

OAKHILL COLLEGE HEADMASTER'S CELEBRATION SPEECH

(Carmen Micic to sing 'The story')

Stories don't mean anything unless you have someone to tell them to....and there is no doubt we appreciate you joining us this morning to hear our story of the past year. There have been some mountain tops, and there have been some valleys....but the story is fulfilling, life changing, exciting and worth telling.

Honourable Mayor, Mrs Wolmerans, Honoured guests, Mr and Mrs Wallington, Board members, Parents, Colleagues, Oakhillians, Ladies and Gentlemen. It is my great pleasure to present to you the 20th annual report on the activities of the school. Yes 20th!! That means we turn 21 next year – that wonderful year in which we celebrate our coming of age. Oakhill has moved from its exciting and miraculous birth under the watchful eye of our founders, through its turbulent teen years to become a vibrant, energetic, innovative and creative young adult and we will be celebrating our birthday in style next year. Please diarise the weekend of the 28 February to the 3rd of March 2013 so that we can celebrate together as a community past and present.

BUT, before we get ahead of ourselves we need to remember 2012 and the purpose of our gathering today:

to Celebrate the amazing achievements of the young men and women of Oakhill College. Each of them has achieved and grown in their own unique way this year and I look forward to hearing about their incredible feats of success and failure a little later.

Failure?? You might ask, well yes we try to celebrate that as well, because in the depths of failure we discover the joy of learning. We learn that our lives do not only consist of mountain peaks and successes – although we will hear so much of that today – but of the valleys, and disappointment that failure brings. With this comes the true realisation that to achieve success we need to build resilience, hope and a purpose for the future.

Sir John Gurdon was told he was no good at Science, now he has a Nobel Prize. As a struggling 15 year old he was told by a teacher that even to think about a career as a scientist would be a 'sheer waste of time'. He came last out of 250 boys in his year for biology and was in the bottom set for every other science subject.

Last week he received the Nobel Prize for Medicine for work that led directly to the cloning of Dolly the sheep and the discovery that adult cells can be reprogrammed to grow into any kind of body tissue.

So, if you are sitting in the audience today and for some reason you do not think that your dreams of success are possible or your teacher or parents have indicated that 'being a scientist or an artist is a sheer waste of time' – you need to take a leaf out of Sir John's book – get up, fight to find the real you, work hard and believe that you can because there is no doubt that the world needs you, South Africa needs you to share the joy that you experience here every day.

Young men and women of Oakhill – today you might or might not receive **the** prize you thought you would, but as you strive to find your passion and true purpose, remember that today is but a moment in time and if you truly believe in the goals you have set yourself, remain disciplined and live the joy of learning, today will be but a fleeting glimpse in the greater scheme of your amazing journey through life.

Too many of my generation got fooled into thinking that money would buy happiness – don't misunderstand me, we need money but in my experience it certainly does not buy fulfilment, or a sense of purpose. Umair Haque said that: *in a working economy, one should gain a sense of meaning from ones work when one makes a lasting, visible difference; and when one makes a difference, one should be rewarded for it.*

But the fact that it seems nearly impossible to build a stable, secure, happy life in the segment formerly known as the middle class, by doing worthwhile work that makes a real human difference is the exception that proves the rule. Illuminating just how deeply and perhaps fatally broken our economy is.

Don't chase money, chase your dream, find your purpose, make a difference and endeavour to fix some of the significant problems my generation has burdened you with.

Talking of problems:

Bill Clinton said: *Our world is more interdependent than ever. Borders have become more like nets than walls, and while this means that wealth, ideas, information and talent can move freely around the globe, so can the negative forces shaping our shared fates.*

The financial crisis that started in the US and swept the Globe was further proof that – for better or worse – we cannot escape one another.

There are three big **challenges** with our interdependent world:

Inequality, instability and unsustainability.

