

HSC ACHIEVERS ASSEMBLY – GUEST SPEAKER SPEECH

Fifty years ago Alan Hayes was among the first group of students to graduate with a New South Wales HSC. Alan has since received an Order of Australia medal in 2009, for his service to the community and to the environment as an author. Alan has perused his interest in herbal lore and natural alternatives for many years. He has created a self-sufficient and sustainable lifestyle with his wife on a small farm in a beautiful rural valley behind the Central Coast of NSW, Australia. Alan grows his own vegetables and fruit, recycles all sorts of material, and makes his own household products, from natural materials that are as effective as the harsher chemicals in commercial products. His home is carbon-neutral and is heated or cooled by the sun passing across the sky. All his energy needs are produced on-site and he lives the lifestyle that he encourages other people to try.

Alan's interest in herbs first began as a teenager. He became aware, through his grandmother, of the herbal lore that had been passed down through his generations of his family. Now widely known to Australians through his 'It's So Natural' writings, it is his knack of adapting the wisdom of the ages into solutions for the problems of the twenty-first century.

This led him to write a weekly newspaper column of environmentally friendly hints tips and remedies for home, health and garden. The column 'It's So Natural' is published in more than 300 newspapers and magazines Australia wide, in New Zealand, the United Kingdom, Ireland, Canada and the United States of America. Alan is recognised as one of the foremost exponents of the natural lifestyle. He has published more than three-dozen books on herbs, health, natural alternatives and sustainable living, and his wide range of best selling books shares his down-to-earth and practical knowledge about natural living. He is committed to recycling, healthy living and utilizing natural resources. Alan's philosophy works three ways: do-it-yourself, save the planet, and save money.

Alan is now recognised internationally as the best-known exponent of the natural life. He has appeared regularly on a number of high rating national television programs as their natural alternatives expert. He speaks on, and demonstrates, the versatility of herbs for natural products. Thirty-four years ago he sold his successful advertising company to pursue a career as a full-time author and writer. Today he continues to write books and owns a number of independent newspapers throughout Australia.

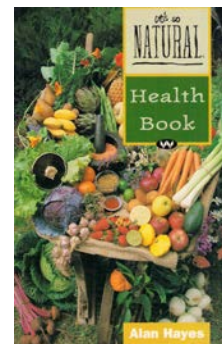
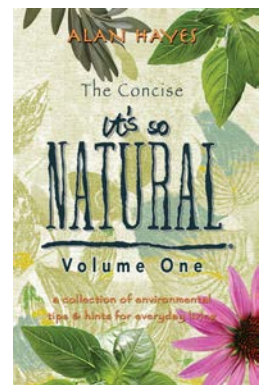
When addressing the School's HSC Awards Assembly, in February, Alan spoke about his life, successes, and the benefit he gained from two of his teachers when he was a student of Asquith Boys High in the mid 1960s. He gave the address to assembled students, staff, HSC award recipients and their parents in the School Hall.

Below is an edited version of his speech which I thought you may like to read.

Mr C Kent, ABHS Old Boys President

'Two teachers in particular helped me to see what could become of the future. One of those teachers, John Gerrard taught English. I was fortunate enough to have him for more than one year. He took an interest in what I was doing and became a mentor. He went beyond just teaching the normal English curriculum he would give me extra themes to write about, read my writing and tell me what I was doing right and what I was doing wrong. After I left School we became very good friends. Although my first book wasn't published till 1989, I would still see him and speak to him about writing. He said Alan; you have a way with words you need to use those words to make your way in life. Initially I would send off my writing to places like magazines, hopefully to get it published. It was difficult to earn a living, writing, because magazines didn't want to pay too much for a story, but it kept me moving forward.

Another teacher who I had a lot of respect for, although he wasn't directing me in the path of writing, was Ray Kench. Again I was fortunate to have him as my teacher for more than one year. He taught me Geography and Economics, but above all else he taught me the value of a positive mental attitude. The importance in believing in yourself, reaching for the stars, and believing if you want something badly enough you can do it.



