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The Crucible of Contradiction: *160 Years of Forging the Paul Roos Identity*

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Opening Reflection

There are schools that teach, schools that shape, and schools that remember. Paul Roos Gymnasium is all three.

This essay is not a historical account, but a conversation between past and present, between memory and imagination. It is a reflection on the tensions that have always defined us. It is a way of asking: What does it mean to belong to a place like this? And more importantly: What does it mean to carry it forward?

Over the past 160 years, this school has endured wars, relocations, revolutions and reckonings. Springboks and scholars, poets and presidents, rebels and reformers. But its true legacy is not found in the archive. It is found in the echo that lives in the Japie Krige Hall, in the ring of the *Saalklok*, in the quiet rituals and named spaces that shape a boy into a man.

This reflection began as a question. How do we honour the past without becoming trapped by it? How do we begin to tell the story of a school that evolves with each generation, yet never loses its essence? I have seen this unfolding, quietly and profoundly, in my own time here.

The answer, I believe, lies in the maroon thread that runs through every learner, every staff member, every parent and every alumnus. It is stitched into blazers, echoed in songs and signed into archives. It is not just a colour. It is a commitment: to excellence, to empathy, to endurance.

This reflection unfolds in eight threads. Each one explores a facet of the Paul Roos identity: its echoes, its rituals, its myths, its vision, its contradictions, its resilience, its global reach and its unfinished song.

As you read the following threads, I hope you hear the resonance. I hope you feel the weight of the legacy, not as a burden, but as a gift and a call to action. Not just remembrance. I hope you will ask, as we here at the school have asked: What comes next? Because the real work of Paul Roos Gymnasium is never finished. It is, and must always be, *Semper Splendidior*.

Thread 1: The Echo in the Hall

If the opening reflection is the question, this thread is the first answer. It begins with sound, an echo, and asks us to listen closely.

If you stand alone in the Japie Krige Saal or the LPR-building, you will hear it. Not just the shuffle of shoes or the creak of benches, but something older. A kind of hum. A memory in the walls.

Paul Roos Gymnasium is a place where generations have passed through, each leaving behind a trace, a story, a standard, a song. That is the paradox: a school built on tradition, constantly reinventing itself. I have only been here a short while, just long enough to feel the weight of the legacy, yet not so long that I have stopped asking questions.

The school's story begins with tension. It was a covenant between unlikely partners: Scottish ministers and academics brought rigour and method, while the local Dutch-speaking community brought urgency and grit. This tension was not minor; it was a cultural struggle over the very identity and language of the institution. From the start, the school was built on contradiction. It relied on a bold act of faith and private funding, not public certainty. Rev. J.H. Neethling rallied 30 townspeople to pledge £465, an extraordinary sum that proved the community was determined to earn, protect and fight for this education.

One of the early Scottish Rectors was known affectionately as "Ou Kalie", remembered for his efficiency, rigour and famous forgetfulness. His nickname still echoes in staffroom lore, a reminder that even the architects of academic excellence were human, fallible and

deeply woven into the school's mythos. These founding figures did not simply build a school; they shaped a culture of rigour that still holds.

This founding paradox is not a flaw; it is a strength. It taught us that excellence requires negotiation, and that the real foundation of a great school is its willingness to adapt without losing its soul.

The staffroom itself mirrored this foundational struggle. J.D. Krige, known as *Oom Japie Home*, was the first Afrikaner staff member amongst the Scots. He successfully united the staffroom by bridging these two founding cultures, becoming the beloved *Koshuisvader* for four decades. His nephew, Paul Roos, became a living fusion of sporting valour and intellectual leadership.

Some surnames echo through the corridors like old hymns. Third, fourth and even fifth generation learners walk the same halls their fathers and grandfathers once did. They sit in the same classrooms. Sing the same songs. Wear the same maroon. This is not nostalgia; it is continuity. The enduring trust of these families is a powerful testament to the identity being forged here.

Since its founding, the school has shifted location five times, each move a philosophical declaration that adaptability is the longest tradition. While we honour historic sporting grounds like *Die Braak*, *Vlakteveld* and *Pawiljoenveld*, we continue to build for the future, culminating in the Antonij Rupert Aquatic Centre, the Astroblook and the Johan J Ferreira High Performance Centre. *Gimnasiumplein*, once the heartbeat of early assemblies, remains a symbolic anchor, linking the physical memory of the past to the constant motion of the present campus.

