



KEYNOTE ADDRESS

BY DAVID MUNRO, YEAR OF 1988.

11 MARCH 2023

Mr and Mrs Lovatt, past Headmasters, members of School Governing Body, Trustees of the King Edward Educational Trust, members of staff, ladies and gentlemen, good evening to all of you.

Let's acknowledge that Mr Edey is one of the greatest educators in our country, and we should deeply appreciate his presence here with us tonight, with his wife Sue. His ability to inspire young men is unparalleled. "Captain, My Captain!" I salute you, Sir.

It's an incredible honor and privilege to be asked to share a few words this evening. My thanks to Mr Lovatt, Jonathan, and Derron for their faith.

Mr Edey, thank you for those very kind words of introduction, but there are two things I feel I should disclose that may well bring into question my quality as an Old Boy of this fine School:

Firstly, I don't have a tattoo,

And secondly, notwithstanding the careful tutelage of a short, rather rotund man present here this evening in under 13 rugby, I had the dubious honor of playing for every team from Under 13 G to Under 13 A – unfortunately I started in A and ended in G – I took up hockey in U14.

The history of King Edward VII School, and the present generation of boys, is well populated by many great families that have contributed so much over the years, each in their own special way. Several of these families are represented here tonight, which is wonderful.

I would therefore like to dedicate these words to every family that has chosen to send their son or sons to the School, whether first generation, one generation, or third or fourth generation.

Likewise, I would like to dedicate these words to the incredible service to the School of the educators, staff members, and headmasters over 120 years – their contribution to our society and to the lives of the 20,000 odd boys that have attended the school in that time is quite exceptional!

As we reflect this evening, let's do it filled with immense gratitude to the current and past teachers, staff members and headmasters of our School, and with appreciation for every family whose sons are from "This Place".

Over 120 years, that combination has created what is one of the finest secondary educational institutions in South Africa today. I want to say that again, King Edward VII School is one or, if not the finest, secondary schools in our country today.

How did that happen? What is the meaning of this School, why has it played such an outsized role in so many people's lives? Why does it inspire so much incredible pride and loyalty?

Is it the buildings and the grounds that give it identity and meaning – or is it something deeper, more profound?

When I ask why the school inspires such deep loyalty and pride in us, I mean every one of us that form part of the Red Army, every one of us that is present here this evening: old boys, parents and family members of old boys, and boys at the school, men and women who have taught, coached, or served at the school, including Headmasters.

What is this magic that inspires so much?

What does the School stir in our blood that calls us together and unites us?

What is it that makes us proud and lifts our heads, that vibrates in our hearts, that stokes the flames of our bellies and that inspires the soaring of our souls?

If you come to watch a Reds or Red Sticks match, you will know what it is.

If you attend an assembly or a valediction, if you stand or sit in the sun or the rain on a Sunday morning in November in the Quadrangle, you will know what it is.

If you drop off a boy in a Green blazer, or pick him up, or watch him play, perform, speak, compete in the colors of our School, you will know why we love this school so much.

If you are in this room tonight, you don't need me to tell you why!!

But this is a council meeting of the elders, a gathering of a clan, an Assembly of the Army, the Red Army, and by God I am going to tell you why we love this School, after 120 years, and more importantly why we need to keep loving it right now, at this very moment.

Come to the School at the start of the rugby season next week; watch the boys as they occupy the stands on the southeast edge of the Reds' field, and listen to their war cries.

You will see a boy in a green blazer with a Red, White and Green colored stick, held 35 years ago in these hands too.

That lone boy will shout:

Who are we?

And the boys on the stands will respond:

We are Red!!

Who are We?

We are Red!!

I am sure you can all hear it right now echoing in your souls.

Who are We?

We are Red!

So who are we, the Red?

Allow me to fire your imaginations to capture the images of what it means to be the Red.

We are the Red jerseys on a winter afternoon never, ever giving up.

We are the click of oars in a boat in the early morning mist.

We are the sound of bails being sprung as the ball, bowled from the Bidly end, castles into the wickets.

We are Agamemnon Dead, Atahualpa, Laertes, Hamlet and Macbeth.

We are the heavy, heart-wrenching beat of the deep bass drum as 17 year old boys solemnly march 3 abreast through the headmasters entrance into the quadrangle and around the cenotaph; we are the notes of the last post; the silence of eternity; and the tears of the lament drifting off in the wind.

We are the "Red and White" that makes a monster!

