

KU-RING-GAI HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC.

(Including Ku-ring-gai Family History Group) • Patron: The Mayor of Ku-ring-gai

October 2022 Newsletter Vol. 40 No. 9

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the **President's message**

You will recall that in March this year we were finally able to hold an Annual General Meeting, the first since 2019. The meeting was held to attend to matters pertaining to the end of the 2021 financial year, following an extension of time given to us by the Department of Fair Trading.

Because of the restraints of the pandemic, no election for committee positions was held.

Thankfully, the present members of the Committee agreed to continue in their positions until it was possible to hold a 'full' AGM at our usual time of year.

By now, all members have been notified that the next Annual General Meeting of the Society will be held on 15 October, 2022, commencing at 2pm.

This meeting is to:

- Pass the minutes of the last Annual General Meeting
- Review and endorse the financial statements for the 2021-22 financial year
- Appoint the auditor
- Receive the President's report
- Elect the office bearers and committee members

Have you considered becoming a committee member? Don't forget, completed nomination forms need to be received by the returning officer by 30 September. You still have time!

Following the business of the AGM, Patrick Dodd will give a presentation on 'The Holtermann Collection'.

The AGM is an important meeting and I would be very pleased if you could come along to support your Society and join me for an enjoyable afternoon tea.

Looking forward to seeing you then.

Lorna Watt



Annual General Meeting

2pm Saturday 15th October 2022

— *The Holtermann Collection* —

Patrick Dodd

In 1951, Keast Burke, editor of Australasian Photo Review, enquired at the Mitchell Library about Bernhardt Holtermann, a name associated with several nineteenth century panoramas he'd seen in the Library. Upon the death in 1951 of Bernhard Otto Holtermann's youngest son, thousands of glass negatives were found stored in a garden shed at the rear of his house where Mary, Holtermann's daughter-in-law, lived in Thomas Street Chatswood. Recovered later that year were 3500 glass plate negatives in cedar boxes and some smaller ones in lacquered tins, all wonderfully undisturbed for nearly 80 years. Burke was invited to look at them.

The negatives were donated to the Mitchell Library in 1952 by Bernhardt Holtermann's grandson, Bernhard, and became known as the Holtermann Collection. The find proved to be the most important photographic documentation of goldfields life in Australia, and was included on the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World register in May 2013.



Join us for what is sure to be a very informed talk with Society member Patrick Dodd who is the Founder and President of the Macquarie Society in Australia and as well a Volunteer Guide at the Australian National Maritime Museum on HM *Bark Endeavour*. He is also a Volunteer Guide and Public Speaker at the State Library of NSW on History and Heritage tours.

Saturday 15 October

2pm



followed by

The Holtermann Collection

With speaker: Patrick Dodd

The Holtermann Nugget

The Holtermann Nugget is the largest gold specimen ever found, 59 inches (1.5 m) long, weighing 630 pounds (290 kg) and with an estimated gold content of 3,000 troy ounces (93 kg).

It was discovered at 2 a.m. on the 19th October 1872 in the 'Star of Hope' mine, on Hawkins Hill at Hill End, New South Wales, after a midnight firing of explosives revealed a 'wall of gold'.

This gave Bernhardt Holtermann the wealth to build a mansion in North Sydney, which is now one of the boarding houses at Sydney Church of England Grammar School (Shore).



Bernhardt Holtermann with the Nugget.

THERE MAY STILL BE TIME!!

Would you like to know more about the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) activities and facilities in Sydney Harbour from 1788 to the present, especially during WWII?

On Thursday 24th November, 2022 we will be joining the Naval Historical Society of Australia for their three-hour cruise entitled *West of the Sydney Harbour Bridge*. The sites we will see and learn about include HMAS Waterhen, Cockatoo Island, Spectacle Island and Snapper Island.

The Spectacle Island Armament Depot once held 1,000 tons of high explosive RAN ammunition and was central to resupply operations in Sydney. The Sea Cadet Company once based on Snapper Island provided training for young boys and girls, with many joining the RAN. The Cockatoo Island Dockyard built over 38 RAN ships and during WW11 completed 31 major battle damage repairs to warships. **A virtual tour of HMAS VAMPIRE to**

learn what life was like on board at 'action stations' on a Daring class destroyer, will also be given.



