

INGEBURG SCHWAB: SECRETARY/TREASURER, PARENTS AND FRIENDS ASSOCIATION, 1962



Ingeburg "Inge" Schwab, her husband Fritz, and their children Lorenz (Laurie) and Katrin, migrated straight from Berlin to Victoria after the war in 1954. Their second daughter, Olivia known as Lilli, was born in Australia. It was Inge who had decided on migration. Not only was the survival in Berlin after the war difficult, but constant news of deaths was worse. Fritz's sister Helga had turned to the German Red Cross to trace the father, stepmother Lotte, and the three teenage half-sisters Edith, Margit and Liliane. When the Germans invaded Belgium, they were hidden for two years by a Belgian family. Then they were denounced. All would die in Auschwitz – also Fritz's uncle, the father's brother and both his cousins, Herma and Gerda.

After one year at the Bonegilla Migrant Reception Centre the Schwabs moved to 13 Errington Street, St Albans, in late 1955. There was no water connected to the house for some months until the line went through. There was a communal tap on the corner of Errington Road and Main Road East where people would go and fill buckets. Despite such and other deprivations, Katrin remembers that it was a really happy, free, exciting life for the children although undoubtedly harder for the parents.



Fritz Schwab (left) at Bonegilla Migrant Hostel, 1950s.



Lorenz and Katrin Schwab, corner of Errington and Main Road East, 1950s.

Both Laurie and Katrin started at St. Albans High in 1960. Although they were a year apart in age, they were always in the same class, because when they started their schooling in Bonegilla it was considered better to put them together until they learnt English. It just stayed that way.

Laurie became a journalist and writer by profession. During the sixties, seventies and eighties he wrote freelance articles and interviewed celebrities such as Liza Minelli, Clifton Pugh, upcoming 'young' comedian Rod Quantock, politicians etc. He was a very young Sub Editor at NewsDay when it launched in opposition to the Herald and was a Sub Editor at the Age and Editor of all the Age suburban papers before online syndication. He wrote a book about the World Cup campaign in 1972. This was a remarkable achievement for a migrant boy with no real academic background - he went through the cadetship route rather than university route.

Katrin had a good start at the high school, because in June 1960 she came top of her class for academic achievement. She is now living a happy retirement with her husband, children and grandchildren.

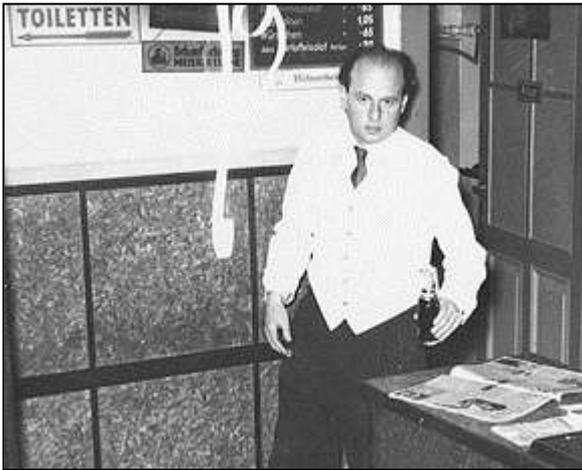
Lilli Schwab attended St Albans High from 1968 to 1973. She joined the Public Service and has had a long career in various Departments and roles including as a trainer, an employment case manager, and currently as a grants manager in the Mental Health and Carers area. She has two children, Tom and Sally, and they have been living in Brunswick for the last 20 years.



Back Row: Zori Loncar, Stefania Sawka, Ewa Makarewicz, Jennifer Weaver, Sylvia Skinner, Mary Saliba, Ardiens Marechal, Nita Rozycki, Bianca Arnautovic, Irene Krawczyk. **Third Row:** Yadwiga Wolczecki, Danuta Strugarek, Regina Muscinkas, Barbara Wale, Jennifer Plant, Barbara Wyka, Yadwiga Szucko, Helen Baker. **Second Row:** Maria Wojciechowska, Renate Stojanovic, Isabella Szostak, Pauline Stewart, Susan Reeves, Martha Kratsis, Zofia Struzycki, Bozena Zaba, Lynette Robinson. **Front Row:** Ursula Plecher, Katrin Schwab, Helga Mucke, Maxine McNiven, Phyllis Rowley, Sheena Flain, Jacoba van Winden, Lieselotte Japundra, Birgitta Rucinski.

Katrin Schwab (front row second from left), Form 1G, 1960.

Many people will remember Fritz and Inge Schwab for the import business they established from their site in Errington Road where they had a business office as well as their home. They imported German cultural and heritage items that were sought by their fellow émigrés: books, journals, magazines, records, Christmas decorations and colourful Christmas plates on which one could serve sweets for the children, and even coffee.



Fritz Schwab, Nollendorf Place Berlin, 1940s.

Fritz wrote regularly for various newspapers in Germany as a sports journalist, including the popular and widely-circulated "Die Woche". He also organized meetings between German and Australian sportsmen e.g. in football, boxing, and cycling and swimming, and brought boxers such as Hans Schilling (German master in flyweight class) and Connie Rudholf (German and European master in lightweight class) to Australia.