These spaces were not built by chance. They reflect a philosophy of purposeful formation, where architecture expresses intent. The Markötter Grounds, the PRG Centre and the Aquatic Centre embody this vision, each one designed to cultivate excellence, collaboration and care.

This vision has been shaped in part by the school's long-standing relationship with Stellenbosch University. The partnership has created a unique academic and cultural ecosystem, where learners are formed not only through curriculum, but through proximity to research, mentorship and a broader intellectual community.

Within this environment, learners are measured not only by their knowledge, but by their readiness to lead, to contribute and to think. The spaces they inhabit are not neutral. They are formative, invitational and alive with purpose.

Semper Splendidior is not just Latin on a crest; it is a challenge. “Always More Splendid.” “Always Brighter.” The motto does not ask for perfection; it asks for progress.

Its philosophical roots stretch back to Prof. John Murray and the phrase *Sol justitiae illustrat nos*. One student put it best: “Splendidior is not perfection. It is resilience in motion.” The rituals, including the Rector’s Toga handover, the *Matric shoeshine* and the *Z-Day procession*, are acts of inheritance. They remind us to improve the past, not copy it.

The echo in the hall is not just sound. It is memory, movement and mandate. It is the maroon thread, humming through every corridor, reminding us that tradition is not static. It is alive.

Thread 2: The Unwritten Code

If the echo in the hall is our inheritance, the unwritten code is how we carry it forward.

There are things you learn at Paul Roos that are not written in any textbook. This is the Phantom Curriculum. It is inherited, passed down in gestures, in the quiet rituals that shape a boy into a man. It is not about rules; it is about rhythm.

Belonging at Paul Roos is shaped by ritual. The tradition of *Koppe skeer* is a rite of passage, an act of initiation that signals readiness for the collective identity. It takes place at the beginning of a boy’s final year, a moment that marks both belonging and becoming. Similarly, the Owl Ritual is a silent, symbolic gesture of respect and deference, passed down in hushed tones. On *Z-Day*, the matrices walk through the Golden Gate with arms locked. It is a handover, the moment the maroon thread is passed from one generation to the next. The shoeshine ritual, learner to learner, is about humility. The ceremonies are amplified by the spontaneous culture of the *Gang Sang* and the spirited *Jolla Bolla* cheers. The Rector’s Toga, gifted in 1991, is worn for memory, reminding us that leadership is a weight.

The *Knopieseremonie* marks the first act of belonging, a simple button handed over with reverence, signalling that responsibility is now worn on the chest. The *Tie Ceremony*, a quiet bookend to the matric journey, binds the story with dignity. It is not just a tie; it is a tether to memory. These rituals, alongside the shoeshine, form a trilogy of belonging: entry, journey and completion.

The Honour Code is not a document; it is a posture. It says: I choose integrity, even when no one is watching. The real code is lived. This is found in the simple, powerful daily mantra of PRG: “Pride, Respect, Gentlemanship”. These are the words the learners hear every day, forming the cornerstone of the dignity they carry in the classroom, in extramural activities and out into the world.

Baadjietrots, never over the arm and with the top button fastened, is more than uniform etiquette. It is discipline stitched into daily rhythm. You see it in the quiet rituals of respect: boys stand up and greet politely when adults walk past, they ask permission to remove their jackets in class, and they stand before they answer a question. There is a reason the *Saalklok* rings true. It is to remind us: You are part of something structured, something sacred.

This posture of respect extends beyond the classroom. Nowhere is the sense of shared commitment more intense than in *Koshuiskameraderie*, the unique spirit of residence life. The hostels are a crucible of character and community, forging lifelong bonds. The school’s Learner Support Programme is a philosophy: We see you. We will walk with you. This is part of the Unwritten Code too. The idea that strength is not silence. Lt. Col. John Trengove, a Paul Rooser and WWII prisoner of war, embodied the Honour Code under extreme pressure. His story reminds us: integrity holds, even in captivity.

