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Now the weekend has come to an end, it starts again. I said the reunion is more than the gathering in Canberra, it is now a living and breathing animal (no, not a monster) with a life of its own. I'm reminded of those interviewed at the end of a Tour de France or after a footy grand final - tomorrow is the start of the next race/ season. And so it is with the next reunion. I don't know when it is, I just know that we will do it again. How could we not when there were so many happy faces, and reconnections and memories that many would never have believed possible.

The proof is in the photos. They are on our website and they are still coming in. Yes, there are too many. Yes, there are duplicates. And yes, there are some 'unkind' ones where people have eyes closed or unfortunate expressions which we will remove. Soon.

Can we remember what was most important back in our school days? Sure, many are still working but life is revolving more and more around births (grandchildren, but not for all) and deaths (parents, school friends and more, sadly) and marriages (mostly our kids and our kids friends) and trying to enjoy a good life in the time ahead of us. We have been reminded that we don't live forever, let's make the most of this.

A marriage takes me away from this computer early tomorrow. A proud occasion for me, it is Andrew and Margo Wright's son in Brisbane and obviously a prouder moment for them. For me and Jenny it will be followed by a break in Noosa, I'll be away until Monday 31 October. I will still be able to see emails - I can't believe how many I am still receiving. Even more than in the week before our bonding (Valda's substitute word for reunion). If I had any doubts about myself before, you would have extinguished them. I really am touched and grateful.

When I get back we will do a debrief, talk about where to go from here, what to change, what to keep the same. There will be a survey. Feel free to make suggestions.

In the meantime, here is a message to you all from Ruth Ingram. It was a few words from her way back at Easter last year, maybe earlier that were the catalyst for the amazing experience. I thought a few words from Ruth was a fitting end. I regretted (briefly) that we didn't do it at the Manuka Pool barbecue (I've already thanked Guenther, Archie, Phil and Col for the wonderful job they did - they are certainly re-hired) but someone has pointed it out that it was better that we didn't have an end, it is ongoing.

So, here are 941 words from Ruth (thanks Ruth). Surely I didn't spend that many hours! If I did, I enjoyed every one of them.

Stay in touch,

Warm wishes,

Brett

Like a lot of people, I am still on a high from the fantastic re-union weekend – I can't seem to slow my heart rate. Even after three functions I still feel frustrated that I did not catch up with a lot of people. For a lot of us, there is something incredibly special about school years and school friends. I hope those who did not enjoy their school years so much gained some sort of equilibrium out of the reunion. My nightmares about the school socials may now stop. For those who chose not to be involved, your decision is respected.

I had intended to say the following words over the weekend, but somehow things overtook me and by Sunday, due to lack of sleep and general cowardliness, I couldn't get my thoughts together!

I want to provide a short story about the journey of the reunion, having been there when the idea was conceived. Successes like this don't come without a lot of work. After my initial chat with Brett about the idea, he literally (and fortunately) ran with it. Tentative enquiries were made with his contacts in Canberra and in general the idea was considered a good one. For the first few months the idea of actually holding a reunion was not foremost – contact with ex-students was the important task at that point. Each person contacted usually had more contacts, and so the whole thing grew and grew. I can remember Brett saying that he would wait until he had 20 email addresses before sending out his first email. When we got to 50 we were ecstatic. By last weekend Brett had email addresses for over 180 people and had made contact with well over 200.

Please remember that when I talk of Brett, I also include Jennifer who did an incalculable amount of work for this reunion. Devoting yourself to such a thing must put a few strains on a relationship!

Brett devoted an enormous amount of his time (day and night) over the last 18 months to this reunion. As a lot of you will know, he stopped at nothing and certainly didn't give up!! Having said that, I really appreciated how he kept me in the loop and shared every step with me. Brett's determination, doggedness, and people skills made it the success it was. Brett & Jennifer's hospitality was never ending – having people for coffee/tea, organising BBQs, joining interstate get-togethers etc. Brett often rang and said "guess who I have just been talking to for an hour". There was always a quiz question. Brett even had dinner with Lois Carlson in America on his holiday there.

I have worked out a few statistics for your consideration. I estimate Brett sent/received thousands of emails in the 18 months. I also estimate he spent an average of (at least) 3 hours per day – a grand total of nearly 1700 hours working on the reunion. I am sure you will agree this is quite incredible. And again, that's not counting Jennifer's hours/efforts. The number of people who attended or got in touch is testimony to Brett's application – including an ability to pick up the phone to contact someone, even if it was through their second cousin thrice removed who had heard of the person 15 years ago! Letters were even sent to people listed on the electoral roll in an attempt to make contact (by Steve Maitland).

We floundered a little trying to establish a website. Richard Swan, Barry Ballard and Jim Gillespie all had input, before Jan Nelson picked it up and created the most fabulous user-friendly website. Jan also put in incalculable hours – we just had to write our little bit, she had to bring it all together. Her hours must have a thousand also. The website really cemented the reunion and provided a focal point for people, including those feeling a little tentative. Jan's husband Alek may be glad the reunion is over.

Brett & I often talked about people feeling intimidated by other's stories. After all, there were some incredible achievers at our school. But this was never about achievements – it was a group of people who spent their formative years together making contact again. Lots of people have had challenges in their lives, things have not gone so well, they have had health issues, mental health issues etc – my admiration and concern for those people is immense. It was always incredibly sad to learn of someone's premature death. Not that Brett stopped there – he even resurrected Valda Krastins!

There were several “committee” meetings in Canberra, others took on tasks which added to the event (such as the cake organised by Roslyn Woodyer). Dangerous territory to start naming people.

The chance meeting Brett & I had was fortunate in many ways – we could not have chosen a better person than Brett to create this whole thing. So many people have had, and continue to have, pleasure from this experience. Already lunches are being planned (in Melbourne on 19 or 20 November), people are asking when the next reunion will be. I can see enormous career opportunities in the future for Brett – private detective, consultant in school reunions, etc.

A special thanks to those who came from overseas – a wonderful commitment.

I feel better now – I have been able to say much more than I could have at the event!

Looking forward to the next one. In spite of the great roll-call we had, there are still lots of gaps to fill in, people to meet. I live near Portland in South-West Victoria – if you are ever near this area please call in.

Ruth Ingram