The fact that the half the world's people live on less than \$2 a day and a billion people on less than \$1 is stark evidence of inequality, which is increasing in many places. We're feeling the effects of instability not only in the global economic slowdown but also in the violence, popular disruptions and political conflicts in the Middle East and elsewhere. And the way we produce and use energy is unsustainable, changing our climate in ways that cast a shadow over our children's future. (Bill Clinton in Time magazine)

Inequality in Knysna

The fact is that South Africa now has the 3rd worst gini-coefficient in the world (this is a number between 0 and 1, where 0 corresponds with perfect equality and 1 corresponds with perfect inequality)

Inequality in South Africa is at its worst ever and in Knysna it is the worst in Africa.

Instability

Instability is also rife: many of you have experienced the burning of tyres on the N2. The tragedy of Marikana has only recently unfolded before our eyes and recently the Arab spring in countries like Syria and Libya have resulted in civil war. I am part of conversations where we talk about the rise in crime and even worse I have been part of conversations which suggest that the grass is greener elsewhere. We run away from our problems, blame the government, bury our heads in the sand and hope that by some miracle we will all be fine, while we ourselves refuse to budge our thinking or help change the paradigm that has caused our town, our country and our world to spin out of control.

Niklas Martin, a student in Grade 11, was recently published in English Alive, a compilation of writing from High Schools and Colleges in Southern Africa. He writes an episodic piece about his experience in Libya. To be honest it could be South Africa, it could be Knysna....

'I hear the fear and uncertainty in my Father's voice' rings true: we have no idea where this instability will take us. To be honest – I hear the fear in my own voice at times, but for me and I hope for you as well, there is the instinctive knowledge that our fear needs to be translated into **action** because our current road map is unsustainable! Our tears need to be put to good use before they become ash-bound! We need to create a sustainable solution for our children and that means we have to change the way we see the world. We have to change the way we think and we have to **act**, we have to stop moaning, stop blaming and **act**. Trust me Jacob Zuma is not going to be acting on your behalf, our government is certainly not going to be acting on our behalf and although you do not want to hear it, you need to stand up and be counted if you want action and a workable solution – you can make the difference, if you choose to. Oakhill has the ability and the opportunity to impact our town and this school meaningfully if we harness the resources both human and material, in this marquee this morning.

Unsustainable

Our situation in South Africa is filled with complexity - there have been wrongs in the past and we have admitted to them, but I fail to see how we have established sustainable solutions for the future of our children. Our leaders are devoid of moral leadership and good values and integrity are nowhere to be seen. Corruption is rife and greed consumes the very soul of our country. Fraud and self-enrichment plague the public service and private sector and the appointment of incompetent cadres drives us deeper into despair.

As a teacher and a parent I know intuitively that we have to find a way. We have to be bolder, we have to be stronger, we have to be more resilient and ultimately **we have to give more**. We have to change the paradigm of the rich getting richer and the poor finding no means of lifting themselves out of poverty and having no purpose and hope for the future. This school continues to make a difference in so many lives, this school gives hope, this school stands up for justice and family values and with your help we can do more. With your help we can fulfil the dream that Nelson Mandela had of bridging the divide between rich and poor and black and white.

Honourable Mayor, I know that this community of parents and young men and women of tomorrow want this town to succeed. We want to see sport facilities which will allow other young men and women to experience their potential. We want an astro turf which will not only allow our kids to experience world class facilities here in Knysna, but also bring hope and a sense of purpose to those who have nothing and cannot dream of a better future. We want a school which, in every way will permeate the very fabric of our society, and shout to those who feel lost and forgotten, that we care and that there is hope and a purpose. We are committed to making a difference, **use us**, empower us, test us and see what the collective potential of this community can deliver to those who do not have, who feel forgotten and who have lost hope.

We will be building a modern Library, innovation and research hub which will connect us with the outside world, where the youth of this town can download study material and world-class lessons from our intranet to help them understand that we want them to succeed, we want them to grow we want them to have the hope of a better life for their families and we want them to value education. Our students want to mentor, want to share want to learn and we want to be part of the solution.

At this point I would like to thank the two families who responded to my invitation at the 2011 Celebration of Excellence and have made it possible to provide bursaries for two students to attend Oakhill – this will certainly help in changing this paradigm. If you would like to make a difference in this area and change the life of a family in Knysna by offering them a world class education I would encourage you to speak to me.