If you watch a Paul Rooser walk across campus, it is not just the uniform. It is the way he wears it. There is a pulse beneath the blazer, a rhythm shaped by tradition. It is in the way the boys sing the school song, not just with pitch but with pride. The real curriculum is not just what you learn; it is how you live.

The maroon thread is not only stitched into blazers. It is stitched into posture, into ritual, into rhythm. It is the unwritten code made visible.

Thread 3: Myths, Makers and the Maroon Thread

If the unwritten code is how we live, the myths are how we remember. They are the stories we carry, the verses we sing, the names we honour.

The school song is sung roughly 525 times by every learner. Written originally in Afrikaans by H. Martens in 1919, the song reflects what the school asks of its learners in both language expressions: “And through ev’ry action brave and true, We carve this name with pride.” This line is the school’s commitment made audible. On *Z-Day*, sung with locked arms and trembling voices, that is when the commitment becomes real.

The melody itself, borrowed from “The Flower of Scotland”, is a direct link to the school’s founding paradox. It is a musical echo of the Scottish roots that shaped our early rigour, now sung by generations of Old Boys of Paul Roos who carry the tune as both anthem and inheritance.

This shared commitment, sung into existence by generations, is the seed from which our legends grow. Every school has stories. Paul Roos has myths. These myths are not exaggerations; they are inheritances. They remind us that a school is not just a place of learning, it is a forge of character.

Paul Roos himself was a paradox in motion: a Latin teacher and a Springbok captain. The story of the golden rugby ball that arrived anonymously, later traced to Princess Labia Giani, rests in the archive as a symbol of legacy. It speaks not only of sport, but of memory, mystery and meaning. While renowned for producing more Springboks than any other school, PRG’s true strength lies in how sporting valour has always been fused with intellectual leadership. The roar of the Markötter Grounds is matched by the quiet intensity of the Japie Krige Hall, where debate and music echo with equal force.

The school’s deepest impact is seen in the leaders it has shaped: statesmen, scholars and stewards. Jan Smuts, whose voice once rose in the Debating Society before it echoed across the world, helped shape the League of Nations and the United Nations, and signed both peace treaties that ended World War I and II. Former Prime Ministers J.B.M. Hertzog and D.F. Malan shaped South Africa’s trajectory. More recently, Leon Schreiber and Gerhard Töttemeyer have carried that mantle into modern governance, with Schreiber serving as South Africa’s Minister of Home Affairs and Töttemeyer as Deputy Minister in Namibia.

Other public servants include Nicolaas Jacobus de Wet, who served as Chief Justice and Minister of Justice, and Dr John Eduard Holloway, who represented South Africa in both the United States and the United Kingdom before serving as Secretary for Finance. Dr Willem Christiaan Naude extended this legacy as Ambassador to the United Nations and Switzerland.

The influence is just as profound in commerce. Billionaire Johann Rupert guides global finance. Jannie Durand stewards Remgro, Michael Jordaan transformed FNB, Riaan Stassen co-founded Capitec, and Edwin Hertzog built Mediclinic. All were shaped by the same corridors and classrooms. Jannie Marais, co-founder of Naspers and founder of the Het Jan Marais Nationale Fonds, remains one of PRG's most influential benefactors. His legacy continues to shape the school's commitment to excellence and access.

Our creative lineage spans all forms of art and media. The voice of Heinz Winckler, the wit of Koos Kombuis, the colour of Portchie and the presence of Armand Aucamp define our artistic output. The sharp pen of Pieter-Louis Myburgh and the probing prose of Pieter du Toit continue our journalistic tradition. Literary giants include Uys Krige, whose words carried both fire and grace, and T.O. Honiball, whose illustrations gave life to Afrikaans humour.

The school's influence in media includes Schalk Pienaar, editor of *Die Burger* and political commentator, and Piet Cillie, who shaped public discourse as a media ideologue. Waldimar Pelser, editor of *Rapport* and Rhodes Scholar, continues this legacy of critical engagement.

For over fifty years, the *Semper* school newspaper has chronicled PRG life, serving as a living record of the school's evolving voice.