HMAS Vampire at sea photo : RAN

The ship is now moored at the Australian National Maritime Museum, Darling Harbour.

The extensive commentary on the cruise will be supported by a complimentary booklet of photos to bring the story to life which includes some RAN customs and traditions. A delicious morning tea and snacks will be available during the three-hour morning cruise which will start from King Street Wharf, just a short walk from Wynyard Station

The tour is fully booked BUT, as the cruise is almost two months away and cancellations are expected due to illness etc., we have a waiting list. Would you like to join this waiting list? If so, please contact Yvette at yreeve@optusnet.com.au or 0414 249 737.

David Rosenberg ~

'Pine Gap – the inside story of the NSA in Australia'

August's illustrated talk by David Rosenberg was based on his 18 years' experience working for the USA's National Security Agency at Pine Gap. He gave an overview of Pine Gap's broad functions as a satellite ground control site managed jointly by the USA and Australia. The term 'God's ear' conveys its immense reach as a spy facility targeting selected overseas countries. From personal experience, he spoke about life for its employees in nearby Alice Springs. His answers to numerous questions gave more insights into this important but necessarily secretive aspect of our national security. Whether about gold-plated satellites or zig-zagging buses or other aspects of Pine Gap, we all learnt something from this enjoyable talk.

Judith Godden

The 13/33 Battalion at St Ives

1942-1944

When looking at the KHS webpage you may have been curious about the picture of Bren gun carriers in Carbeen Avenue. Here is the answer.

(For photos of the Bren gun carriers see page 7)

In 1943 the government's policy was amended so that no soldier under 19 years was to be posted to an active service unit. The 13/33 Australian Infantry Battalion was selected to be the holding unit for soldiers who had completed their basic training and were still too young to be sent to Canungra to complete their jungle warfare training and then their permanent unit posting.



Young trainees at a lecture session

The army set up what was called the 'Boys Battalion' near the few shops at St Ives, in the Rosedale Road area. It occupied about 10 acres, bounded by Benaroon Avenue, Killeaton Street and the creek below Warrimoo Avenue. It held a few wooden buildings in the way of mess huts, stores, canteen etc.



Another lecture session for the trainees

The battalion, under the command of Lt Col Henry Chilton, carried out normal military training as well as jungle training in Middle Harbour and at an area at the end of Douglas Street.



The area in St Ives in 1943. "Photo: SIX maps"

Jack Hargrave, when eighteen years old, joined the camp toward the end of 1943 and was posted to 'A' Company. He recalls that the soldiers slept in tents. While there, he spent most of his time working on Sydney wharves loading ammunitions and other supplies for the Islands' warfare. They were transported by army trucks daily. His group were all 18 year-olds. The battalion was transferred to Frenchs Forest in 1944.



Stoking the fire for a homemade shower

horses. At that time, the adjacent current Village Green area was market gardens.

A cousin of Miss Chase, who lived on the other side of the camp, recalled a large number of soldiers around her house on VJ Day, and that on the night in 1942, when Japanese submarines entered Sydney Harbour, the camp was vacated. The soldiers were presumably located to more strategic positions.

During this period there was also more military presence. A field ambulance unit was stationed in Horace Street opposite to where Torokina Avenue is now. Army tents were seen nearby. The Green Toad, now Green Toad Tea Gardens, 50 Alvona Avenue, was used as a small hospital.

Sources:

National War Memorial

Historian, Vol 27, No 1 1998

Kupedia

Morrison Hammond

Walter Bass – ABC Campaigner

For twenty years Walter Bass was the New South Wales President of Friends of the ABC¹. In 1976 the Fraser government proposed to slash the ABC's budget and in response, thousands joined rallies around Australia in defence of the national broadcaster. Concerned Melbourne citizens launched 'Aunty's Nieces and Nephews'. In Sydney, Friends of the ABC [FABC] was launched at a public meeting on 20 April 1976. Five months later, 35,000 supporters had signed a petition in a 'grass roots' campaign to secure the ABC's independence.



Walter Bass (1931–2015)

FABC's founder looked like a friendly, bearded uncle but no one could ignore Walter Bass (known as Bassie to his friends) - a feisty man who befriended prime ministers, premiers and media personalities. In his 80s Bassie wrote

"Since that first well-attended meeting, Friends has become a national organisation, demonstrating the importance of the ABC to all Australians. It is, in fact, indispensable. The ABC must not be commercialised – it must remain free from political and commercial influence".

