

Class of 1985 - 30 Year on Reunion 2015

Assembly Address - Friday 21 August 2015

There are a few things I want to mention that might help you in the future that might make you more successful. I want to give you a little bit of background to our group. In 1981, there were no black students in any white government schools in South Africa. For some of you, that may be hard to even imagine. We had the very first black student in the country at Pretoria Boys High--Stanley Ne tshituka, the first black pupil in a white government school in South Africa. I believe we accepted Stanley as we have any other student who came to Boys High. This set the stage to begin the tradition at this school to open its admission to all races. I look out across the school today and am happy to see the great strength our school now has because of this.

I'd like to share an experience I had and I apologize in advance to Mr. Reeler. He asked me not to share this, but I'm going to share it anyway. About 4 a.m. around the end of November 1985, I was precariously balancing myself next to the famous statue of the naked boy who stands atop the dome of this great school. Someone shone a very bright light into my face from the fishpond below. I shouted down to the person, thinking it might be David Manley or Charles McDonald, my two partners in crime, "Who's that idiot shining that torch in my face?!" (Essentially, that is what I said.)

It happened to be the headmaster. Mr. Armstrong, the headmaster at the time, promptly shouted back, "Jakins, get down here now!" I figured he couldn't prove it was me if he couldn't actually catch me so the three of us slid away and a few days later each one of us was caned six of the best by the headmaster. He did that to make an example of us and to stop the tradition.

Mr. Headmaster, I apologize again for sharing this story. It is not my intention to resurrect that tradition. It is very dangerous! I share this story because that statue has a great symbolism that I would like to discuss. Having seen the statue up close, I feel somewhat qualified to talk about it. Under his right arm is a rugby ball. This is symbolic of the balance between our physical activities and the importance of gaining a good education. As Mr. Reeler mentioned this morning, it symbolizes the holistic development of a Boys High boy. There is a fine balance we must work on in order to be successful and happy.

We must understand that success does not come as a result of luck or accident. It most certainly does not come from having all our wishes come true. Success doesn't come from external circumstances. It comes from inside regardless of what is happening around us. I believe that success takes work. A fine balance of work.

I believe that we must work hard in three areas to be successful. Perhaps like a three legged stool, where if we ignore one or two of these legs, the stool falls over. First, we must work on our physical health. A few months ago, I suffered a heart attack, or as they say in Durban, my heart attacked me! I had a wake-up call that I need to work harder at being healthy.

Secondly we must work hard to make a living. With a good education and honest and earnest labour, we can achieve this.

Thirdly, we must work hard in our relationships. Relationships with whom, you may ask? Your family, your friends, and if you are religious, your God. When we work hard at developing and strengthening

relationships, we will experience happiness. Working on strengthening relationships can be hard but also fun.

Some people work hard at only one or two of these three things. Some people work so hard at being healthy that they run for hours every day and don't pay attention to their family. Others may work so hard at making money that they ignore their health and their family relationships. It is a fine balancing act that allows us to follow the symbolism of that boy.

Life is a great adventure. We need to have dreams and worthy goals that we can work to achieve. Don't stand back and be lazy. A famous man once said, "Without hard work, nothing grows but weeds!" Thomas Edison said, "There is no substitute for hard work."

Hard work spotlights the character of people. Some turn up their sleeves, some turn up their noses, and some don't turn up at all.

If we work hard and we achieve some measure of success, that is good. We have helped ourselves. But the right thing to do when we achieve success is to give back! Look around you! What you see here is as the result of ordinary men and women, mostly old boys of this school who have achieved success and given back to Boys High. Give back to this school, give back to your community and this great country so that our next generation can be even greater than you!

That boy up there has great symbolism. One thing he can never do is get down from the dome and work hard and give back-but you can! Thank you.

- Glenn Jakins (1985)