



# PENRITH HIGH SCHOOL

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Principal: Wendy De Paoli

November 2007

## NEWSLETTER

### *From the Principal*

The Higher School Certificate exams are now completed and the School Certificate exams almost completed. I would like to congratulate both our Year 12 group and our Year 10 students on their outstanding attitude and approach to these exams. Both year groups have been in the very safe hands of our Presiding Officer, Mrs Kara McKeown, and her team of supervising examiners. I would like to thank them most sincerely for the thoroughly professional way they have cared for all our students during these very important external exams.

We have already had some very exciting news with regard to HSC results. Congratulations to Tammie Barlow, who earlier this year received the Minister's Award for Excellence in Student Achievement and whose HSC Design and Technology project has been nominated as one of the best in the State and included in the DesignTech Exhibition at the Powerhouse Museum. The launch for this exhibition will be

held next week and Tammie's proud teacher, Mr Russell, will be accompanying Tammie and her parents to see her unicycle on display. The DesignTech Exhibition goes right through the summer holidays and I encourage all of our students and their parents to see this exhibition if they have a chance to visit the Powerhouse Museum and see the wonderful work of NSW Design students on display. It is always an exhibition of excellence.

In the HSC Visual Arts course we are delighted with the news that four of our students have each had their body of work nominated for *ArtExpress*, which is the collection of the very best HSC Visual Arts projects for the year. Congratulations to Camelia Mowbray, Louisa Xu, Anna Ng and Sarish Wahid on these nominations. This again points to the excellence that has been achieved by so many of our Year 12 students. Further congratulations to Camelia, who is the recipient

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#### ***P&C Meeting***

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> November

7:30pm in the Staff Common Room

All Welcome

## *PHS Interview with Glenda Browne*

### **So, Mum, what did you win?**

I won the 2007 Ig Nobel Prize for Literature.

### **What are the Ig Nobels?**

The Ig Nobels are a spoof on the true Nobel Prizes, and they're given by the Annals of Improbable Research for work that makes people "laugh, and then think". What they think is up to them.

### **What did you have to do to claim your Prize?**

I went to Boston in October this year, and I received my award at a ceremony at Harvard University. Two days later I also gave a five-minute speech at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

### **What did you win your prize for?**

I won my prize for an article written six years ago about how we should alphabetise index entries that start with 'The'. Most of the rules suggest that you should look for The Beatles and The Bible at 'B', but The Hague and first lines of poetry such as '*The camel's hump is an ugly wump*' at 'T'. If you look at the phone directory or other lists, however, you will find that these rules have been applied inconsistently. My conclusion was that we should consider indexing these terms under both the options.

### **Describe the award.**

The award is a wooden block topped with a rubber chicken swallowing a plastic egg. The chicken is deliciously squishy, and the egg is appallingly yellow. I am fonder of my certificate, which has a picture of Rodin's Thinker with the Thinker fallen to the ground. It has been signed by five real Nobel Laureates, one of whom presented me with my award.

### **Who else won a prize?**

The medicine prize went to a radiologist and a sword-swallower who had written an article entitled: "Sword-Swallowing and its Side-Effects". The sword-swallower entertained us with sword-swallowing acts. The chemistry prize went to a Japanese woman who had isolated vanilla from cow dung. Samples of vanilla-flavoured ice cream were provided the day after the presentations. Another popular winner was the Argentinean who studied the effect of Viagra on jet-lag recovery in hamsters.

### **What other Australians have won in past years?**

Last year the mathematics prize went to Nic Svenson and Piers Barnes, two CSIRO staff, who had done mathematical modelling to find out the number of group photos you have to take to be almost certain you'll get one photo in which no one is blinking. Karl Kruszelnicki won an award for the study of belly-button fluff.

### **What were the highlights of the award ceremony?**

The awards are held in Sanders Theatre, which is a beautiful polygonal wooden building. The view was punctuated by the occasional paper aeroplane soaring across the crowd. The spirit of the winners, the volunteers and the crowd is exuberant and people participate to the fullest. The winners each only get one minute to speak, and the remainder of the ceremony is full of silliness. For example, the 'Simultaneous Translators' all speak at once. The speakers are kept very strictly to their time limit by an eight-year old girl with ice-water in her veins called 'Miss Sweetie-poo'. If you speak too long, she stands next to you and complains plaintively: "Please stop, I'm bored. Please stop, I'm bored".

### What's the reason for the award?

The main point is to give scientists a chance to laugh at themselves. The organisers also hope that it will help spread the excitement of science to non-scientists. Some of the awards are critical and provide an opportunity to poke fun at ideas they feel are ridiculous – such as the Breatharian who believes she can live on nothing but air, and the financial controllers at companies such as HIH and Enron.

### What impact has your award had?

I had a couple of radio interviews while I was in the States, and a few more when I returned. I've also been interested to see the response in a range of blogs on the Internet. Overall, people have been interested and many have said the question of where to look for things that start with 'The' has puzzled them, and they're delighted to have an answer at last.

You can see the video of the event at <http://www.improbable.com/ig/2007/webcast/> and learn more about 'The' at [www.webindexing.biz](http://www.webindexing.biz).

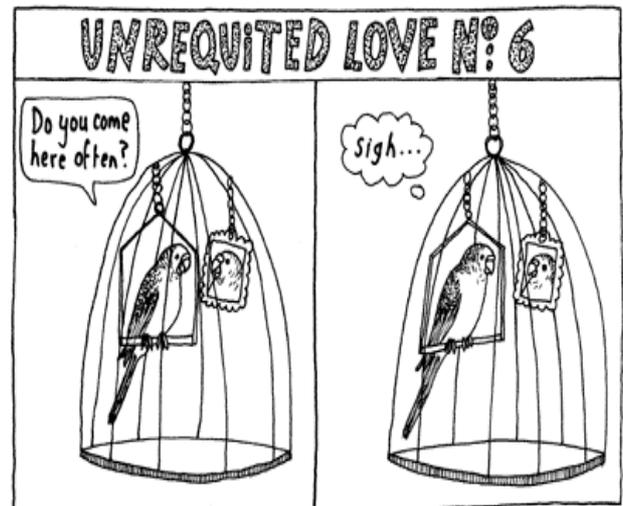
*Bill Browne*

*Year 11*



## Judy Horacek Cartoons

The school would like to thank cartoonist Judy Horacek for allowing us to reproduce her cartoons.



Judy's theme for November is '*Entertainment*' and readers can enjoy more of the cartoons at her website:

[www.horacek.com.au](http://www.horacek.com.au)