Mr Kench helped me to formulate goals to help me move towards what I wanted to attain in the future.

It's all right for one to think well, here I am at School, I will become a writer a doctor a journalist or an accountant, it doesn't matter what you want to do, you need to work towards achieving that goal. He showed me how to make those goals achievable. By planning ahead, identifying what I wanted to achieve by five years time. What do I want to be in three years time? Rather than just leaving that goal sitting there and me not achieving anything, he showed me how to do it by breaking it down into its component parts. Think about what you need to achieve each year, then each month, then each week and then each day. All of a sudden what you have to achieve each day is not much at all. By being disciplined and applying yourself, that goal can be achieved in a very short time; way before you thought you could achieve it. Ray Kench also explained the process of evaluating your progress and adjusting your goals. I've done this all my life, and I thank Ray Kench for taking that time to help me see the value in this process. He was a great role model as he was involved with other things like sport and things outside of school like the surf club. He became a very strong mentor.

The encouragement that I received from these two teachers and their friendship after school enabled me to keep moving down the path of becoming a writer. Even though after leaving school it was almost impossible to earn a living being a writer, as artists tend to starve most of their life. For me, writing is like being an artist. An artist uses a brush to create his vision. I see words as a brush going on to a canvas to make a picture to let others see what is my minds eye. Eventually I found entry into the advertising industry and ended up owning my own advertising company. Both of these teachers helped me achieve what I have been able to achieve. Even though I knew what I wanted to do they helped me develop the confidence and skills I needed. In the advertising industry these tools are very important.

More recently I met another person away from School who helped me with further direction in life. I had by then, developed a desire to become self sufficient and sustainable, to move out of the city to a small farming community. I did not intend becoming a full time farmer because I was still commercially orientated, but wanted to grow my own food, preserve some of that produce, to make a home sustainable. Independently, away from mainstream living. I found that I had to make a decision. Do I continue to do what I was doing or sell the advertising company and try a new goal to become a full time self sufficient person. This person I met suggested I write a book about what you do. Rather than write a great Australian novel, which is what I dreamt about, as a youngster but to write about what I do.

I tried this for three years and found a small publisher in Shepparton in Victoria. This publishing company did not live up to my expectations so I decided to use the skills I had developed over the years, and remembering what people like Ray Kench had said about maintaining a positive mental attitude and believing that anything is attainable if you try and keep on trying. Soon I found myself appearing on TV, on some of the lifestyle programs, marketing the book. That was 43-books ago! I have found it possible to live some of my old dream. To establish myself as a full time author in this country! I've also taken advantage of opportunities as they present themselves as you go through life. This is another thing that Ray Kench taught me. You will find as you go through life opportunities will present themselves. What you do with those opportunities will make a difference. I've seen many people over the years that have had that opportunity and yet not taken the gamble of grasping it. Later they have regretted that lost opportunity.

Not always in seizing the opportunities does it work. One might stumble, the worst thing that can happen then is that you land on the bones of your backside. Instead of crying about it if this happens, you pick yourself up, dust yourself off and try again. Most importantly, you analyse what it was that caused you not to succeed the first or second time. One of the greatest success stories in this regard is Sir Lesley Hooker who built the L.J. Hooker real estate empire. He stumbled four times before he found his feet, but each time he analysed what it was that caused him to fail. Finally he achieved success that he wanted to achieve.

It doesn't matter what you want to do in life. If you set your goals and remember to continue to re-evaluate your goals, considering advice from those around you, from your teachers and those in your family that you spend a lot of time with. Share your dreams and aspirations because you never know how it can turn into a fortunate outcome as it has in my case. It doesn't matter what you want to be in life, you need to set those goals. At the end of the day, success comes not from having a great pile of money in the bank, success is enjoying what you do, being able to wake up in the morning enjoying the challenges ahead but most important sharing that with people around you, your family, your future spouse, no matter who that might be, then you will have a rewarding life'.

Thank you!