

Mayor, Governors and Headmaster, distinguished guests, school staff, pupils and their family members.

...it is but a moment ago in time when I was placed among where you are now seated in this very same hall.

In my time, over 45 years ago, the whole school attended this day. Today, I am glad to hear that girls have now joined the sixth form, and that enrollment has significantly increased. So much so, the whole school cannot in 2019 fit into this room!

But the last “prize-giving” I attended was in 2009 in the city of Kazan in Tatarstan, in the heart of Russia, at a national gathering of seriously well distinguished scientists and medical researchers... There I was expected to give out to each winner - men and women alike, an over-sized medal, a unusually large bouquet of flowers, a cheque and then to wrap my arms around each of them in a tight Cossack-style bear hug! This was fine, except there were over 75 prize recipients! I am sure today will prove somewhat less exhausting!!

My task this morning is *not* to listen - as I once did. *Not* to fidget - as all pupils do. *Not even* to collect an occasional prize... (...there curiously being *none* set aside for speakers!), ..... But to hold **your** attention, knowing that between a hearty lunch and now, I am the ***last major obstacle*** !

Thank you, Chairman of the Governors, for your very kind introduction.

If I may, I will primarily address my remarks to the pupils here today. So let me kick-off with quoting, albeit slightly out of context, **Dante**: the medieval Italian poet and philosopher.

Dante was around in Italy in the 13<sup>th</sup> century - LRGS, while endowed in 1472, probably existed around the same time as Dante. He said then (and no doubt he could have been addressing just boys):

“Consider your birthright. Think of who you are. You were not made to live like brutes, but to pursue virtue and knowledge.

So having got your attention with that rather stern medieval admonition, I will, if I may, indulge myself and tell you about what I have been doing...

I had largely decided while at school to pursue a career in finance and to work overseas, encouraged in particular by Messrs. Hansen, Tissington, Robinson and Mr Joyce -who was Headmaster for most of my time at LRGS. Two of whom who are sadly no longer with us, but are, no doubt, watching to see if their old boys are behaving themselves!

I am sure on that Tony Joyce and Doug Cameron would agree with me on that!

Having with my own children seen a variety of schools in action. There is no doubt in my mind that LRGS had during my own special time here a most gifted and inspiring set of teachers. I am sure this remains equally true of today.

Let us all thank the teaching and administrative staff for all that they do!!

So off I first went into the city in London. The British merchant bank I joined only took 8 graduates that year. And was at that time the most international of them all.

Soon I was working in California, then New York, Frankfurt, Johannesburg, Mumbai, Brussels, Milan, Sao Paulo, Shanghai and other places. From merchant banking I had moved into venture investing and what is now called the world of "private capital" (where we buy and invest in privately owned businesses).

In 1990 I was fortunate enough to join a group of investors who took control of a small company near Atlanta. I am still on the board of that same company, roper technologies, which is now a large publicly listed conglomerate, mainly operating in the software and medical device sectors.

We have over 17,000 employees around the world and recently invested over £400m to buy and develop a company here in the UK which is (the pupils will like this) the world leader in software that is used in digital animation: the same company that did "lord of the rings" and many other movies.

It is a point of personal satisfaction, as I have done many times, to encourage investment into the UK from overseas, particularly from the United States.

I have been involved in financing and/or sitting on the boards of companies doing everything from novel medicines and experimental surgical devices, artificial intelligence and other business software. Also industrial controls used in running large factories, fast food restaurants, gas pipelines, telecom towers, satellites, power stations and wind power facilities, bicycle helmets, radio and TV stations, even some movies in Hollywood..... *And so I could go on and on.*

It has been quite an adventure with some memorable moments.....

I have seen a colleague climb in and get temporarily stuck inside Yuri Gagarin's original Soyuz space capsule which is now kept in a secure facility at the Russian Space Centre, Gargarin was 5' 2" and my erstwhile Dutch colleague was 6' tall!