Bassie intensified his FABC activities in the 1980s after he retired from his job as a surveyor with the Water Board. He had come to Australia as a child of seven after his parents fled from Nazi-occupied Austria in the late 1930s. He told journalist and broadcaster Andrew West:

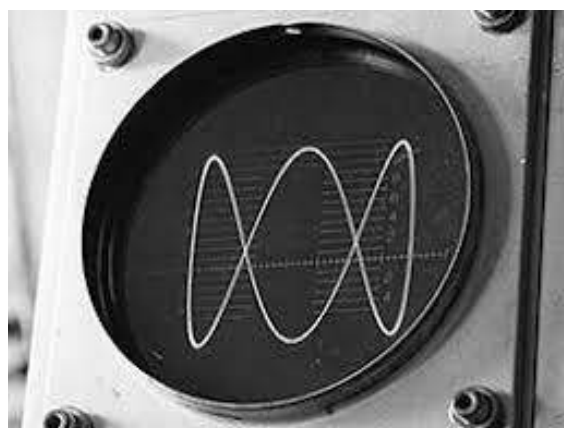
"I was born in Vienna during very turbulent times into a political household [and] was always aware of the great danger a country is in once its media is threatened. The first thing that always happens in a coup of revolution is that the radio stations are attacked and taken". He finds the most troubling aspect of the Australian media is the concentration of owners. "No organisation which depends on commercial sponsorship for profit can remain truly free of editorial influence. Of course, these highly-paid talk-back kings say no-one ever interferes with their freedoms. But the only people they ever offend are the aged, the infirm and the poor". (SMH, 3 March 1988).

Bassie collected a vast media-related archive and, from his encyclopaedic knowledge, wrote or spoke, wise,

witty and succinct responses to questions, asked politicians provocative questions when they wished he wouldn't, made submissions and lobbied to save the ABC. He also tried to right a great number of other wrongs. As FABC's President he wrote an open letter which was signed by these eminent Australians: Patrick White, His Honour Justice Michael Kirby, Nigel Butterley, Frank Moorehouse, Patricia Lovell, C. J. Koch, Lloyd Rees, The Hon James McClelland, Edmund Campion, Les Murray, Thomas Keneally, Nancy Keesing, Her Honour Judge Elizabeth Evatt:

[W]e refuse to believe that a society capable of producing the diverse talents that Australia is now doing cannot maintain a national broadcasting service devoted to cultural quality... The ABC was once truly the voice of Australia; now we switch on to the tones of trendy hucksters who are not even good at selling. ... One of the great lies being put about by purveyors of mediocrity is that the ABC should make itself 'relevant' by abandoning the transmission of cultured excellence altogether, instead devoting itself to adding yet more 'pop' culture to the existing flood. The broad masses, the lie goes, want nothing else... (SMH, 12 August 1985)

The troubles continued and the ABC's Staff Association held a stop work meeting in October 1978 demanding the end to staff cuts and staff ceilings and, when no concessions were made, pulled the plug on TV broadcasts in Sydney and Canberra.



The ABC

When transmission resumed a month later, Patrick White and nearly 300 others paid for a FABC advertisement: "Did you miss the ABC?" A *Canberra Times* journalist said the strike had taught him "that the ABC is the most pervasive, most important and most varied force in culture and current affairs in this country".

Bassie was not deterred by his opponents. In fact, he was so amused when Mike Carlton wrote "What a silly, self-important, know-all snob you are" (and signed it with an

impressive flourish at the bottom of the page) that he framed the letter and hung it in his office. He thanked Channel 9 journalist Gerald Stone for his advice on how to run the ABC but said one thing bothered him. "Why aren't there any Friends of 60 Minutes?" When Gareth Evans (the Minister for Transport and Communications in the Hawke government) informed staff at the ABC of the government's plans to prune the ABC's charter and possibly introduce advertising, he added that "thuggery" and "street marches" did not impress the Government. Bassie, who often gave politicians 'Save ABC' stickers to put on their bumper bars, told Senator Evans he should put the sticker on the dashboard of his car. The Minister was not amused. Bassie commented to the *Herald* "He is a rather humourless man when he's under pressure".

