

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL'S MESSAGE TO ASSEMBLY FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2016

Since I will be finishing at Bishops at the end of this term, Mr Pearson asked me if I would address you on my thoughts on the school as my time here comes to an end. I thought I would break my talk up into two parts:

1. What I love and will miss about Bishops
2. Lessons I learnt from my children that I believe might be of assistance as you go through life.

We make a statement nearly every day when we start the day by congregating in the chapel. I have loved the routine of starting the day with a chapel service. The service is often so simple and yet nearly always very meaningful. I love the sound of male voices singing lustily and here I must pause for a moment to compliment you on your singing this year so far. While I have always appreciated the singing we do in the chapel, I don't think it has ever been as good as this year. I also love chapel because it is an opportunity to simply take stock before the day begins. I know it's not cool to admit that you like chapel, but I tell you proudly today that I love it!

During my years as a teacher I always enjoyed the classes I taught and the schools in which I taught. There was one exception however. About 15 years ago I did an exchange year overseas and taught in a school where the behaviour of the boys was appalling. I know now that one of the reasons the boys wouldn't properly engage with me was because they knew I was only there for a year and so didn't want to waste emotional energy on a person who wasn't staying for long. This experience highlighted two more things I have loved about Bishops: your behaviour is generally excellent (nobody is perfect), especially in classrooms, and this allows meaningful and interesting lessons to be part of your daily life; and secondly, you are also quite willing to form friendly relationships with staff. Both these aspects make Bishops a great place to work, and I will certainly miss my interactions with you in the future.

Consequently I have so enjoyed witnessing the abilities of the boys at Bishops. I have had the privilege of chairing the 10 Club during my close on 8 years at the school and that wonderful experience has, for me, been symbolic of the enormous talent that lies within the boys of the school. At these meetings each member has an opportunity to deliver a paper on anything that interests him, and over the years I have been privileged to hear the most amazing talks on a vast range of topics. The assembly notices, which are always filled with a litany of remarkable achievements, give a strong indication of what I am talking about here.

Of course sport is an integral part of life at school and I have equally enjoyed witnessing literally hundreds of fixtures where an astounding array of talents have been on display. Because I am leaving I am not going to make any attempt to be politically correct and mention all the sports we play, but rather highlight my favourite moments. There is nothing quite like an exceptional game of hockey played under lights on a Friday night where everything just clicks and the game is over before you, the spectator, realises it. I must admit that this was not always a very comfortable experience on a cold, wet evening, but the new Woodlands Pavilion has made it, in my opinion, one of the best places in the world to watch hockey.

It shouldn't surprise you, especially if you consider my extremely muscular physique, that I spent many years playing rugby and I love watching the game today as much as I enjoyed playing it. I had the

privilege of playing under Basil Bey when I was a student at UCT and played with many ODs, and so I fully understood the running game when I got to Bishops. This is the only school at which I have taught that has continuously promoted the running game and so I just love watching rugby at Bishops. Some may argue playing running rugby is to our detriment on occasions, but I argue that it only doesn't work when we get it wrong and play a **predictable** running game. I urge you to continue to stick to the motto printed on the back of the warm up t-shirts – "running rugby SINCE 1861". It separates us from the rest and we must never give up striving to perfect it.

I recently watched the SA under 18 team playing on the Piley against France. I found myself getting agitated, not something I commonly do when watching sport and when I stopped to think about it I realised it was because it was the only time I had watched a team I support playing on the Piley that was not attempting to play the Bishops brand. I concede SA was a very talented team and their sheer talent allowed them to win the game comfortably, but it was very irritating to watch them repeatedly kick a ball away when they had a four-man overlap. The Bishops staff were addressed at the beginning of this term by the recently retired director of WP rugby, Mr Rob Wagner. He told us that his counterparts in New Zealand have repeatedly told him that when the sleeping giant that is South African rugby (sleeping giant because we have an extraordinary amount of natural talent at our disposal) wakes up, NZ is in trouble.

There is a lot more that I love about Bishops, but not enough time to mention everything and I would now like to move onto my 2nd heading - Lessons I learnt from my children that may help you.

One of my daughters is married to an OD, Henry. Henry has told me more than once that when he finished at Bishops he had only one thing on his mind and that was to do a degree that would ultimately lead to him making as much money as possible. It didn't take long after he graduated for him to realise that he had made a huge error of judgement. Something many of you have to face is that you are being brought up in a relatively wealthy home and you become accustomed to a certain standard of living. Improving your standard of living is an easy path to walk, but settling for less than you are used to is much more difficult, and so you may be tempted to fall into the same trap as Henry. To put a practical spin on this, let me use a scenario that plays out at Bishops at least a few times a year. Every year one or two matrics are given a car by their parents that cause the rest of the school to gasp and everyone, staff included, to talk about it. Now consider the predicament of that matric, if his first car is an expensive car, how long will he have to work or **what kind of work** will he have to do before he can replace it himself with something similar - assuming his parents won't continue to buy him a car? In today's world it is not uncommon for parents to provide their child with a car for many reasons - safety being one of them. I did the same for my children, and so I am not suggesting they don't help you at all, but I am suggesting that you should wish/negotiate/express your opinion for something simple if your parents choose to assist you in this way, because it allows you to choose virtually any career and the first car you buy for yourself will be something you will be proud of, no matter the cost.

The point I'm making is not to make a controversial statement about your parents giving you a car, but to encourage you to have an open mind about your career options. Service industries, like teaching, while not necessarily being the highest paid industries, provide enormous job satisfaction that can last a lifetime. I can promise you that from my own experience.

My other daughter shares a house with some acquaintances in town. She noticed one of her male housemates (who is about 26 years old) never did his own washing, despite there being a washing machine in their house. Instead he took it home to his mother every week and she returned it while he was at work, all neatly washed, ironed and folded. She thought it a bit strange that he didn't just do it himself and after getting to know him better she challenged him on it pointing out to him how his actions limited his options. He would arguably never be able to live far from his mother and if he fell in love and got married he would have to have a partner who accepted that he couldn't use a washing machine. To his great credit he thought she made a good point and now does his own washing. I tell this story to encourage you to continue to seek to develop your entire self. Let there be nothing that you are not prepared to do for yourself, and life will offer you so many more choices.

Finally, one of my children is qualified as a Town Planner but she doesn't work as one. She uses the skills she learnt to do the very interesting job in which she is presently employed. Recently she was invited to a careers day for grade 11s and 12s, where there were about 30 professionals who all sat proudly at tables with a sign in front of them saying what they did. What she found interesting is that the learners only went to the tables where the signs indicated conventional careers, for example, accountants, lawyers, doctors, teachers, etc, but these comprised only a small proportion of the approximately 30 tables. Those who were not receiving visitors soon got bored and landed up networking with each other and forging business opportunities for themselves. My point is this, I think the LO programme at Bishops is outstanding and is designed to make you think about yourself, what your strengths are and how to choose an area of interest to study that suits you. You have probably heard this more than once, but the jobs in which most of you are going to be involved in, when you are my age, have not yet been invented, and so when deciding on which degree to do at university, aim to study in a faculty that will develop the skills you enjoy using and will make you feel like getting up for work for the rest of your life.

I conclude by wishing you all well. I have enjoyed my time at Bishops for all the reasons I have already stated and for many more too. The best gift you can give a teacher is to re-introduce yourself to them many years after you leave school and share your successes with them. I hope many of you do that to me in years to come.

Vernon Wood