The legacy extends to the quiet giants who shaped disciplines and nations. In medicine, PRG produced pioneers like Edwin Hertzog, who helped build Mediclinic. In law, judges like John Trengove and Ernest Frederick Watermeyer have upheld justice at the highest levels. In theology, Anton van Niekerk shaped ethical discourse, while Braam Hanekom served as Moderator of the Dutch Reformed Synod of the Western and Southern Cape, guiding the church through key moments of public witness and transformation.

In science, Charl Francois Naudé, who discovered the nitrogen-15 isotope and studied under Einstein and Planck, represents the school's quiet brilliance in global research. In engineering, Volker Trumpelmann designed the Bloukransrivierbrug, a feat of civil infrastructure that reflects PRG's contribution to national development.

And of course, the maroon jersey embodies athletic distinction. It has been worn by over 50 Springboks, including Steven Kitshoff, Damian Willemse, Schalk Brits, Francois Hougaard, Cobus Visagie, Andries Bekker and Willie le Roux. *Oubaas* Markötter, the architect of the modern scrum, once walked these fields. Beyond rugby, the school produced Justin Harding and Garrick Higgo in golf, Peter van der Merwe in cricket, Heerden Hermann in the Olympic pool and Tiaan Pretorius on the Sevens podium.

The school's Olympic legacy includes Jacobus (Attie) van Heerden, who reached the semi-finals at the 1920 Antwerp Games, Jack Loubser and Johannes Hendrikus (Snaar) Viljoen, who competed in Amsterdam in 1928, and Barend Blommaert, who vaulted at Helsinki in 1952. More recently, Ryan van Wyk represented South Africa at the 2006 Commonwealth Games.

These names are not just achievements. They are echoes. They remind us that Paul Roos Gymnasium is not a factory of fame, but a forge of character. The maroon thread is not a metaphor. It is a memory. It is a movement. It is a mandate. It runs through the song, the crest, the myths we live and the makers we honour.

Thread 4: The Anchor and the Sail

If myths remind us of who we are, this thread asks who we are becoming. It is about motion and memory, about holding and reaching.

Some schools resist change. Paul Roos builds for it. This thread is about that balance: the anchor and the sail. The way tradition holds us steady, and the way vision pulls us forward.

Paul Roos has never been afraid to move, whether physically or philosophically. Since its founding, the school has shifted location five times. The wartime relocation to the *Suidwal* was bold. The architecture has kept pace with the vision.

The Japie Krige Hall, the Markötter Grounds and the Antonij Rupert Aquatic Centre are more than buildings; each one is a signal, a declaration that we are building for what is next.

The Master Plan, formally initiated in 2017, was as much about philosophy as it was about facilities. It set out to future-proof Paul Roos Gymnasium, ensuring it remained a leading, respected and relevant boys' high school in South Africa. The plan centred on balanced excellence in academics, sport and culture, and was guided by a leadership ethos that viewed the school as a strategic institution requiring thoughtful stewardship.

This vision led to upgrades across the board: science labs, IT centres, hostel renovations and the Johan J Ferreira High Performance Centre. The gymnasium was redesigned to foster not only athletic performance, but also discipline and motivation. The Markötter Rugby Field was fitted with smart lighting technology, symbolising stewardship in motion. The resurfaced tennis courts, upgraded generator and expanded science rooms all speak to a philosophy of excellence that is not a moment, but a maintenance plan.

The JF Marais Media Centre, inaugurated in 2021, is a quiet revolution. It is a space for critical thinking, digital literacy and academic formation. It reflects the school's investment in intellectual rigour and technological fluency, anchoring the future in curiosity.

This commitment is continuously proven by its partnerships. In a recent testament to collaborative vision, Paul Roos Gymnasium, Stellenbosch University and Remgro completed a self-sustaining indoor cricket facility on the school's property. Extending this vision further, Maties Hockey officially welcomed athletes to their grounds in August 2024 with the addition of a third astroturf. This was made possible by the partnership between SU and PRG.

The PRG 150 Trust, the Foundation and Klub 1000 form a quiet revolution that makes excellence sustainable. Their support has enabled e-learning upgrades, generator resilience and academic expansion. This outward-facing impact includes alumni who are Captains of Commerce, leading industries, shaping economies and building legacies globally.