In his fight to keep the ABC ad-free Bassie noted "The argument that 'discreet sponsorship'... would not affect the ABC's current affairs and news operations is like saying that one needn't worry about bowel cancer because it is such a long way from one's head".

From his home in Turrumurra, Bassie wrote copious letters to *The North Shore Times* – one reader complained because one issue didn't have a letter from him. The paper wrote a profile of him in April 2002, including the results of a competition they ran to find the 'best of Bassie' questions. Here are some of them and his responses:

Q: If you were PM, what would you do with budget surpluses?

A: Disengage Australia from the war on terror immediately, take money from defence and keeping refugees out and put it instead into education and health.

Q: Why do you continue whinging? Why don't you help others and bring happiness to your life?

A: [Corin his wife] Walter is the most humorous, most effervescent and happy person I have ever met. I've hardly heard him whinge in 45 years of marriage. And he's the funniest man I know. [Walter] I find my happiness in living my life and writing letters. As far as community work, I worked for the Friends of the ABC and, as a surveyor, I have stayed in many country communities.

Q: What do you think of your critics?

A: They do a great service by giving their abuse with no points. I make a lot of points in my letters, but it shows they have no point when they don't ask or answer any questions.

Q: Would you like to fund an ongoing anti-salinity rehabilitation program?

A: This is an important issue because it's destroying the Murray Basin and our water supplies, everything the Greens say is true, even though I don't vote for the Greens. [When asked was he trying to keep the bastards honest? He replied "The best way to keep the bastards honest is to get rid of them"].

Bassie died on 17 November 2015. That night Phillip Adams introduced his 'Late Night Live' radio program with the words: 'The wise and witty Walter Bass, dead at 84'.

¹In January 2014 the name 'Friends of the ABC' was changed to 'ABC Friends'.

About the Author: *Dr Diana Wyndham is a historian and author whose most recent book is 'Norman Haire and the Study of Sex' (University of Sydney Press, 2013). She is a Committee member of ABC Friends (NSW) and Assistant Editor of ABC Friends' National Newsletter, 'Update'.*

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Message from your Membership Secretary

Thank you to all our members who have paid their membership fees.

Your fees are our main source of income and cover the many overhead expenses incurred to keep the Society functioning, such as rent for our research rooms, meeting room hire and Ancestry subscription.

For those yet to pay please ensure you do so by the end of the month in order to keep your subscription current.

If you have decided not to re-join, we thank you for your past support. Please remember you will be most welcome if ever you should wish to re-join KHS.

Annet Latham

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' Tales from the Past ' 8 June 1806

For a while Sydney's tallest structure was an elegant clock tower. Standing fifty metres high, the square brick tower had been built by Governor Hunter and could have been designed by the convict builder James Bloodworth. Neither the local bricks nor the lime-deficient mortar could stand up to the heavy Sydney rains.

After the tower fell a public-spirited watchmaker placed a clock in his window.

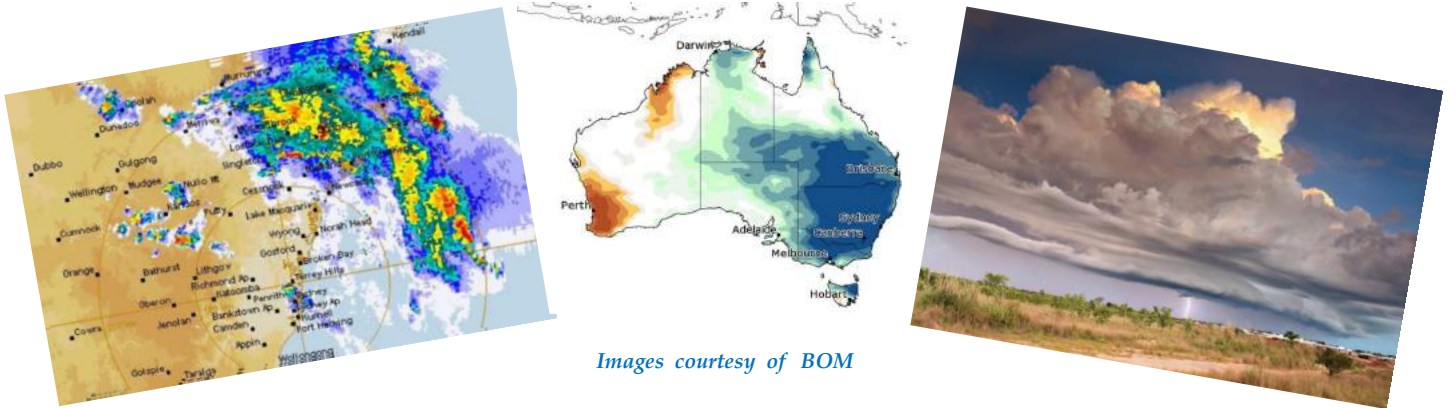
'From Gods to Gigabytes'

