ryan OAM. Patricia served as a member of the MSEI Board for nine years and held the position of Chair of the Board for five years. Her contribution was always generous, heartfelt and undertaken with absolute joy as she continued her work in education, her true passion in life.

Sr Kath presented Patricia with a beautiful icon Our Lady of Vladimir painted by resident artist, Sr Margaret Broadbent rsm as a gift from the Melbourne Congregation.

Maureen Smyth has worked for the Melbourne Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy at Alphington for nearly fifteen years and in that time she has shouldered most of the administrative and secretarial responsibilities for Mercy Secondary Education Inc. She has always undertaken the role with poise, confidence and dedication.

Maureen was seconded by MSEI from the Congregation in 1996 when MSEI was in its formative years and when Peter Molinari was Executive Officer. Over that time, Maureen has seen MSEI grow and has witnessed many changes and developments. She has played a pivotal role in coordinating the accommodation bookings in Ireland for the biennial Mercy Ethos Program, was a member of the Planning Committee for the National Mercy Education Conference (MSEA) in Melbourne in 2004 and has coordinated the annual Mercy Education Dinner for many years. These roles have been additional to the many administrative tasks she completes on a weekly basis for MSEI and additional to the regular tasks she undertakes at the Congregation Centre including Reception duty and processing the Health Insurance for the Sisters of the Congregation.

While Maureen’s organisational skills will be sadly missed, she will be missed even more for the person she is. Maureen is a gracious lady in all aspects of the words - friendly, approachable, warm and always considerate of others. No task has ever been too hard and she has always been quick to offer assistance when needed. Her contribution to Mercy Education and the Sisters of Mercy will be recognised for a long time. On a brighter side, Maureen and her husband Tom plan to travel around Australia and then overseas. We wish them many years of health and happiness in retirement.