Another enduring anchor of this long tradition is the school's integral relationship with Stellenbosch University. It is not just proximity; it is a shared pedigree and standard that runs back to the school's earliest days. The relationship is familial, sharing purpose and standards. The Rhodes Scholarship, awarded to PRG learners since 1903, symbolises this high standard of intellectual leadership, fostering a tradition of academic excellence that extends directly to Oxford University. The motto, *Semper Splendidior*, echoes the university's own: *Sol justitiae illustrat nos*.

This academic partnership is embodied by leaders like Professor Wim de Villiers, Rector and Vice-Chancellor of Stellenbosch University and a Rhodes Scholar. Dr Reynhard William Wilcocks, the longest-serving Rector of Stellenbosch University, played a key role in formalising PRG's separation from the university. Dr J.K. Basson, recipient of the State President's Order for Meritorious Service, exemplifies public service shaped by academic rigour.

The maroon thread runs through every blueprint, every partnership, every plan. It anchors us in purpose and lifts us toward possibility.

Thread 5: The 160-Year Mirror

If the anchor holds us steady, the mirror asks us to look closer. It reflects not only our triumphs, but also our tensions. It invites honesty.

Paul Roos stands inside history. It is a 160-year mirror, reflecting the complex story of South Africa, not only its victories but also its contradictions. This thread is about self-reflection and courage, acknowledging that the school has not existed in a vacuum and has struggled through various wars, political turmoil and equality issues.

Standing in the school's archive, one senses that the archive does not glorify war; it honours sacrifice. Reginald George Francis Mair died at Delville Wood in 1916. Eleven Paul Roosers died in the Border War. Anton Lubowski, a 1970 matriculant, became a lawyer and activist, resisting the state and reminding us that courage comes in many forms. The *Pro Patria* ethos of service beyond self is stitched into the school's fabric, honouring alumni who served across various conflicts. We hold these stories with care, not in judgment but in remembrance.

The crucible of contradiction was never sharper than during the decades of Apartheid. Operating within a deeply segregated state, the school was forced to confront the moral tension of the age. The mirror reflects the architects of state policy, including former Prime Ministers D.F. Malan and J.B.M. Hertzog, who laid the groundwork for racial separation. It reflects F.R. Tomlinson, who authored the controversial report that structured separate development, and media ideologue Piet Cillie, who defended government policy through *Die Burger*. Yet, the crucible also forged resistance. Koos Kombuis, a writer and musician, stands as the most prominent alumnus who publicly challenged Apartheid through his art and the *Voëlvy* movement. Other alumni like Uys Krige and theologian Anton van Niekerk contributed to literary and ethical discourse that questioned the moral foundations of the system. Anton Lubowski resisted the state as an activist.

Acta non Verba, meaning deeds not words, is the school's ethical standard. In a world of rhetoric, it reminds us that accountability is measured in action. This principle lives in the way learners are taught to lead, serve and reflect, not just speak. It lives in the school's painful, necessary confrontation with its own role in history, and in the quiet symbols that mark its transformation. One such symbol is the Nelson Wall, built to commemorate the end of Apartheid. It stands as a physical gesture of reflection and renewal, reminding us that legacy must be earned, not inherited. Today, learners are not shielded from this history; they are invited to interrogate it, to shape a more just future.

This commitment to dismantling historical inequality continues today, particularly concerning the legacy of inherited privilege. W.M. MacMillan was the first PRG learner to receive the Rhodes Scholarship in 1903. The Rhodes legacy is complicated, involving ongoing discussions with the Rhodes Trust to clarify and reshape the terms of the dedicated bursary scheme. These talks focus on modernising the partnership in line with evolving ethical standards, ensuring equitable access and reaffirming the historical relationship between the Trust and the schools. This continuous engagement ensures that the school, alongside partner schools like Rhenish Girls' High School and Bloemhof Girls' High School, grapples with the issues of privilege and equitable access, making sure the scholarship's expansion truly says: Excellence is not exclusive; it is expansive.

This ethic of contribution is not abstract. It lives in *Societas*, the school's outreach programme, where learners earn their badges through acts of service: packing festive shoeboxes for Joostenberg Primary, cultivating vegetables in the community garden at J.J.