Brief History of Weather Forecasting by Richard N. Whitaker

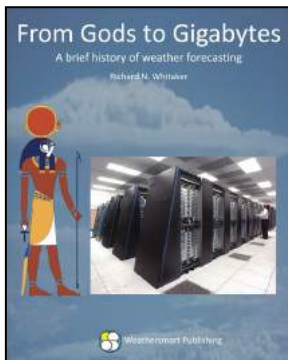
KHS member (and our very own weatherman!) Dick Whitaker's new book tells the fascinating story of humanity's love affair with the weather – together with the strong desire to predict it.

Many different forecasting methods have been tried down the ages – such as using prayer and sacrifice to the Sky Gods, observing the behaviour of plants and animals, looking at cloud patterns, and in more recent times using science, technology and mathematics as the main forecasting tools.

Modern weather prediction is one of the more recent scientific endeavours. Mathematics, physics and chemistry can be traced back for centuries, but mathematical weather forecasting is barely 100 years old, and has made astonishing progress in such a short time.



Images courtesy of BOM



We can now predict the weather far more accurately than ever before – and the story of how we reached this point has involved inspiration, communication and calculation. It is one of the great philosophical and practical triumphs of human achievement!

To buy a copy of this fascinating history (and remember, Christmas is coming up!) please contact Richard (Dick) Whitaker at weathersmart@optushome.com.au and he will tell you how to make the purchase. The cost is \$34 and this includes mailing to your preferred postal address.

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Norfolk Island Weather Bureau

WEATHER ROCK

- | | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| If rock is dry | - Fine |
| If rock is warm | - Sunny |
| If rock is wet | - Raining |
| If rock is swinging | - Windy |
| If rock is white | - Snowing |
| If rock is spinning | - Tornado |
| If can't see rock | - Fog |
| If rock is gone | - Hurricane |



Ku-ring-gai... Then... and Now



Looking north up Carbeen Avenue. On the left is the junction of Carbeen Avenue and Mungarra Avenue.

1943 photo ©AWM; 2022 photo © Ian Hall

This month, we have a 'Then ... and Now' contribution from KHS member Ian Hall – actually, two!

Ian has been busy examining photos from the Australian War Memorial of World War II army activities in and around St Ives – and what's more, he has gone to the effort of taking comparison shots, showing what the same areas look like today.

This is precisely the sort of interest and dedication that historical societies thrive on, and we thank you, Ian, for your enthusiasm. But the story goes even a little deeper... Ian noticed that at the top of our website's home page we feature a series of 'Then...' and 'Now' shots of each of Ku-ring-gai's suburbs, and when he saw our St Ives shot, he recognised the 'Now' photo as one that he had taken – way back in 1997!

It's true, some of our 'Now' shots do need updating, but the mystery was how we came to have a copy of his 1997 photo in the first place – after all, Ian has only been a member since 2017. It transpired that it was Ian's mother, Thelma, who had donated her son's photos to us way back then!