I once met with a chairman of MGM studios – a prominent Hollywood mogul indeed whose office chair was so large his feet did not reach the ground!

Even better than that I once had a chat, one-on one, with Steven Spielberg at a time when I was representing in America Germany's second largest bank that was participating in an important documentary Spielberg was making.

Given the sensitivity of the subject matter, we absented ourselves from a dinner and found ourselves for the next forty minutes dressed in black- tie hiding away from the other dinner guests in a broom closet at the natural history museum in New York: Spielberg sat on a bucket and I perched on a shelf!

I have been drenched and covered in mud on a hillside during a sudden tropical downpour standing alongside the President of a Central American country while inspecting a new hydro electric generator and I once had to deal with lawsuits arising from a burial-at-sea service in one of our funeral home companies in California where the mourners all too often, but not surprisingly, came back extremely sea-sick!

*What* LRGS instilled powerfully in me – and which resonates in all that I just described, is an *insatiable* curiosity about people, their ideas, their different cultures and what makes economies and businesses *tick*.

**So lesson one:** be *curious about all* that is around you: be observant, watch, carefully, study what you see, hear and read, and take time to understand what you may not know.

Do *not* sleepwalk from event to event, moment-to-moment....and do not be afraid to interact with new concepts, new contacts and with faraway places.

**Lesson two:** recognise in life *patterns that may repeat themselves* or which might give you a clue as to how to react, manage or handle any problem or opportunity ...all the while learning, of course, from any mistakes.

.....and do expect the *unexpected* to happen, even if the patterns seem all too familiar.

When I hear about a business plan, or talk to an entrepreneur, I readily hold in my mind a picture of how that company may operate:

... Its fixed and variable costs, its resource constraints, its working capital cycle, its supply chain risks.... Along with how and through what channels it may sell its product or services to its defined market place. I think hard about how best to scale-up an enterprise, not forgetting how a business is to be best governed, respecting ethical, compliance and environmental standards and how well it looks after and retains its best employees. This for me - in my world - is all part of "pattern recognition".

**Lesson three:** be undaunted in gaining access to experts and senior practitioners in any field in seeking out the best advice and assistance in whatever you may choose to pursue once you embark upon a career.

In my travels and work I have had the privilege, if not the fun also, to have sat in some notable places, with presidents, princes, prime ministers, captains of industry, generals, movie stars, and Nobel prize winners.

They are all human, and all on some level accessible...all the more so given today's communications technology.

But what is even more important than talking to the so called "great and the good" is seeking out mentors who may take an interest in you, and broaden your horizons, even those elders with very busy lives relish the opportunity to engage with enthusiastic young people at key points in their careers.

Let us now think beyond our school motto: "praesis ut prosis"

Let us ponder the letters: L – R - G – S

Of what might each letter usefully remind us?

What I am about to suggest to you, I recall I once may have heard during my time at LRGS!

**"L" – for loyalty:** this may mean loyalty to family, colleagues and friends, an ideal, a faith, a political party, a country, a sporting team, a regiment and so on. Let me suggest that each of you pupils will discover and retain at least one great loyalty in life. The *challenge* is then to see how you can put that loyalty to good effect, to impact positively others and what they are also trying to achieve.

For the moment you are expected to be loyal to the community that is LRGS!

....do please retain that thought!

**“R” – for resoluteness:** nothing is easy in today’s world, and it never really was so in times past, before major advances in medicines, technology, and of great conflict or economic crisis.

Allow me to encourage each of our pupils here to stay the course; and at least find one academic subject or sport, which they might *resolutely* pursue to success.

I firmly believe that *each* of you are capable of excelling in at least one field of learning or activity.

