



THE EARLY BEGINNINGS OF HERITAGE ACADEMY

Marilyn Grieshaber – 20 March 2010

on the occasion of our first TWENTIETH YEAR CELEBRATION this year!

TWENTY YEARS ago - on the first day of the new school – 29 Jan 1990 – we opened our doors and welcomed in 14 students. So we went out and bought 14 desks!

Only 8 weeks before this we had made the decision to start the school.

3 weeks before, at a meeting of potential parents I said the following:

Heritage Academy just had to be – because God wanted it.
I have never been more aware personally of the hand
of God working in any situation.

And I quoted Isaiah 60:22: "In its time he will do this swiftly." And he certainly did!

We started off in a church building in Boom Street for 2 months, then moved to the St Nicholas premises where we occupied "the white house with the blue roof", on the corner of Loop St and Shepstone Rd. We were there for 2 years, and our numbers grew to 35.

NO UNIFORM – it was a great change to have no uniform – but then, some wanted it ...

THE BADGE – we designed the badge, with the oak of righteousness and the crown of glory. Our desire was for the children to grow up strong, and acknowledge Jesus as King!

THE NAME – we wanted this place to be more than a run-of-the-mill school. It was to be an ACADEMY – a place of special training and learning – learning the greater lessons of life and of God – (more than just academics). We wanted to walk in the inheritance that God has given those who walk by faith. To inherit the earth for the Kingdom!

While we originally intended this to be a high school, we found there was a desperate need in the community for primary education. So, with that in mind, and needing to find new premises for the beginning of 1992, we started searching.

It is a miraculous story in itself how we were given these current premises! (That's for another day!) What a change this was from a 7-roomed house to ALL these classrooms - we didn't know how we would be able to fill them! And the SPACE ! – fields, admin block – and a HALL! It was wonderful! God is truly good!

We set up the school to accommodate learners from Grade R to Grade 5. We had 67 learners.

I was Principal for those next 4 years. They were good days: growing in numbers, growing in faith, growing in experience, and certainly enjoying basking in God's faithfulness as we laboured under his banner of love and His direction.

In those early days we just did everything we had to – taught, played, worshipped, and even did every scrap of cleaning of these premises ourselves – children and teachers alike!

We saw many a child touched by the love of God, and many a parent overwhelmed with gratitude to God.

We saw children like the little boy in Grade 3 – the psychologist told us he would NEVER be able to reach Grade 7 so we should just pass him each year. We did not do that – instead we taught him with loving care – and he passed Grade 7 on his own steam 4 years later! A well-balanced boy who went into a mainstream high school.

We saw children like young Mr G... barely scraping through Grade 7 with all the effort he could muster – BUT what a gentleman! – he became Headboy at Newton High 3 years later!

Our third year here saw the opening of the Boarding Establishment next door – with 35 boarders. (Today we utilise a few houses across the road as well.)

We even ventured out with a high school Bridging Course for second-language students, and also an upper high school semi-correspondence course. These were all tentative steps to preparing ourselves for the opening up a full-fledged high school a few years later.

This school is for children. Dreams and aspirations run high. Just this week I was chatting with an enthusiastic young writer. . . and also an equally enthusiastic herpetologist. In my classes alone, I know we have at least one budding pastor, doctor, and nuclear physicist.

Mr Andy Thomas (the first principal) was also a dreamer. He dreamed of this school, and succeeded well with the groundwork to establish the school – both internally and externally.

I seemed to lay foundations with procedures, policies and paperwork!

Len de Beer literally transformed the appearance of this place from the foundations to the roof, and also brought in the dynamic element of missions.

Mr Axford brought in computers and did an enormous amount of liaison with the Education Department.

Mrs Thomas has taken the school to new heights and depths, and to faraway places as well - and has done an incredible amount for the school internally and externally, as well as providing facilities and training for the staff - and I know she keeps you learners on your toes. She is a perfectionist, a people-person, a principal that we can all be very proud of! And can be very thankful for!

These Principals have all done their part as God has called them for their special season.

Needless to say, the staff – both past and present - have been the flesh and the blood of the school, they are the faithful people – who, more often than not, have sacrificially but gladly put the Kingdom before their own needs - who have continued in God's grace, with the mandate that God gave us at the beginning:

to offer a school that stands for truth,
that brings the light into darkness,
and that responds to God's heart-call to plough soil for the establishment of
God's Kingdom on earth, so that He can come and reap his harvest for eternity.