

Reflections of my Life - John Topper

It is the day before my 57th birthday and I am really suffering in the sunshine, tapping away at my laptop in Sardinia, where I am having a couple of days Rest and Recreation after a conference here earlier this week. In August /September I went UK-South Africa-New Zealand-Australia-USA-UK on a recruiting drive for members of an international information service that I run; all about how to use coal in an environmentally friendly manner (Did you know that about 40% of the world's electricity is generated from coal! - but enough of that).

In early October I spent two weeks in Japan discussing ways of reducing greenhouse gas emissions, from fossil fuel power generation, and after I get back from this trip I turn around and head for India - so you get a feel for my life - all very suitable for one of Drake Boys graduates.

I seem to have been travelling extensively on energy related business for the past 15 years, first for British Coal, then for one of the successor companies doing consulting, mostly in the former Soviet Union where I met my second wife Erena in 1991, definitely the most attractive mining engineer I have ever met! For 15 months I worked for the United Nations Industrial Development Organisation and left at my own volition, frustrated by excessive bureaucracy, before taking up my present post as Managing Director of two of the International Energy Agency's projects.

It is all a far cry from the 14-16 year old naive youth who attended PRS in 1960-62. I don't have the detailed memories of small things that so many have displayed so astonishingly. BUT I do believe that it was easily the best school I attended. It helped form my character -for good or bad - and developed a competitive spirit and a determination that I still depend on to this day. It also bred a toleration of others of a different background, which has been invaluable in international business. When my colleagues of recent years are all retiring early, I have no intention of going - it is all too much fun!

All the women reading this will be screaming by now about the concentration on business, so let me add that as I was completing my Ph D I met Jenny, who became my first wife and with whom I produced two great children. Philip, like me graduated from Loughborough University, but as an economist, not as an engineer and is now working in manpower recruiting. My daughter, Nicola, trains and occasionally rides race horses. My step daughter, Maria, is at university in Vienna hoping eventually to capitalise on her fluency in English, Russian and German."

John Topper