We are 67 green and gold tries in 124 matches, 10 flashes of brilliance in the 2007 Rugby World Cup to lift the trophy and inspire the hearts of a nation! You will hear from him later tonight.

We are three US Masters at Augusta National, and three Open Championships; three other majors - all dressed in black!

We are the Bomb squad, holding the ball at the back of the mall crushing the enemy over their line; the "Big" number 8 jersey destroying the Wallabies and everything else in his path; the 2012 Currie Cup winner wearing the #2 jersey.

We are 277 runs at Edgbaston followed by 259 runs at Lords; we are a 415 Run partnership against Bangladesh; the fastest Proteas gloves to take 200 Test Wickets; we are 302 runs at Newlands, and 85 at the Wanderers this week! We are the father and grandfather who scored 13 centuries and 34 half centuries in 133 first class matches; the doctor who transformed the sport; Proteas generation after generation after generation.

We are the target of a lightning bolt on the John Hurry field; on Wemmer Pan.

We are a bolt of lightning in green and gold sprinting the Japan Olympics 400m track; the T63 100m Africa record shattered at the in the same stadium two weeks later at the Paralympics; the African parabol jumping for kids.

We are the pair with oars that smashed the U23 world record in Italy at the World Rowing Championships;

We are 42 goals and the most caps ever for South Africa (250) on the Astro turf; the Bafana Bafana debutant against Namibia making his mark.

We are 41 years of rugby coaching for new boys, immortalized by the name of the field at the south side of the School.

Who are we?

We are Red!

We are 500m of Triumphs and Laments along the River Tiber in Rome, in hallmark charcoal black and white.

We are the driving force behind Chris Hani Baragwanath hospital becoming a world class medical facility serving the people of Soweto.

We are the trumpet on These Streets.

We are the Supreme Court making the Group Areas act "virtually unworkable"; the first prosecutor in the international criminal court.

We are Queens Counsel and the advocate of the high court to three Nobel Peace Prize Winners – Desmond Tutu, Nelson Mandela and Oliver Tambo; the voice of the words at the Steve Biko inquest "He died a miserable and lonely death on a cold prison floor".

We are President Mandela's, and the rainbow nation's, first Minister of finance.

We are the transformation of the life insurance industry in South Africa and the United Kingdom; a world class Business School in Johannesburg, and the top oncology hospital in the southern hemisphere.

We are the re-invention of the global paper and pulp industry, we are miners, lawyers, financiers, bankers, investors, insurers, advisers, industrialists, constructors, farmers, artists, musicians, film makers, architects, technologists, educators, doctors, nurses, journalists, preachers, care givers and more...

Who are we?

We are Red!

We are the father and son who walked to cricket every Saturday observing their faith; we are the team and the coaches who walked to fetch that boy for his last match.

We are the mothers and fathers, sisters and brothers, grandparents and family and friends turning out Presbyterian Style to sit on the stands, home and away, rain or shine supporting their sons, brothers, grandsons, nephews, friends.

We are the quiet, efficient and overachieving mother dedicating her life to the Old Boys Association and its members, knowing many of them by name.

We are the King Edwards Educational Trust, building an endowment dedicated to the future of this School.

We find a place in our hearts for 43 boys to have a home at King Edward VII School, and 9 girls at Parktown High School for Girls.

We are an Aquatic Centre fit for the Olympics, a club house fit for a Headmaster, a maths center, science block, Astro turf and boarding houses, library, cricket pavilion, bursaries for boys who will change the world –

Who are we?

We are Red!

We build, we grow.

We are a torch in the hostel, Beano, and a thousand more.

We are the quenching teas, the first aiders, the flowers in the school hall on sad occasions.

We are the 255 boys and masters, some as young as 17, who made the ultimate sacrifice on the fields of battle so that we could be here tonight –

We will remember them.

We are as tough as nails, we support, we compete, we win, we support, we compete, we love, we cry, we win, we are street-fighters and we are gentle souls at the same time; the iron is always just below the velvet with us.

And we never, ever give up.

We give of our best.

We reach down to give each other a hand up, we are a brotherhood, and a sisterhood, and a family.

That is who we are, the Red Army, this and a million more images – too many to mention - that represent what this School has achieved, and which describe what it is that we are capable of – that is who we are!

Yet I will say to you tonight that all that incredible achievement, all that unbelievable contribution to society, all that success, triumph and sacrifice – it is not enough – not for the times we are living in!

