

### **Regaling the “Many Paths, One Spirit” Reunion, Sydney 2018.**

Sunday 16 September 2018 dawned with the sun streaming into the courtyard of St Benedict’s Parish, Broadway. In the earlier hours of this day, the mobile phones belonging to the members of the XSJSS-SYDNEY Committee could be heard ‘ping-ing’ in the different suburbs of Sydney as messages were sent to and from. The big day had arrived. Checklists were ticked off and cars were packed to the max.

The air was buzzing with excitement as the alumnae arrived while food stations were set up, collection points for registration packs and ID lanyards defined, information booths for individual events labelled and a table for late registrations was arranged.

Fr. Epeli and Fr. Joti celebrated Mass, with a warm welcome to the Alumnae. The FSCC choir sang our praises through the roof and the Committee members were cajoled into singing our newly composed reunion song in church, much to their surprise. And ‘light refreshments’ were served in the courtyard while ID lanyards and registration gift bags were collected. The ex-students of St Joseph’s Secondary School, Waimanu Rd, Suva had gathered. And they had travelled in from Fiji, New Zealand, Honk Kong, Malaysia, Canada, United States of America, England, Scotland and from all over Australia.

Monday 17 September saw a group of approximately a hundred of the SJSS alumnae with family and friends meet at Milsons Point. Some ladies warmed up with Yoga stretches supervised by Jeanie Chan, Class of ’84. Our blue and white flags were fitted onto mobile poles (aka mop handles that were negotiated and bought at a convenience store in Milsons Point by Marie and Ruby), group photos were taken, and we set off across the Sydney Harbour Bridge, stopping for photos as we walked. The enthusiastic fitness fanatics broke away and strutted into the Rocks while the rest of us strolled at a more leisurely pace, chatting all the way (as to be expected). The group boarded three chartered double decker buses and were taken on a three-hour tour of our beautiful city, Sydney. However, some tours took a little longer, according to some stories being told later. Perhaps the ‘rogue’ driver was overwhelmed with being surrounded by a bus load of beautiful women; he did not want the tour to end.... LOL.

The programme for Monday evening was designed for a relaxing, social evening after the busy activities of the day with everyone taking a walk down memory lane with trivia, performances and dancing. It started off on Fiji time as groups dribbled in. Apparently, a few ladies had to stop at the pub to ‘warm up’ after being frozen, sitting on the top deck of the double decker bus. And unfortunately, some didn’t make it to the event because they were ‘frozen through’. When the question was posed, “Why didn’t they move down into the bus?”, someone else piped up, “Because in true Fiji style, they would have sat there and ‘vosota’ because they were too embarrassed to go in” .....you can all imagine the laughter that erupted.

Each group decorated their tables to the theme of the Reunion, “Many Paths, One Spirit” and a representative was nominated to explain their depiction. The room erupted in laughter as each group strove to out-do the last. The creativity that was injected into these explanations was worthy of Academy Awards..... and winners they became. The four judges (consisted of family and friends, including our musician for the evening) were complimentary and their decisions were final. The trivia round brought out the competitive spirit in everyone. In this setting, it was hilarious to see how quickly we all forgot we no longer at school.....and even though everyone was informed that there would be no correspondence entered and the judge’s decision was final, one group staged a

silent protest, standing on chairs. Their mini placards held by Ingrid read “OMG” and Margaret - “They hate us coz they ain’ t us” .....tipped the scales and brought the house down.

This was followed by performances. The Fiji Contingent performed a beautiful Fijian meke to Pakiakia by Makare, the Class of '84 performed their rendition of Saturday night Fever and the Class of '83 had Tina Turner rolling down the river with her big wheels. And our wonderfully talented musician, William Vatubua, rocked the house with his melodious voice that had everyone on their feet until it was time to call it a night.

