

Geoff Davis

Life Membership bestowed 1997

Member 1968 - 1973, 1982-1985, 1986--1995 as Vice President 20 year elected to the committee.

Geoff, who showed an interest in languages at an early age and who has a working knowledge of French, German, Russian and Chinese, has been a language teacher since 1960. Geoff has taught all these languages at various times in his career, and introduced Chinese into WA schools in 1980.



He taught Chinese from Years 8 to 12 for 15 years at Mt Lawley SHS, as well as initiating the program at Rossmoyne SHS at the same time as he started at Mt Lawley.

Apart from his achievements as a teacher Geoff started up two professional supports for teachers of Chinese: the CL TAWA in 1984 and the CL TFA in 1994 - state and national bodies respectively. He was president of the Chinese Language Teachers' Federation of Australia from 1994 to 2001 and has been recognised by the PRC for his outstanding contributions to Chinese language education in Australia.

Geoff has tirelessly promoted the teaching and learning of Chinese in WA and assisted and supported all initiatives at every level from primary to tertiary institutions. He is still active in this area Even though he has officially retired . Geoff continues to be involved in curriculum development, having been active in the creation of all Chinese syllabuses since 1980.

When asked to reflect on some highpoints in his long career Geoff nominated the following:

- Transferring from primary school to teach French at Belmont HS in 1960.
- Studying in Paris and Moscow in 1966 and attending a Goethe Institute Course in Munich in 1971 .
- A 4 year stint studying Chinese in Hong Kong.
- Visits to China on Education Department delegations and studying at Nanjing Normal University in 1992.
- Taking 10 students to China in 1993 together with Anita Chong - a real highlight!
- Helping 5 Mt Lawley SHS students to gain Young Scholars in China
- Awards to study in Beijing for a year.

Source: MLTA Newsletter, July 2003)

Geoff recalls:

Modern Languages referred in (my high school) days to French and German. Latin which was still being taught in schools was not considered a modern language – une langue vivante. It was still being taught at Perth Modern School in the early 1940s (my brother who attended PMS from 1944 to 1946 had to take it), but by the time I arrived there in 1949, it had been replaced by German.

At that time students faced two public exams, one – the Junior – at the end of Year 10 and the Leaving at the end of Year 12. In preparation for those exams we studied French vocabulary from a little book

entitled (as I recall) French Vocabulary for Junior and Leaving Students, published by the MLTAWA. The book was a source of regular income for the Association for many years.

Vocabulary items were arranged by topics, each divided into items examinable in the Junior and the Leaving; all had to be studied and were regularly tested. Students at that time, unlike many today, knew how to learn by heart, since the only computer we had was our natural one: our brain.

In the late 1960s when I was teaching French and German from Year 8 to Year 12, the MLTAWA used to organise five-day camps for students at a campsite at Point Peron to prepare them for the Leaving exam in November. The camps were a lot of fun as well as great learning opportunities for our students and it was at that time that I joined the Association and met many other teachers of French.

Through discussion with others I learned the MLTAWA was officially set up in the late 1930s by Dr Christine (Bidy) Morrow from the French Department at UWA. She was still teaching there when I was a student in the 1950s. Dr Morrow was apparently caught in France in 1940 when the Germans invaded and I heard stories about her aiding the French resistance during the years of occupation. On her return home the MLTAWA was apparently resurrected. I cannot vouch for this, however.

By then the languages taught in WA schools were expanding. Italian was now popular and I even had a chance to teach Russian on a Saturday morning at Mt Lawley SHS for a couple of years. By the time I returned from teaching in Vietnam in 1979 the MLTAWA included teachers of French, German, Indonesian, Italian and Japanese. In 1980 when I re-joined the Association, Chinese was added to them. I served as Vice President for about 15 years and as Secretary for a year, after which I was elected a Life Member.