

Message from the Vice-Chancellor

It is with great pleasure that I write some introductory words for this limited edition of the “Knocking on Heavens Door” book, which is a record of both the 40th reunion and the life and times of some of the Alumni who attended Rhodes between 1965 and 1975.

For many, Rhodes is a special place in that it enables life long friendships and creates indelible memories. This book illustrates these attributes and chronicles both the life and times and the somewhat spontaneous reunion of approximately 150 Alumni, now mostly over 60, who came from far and wide to “have one more drink together before we die”.

The late 60s, early 70s were a special time in Rhodes’ history under Vice-Chancellor James Hyslop. In a way it represented a transitional period from the long standing established to the more contemporary. For example, during that decade the government of the time threatened to withdraw Rhodes’ subsidy because a Chinese student was selected as one of ten Rag Queen finalists; there was a “Disobedience Campaign” to challenge the wearing of ties to lectures; the UPE Intervarsity (now Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University) was called off because our Chinese students were banned from attending the post-sport entertainment; Kimberly Hall hosted its first residential students, and the “new” Kaif on the Great Field was built. It was a cautious time of expansion and change.

The then Dean of Students Dr Hugh Chapman was heard to have said “Rhodes is trying to turn you fine young men into future leaders, why, oh why, do you always chose to lead in the wrong direction and behave like such fine and likable rogues!” There was something special that brewed during those years at Rhodes!

My research on some of those featuring in this book has led me to conclude that never in the history of Rhodes had so much time been spent by the Vice-Chancellor and august bodies of the University, on so much mischief and nonsense caused by so few!

Of course Rhodes has progressed considerably since then, not the least of which is that our student body is considerably larger and more diverse and cosmopolitan (and perhaps also less roughish)!

Nevertheless it was a great pleasure to meet and interact with many of these Alumni at a campus tour luncheon in the postgraduate village. It is my hope that present and future generations of Alumni will share the same fondness for their Alma Mater as these students of 40 years ago did!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Badat', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Dr. Saleem Badat, Vice Chancellor
Rhodes House, Johannesburg, 13 November 2010