**“G” – for gratitude:** LRGS has long been a top performing school. It offers some fine facilities and excellence in tuition that is so easily taken for granted. Having seen school aged children in deprived parts of Africa, India and Latin America, some in poor health: I hope you, too, will in some way be very grateful for what LRGS offers here in Lancaster. We should be especially grateful to the parents and grandparents seated here who are no doubt giving all that *essential* support to the young ones at the school. My 87 year-old father is present today and I certainly acknowledge that he and my late mother always gave to me the greatest of encouragement in my own education.

**“S” – for service:** so what does this mean for me? I am closely involved with a number of philanthropic organisations in the UK and elsewhere. Let me, if I may, talk a little about the work of the **Sutton Trust** on whose board I have served for several years and which was founded by my good friend, Sir Peter Lampl, as a research and idea-implementation charity – a *“do-tank”*, not just a *“think-tank”* – which aims to boost opportunity and upward mobility through improved access to education and skills.

You have had great success in a similar sort of way among primary school children here in Lancaster with *“InspirUS”*...a programme, which I look forward to supporting next year.

Well, let me tell you about one success among the many at The Sutton Trust. We take some 2,000 bright young pupils each year, of moderate income households, some from difficult home lives ...many of whom may not have considered going to university at all. Indeed 80% of those who are successful in this programme are the first members of their families to go to university. Free of any charges or debts, we test them, coach them and send those who have promise and are motivated to summer schools at Yale University and M.I.T. in the USA.

Out of that group, we encourage about 250 to apply to go to American universities: this programme, now into its fifth year, secured entrance to ivy league and other top us colleges for some 75 students alone last year: all fees paid by the universities themselves, and the travel costs covered by the Sutton Trust.

These are, I am sure you will readily agree, truly life changing opportunities, much as LRGS and Oxford were for me.

I have had the privilege to get to know several cohorts of children benefitting from this push-up the ladder, including one, a partially paralysed girl from Liverpool who is now studying mathematics at Stanford University in California and with whom I first chatted when we met with Woody Johnson, the current us ambassador to the UK about 2 years ago. I remember her telling him that before the programme she did not possess a UK passport.

I am also involved with the **scientific exploration society**. This is a group of wonderful, if slightly eccentric, explorers and ex-military people led by Colonel John Blashford Snell (himself now 82 years old).

The “SES” promotes environmental awareness, field charity work, better healthcare and sanitation in remote places, conservation and scientific measurement, and discovery of new fauna and animal species. They often take young people on their expeditions.

In my time at LRGS, Blashford Snell was often seen in TV documentaries as a sort of Indiana Jones style figure: Yes, he led the first full-length journey down the blue Nile in Ethiopia, being shot at and having to jump fierce rapids ( ...as he puts it: nobody who travels with him comes back quite the same.... And some don't come back at all!).

And...he took a grand piano from London all the way to a remote tribe up the Amazon. ...you can see some YouTube videos about this. The expedition doctor was also a musician who then tuned the piano when it finally arrived having been dragged through the jungle!

Sir Chris Bonnington, the famous mountaineer, a fellow member of the SES, would no doubt agree with me that I am myself not cut out to go up Everest, but the intrepid Colonel has instead suggested that I can have the choice next year of a short-legged pony trek across the desolate plains of Mongolia, or a trip to Bolivia to continue the search for the **lost city of z**. ...something that had eluded the real life Edwardian explorer, Lt. Col. Percy Fawcett, before the first world war.... A quest that was later made into a film.

Just be careful when getting involved in charities what is expected of you!

**So remember: LRGS = loyalty, resoluteness, gratitude and service**

I am sure all of our prize winners – each of whom I warmly congratulate today, will have confidence in what comes next...but so should you all - in simply doing the very best you can during your time at this fine school.

As you, the pupils here assembled, go forward in life, let me - in closing, here, repeat what Franklin Delano Roosevelt, the great American president, wrote a few days before he died in a place called Warm Springs, Georgia: "The only limit to our realization of tomorrow will be our doubts of today...."

**So be confident, and do your best!**