



### Newcastle Old Boys' Dinner



Guest Speaker - Dr Peter Moore

Good evening and thank you for your warm welcome and invitation to speak before you tonight. I must say that it has been an interesting exercise to reflect on my time at Boys High and what influences the experience may have had on the direction of my life and career.

There was always an expectation during my primary school years that I would be following in the footsteps of my father, Wal Moore. My father was a prominent Novocastrian and graduate of Newcastle Boys High in 1941. Two of his closest friends who served with him in the RAAF in WW2, Ian MacKenzie and Russ Evans, were Boys High graduates. One was my godfather and the other was a surrogate uncle. As it turns out, as I compare our times at Boys High the differences were more stark than any similarities. In fact, about the only things my father and I had in common were that we shared some of the same teachers. While my father enjoyed the teaching of Harold Beard (deputy in my father's time), "Spot" Burroughs, "Toc" O'Connor, and others in the prime of their careers, we in our time enjoyed the spectacle of their decline as they ended their careers during our watch. As I reflect I am struck by how much patience they had in teaching for so many years, not only to the very bright and intelligent, but also, lets face it, some seriously disturbed and unteachable individuals. But, our teachers, what indelible characters they all were! In many cases what they taught us when they had any success in reaching us was far more

valuable than the homogenized curriculum-based lesson plans that are now presented to our children and grandchildren. Harold Beard was a man before his times who deserved all the affection and accolades he received!

The one teacher I remember well was Noel Fardell. Fardell reminded me of one of the original tough guys. He bore a passing resemblance to the actor George C. Scott in looks and mannerisms with the same precise diction and pithy language and, like Scott's movie characters, showed a similar inclination for controlled violence when unhappy with the behavior of us poor testosterone-addled students. There are two instances I remember well. One was the time he brought the class to a halt over a series of infractions and as the class became silent he calmly pulled a hidden cane from inside his pants leg, much like a samurai drawing his sword. With the threat of violence imminent calm was restored.

The second instance was a little more comical on our part. I happened to live two houses up from Fardell on The Terrace and so would see him almost every day. It was a habit of a small group of us as we wandered up from the station to check out the surf at Newcastle Beach before we headed home. On this occasion I believe it was Ian Parsons, Bruce Wilson, Keith Read, and me in the group. Fardell drove by The Esplanade on his way home in his Citroen with the young Miss Stokes, one of only two women teaching at the school in the passenger seat. Without much thought to consequences we all whistled and yahooped like the adolescent primates we were. Not a smart move on our part. It was not very pleasant for us the next day as he lined us up to deliver his wrath!

Unlike my father, I was not a prefect, I was a 5 percenter! I was not in the first grade football team, I was a surfer. I was not a good student, I was happy marching with the 5<sup>th</sup> column! I never did homework, and I frequently missed first period because I was surfing and missed the train to school. But, I adopted stealth mode and stayed very much under the radar. Although I had a decent pass on the first go at the leaving certificate, it was not good enough for admission to medical school and so I repeated 5<sup>th</sup> year. My closest friends

were Keith Read, who became my brother-in-law and Ross Morgan, my closest friend for life. Our bond was surfing!

When I look at my time at school, my only accomplishment worth mentioning is that Ian Parsons and I were the first to get the cane in 1964 under the new Richardson get-tough regime, which, in retrospect was for somewhat foolish reasons and almost certainly had no real effect on our behavior. Our offense relatively harmless and juvenile, we got caught tossing grenades of dirt from the rose garden ahead into the stream of students walking up from Waratah station. After some harsh words from Richardson, the punishment delivered by TOC proved to be only transiently painful, but priceless in achieving street cred among our peers.

And so I went off to medical school in Sydney where my commitment to surfing continued unabated. And then a funny thing happened after I graduated. From the moment I started my internship, I loved what I was doing and found I was really good at taking care of the most critically ill and injured patients. I had three great mentors. Owen James who gave me many opportunities and fast tracked my career as an anesthetist and intensive care specialist at the Royal. Eustace Alfred, an intensivist and a pioneer in the introduction of personal computers and computer programming in medicine. He gave me the desire and skills to understand their use and apply informatics for rapid resolution of clinical problems at the point of care. My third mentor was Saxon White the foundation chair of human physiology at the medical school at Newcastle. Saxon became my mentor, doctoral supervisor, good friend and colleague. His advice and wisdom opened me to the idea of thinking big and to seeking a career in academic medicine.