Inge served on the St Albans High School's Parents and Friends Association for a short time as Treasurer and Secretary. She was skilled in office work, accounts and typing, through her education and running the family business. However, with three children, a business and her husband's attitude (women will be at home in the evenings), her tenure on the PFA was short. She continued to work full-time in the family business until her early 70s. However, when her son Laurie died in 1997 at the age of 50 years, Inge could not cope with it. Her health suffered and she survived Laurie by only seven years; she died in March 2007. Fritz died peacefully on 8 July 2014 and was buried at Altona Memorial Park.



FORM 1D

Back Row: Ivan Volkov, John Nicetin, Raymond Robinson, Vassyl Bilinski, Ivan Bilinski, Derek Thurgood, Harry Scamangas, Lorenz Schwab, Nicolai Starostyn. **Fourth Row:** Doris Harbach, Erika Kolin, Luba Horpinitch, Catherine Hatjandreou, Czeslawa Orlinski, Dawn Clark, Gisela Heinrichs, Cheryl McLeod, Olha Ilkio. **Third Row:** Philip Wilman, Stefan Vasjuta, Albert van de Kuyt, Corneleus Vermolen, Anton Seychell, Vladys Turok, David Spotiswood, Andrew Nowak, Jerry Osadczuk, Stefan Romanowski. **Second Row:** Zoia Yanczak, Dawn Hopkins, Milica Jankovic, Heather Goddard, Monika Nowak, Miriam Faganel, Marja Jaciow, Tatiana Korinsky, Pamela Hammond. **First Row:** Philip Pringle, Leonid Troszczyj, Slauko Tomy, Mykola Nowycky, Keith Wright, George Spiteri.

Lorenz Schwab (back row second from right), Form 1D, 1960.

Lilli Schwab and St Albans High School:

I attended St Albans High from 1968 to 1973. I was a good student but terribly shy. There were fun times, confusing times, exciting times and a lot of times feeling the craziness of adolescence.

The school at the time was what would now be called a bit of a 'basket case'. It could not attract experienced teachers and employed a lot of first year inexperienced teachers who found it difficult to engage students and ended up with classrooms that were bordering on chaotic. There were also a group of teachers from America and Canada, who filled in the state wide teacher shortage at the time. I remember one particular teacher - a lovely bloke but serious hippy - who taught candle making in his English class and often let the class find its 'own interests and learning' which meant a lot of chatter and not much else. Great times but not very educational.

Love was in the air and there were a number of great school musicals preaching peace and love. I remember going to one wearing a brown suede vest with long fringes - very 60s! Then came the seventies and I remember sitting in a sweltering portable (we had lots of these at one stage) and being very impressed that my new friend was going to a Led Zeppelin concert. There was obviously a teacher in the room but that was only incidental!!

As the years went on and I reached the senior classes learning became more important and focussed. Mostly I remember Denise Whittle (Kirton) as my English teacher. She was wild and interesting and supported my learning. And then there was Mr Hope, who taught Accounting and Legal Studies. Conservative in his cardigans and black, horn-rimmed glasses, but with a dry sense of humour, he supported me and believed in my abilities. When I did well in the Year 12 exams he sent me a note congratulating me. I remember him fondly.

I went on to do an Arts Degree at Melbourne University and a Diploma of Education at Melbourne State College. I never taught in a school but spent some years teaching literacy to adults on a part time basis.

I joined the Public Service and this has led to a long career as a bureaucrat. I have worked in various Departments and roles including as a trainer, an employment case manager and currently as a grants manager in the Mental Health and Carers area.

I have travelled around Asia and Europe, most recently visiting Borneo with my children.

I have two children, Tom and Sally, and we have lived in Brunswick for the last 20 years. I have a menagerie of animals (two dogs and two cats) that keep me busy.

Inge Schwab and St Albans High School:

My mother was never much of a 'joiner'. I suspect her involvement with the High School's Parents and Friends Association had something to do with the legendary persuasiveness of Lorna Cameron (whose children were friends with Katrin and Laurie) but also a willingness to be involved if it was for the good of her children.

I think she enjoyed having a role independent of Dad and the business. She was very hard working and took her position seriously. I remember Mum would come back from committee meetings and spread all the yellow school donation envelopes filled with pennies (which were for the 'poor children') over the kitchen table and I would help her sort the money and count it. I'm not really sure where they originated from. Perhaps they were for School Contributions.

I remember her walking home from meetings wearing one of the many 'trench coats' she would own during her life - no nonsense but stylish at the same time.

I don't know whether life just got busier, whether Dad felt threatened by her involvement or whether she just never felt comfortable being part of a group, but she was never involved in any community activities after she left the Parents and Friends. She preferred her life with her children and grandchildren, her dogs and her books.

She was a keen reader particularly of autobiographies (mostly in English) and the thicker the better. She had wide interests - reading Australian classics like Patrick White and Ruth Park but also loving Hollywood biographies including David Niven and Montgomery Clift. Mum was a very capable woman and I think had she been born in another time she would probably have been a well educated professional.

She often ran the business while Dad was away overseas and juggled this with running a family and household. Mum was the one who went to parent/teacher interviews, kept an eye on homework and made sure the uniforms were clean. She also did all the secretarial and accounting work of the business, answered all telephone calls and most days spent a lot of her time on her feet.

She hated the limelight but I think she deserves this acknowledgement of her work for the school.

Lilli Schwab, 2015.

Family photos supplied by and copyright Katrin and Lilli Schwab.
Thanks to Lilli and Katrin Schwab for family background.
School photograph reproduction courtesy of Nick Szwed.