We have to build, in our children, a capacity to care, a capacity for compassion, a capacity for disciplined hard work, and a capacity for being efficient, for working smarter, for change, innovation and creativity. And we need to build in our children the capacity for real meaning and joy from life's labours.

The real source of wealth and capital in this era is not material things. It is the human mind, the human spirit, the human imagination and our faith in the future. (Steve Forbes)

And if the young men and women sitting in front of me today are anything to go by, I certainly have faith that they will positively, innovatively and creatively fix up the mess that we seem to have left them.

I have recently visited all our ground staff in their homes. Albert has a wonderfully warm home on the hill here which is beautifully looked after, very much like he looks after our gardens at school. He keeps himself busy tending to a small herd of pigs that he rears and sells and I can see the pride of a man happy with his home. Robert also has a wonderful home – he has created a happy environment for his sister's kids, who he looks after since she passed away – he is now a father to many. Robert worked on the Oyster beds in the lagoon for 23 years before was retrenched. He can tell you of the intricate detail of growing and harvesting oysters. Rueben has just moved into his new home given to him by the council. He is proud and already talks of the additions he wants to make. Gideon lives in a wooden home which I couldn't visit because he was in hospital, as does John but his leaks and **your children** led by the SRC, raised enough money to replace his roof. They have spirit, imagination and faith in the future and we need to learn from their example.

I am sure you will agree with me that these gentlemen on our grounds, led by Philip Stewart, have transformed our gardens and have created an environment where joy truly abounds – Thank you!

Alan Graham our founder Headmaster and his wife Dal visited earlier in the year and spent two days exploring the growth and development at Oakhill. I found his visit to be a huge growth experience for me. Alan was here from the very beginning and worked with the founder parents and Board members to create this special school. This link with our founders is crucial as we prepare to forge ahead into the future. It will keep us grounded and focused on the founding principles of recognising individuals, rewarding creativity, embracing discipline and inculcating the joy of learning by encouraging students to think for themselves, to question the status quo and to care for others!

2012 has been a year of gearing up for growth and the planning and preparing for this has involved so many volunteers, parents and pupils and I am overwhelmed by the enthusiasm and passion brought to the fore by this wonderfully gifted and generous group of people.

Our young school is in good hands and I would like to thank the Board, led by **Peter Wallington** for navigating us through the past years with courage, purpose and passion for the sole purpose of serving the young men and women of our school, who have always remained at the centre of all we do here. I can sometimes not believe the amount of angst and time Peter and other Board members spend, ensuring that Oakhill remains sustainable for the future. I certainly appreciate his wise counsel and insight. Our conversations are always filled with purpose and the determination to overcome the many obstacles we find in our path. **Jon Salters**

heads our finance committee and without him we would not have found ourselves in the strong financial position we are in, to leap forward into our 21st year.

Paul Kotze heads up our Planning committee, who have been working feverishly behind the scenes to ensure that we are prepared to purchase our sport campus and ultimately develop it. I am pleased to announce that we are at the final stages of this planning and I am confident that we will be playing on our own sport campus in 2013. This dream has only come to fruition with the help of **Ian and Marinda Brymer** who continue to give of their time to ensure success in this area. Added to this committee this year have been **Dave Hall** whose engineering skills have helped immensely in the planning stages and **Gordon Shutte**, who oversees the legal and financial aspects of the project.

Ladies and gentlemen please put your hands together for these parents, who on your behalf are working without compensation, to ensure that our children receive a world class education right here in Knysna.

I am truly humbled by the selfless dedication of these parents and Board members in a difficult economic time, to ensure that we progress meaningfully into 2013.

I am also humbled by those of you who have bought into the vision and dedication of the Board and Planning committee and have chosen to take a debenture. We have raised 5,7 million rand thus far which will propel us forward positively, BUT we will need others to buy into this vision too and I would urge you to consider investing in this town, in your school and in the young men and women here today, by acting in this physical way to ensure that we make a significant difference to the lives of them and future generations.