In preparing this talk, I put my mind to thinking about any valuable insights, wisdom or understanding from my days at Boys High that may have had any impact on my career. And “yes” I do have a valuable pearl of wisdom, which I have thought about and often repeated over the course of my teaching career. This pearl comes from of all people, Jake Simpson,

and it took me a long time to understand what he meant. It has something of the flavor of a Zen puzzle. What he said was:

“There are over 100 ways to kill a cat including choking it with cream”

Yes, you can probably kill a cat by choking it with cream just as there are many weird and clever ways to manage an anesthetic in a patient undergoing surgery, but there are usually only a few direct and simple or uncomplicated ways to kill a cat or for that matter provide safe anesthetic care.

And so to the second part of my professional life, I have spent the last 28 years at UC Davis Health, serving for over 20 years of that time as an Academic Chair and Department Head and now as a Professor and Chair Emeritus. It's been a wonderful and rewarding experience as I have done everything that you could possibly do in my specialty and, as an academic leader been doubly rewarded by the successes of my students, residents and the young faculty whom I have helped to train, mentor, advise and support. But, there is always an opportunity if you look for it to play an encore – a much more interesting word than retirement!

I want to talk with you a little about what I have been about over the last 5 years, first as a volunteer and now as a staff member. In 2013, I began to free up time to volunteer with an international medical NGO in very unique and exciting global health programs. The organization is Orbis International. Orbis represents a marriage of aviation and medicine. They are best known for their Flying Eye Hospital. The FEH is a fully functional, fully accredited ambulatory surgery center and teaching hospital built into an airplane. This is the third generation FEH. The plane is a MD10 donated by Fedex, and to give you an idea an MD10 is a cargo plane about the size of a Boeing 777. The MD10 was originally a DC10 which has been upgraded with long range fuel tanks and avionics by Boeing for Fedex where it makes up the bulk the Fedex fleet. Boeing installed all new avionics and a glass

cockpit identical to the 777 and re-designated the plane the MD10. The plane has been vastly modified and is unique. We have a 48 seat auditorium with a large 3D flat screen projection at the front of the plane, there are 18 cameras on board in all the treatment areas, including a 3D camera in the operating microscope. Surgeries are live streamed from the plane around the world through CyberSight, the Orbis internet platform. This allows our surgeons to discuss and teach procedures to a much wider audience than is in the operating or procedure rooms or forward classroom. We have a Laser treatment and exam room, a fully equipped operating room for eye surgery, cleaning and sub sterile rooms, recovery room, change rooms, etc. The plane is totally independent of ground services. All we need is aviation fuel to run all our systems in the hospital.

Orbis International as an organization is 35 years old and was founded with the initial support of United Airlines and now by Fedex as the major donor. The FEH was born with the commitment to end avoidable blindness in developing countries. Shockingly, 75% of visual impairment can be prevented or treated. It is estimated that over 30 million adults and children today would be able to see with surgery or glasses.

However, the challenge is building lasting structures that can deliver the type of care needed for generations to come. At Orbis, we know the only way to make a real difference is to help build strong health systems that will go the distance and ensure people can receive good quality eye care when they need it. How we go about it is by threefold efforts.

First – is treating and training eye care providers through hands-on training. This includes doctors, nurses, optometrists, biomedical technicians and engineers and so forth. My focus is pediatric anesthesia safety, which is often the stumbling block to surgical care as anesthetic mortality in developing countries is so bad that the risk of surgery in children is unacceptable.

Second – working to strengthen health care infrastructure through the long-term support of local partners. Orbis head office is in New York. The major European Office is in London and there are 16 other in-country offices around the world running long term projects in our partner hospitals.

Third is advocacy. Orbis advocates for the inclusion and prioritization of eye health within public health and government policies. The plane is a powerful attractor for celebrities, the media, politicians, national health and other government leaders. It is also a powerful attractor for donors, foundations and philanthropists. It is widely covered in the news media including the major networks in each country we visit and in the US and Britain.

Our most recent and exciting development has come about from a major funding grant from UTC Aerospace Systems to develop the plane as a mobile simulation center to build simulation training into every program. I am leading these efforts, which permit us to extend our teaching and training programs beyond the training obtained by the hands-on-trainees and to safely extend training beyond the limited abilities of the host doctors and nurses.

I have worked and now hold medical licenses in 10 countries other than the US. I have worked in Panama, Peru, Philippines, China, Vietnam, Barbados, Ghana, Cameroon, Bangladesh, and Ethiopia. It is truly an exciting and fulfilling experience.

I would like to conclude at this point with the observation that us Old Boys of Newcastle Boys High represent the best and the brightest of our generations. We were set up to have privileged professional and rewarding lives. We are resilient! There is no such thing as retirement. That only happens to racehorses! Continue to enjoy your passions. The word of the night is ENCORE. There is no job description, program or script for any ENCORE. And as in every ENCORE performance, you do what you want to do, not what others expect of you! Thank you for your time and patience!