

ACK Story: Steve Rieniets (1979-80)

A proud Gippslander, I attended ACK as a boarder in 1979 and 1980 and often reflect on how that experience has been instrumental in preparing me for life's journey. Resilience, discipline and the ability to accept, get along and connect with a wide range of people, are qualities that have proven most valuable in my working life and life in general.

After finishing at ACK in 1980, I attended university and obtained a Bachelor of Civil Engineering and later an MBA. I was also a graduate of the 1996 Williamson Community Leadership program run by leadership Victoria. I have remained living in Gippsland ever since. I have spent 33 years working in the electricity industry predominantly in the Latrobe Valley and spent around 18 months working in the USA in the late 1990's with my then young family.

I commenced working with the then SECV in 1985 as an engineer in the Latrobe Valley coal fields and progressed quickly through the management ranks to my current role of General Manager of the AGL Loy Yang Power Station and Mine in Traralgon in the Latrobe Valley. **Loy Yang provides 50% of Victoria's electricity.** My role has overall responsibility for the mining operation and the power station, which includes the safety and well-being of over 1000 employees.

I married a local Gippslander, Kathy and we have three adult children – Jordan (28), Meg (25) and Charlie (22).

My family has a very long association with ACK, commencing in the early 1920's. My late grandfather Clive Beaumont attended ACK in the 1920's and was Captain of the First XVIII, Captain of the First XI and the champion athlete in 1926. I don't think many other students achieved this trifecta! Not only a talented sportsman, he also attended Melbourne University upon leaving ACK and studied Medicine, later practicing as a doctor and surgeon in Myrtleford in the 1930s, 40s and 50s. Clive was a high achiever. Clive's sons and my uncles Peter, Maurice and Paul Beaumont also attended ACK in the 50s and 60s. My youngest son Charlie continued the family tradition and also boarded at ACK in 2012 and 2013, meaning four generations of my family have attended ACK over 90 years.

Apart from my family being my greatest achievement, in business I was recently awarded the 2016 LGBTI Australian Regional Champion for my work promoting inclusion and diversity in the workplace. In sport, I was fortunate to have played around 300 games of football in the Gippsland leagues and captained and coached both the Newborough and Moe football clubs, playing in three successive premierships with Newborough in 1988, 1989 and 1990.

My most vivid memories of ACK were the mateship and camaraderie amongst the boarders and the dedication of the Marist Brothers to teach and care for around 300 boarders around the clock. Br Paul Gilchrist was a fantastic teacher of mathematics and science and a great mentor to me, as was Br Rudy Oppitz who instilled in me a great work ethic and understanding of the benefits of good preparation. Also, Ray Carroll, particularly for the support and encouragement he gave me during my early times. I continue to meet many old ACK boys, both young and old, through business and sport and I am amazed by the bond

which exists, even though we didn't attend school at the same time. The ACK family is far and wide.

I still maintain contact with the ACK community through various 'old-boy' functions and regularly catch up for lunch and a few beers with a few cohorts from my years. I have also been involved with St Vinnies for many years, working on the local and Melbourne soup vans and regularly raising funds participating in the CEO sleepout each year. It is there I have regularly maintained contact with Br Doug Walsh, another ACK connection. This association with St Vinnies started at ACK when we often volunteered at Ozanam House in North Melbourne. Other habits from ACK which remain with me today are the ability to have a 3-minute shower (much to the chagrin of my children) and a fear of being late for anything. Being late for study, or more importantly for food at the ACK refectory, had dire consequences.

To me success in life depends on discipline, preparation and making the most of your opportunities. It is also about continually educating yourself. Preparation is hard work and a willingness to get out of your comfort zone – qualities I learnt very quickly at ACK. I believe in setting yourself stretched, but achievable goals in life and doing your very best to achieve them with what resources you have available at the time.

The values I live by are honesty, hard work, enthusiasm and persistence. In my view, it's always too early to quit and when adversity hits, always bounce back! All of these qualities I learnt at ACK, both in the boarding house, classroom and on the sporting fields. When in doubt, doing the right thing is also a practice I have found to work well.

My advice to existing Year 12 students at ACK is summed up in our motto "Quae Supra Quaere" – seek the things that are above. Aside from the spiritual meaning, set yourself ambitious, but achievable life goals. They may seem beyond you at the present time, but if you do your very best with what you have, you will achieve them. Be on time. Make your showers less than 3 minutes. Be resilient. And whenever in doubt, do the right thing.