

Vale Jim Murrihy

I am most fortunate to have taught with Jim Murrihy at Parkdale Secondary College for many years. Jim was the heart and soul of Parkdale Secondary College, particularly when we all knew it as Parky High. He was an amiable man, always cheerful and encouraging. His students loved him, especially his typing classes in the early days. Those girls are all well into their fifties now, and they will be sad to lose their "Uncle Jimbo."

When I came to Parkdale High School in 1977, Jim was the dominant personality in the staffroom. His laughter and his stories drew us all to him. He had a quick wit and he made people comfortable. Jim made it clear that this was a happy place to work. His mischievous sense of humour always suggested to me, that he may have been a bit of a scallywag in his own schooldays. He seemed to reserve a special empathy for those who strayed, and I never saw him speak angrily to a child. Jim's way was to listen, forgive and ask for greater effort. These days, a Year Level Coordinator must jump all manner of hoops to deal with recalcitrant rascals. As a Year 9 coordinator, Jim liked to visit troubled lads on their own turf. On one famous occasion when Jim visited the home of a regular absconder, hoping to win him over, the boy fled and jumped the back fence. Jimbo jumped over after him. Just for a chat. The boy was at school the next day.

It was natural that I would enjoy Jim’s company. He was a died-in-the-wool North Melbourne man, and his eyes would light up and his voice would assume a growling determination when he offered his predictions for the weekend's footy. I am a Tiger fan and more than once we met at the MCG when our teams clashed during the eighties. Jim had the best of those meetings. He was happy, as long as his team played with grit and courage and a dash of magic.

Not surprisingly, Schimma, the Krakoeur brothers and King Carey were his favourites. Jim placed determined effort and loyalty at the top of his list of qualities that were non-negotiable. A strong unionist, Jim impressed upon us the importance of standing up for ourselves, and doing everything we could to advance the cause of public education, and the interests of Parky High in particular.

For many years, our school felt like a family. We all knew each other by name. We knew every student. The staff would regularly hold social gatherings at someone's home at the start of the year to share a glass and swap yarns. They were good times and Jim led the festivities. It became a standing joke

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