Rhode Primary, collecting bread tags for recycling, and running the spirited *Lenteloop* to unite the school and its neighbours.

These outreach programmes, alongside bursaries and mentorship, are not just gestures. They are promises: that legacy must be shared, and excellence must serve.

The measure of this transformation is found in the highest achievements of rigour and contribution. Since 1961, thirteen Paul Roos alumni have received the Chancellor's Medal, Stellenbosch University's highest academic honour. Others have been knighted abroad, recognised for contributions to law, diplomacy and science. These accolades are not anomalies; they are echoes of a culture that prizes rigour, curiosity and service.

Among these quiet stewards is Fanie du Toit, a Rhodes Scholar and recipient of the UNESCO International Prize for Peace Education. His work in reconciliation and peacebuilding reflects the school's evolving commitment to ethical leadership and social transformation.

The PRG Foundation, the 150 Trust and Klub 1000 are acts of stewardship. Learners serve and they lead. Whether coaching or planting trees, the message is clear: You are here to contribute.

The mirror does not distort. It reflects. And in that reflection, the maroon thread remains visible: sometimes tangled, sometimes taut, but always present.

Thread 6: The Price of Endurance

If the mirror shows us our contradictions, endurance is how we respond. It is the quiet answer to every challenge, the rhythm beneath the roar.

It is easy to celebrate the trophies and the scholarships. But behind every achievement is a quieter story of effort, resilience and repair.

This thread asks: What does it cost to endure? The cost is not paid once. It is paid daily. The entire narrative of this essay is a testament to resilience, forged by overcoming formidable obstacles: the cultural and financial struggle of its founding, the repeated physical disruption of five relocations, the moral contradiction of the Apartheid State, and

the constant need to sustain excellence against economic turbulence and shifting demands.

The archive, opened by Dr Gideon Roos in 1997, is not a museum of nostalgia. It is a ledger of endurance. Inside, one finds Jan Smuts's scratched windowpane, the golden rugby ball and the names of learners who died in war. There is the stone owl, the velvet cap and sheets of music from 1906. The *Semper* newspaper, still published after half a century, records the school's evolving voice, a testament to intellectual continuity and emotional memory.

Endurance is not only preserved in artefacts. It is also lived, in spaces, gestures and shared silence.

The Matric Grounds are not just a space. They are a sanctuary. Framed by the Golden Gate and approached through the Welcoming Arch, they mark the seniority of the final-year boys and the quiet reverence that surrounds them. Only matrices may enter. All other grades are expected to honour the boundary, not out of fear but out of respect. On *Z-Day*, the gate is unlocked by the Head Prefect and the entire school marches forward. It is the only time the grounds are shared, a moment of handover when names are read aloud and the maroon thread is passed. The grounds are not used for spectacle. They are a place to spend time with a friend or to teach a younger boy how to tie his tie.

Endurance is emotional. Excellence without empathy is brittle. Paul Roos holds. It holds in the classroom, where learners meet the rigour of colours criteria, merit lists and subject demands. Endurance here is not dramatic. It is the quiet discipline of showing up, of mastering complexity, of choosing growth over comfort.

It holds in transformation. In 1976, Japie Coetzee introduced Xhosa as a third language, a quiet act of courage. Today, that spirit lives on in the Paul Roos Academy and the PRG Junior Soccer Academy, which recruits players from Stellenbosch, Paarl and surrounding communities. Football at PRG is not just a sport. It is a statement that endurance also means expansion, inclusion and reimagining tradition.

It holds in times of crisis. During the COVID-19 pandemic, Paul Roos did not retreat. It wrote letters. It built bridges. It sustained learning through hybrid platforms and supported families through the PRG Learner Support Fund.

The Foundation's work during this period, funding coaching, accommodation and mentorship, was not just financial. It was formative. Endurance became a shared posture: flexible, compassionate and quietly defiant.

It holds in stewardship. The school's long-term health depends on quiet, consistent care, through the work of the PRG Foundation, Klub 1000, the Gideon Roos Bursary Fund and the Jan Marais Nationale Fonds. These are not just funds. They are promises that no learner will be left behind because of economic hardship, and that legacy is not a luxury but a responsibility.

