



# RUSSELL MORSE

Bishops Memorial Chapel, Diocesan College - 3<sup>rd</sup> November, 2016

## To Russell, My Great Friend and Remarkable Man

I'm privileged to have been asked by Russell's family to say a few words on behalf of his friends.

When I see the images of Russ in the pamphlet, I'm tempted to comment on his dress sense and tell amusing stories, but I won't try and match his sense of humour. My approach will be more serious.

It's an honour to pay my respects to someone who I have admired for so long, and who I've had so many laughs with. Russ was dealt a terrible hand, but he made the most of it through strength of character – and achieved so much despite his circumstances.

Thank you Tom, Greg, Bryn, and Kathy for this opportunity

### First, some context

For those of you who don't know my connection with Russell, I have enjoyed many highs and lows with Russ since our schooldays, here at Bishops.

- We played rugby in the same team at school and in the defence force, we travelled overseas to play rugby in the Far East together, we worked for the same investment company 20 years ago and again over the last year.
- We were together the day of his accident, my mother tracked him down in hospital the following morning, and we developed an incredible relationship.

However, I am mindful that so many people have similarly enjoyed their own special path with Russ, a lot has happened since the accident changed his life, and I would therefore like to thank all of you for coming out to pay your respects and support the family.

Russ would have been overwhelmed.

I could say so much, tell so many amusing stories, pass on the many messages of love, and talk about so many people who Russell valued, but this would leave out dear friends who were essential to sustaining Russell's bravery over more than 3 decades.

### The essence of Russell

When I think of Russell, I think of:

- his love for his family, and their times together
- his sense of humour

- his courage in dealing with his condition
- his love of animals
- his passion for the markets and horses, and
- his extremely wide circle of friends.

But mostly I think of how his irreverent sense of humour helped him survive his circumstances, and develop his relationships.

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### **So starting with his family,**

I would like to recognise Jean, Russell's mom – who was an incredible source of strength for Russell. She can help us get to his essence.

Jean wrote a piece called "The Wheel Turns", which documented his early life. She details his personality, his emerging character, the impact of his injury, and their visit to Israel to investigate rehabilitation. It's all about hope, and Russell's strength of mind. Jean was privy to so many hidden aspects and difficult moments in his life, and captures his essence in 4 or 5 sentences.

Jean starts with:

*"From the beginning he chose to follow the path less travelled"*

and

*"From an early age he displayed a quick wit and ability to turn a situation around to see the funny side"*

then turning to his accident

*"Suddenly the peace is shattered – our lives would never be the same again"*

and then highlights his approach to dealing with his situation

*"During all these months, Russell does not lose his sense of humour and shows great strength in coping with his situation. This was a great help to those around him who respond with love and support at all times"*

It has been a difficult year for the entire family, and Jean is particularly missed at this sad time, and remembered for her immense role in supporting Russell.

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Interestingly, while Russell and Jean were in Israel, they were assisted by Rotary.

Which brings me to

### **Russell's Motivational Talks**

At the beginning of the year Russell asked an old friend of his fathers, Dennis Nick for advice, and Dennis put him in touch with the Signal Hill Rotary Club which meets at Royal Cape Yacht Club. Before we knew it, Russell was talking about his life to a room full of strangers. He spoke about his carefree younger self, his sport, the accident, his career path, his passions, and some of the daily struggles he has faced.

Over the next 6 months Russell spoke at Rotary Clubs in St James, Sea Point, and Pinelands, and the reaction from the room was always the same - rapt attention and admiration.

I look back at this experience, and feel it was huge in Russell's life:

- Russell received warmth and love from a room full of strangers, and they verbalized their admiration at how he had dealt with his situation.
- His talks enabled him to feel support from people outside his immediate circle of family and friends, and reinforced that others could get a sense of what it must have taken.
- It was extremely good for him

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### **And so, talking about his friends**

I would also like to acknowledge James Stewart, a great friend of Russell's who could not be here today as his brother passed away yesterday.

I miss him here today, and Russell would have wanted him to be acknowledged.

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As Russell is released from his very difficult lifestyle, we are thankful for the good times, and the positive example he set.

I say again - What a man!