At this point I would also like to pay tribute to **Celia Andrews** who served on the Board at Oakhill from 2008 – 2010 and who recently passed away after a short battle with cancer. Her memory will certainly live on in our successes. Our thoughts and prayers are continually with her husband, Mark and her two beautiful children, Jonty and Holly.

Matric results

Ultimately we are an academic institution and we are judged by our academic results. The results achieved by the matrics of 2011 were outstanding. Our 100% pass rate is still intact, but more importantly we continued to impress by ensuring that 87% of our candidates received a university endorsement. Our small matric group of 30 candidates produced 60 distinctions between them.

Our Dux scholar **Maren Seydack** earned a level 7 (80% or above) in nine subjects, closely followed by **Harry Maarsingh and Jo-Li Kotze** with seven level 7 achievements. **Kate Gardy** achieved six level 7 achievements.

I have no doubt that our current matrics will certainly follow in this positive tradition...there are 53 of them and working on this 2 to 1 principle they should achieve 106 distinctions between them – no pressure!

In the Northern Cape at present, parents have burnt down the local schools demanding a new road and that the Mayor be fired. Jonathan Jansen points out that as South Africans we place no value in education. Who in their right mind would deprive their children of the one means of escaping poverty: education?

At Oakhill I get the sense that there is excellence and purpose in education. I get the sense that our young men and women enjoy learning and as a result will solve some of the complex problems which are facing their generation.

Each year I talk about the extraordinary achievements of our young men and women and each year at this time I am amazed at how sensitive, innovative, creative, courageous and talented they are. And if you are doubting whether you should invest in a debenture, now is the time to gather some investor information because we truly have remarkable, and amazing young men and women here.

Paul Wallington.....(to interrupt me)

If you wander through our campus, like I often do, you'll bump into **Mark Davies** who is our own entrepreneur. He is the creator of the Unison elite – *This is a media centre like the Batmobile is a family car. A full PC embedded in a component amp-style chassis with Wi-Fi, gigabit LAN, a terabyte of storage, a Veris RM200 Windows remote and a backlit LCD screen. It runs Windows 7, is completely customisable and will do anything any media player has ever dreamt of.*

I'm glad you understand the terminology! You can buy one from Knysna electronics and I have no doubt we will be seeing other inventions from this bright young man.

If you listen carefully for where the most noise in the quad is coming from, you'll bump into **Caspar Lee** – our very own YouTube sensation. Caspar has 52 000 twitter followers, only a few more than me, 37 000 facebook friends and more than 80 000 YouTube followers (a lot more than me) who have viewed his videos more than three million times. He has just won 120k in YouTube's next comic prize and I have no doubt will be able to fund the next development of our sports campus in a couple of years' time. He is creative, innovative, and I'm told looks like Leonardo Di-Caprio. Ladies and gents watch out for this sensation in the future and Caspar, I particularly like your video on how to kiss **with**....I'll leave it at that!

In another corner of the quad, looking intently into Dana's eyes – and someone who has obviously watched Caspar's video, is **Josh Pama** who recently won a merit prize from the Royal Society of South Africa for his essay entitled: Fracking in the Karoo. Another young man who is thinking about the sustainability of our environment.

Maya-Rose Torrao is also sitting nearby – quietly playing on the guitar. She has the most magnificent voice but she has also won a place in the top ten in the English Olympiad this year. She is a talented young lady who is certainly going to make a difference in the future.

Robyn Seager is quietly preparing for the Interact fashion show where she is presenting her first range of designs on the walkway. She is raising money for charity and doing something she loves and is immensely passionate about.

I look around – I'd like to chat to **Mikayla Oliver** but she's not at school. She is still trying to prove to Mr van Straten that she is the best cyclist at Oakhill. In fact she has just come 4th at the mountain biking cross country world Championships – an amazing feat! We believe you Mikayla and are humbled by your drive, dedication and passion for cycling.

Jack Duthie is also not at school; he has just won the Louis Oosthuizen championship and is ranked in the top 60 in the world in his age group. Who knows, perhaps he will follow in the footsteps of Brandon Grace – we are proud of him!