Tuesday 18<sup>th</sup> September saw a bus trip off to the Hunter Valley for wine tasting at 7am and the Harbour Cruise on the Sydney Harbour at 1pm. While the group travelling to the Hunter Valley sang their way out of Sydney and kept the proprietors entertained at the various Cellar Doors as they learnt the art of ‘tasting and spitting’, the group on the Harbour rocked the waves with the ‘Tui Boto’ snaking through the two lower decks and various versions of pole dancing. The top deck had the alumnae dancing to the strains of Boney M after taking ownership of the boat and flying the St Joseph’s blue and white flag.

Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> September, alumnae, families and friends enjoyed a spectacular evening at Doltone House, Kings Wharf. Everyone was dressed to the nines and looked beautiful. The gentlemen scrubbed up well in their suits. On arrival, our guests were greeted with cocktails and canapés before being invited into the venue and assisted to their tables. The hipster (photo) booth set up in the far-right hand corner of the room was an all-night favourite which had a never-ending queue. This great initiative was generously sponsored by the Class of '78. Sweepstakes were sold and the five lucky winners won cash prizes. Door prizes were also drawn which put smiles on the faces of our winners. And the dance floor was ‘packed to the max’ each time Voli K & his band leapt into action. And just as quick as the evening began, it was all over in a blink of an eyelid. The evening ended with a repeat performance of the Fiji Contingent to Pakiakia by Makare (remix) and everyone joined in.

The morning of Thursday 20 September dawned with the forecast of rain which probably reflected the mood of the travellers to Canberra as we were told- “it was a very quiet trip down”. The heavens opened a little and the planned family day picnic was quickly redirected to lunch at the Kirribilli RSL with the Sydney Harbour Bridge as our backdrop. And when the sun crept out from behind the clouds, it turned into a beautiful relaxed afternoon with everyone enjoying the meal of their choice and some indulging with fresh oysters, prawns and seafood and a drop of ‘vino’, and regaling stories of the previous evening.

On the morning of Friday 21 September, we waved off another trip to the Hunter Valley. They left Sydney a little after 7am. This group reportedly were all raring to go, singing their way out of Sydney and up to the Hunter Region. Many were impressed with the new experience where they learnt about wine “tasting and spitting” and enjoyed the ride on the mini train. They all enjoyed lunch at the small Winemaker’s Centre where a range of specialty wines were matched to a gourmet spread before singing their way back to Sydney..... with their purchases.

Saturday 22 September dawned, and another group left on the tour bus for the Floriade Festival in Canberra with a very busy itinerary to check out the various embassies, visit Parliament House, Mt Ainslie and the War Memorial. While they were admiring the beautiful blooms and enjoying their perfume in Canberra, a second group hit the Sydney Harbour on a ABBA themed cruise. And didn’t they dress the part!!!!!! With their white wigs and ABBA paraphernalia, they too had a rocking time, and ended with farewelling the rest of the passengers with “Isa, Isa, vulagi lasa dina” when they

docked. Apparently, the free entertainment continued into Cargo Bar on The Promenade in Darling Harbour with Waltzing Matilda for our local Sydneysiders.

Sunday 23 September- we gathered at St Benedict's once again. This time, it was to give thanks for a wonderful week of re-connecting and renewing friendships and strengthening the bond of SISTERHOOD. ....and throwing out the challenge to our SISTERS OVER THE TASMAN, IN THE LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD, THE LAND OF THE ALL BLACKS AND KIWI FRUIT.....to host the next alumnae reunion.....

And while groups continued to reminisce and recall the events of the previous days, the sense of sadness was tangible as we shared a scrumptious afternoon tea, cleaned up and slowly packed up, farewelling our sisters and wishing everyone Bon Voyage.... till the next one..... perhaps over the Tasman!!!!!!

With blessings in the Spirit of Anne Marie Javouhey,

Emily Koroï

And the XSJSS-SYDNEY Committee.



XSJSS-SYDNEY Committee 2018.

Back row: Emily Koroï.

Middle row: Karen Macallister, Helen Black, Kathy Johansen, Angela Duckworth, JuDe Bulatiko Slatter, Carol Wooley, Yvonne Osborne, Grace Yee, Adella Chan, Reywan Khan.

Front row: Amy Chan, Roslyn Lee, Pamela Devlin.