It also holds in the daily actions of the community, where teachers reinforce values in every lesson and conversation. Student leaders who inspire their peers to lead with integrity, not just ambition. School management who plan, adapt and overcome, so that excellence is never accidental and inclusion is never optional.

It holds in the quiet collaboration between Discipline and Student Support, where every issue is met with a pastoral approach. This is not just about rules. It is about care. It is about seeing the learner behind the behaviour and walking with him toward growth.

This thread is for the quiet heroes: the learners, the staff, the parents, the alumni. For the ones who patch the cracks so the building does not fall. Because the price of endurance is not paid once. It is paid daily, in sweat, in silence, in solidarity.

The maroon thread does not fray. It holds.

Thread 7: The Global Citizen Factory

If endurance is how we hold, global citizenship is how we reach. It is the outward motion of character, the maroon thread travelling beyond our gates.

Some schools prepare learners for the next grade. Paul Roos prepares them for the next century. This is not just a school. It is a launchpad for leaders whose character must travel as far as their ambition.

The global journey often begins in the pocket, with a passport, a plane ticket, a letter of invitation. Our learners have long travelled to Germany, the Netherlands and France. Today, they continue this journey through vibrant exchange programmes with schools in Germany and Belgium. They do not go as tourists. They go as ambassadors of the maroon

thread. They return with perspective, realising that global citizenship is not about geography. It is about empathy, curiosity and the courage to represent something greater than oneself. The *Pasch-Schule* designation, awarded in 2008, was more than a badge. It was a bridge, connecting PRG to Germany's global learning network and affirming its outward gaze.

But global thinking does not begin abroad. It is honed through disciplined performance. The Choir trains with conviction. Their invitations to events like the 2025 African Asian Pacific Choir Games and the Grand Prix of Nations prove that PRG's culture is not just competitive. It is exportable. Learners learn that excellence is not about winning. It is about showing up with integrity, representing with humility and performing with purpose.

The academic offering is broad and intentional. The J.F. Marais Media Centre is a space for quiet rebellion, where learners learn to think critically, write clearly and question kindly. The Investment Club, a learner-driven initiative, teaches financial literacy and market dynamics, preparing boys not just for university but for the complexity of global commerce.

The global journey also begins on the field. PRG learners travel abroad not just to compete but to connect. The rugby programme is internationally recognised, and players like Altus Rabe and Gert Kemp recently represented South Africa in the Under 18 International Series against elite teams from France, Ireland and England. Reiley Norton earned national colours in both rugby and cricket, captaining the Junior Springboks to World Cup glory in Italy in 2025 and representing South Africa at the ICC Under 19 Cricket World Cup the year before. His dual representation reflects the scale of excellence and the readiness to perform on multiple global stages.

In 2019, six Paul Roosers represented their countries at the Rugby World Cup. Five played for South Africa. One played for Italy. It was a moment of pride and perspective, a reminder that the maroon thread does not stop at borders. It travels with character.

In other sports, At van Heerden represented South Africa at the 1920 Olympics in Antwerp. Heerden Herman, a Paul Roos swimmer, became the first South African to swim the 1500 metre freestyle in under 15 minutes. His feat was not just a record. It was a

signal that PRG's standard is global. These stories are not anomalies. They are echoes of a school that has always looked outward, always reached further.

But the real proof of global citizenship is not in programmes. It is in people. Paul Roos alumni have been honoured abroad for contributions to law, diplomacy, science and education. Jan Smuts studied at Cambridge and Gerhard Tötemeyer lectured in Sweden. Pieter Koornhof represented South Africa in Geneva. Frans Geldenhuys served as Ambassador to The Hague and Bonn. Dr John Eduard Holloway represented South Africa in both the United States and the United Kingdom and later served as Secretary for Finance. Dr Willem Christiaan Naude served as Ambassador to the United Nations and Switzerland. These careers reflect the school's ethos of service beyond borders, a quiet diplomacy shaped by rigour, empathy and the maroon thread.

In the arts, Arnold van Wyk and Bernhard de Clerck studied music at the Royal Academy of Music in London, extending PRG's legacy into global performance and cultural excellence.

