

Royal High School biography interview

Colin Todd

1. Which primary School did you attend?
 - a. Royal High preparatory in Northfield Broadway, years 1 to 7
2. Which years did you attend the Royal High?
 - a. Primary from 1956 to 1963, then secondary until 1969, five years of which were at Regent Road then one year at Barnton.
3. What were your first impressions of the Royal High?
 - a. Primary
 - i. Teachers were Mrs Pow/ Mrs Munro/ Mrs Hamilton/ Mr Watson
 - ii. I moved from 4B to 5A – possibly for doing well - but I wasn't welcomed – I was seen as a 'B' Boy
 - b. Regent Road
 - i. Daunting and confusing – moving classes (unlike Primary) – often quite far, including a five-minute walk to the Regent Terrace houses; Gytes were excused for turning up late
 - c. Barnton
 - i. Lacked the character of Regent Road, but had much better facilities
4. What were your favourite subjects?
 - a. English with David Campbell
 - b. Maths
 - c. Science – Mr Mackay, then the new and very young Frank Lund
 - d. Disastrously bad at History (never passed an exam) until Dave Somerville (what a man!) helped me to my best exam result – I met him in the playground after the exam results and he like me expressed surprise at my success
 - e. Arthur Ross was our form teacher – I was censor on Arthur's behalf - he was always late – I was like Radar in MASH – “sign here please Arthur” when I eventually located him
 - f. German (I'm told I won the German Consulate prize in my 6th year)
 - g. Overall I was 17th but was much higher at Maths, Science and English – my poor Geography, Art and History results dragged me down
5. Who were your favourite teachers, and who inspired you?
 - a. Dave Somerville
6. What are your best memories?
 - a. 6th year at Barnton – such a transition from 5th – we matured and I regained my popularity
7. What was your greatest achievement?
 - a. Academically – my history results, principally due to Dave Somerville
8. What was your impression of school as you left?
 - a. Sadness – I would have liked another year
 - b. That was a good year (I only had the one at Barnton)
 - c. Physics was taught badly – I left without understanding the subject, but fortunately University solved that
9. What did you do immediately after School?
 - a. I went to Edinburgh University, studied Veterinary Medicine at Dick Vet, but left after 1st year, and was accepted for Physics, where I had to start in first year– but fortunately I had a five-year grant (for Vet. Medicine). I graduated with a BSc Physics 1974, and followed that with an MSc in 1975 – a Post Graduate in Fire Safety Engineering. I picked that from several options which were being 'touted', as I felt it was a subject in which I could possibly achieve a useful outcome. There were just four of us on the course; one a New Zealander who went home, one mature student and the two of us who would form the first cohort in Fire Safety Engineering.
10. What has your career been?
 - a. My first job was for Unilever in London 1975 – insurance in a fire safety role – good experience of industry in a business
 - b. Unilever let me start another MSC in radiation and environmental protection – Surrey University. I completed the course part-time but didn't feel it was necessary to take the exam – I already had an MSc
 - c. I moved to the Fire Offices Committee 1976 – 1977
 - d. Marsh & McLennan Insurance Broker 1978
 - e. I established C S Todd and Associates in 1982,
 - f. On my award of the MBE for services to fire safety, I was asked to comment – “I was very surprised, but extremely delighted, to receive this great honour, which I believe was the result of nomination by a number of

colleagues within the fire safety profession. The year-end represented the anniversary of 44 years in the world of fire safety, having completed a Masters degree in 1975, as one the cohort of the first four students in the UK to undertake higher education in fire safety engineering. This honour was a great way to end the year and celebrate the completion of another year in a profession that has given me a worthwhile career.

11. My current work includes:
 - i. Expert witness cases.
 1. Public Enquiry – Grenfell Tower Inquiry (Colin has been an expert witness during the Enquiry)
 - ii. Authoring of a number of BSI publications, including PAS 79 (National standard for Fire Risk assessment)
 - iii. Delivering training courses for clients and undertaking public speaking.
 - iv. Serving on several British Standard committees.
 - v. As a Board member of the Fire Industry Association (FIA), Chairman of the FIA Fire Risk Assessment Council.
 - vi. The Company now has around 30 staff, so I am kept busy with administration of the team
- b. What's next? - at 69, I'm having a good time at work, so would like to carry on as long as possible.
12. How do you keep fit?
 - a. I'm a Gym user, and hold several British records, plus one World weight lifting record in a slightly obscure discipline. I managed that just after my 65th – when I was the youngest in my age group. Time will tell if I try again just after my 70th!
13. Have you kept in contact with your contemporaries?
 - a. Not as well as I might have done, but I keep in touch with Will and Robert Dunnett, and also attend the RHS London Club dinners fairly regularly
14. Do you want to tell us about your family?
 - a. My son works in the same business, indeed I recently had to step down as an expert witness for the Police in the Borough of Kensington and Chelsea as he had just been appointed as Head of Fire Safety there!
 - b. My elder daughter is a teacher and has with three kids
 - c. My younger daughter in PR
15. Do you have any photographs, memorabilia or other records from School that you want to share?
 - a. I have an image of me during the trials of a 42 meter 'snorkel' platform, and given I have no head for heights...
 - b. I will make a photo of me with my MBE insignia available
16. What message do you have for today's pupils?
 - a. You are going out into a world unduly influenced by politics and money; the important thing is that you must be true to yourselves; never feel that your contribution will be inconsequential, no matter how apparently insignificant your role.
17. Other information
 - a. I have been a frequent attendee at RHS London Club dinners, and you will see from the photos that I very much enjoy myself!

Photographs



2013 Dinner



2013 Dinner



2013 Dinner



2014 Dinner – Colin chats with Janet and Andrew from Watsons



1963 – RHS preparatory class 7a – Mr Watson's class



2015 Dinner – with David Robb



2015 Dinner – with David Robb and Al Senter



2017 Dinner



2018 Dinner –With Alex Prentice



2019 London Dinner with Neil Zeiger, David Robb, and Bill Strang