

# Charles Cookson

It is always wonderful to have feedback from Old Boys. A letter received from Rod Cameron proved most valuable. He was a classmate of Charlie Cookson and sent a rather badly damaged photograph to prove it, (now restored) along with identification of the boys.

**H**e remembers Charlie as a very pleasant and popular boy whose classmates were disappointed when he left.

Charles Cookson and his brother Forrest entered Scots College in 1946 having accompanied their father a U.S Army Colonel assigned to Wellington as the Military Attaché to New Zealand. They studied at Scots for three years before returning to South Carolina where their father was sent as the Commandant of Clemson University, at that time a military school.

Charlie remembers that studying was a unique experience. They wore uniforms. Discipline was more severe than was the case in American schools. They had to wrestle with multiplying farthings, half-crowns, pounds, shillings and pence. The school day lasted longer. They had never heard of a tuck shop and they



*The Cookson brothers, Forrest and Charles*

had to undergo military training during the school break. In sum the brothers had to adapt to something new almost every day.

Charlie had never encountered a physical education teacher like Mr. Harry Gee. A positive feature from the agonies of cross-country running with Mr. Gee behind them, taking off the whistle bearing leather strap to provide 'encouragement' to run a little faster is that Charlie kept running regularly through much of his life.

The Cookson brothers believe that the three years at Scots had a bigger impact than any of their other primary or secondary educational experiences. Scots demanded more from them physically and mentally and taught them to work hard in areas where they did not have any particular talent.

Forrest developed an interest in mathematics and physics while studying with the Reverend Hercus and completed a PhD in Physics at Princeton and the course work for a PhD in Economics at Georgetown University. Charles graduated in 1957 from Princeton University and later completed a Masters Degree in Public Policy at the College of William and Mary, the second oldest university in the U.S.A.

Perhaps their experience of their three years in New Zealand influenced them both to spend most of their working lives as expatriates working outside of the United States. Forrest worked in Thailand, Bangladesh, Tanzania, Honduras Nepal and Sweden. While Charles spent 27 years in Brazil and shorter times in the Dominican Republic, Guatemala, Colombia, Mexico, Peru, and Bangladesh. Only following retirement did Charles return to the United States where he lives today in Washington, D.C.

In 2008 when Charles was preparing for a trip to New Zealand he contacted Forrest, who had returned ten years previously. Forrest wrote back saying that no matter where he went in the world everyone he met seemed to like New Zealand and New Zealanders. They agreed that what underlined this popularity was the values that schools such as Scots taught its students.

Nearly 60 years on, Charles and his wife Pat returned to Scots where, it still from the front, looked exactly as he remembered it. And exactly as he and his brother had been welcomed six decades before, Pat and he were greeted with the same New Zealand warmth. As he wrote later, "We were even treated to one of my favorite memories of the country, fish and chips out of newspaper wrapping. This had been my dinner once a week while I was taking after-school bagpipe lessons. Life doesn't get any better than that."

*Paddianne W. Neely, Scots College Archivist*



*Forrest, Mrs Cookson, Charles and Mr Cookson*



**Form II 1948:**

*Back l to r: P Harrison, RP Nielson, B Parsons, I Todd, LE Hutchings, I Poppe, T Donnelly, J Parker, G McDonald, A West.*

*Middle: V Marks, R Berry, B Meadowcroft, G Spiers, D Lander, GM MacRae, J Brady, J Beddows, M Walker, O Higgins*

*Front: M Stephenson -----? J Allen -----? C Boulton R Cameron -----? -----? D Penlington, K Living, J Hercus, N Manthel, C Cookson*