The modest, **Niklas Martin** wanders past – he has been chosen to represent South Africa at Body Boarding

Joshua Pieters and Chris Marrow chat on the bench in front of me – they have been selected for the U19 SWD three-day cricket team and Josh has just been awarded a contract to play cricket in the UK.

Michaela Beers is telling her friends about her experience of winning the Fish River canoe marathon with Graham Bird, yes I said winning!

Tessa Collins has quietly returned from Edinburgh, where she was selected to participate in the Edinburgh Tattoo as a drummer.

Xolisa Dinga, a double amputee ambles past me with a broad smile – he completed our own Odyssey – 400km of walking, cycling and canoeing. He is courageous and determined!

Jared Wells, Nicholas Thompson and Jake Turner are on top of the world – they have just performed outstandingly at the U15 cricket festival – too many runs and wickets to mention.

Kristin Groenewald converses with me in Mandarin –(roving mike)

A huge thank you to **Lian-Mei** who has made a significant impact at Oakhill this year and we look forward to the tour to China in September 2013, where we will be establishing partnerships with schools for exchanges and collaboration in the future.

Joshua Buchalter strides past – he is an amazing leader and is pioneering our venture into 15 man rugby.

Anola Walk smiles - she is a magnificent athlete and has qualified for the junior national swimming galas

Sandy McCrae, and Georgie Ovenstone, two beautiful young ladies whose courage, wonderful smile and optimism in adversity, truly humbles me. Their quiet strength tells me that there is a bright tomorrow!

I have to return to my office and on my way out I pass **Tyla Katz** - who can forget her matric dance dress!

Steyn de Klerk is standing in the doorway – I break out in a cold sweat in case he asks me to dance like he did at the Matric dance – whew he slips the other way and I pass through the portal into the reality of my office, unscathed but reinvigorated and motivated for the weeks ahead.

This is a happy place, a fulfilled place a place of joy of learning, of friendship and excellence and if you are not amazed, come and take a walk through the quad with me at some stage. It will feed your soul!

Staff

These achievements happen because we have an extremely professional group of teachers and although we will not always get on with them all the time, they truly want to nurture the love of learning of all who cross their paths.

Leaving:

This year we bid farewell to Peter Bishop who is retiring. He has spent 17 years at Oakhill and had a significant impact on the young men and women who have engaged with his unique teaching style. He is a complex individual but always means well and ultimately has had the passion to prepare young men and women for life. We will be saying our formal goodbyes toward the end of the year but thank him for his tireless effort over many years.

Long service

Ronel Muller and Juliet Le Fleur have completed 10 years of service to the school and as we grow and develop this institution it will be on the shoulders of these staff members that the future is built.

Amanda Barnard has completed 20 years of service and her name will appear along-side Elna Brown and B-A Hayward's up the pathway to the Admin block in thanks for her commitment and passion.

Thanks

Being a member of staff at Oakhill can be all-consuming and I would like to thank each and every staff member for striving for excellence this year. We have made shifts in using technology, Moira has even used RAP in her accounting class but we know that there is even more that we need to conquer in the next while. I have no doubt that you are committed and I thank you on behalf of the entire community for your dedication. Happy Birthday Hannalie!

Sheila Pasio, Lee Raynor and Juliet Le Fleur, our House mentors, continue to create a nurturing environment where each individual counts and I appreciate the time dedicated to this.

Diana Barnard continues to establish an IT network that will support 21st Century teaching and learning and I appreciate her aim of perfection.

I would like to thank **Riaan van Straten** and all who led our Odyssey experience this year. Riaan is truly a leader of the highest order and I think all Grade 10 parents will join me in thanking him for his attention to detail and his passion for growing young men and women.

Leanna Dreyer has made significant strides in harnessing our artistic excellence in Drama, art and music and I have no doubt that this department will flourish under her wisdom. I thank her for the way she sees the strength in every kid who crosses her path and oh, **Amy** your Matric Art exhibition is simply stunning – don't miss it - it's on display in the mall opposite Mug and Bean.

Our matric dance this year was truly outstanding and **Moira Schady** continues to quietly make a significant difference in all we do in this area.