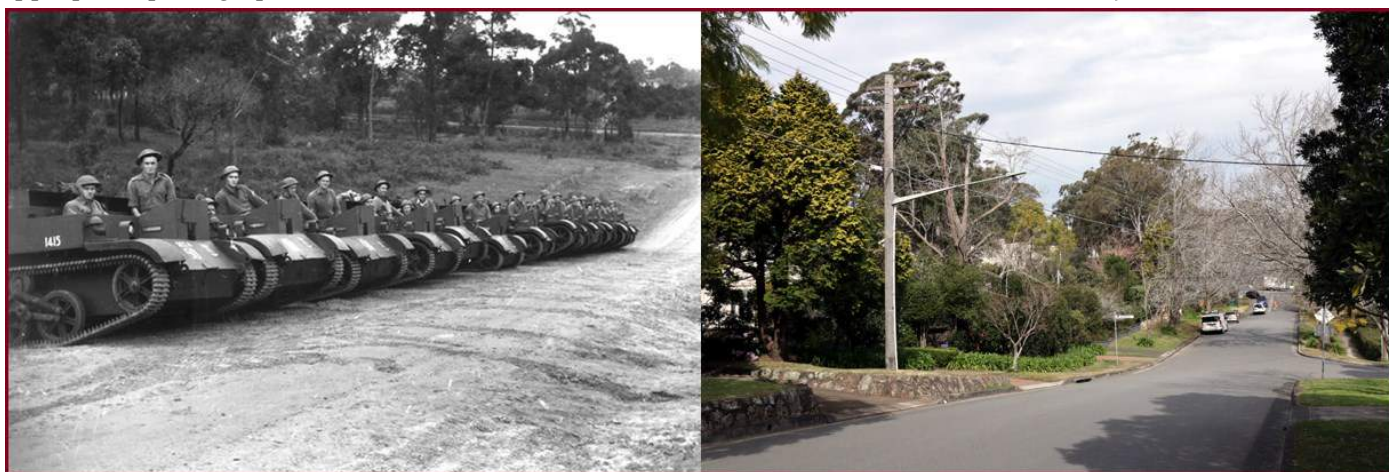
And that's not all – the eagle-eyed Ian also noticed that the 'Then ... and Now' photos on the website did not quite match properly, in that one shot was looking northwards, but the other was southwards. Thanks to Ian's research this has now been corrected on our home page, and the 'Now' shot has been updated with Ian's new photo taken in August 2022 – the two shots are now 79 years apart.

Ian is now working on some more comparison photos of St Ives in the 1940s, particularly of the Army's activities around St Ives Showground, and we look forward to publishing these in a future newsletter.

If any other members would like to take some updated 'Now' shots to replace the current photos at the top of our home page, we would love you to share them with us!

Or do you have any other 'Then ... and Now' photos of Ku-ring-gai? Please send them to editor@khs.org.au along with their descriptions. If possible, please also tell us where the photos came from, so that we can attribute them to the appropriate photographer or source.

Ralph Davis



Looking south down Carbeen Avenue towards Killeaton Street. On the right is the junction of Carbeen Avenue and Mungarra Avenue.

1943 photo ©AWM; 2022 photo © Ian Hall

DIARY DATES

OCTOBER 2022

Saturday 15 : **2pm - Annual General Meeting**
The Holtermann Collection
Presenter : Patrick Dodd

NOVEMBER 2022

Saturday 19 : **2pm - General Meeting**
Girt Nation
Presenter : David Hunt

Thursday 24 : **Tour** - West of the Sydney Harbour
Bridge cruise

The Research Rooms

The research rooms are open every
Tuesday and every Friday from
10am to 2pm for research
and general enquiries.

**The KHS committee meets on the first
Thursday of every month in the
research room.**

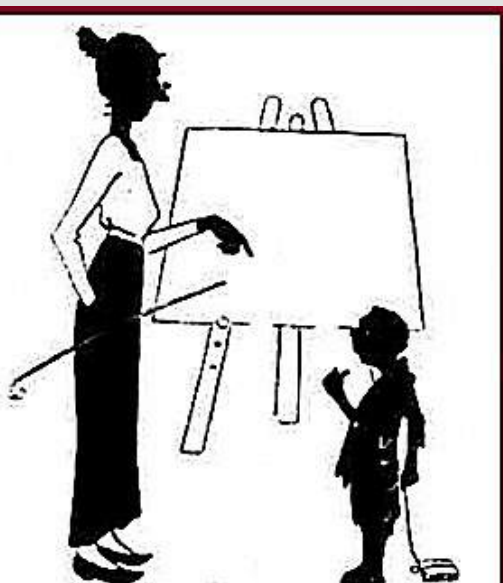
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Teacher: "How is it that you're so late, Tommy?"
Tommy: "'Cause there was a man pinched for stealin' hens and settin' a house on fire, and knockin' down three policemen, an' me mother sent me round to see if it was me father."

Newsletter Details

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