In commerce, the maroon thread runs through boardrooms in New York, Zurich and London. Johann Rupert's global influence is matched by alumni like Jannie Durand, Michael Jordaan and Edwin Hertzog, captains of industry who shape economies and build legacies across continents.

And increasingly, the world comes to PRG. Each year, Dutch principals travel to Stellenbosch to learn from Paul Roos, its leadership, its culture, its systems. These study tours, hosted in partnership with organisations like The Principals Academy and Dreamcatcher Foundation, reflect the school's growing role as a global learning destination. PRG does not just send ambassadors into the world; it receives them.

And then there are the stories that live in laughter. Oom At Slabber, beloved Science teacher from 1951 to 1965, once served an aperitif with the Pope. The moment was arranged by a former learner turned Catholic priest. It is a story told with a smile, but it speaks volumes: about legacy, about connection, and about the unexpected places the maroon thread can travel.

Global citizenship is not a slogan. It is a posture. It is the way a learner carries himself in a foreign classroom, on a distant stage or in a shared conversation. It is the way he listens, the way he leads and the way he learns.

The maroon thread is not just stitched into blazers. It is stitched into passports, into performances, into purpose. It travels far. And it returns stronger.

Thread 8: The Unfinished Symphony

If global citizenship is how we reach, this thread is how we return.

Some schools end with a full stop. Paul Roos ends with a crescendo. There is no final chord here, only a rising note: a call to continue, to contribute, to create. This reflection is an invitation to see the school not as a finished product, but as a living composition.

The rituals keep us moving. Every year, the Grade 8s walk to lay wreaths at the statues of Neethling, Hofmeyr and Murray. It is transmission, a way of saying: You are part of something older than you. The Grade 8 Archive Signing is a quiet ritual of entry. Each boy inscribes his name into the story, knowing that one day, he will leave a legacy behind. The *Z-Day procession*, the *Matric shoeshine* and the Rector's Toga are acts of inheritance, reminding us that legacy is a verb. The *Goue Trappe* (Golden Steps) represent the climb every student must make, physically and metaphorically. The *Koshuiskameraderie* echo ensures that the spirit of community and mentorship is passed on.

The legacy lives in stone and spirit. The campus is full of named spaces: *Die Oude Leeskamer*, *Gimnasiumplein*, the Japie Krige Hall. The PRG 150 Trust, the Foundation and Klub 1000 are stewards. Even the Splendidior Brand Shop and Roosinbosch Cafeteria carry the ethos, a reminder that this is a place where identity is lived.

The *Lenteloop*, our spirited spring run, kicks off each year with unity and motion, a living metaphor for the unfinished symphony. It is not just a fun run; it is a communal pulse, a celebration of renewal and visibility, where learners, staff and families move together in shared rhythm.

The legends are still being made. The alumni list is long: Springboks, Olympians, Rhodes Scholars, Judges, Poets and Presidents. Each one is a verse in the school's symphony. The maroon thread travels.

The provocation that will not let go is found in the spiritual mandate: "We toil not for school or for life, but for eternity." While the common saying is *non scholae sed vitae*

discimus, Paul Roos's interpretation provides a spiritual dimension, emphasising that the purpose of one's education and hard work extends beyond worldly success to a higher, eternal purpose.

"Maroon Forever." "If I die a Paul Rooser." These lyrical declarations are not hyperbole. They are the heartbeat of a legacy that refuses to fade. They are the final notes of a song still being written.

This reflection is not written to commemorate; it is written to provoke. To ask: What comes next? The maroon thread is not a ribbon; it is a lifeline. It ties us to the past, but more importantly, it pulls us forward. Paul Roos Gymnasium is not just a school. It is a symphony, and it is still being written.

Semper Splendidior.

Author's Note

This essay draws on institutional archives, alumni records and public sources. Every effort has been made to ensure historical accuracy and narrative integrity. The views expressed are those of the author and do not necessarily reflect the official position of Paul Roos Gymnasium, its management, governing body, affiliated clubs or alumni.

About the Author

Vernon Dickason is Vice Rector of Paul Roos Gymnasium in Stellenbosch, where he serves as institutional leader, educator, and strategic planner. With a background spanning theology, law, and systems thinking, he brings a multidisciplinary lens to the work of narrative stewardship and educational transformation.

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