Dave Pryke is a part-time sport administrator since he announced his engagement to Elmarie – congratulations guys we are truly delighted!

Suzanne Griffin has had a difficult year but I appreciate the shifts she has made in her portfolio to ensure sustainability in the long term.

Barbie Leibbrandt and Lizanne Hafner have to deal with my day to day matters and that is never easy in a growing school and I thank you for your patience and your steadfastness in ensuring we get things right. Barbie and Philips Mum passed away yesterday - Our thoughts and prayers are with them!

And lastly to **Dawie Botha** who graciously deals with the day-to-day student affairs of our school in a way which allows mistakes but demands accountability. Your wisdom is always appreciated!

There are also many, who are not part of our formal staffing structures but make a significant impact in all we do. **Brenda McKechnie** for helping with the school magazine, **Justine Edwards** and **Petra Quinlan** for her tireless efforts behind her camera and Justine for her magnificent work on the Oakhill Echoes, our quarterly newsletter.

And lastly to **Vanessa Eyre** who has made a wonderful impact in the way we raise funds and deal with our bursary programme. We are truly indebted to you!

Some staffing changes for 2013

We will be employing a new IT technician for 2013 as we gear up to cope with the improved network. Arthur Vhisa, formerly a security guard is currently on a learnership for this position.

Sheila Pasio will also be changing portfolios next year. I have asked her to head up the newly formed leadership portfolio, which will drill down into the importance of what leadership means for every one of our students. We want to establish more opportunities to lead in our school and Sheila will be exploring the different avenues which will allow all our young men and women to grow as leaders. One of the avenues we are exploring at present is joining the group of Round Square schools. Round Square is an international group of 83 schools around the world that adhere to six principles which are already very much part of our DNA. They are:

Internationalism

Democracy

Environment

Adventure

Leadership and

Service

Sheila will be heading up this exciting project and many others to ensure we build resilience, confidence and self- awareness into all we expect our students to do in the future.

We have also advertised for the position of House Mentor to replace Sheila as Head of Jubilee House and I am hoping we will be able to make that announcement by the end of next week.

Lastly, we will be reshuffling some administrative roles in 2013. Barbie Leibbrandt will focus on Marketing, Alumni and Bursary students from the beginning of the new-year and Lizanne Hafner, my PA will pick up the admissions workload to ensure efficiency and clear lines of communication.

We will also be welcoming Anita Britz onto the staff in a part-time capacity to deal with financial administrative and project management issues pertaining to the new sport development. She will also be administering the debenture process and working along-side Paul Kotze to ensure efficiency in this area.

Facilities

Fresh ideas in pursuit of new and better solutions can lead to creative, even breakthrough results and these ideas have been the source of useful inventions and innovation, in our school in the last while.

We have redesigned, and when I say we, your sons and daughters have been involved in redesigning, new lockers and work areas in the quadrangle to make it greener and user friendly for all our students. They are also involved in redesigning classroom furniture.

We have also upgraded the Coffee shop area to accommodate your needs as we progress and more work will be done to this facility during the December break to create more space for kitchen facilities and the school clothing shop will move to make way for a more modern, user friendly inside area for the coffee shop.

We are also planning to upgrade the art block to include an innovation hub, state of the art, media centre which will provide a research base for both teachers and pupils. This follows on our strategy to improve our IT network by expanding our fibre optic

cables to include all buildings on the campus. This upgrade will enable anyone on the campus to connect onto a fast connection to enable efficient collaboration, communication, innovation, inquiry and design which will aid learning in the 21st century.

Ultimately the network we are creating will be able to allow any device to connect with it, ensuring that we can use the latest technology in teaching and learning in all our classrooms at Oakhill.

Our timeline for this is to encourage all students from grade 8 - 12 to **bring their own device by 2014**. Some might chose a smartphone, others a tablet, a netbook or a laptop – this won't matter as these devices are extremely personal, but the important thing is that they will need a device to enable learning and teaching to be made more efficient, reliable and collaborative as we progress into the future.

(Sasha Benjamin)

A reasonable goal for most 21st century education systems might be 50% of time available for inquiry, design and collaborative project learning using modern technology, and 50% for more traditional direct methods of instruction. We will be aiming for this balance!

As I have mentioned, another exciting development is the purchase of 18 hectares of land as our sport campus. This will not only allow us to have our own sport facilities but will give us numerous opportunities for learning as well. Our young men and women will be working with the team of project managers, engineers, architects and environmental consultants to solve some of the complex questions which arise out of purchasing land with no services. This experiential learning will help us to innovatively and creatively solve some of the questions facing our world and collaborating with professionals will certainly encourage learning and growing amongst our students.

Allan Graham award

Some matrics have been here nearly as long as this school has existed and they are immensely proud of it. The Alan Graham shield is awarded to those in our school who started their careers with us in Grade 0 and progressed through the school and ultimately matriculated with us here in the College. This award for 13 years of schooling is no mean feat and is aptly named after the founding Headmaster: Alan Graham.

This year I am proud to announce that we will be awarding it to nine of the matric group. Could I ask them to come forward to receive this:

Luke Bell, Sasha Benjamin, James Boomer, Nicolo Cox, , Emma Horn, Sandra McRae, Joshua Pieters, Jake Read and Leo Thesen.

Goodbye to the class of 2012

This year we have an SRC President who was in Grade 11: Lulu Read. She has been voted onto the SRC for a second year running as the President and I'm not in the least bit surprised. She leads with direction, with purpose and with empathy for her fellow students and her wisdom and courage make a significant impact in the way we do things at Oakhill. I truly value her opinion and she is not scared to give it and her input at executive and Board level has truly allowed us to keep our focus firmly on the young men and women of Oakhill. Thank you for all you do and I look forward to working alongside you in 2013 again.

Our matrics take leave of us and enter a world filled with hardship, inequality, and instability.

Abraham Lincoln in his address to congress in 1862 wrote about the voluntary compensated emancipation of slaves, he said: *The dogmas of the quiet past are inadequate to the stormy present. The occasion is piled high with difficulty, and we must rise with the occasion. As our case is new, so we must think anew and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country.*

This could be true of our country in 2012! The occasion is piled high with difficulty;

Education, Health, Crime and unemployment loom large in our town and country. Inequality is out of control and we have don't have leaders with the moral fibre who will catapult us forward positively.

We must rise, ladies and gentlemen, alongside our sons and daughters, with the occasion. We must think anew and act anew!

Matrics, a thousand fibres connect us and among those fibres the thread of our actions run as causes which will come back to us as effects. The question is what effect do you want to have?

I think we need to strive for significance as individuals and as a school. We should not chase success but ask ourselves how we can make a significant difference in our town.

Success is getting 7 distinctions for matric, significance is being prepared to discover your true purpose and make a difference in the lives of others

Success is seeing your school mentioned in the press, significance is seeing it mentioned for making a difference in the community

Success is having your name on an honours board; significance is making a difference in one person's life

Success is getting an Oakhill education, significance is giving someone else the opportunity to experience it with you

Success is a façade, shallow and meaningless, significance is real, deep and life changing

Success is acquiring things: knowledge, resources, experience, significance is using knowledge, resources, experience to serve and benefit others.

Success is having things, significance is giving things

Success is living like there is no tomorrow, significance is ensuring your life impacts tomorrow

Leo Rosten said: *I cannot believe that the purpose of life is just to be happy. I think the purpose of life is to be useful, to be responsible, and to be compassionate. It is above all to matter, to count, to stand for something, to have made some difference that you lived at all.*

Ladies and gentlemen, Matrics, these are our choices – to be successful or to be significant, to chase happiness or to be happy because we have a purpose and to ensure that we make a difference wherever we are whatever we are doing.

Oakhill certainly has a purpose and as a result our future looks bright, our 21st year is beckoning and before we know it we will be blowing out the candles on the birthday cake.

So, in Seneca's words:

*As is a tale, so is life: **not how long it is, but how good it is, is what matters.***

And, 2012 ladies and gentlemen has been a good one and that's what matters!

Thank you.

Shane Kidwell