When those boys shout “we are red”,
when they shout “Bury me with my KES badge”,
when they sing the words “When we the Reds are here once More”
when they crouch arm in arm and shout those famous words of our War Cry:
“Itchy ballagoota
Skiet a ramma doota...”

It is **they** that are the true office bearers and infantry, the artillery and the sappers of the Red Army – **for without them we are nothing!**

It is that Green sea of 1,150 boys who enter and leave those beautiful new gates every day,
that wear the red caps,
that will carry the red sticks,
that will run out dressed in the red jersey, that play in the u14 G team and every team in between –
it is the boys on the 2023 debating team,
in this year’s school play,
playing the pipes and the drums in the School Band,
writing the maths Olympiad,
in the photographic society,
it is the boys of 8G and 9B, 10C and 12F,
it is the hijinks in the science lab,
the inspiration of Private Peaceful, and Mother to Mother, and To Kill A Mocking Bird, The Tempest and Romeo & Juliet,
the challenge of differentiation and integration, of Boyles law and the uncertainty of Heizenburg.

The boys of 2023 and 2024 and the years that lie ahead – it is they who are the office bearers and infantry of the Red army that we truly care about tonight – **for it is they who inherit the gifts of 120 years of history** and it is they who will create the fibers that continue to extend the rope that is King Edward VII School.

As my Oupa said at his farewell: “Once you join King Edwards, you never Leave”.

And it’s the Commander and his phalanx of generals,
the coaches and guides,
educators,
professionals,
teachers,
ground staff, and
trainers
that lead the daily engagement as we prepare these boys and young men for our world – it is to them that we give our salute tonight,
to them our thanks,
to them our trust –
for it is in their hands that the future of our Red Army lies!

And so it is for these boys that the School exists, that the 120 years hold meaning –
it is for their hopes, dreams and aspirations and,
it is for them to learn to succeed,
to belong,
to be part of something bigger than themselves,
it is for them to be dipped in Red,
so that when they sit at this council,
when they join our ranks and emerge to take on the world and make their mark on it –
it is then that they will know the heartache of examining their souls and testing their commitment to the battle cries of the Red army –

- it is then that they will ask of themselves,
- as we who sit here tonight have often done:

“Are we worthy?”

For these boys already know the ultimate rally cry of the Teddybears, the words emblazoned in our hearts, and imprinted on the cold granite of our cenotaph:

Sons of this place, let this of you be said, that you who live are worthy of your dead.

That’s why 120 years is important – because it brought us to this very moment, and to those 1,150 boys in the School today –
it is for them that we give our thanks, it is for them that we honour and acknowledge and celebrate 120 years;
it is for them that we uphold our own commitment to be worthy sons of this place,
indeed, worthy teachers, coaches, headmasters of this place,
worthy daughters, brothers, sisters, mothers, fathers, families and friends of this place, the place we call School.

Under ordinary circumstances, I would say thank you and that would be that. It would also be the 18 minutes that I promised my co-conspirators as we prepared for tonight. However something extraordinary happened in my life that I would like to share this evening.

As Mr Edey mentioned, I had the privilege to lead the Liberty Group as CEO for the last 5 years that it was independent and separately listed, until it was bought-out by the Standard Bank Group last year.

I want to share with you the extraordinary story, some may call it a predictable miracle, of why I took that job when it was offered to me in 2017, and what it meant to me.

By 1985 Liberty Life was the 5th largest company listed on the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, having been founded only 27 years earlier by Sir Donald Gordon.

Liberty was a massive empire built on his deep belief that everyone should have the opportunity to strive for financial freedom in their lives, the opportunity of dignity in retirement and to be freed of the burden of financial worries.

In the year of 1985, Donald Gordon approached my Oupa and Ouma, who at the time were retired, living in Sandringham on a state pension and teaching extra maths lessons to get by.

He came round to their home and explained to my Oupa that he had learnt the power of compounding in my Oupa's maths classroom at the School, and upon those lessons, that knowledge and the power of compound interest, he had gone on to build Liberty into what it was at that time.

To express his appreciation to my grandparents, he offered to pay them a life pension to cover their expenses for the rest of their lives – his version of Financial Freedom, or Liberty.

My Ouma and Oupa indeed lived the rest of their lives in peace and with dignity, my Oupa for 4 years, and my Ouma for a further 21 years – All told Donald Gordon provided my grandparents with his vision of Liberty for 25 years in return for what he had learnt in my Oupa's maths classroom.

This is the story of a great son of this place, worthy, and it is a story I am proud to tell tonight.

It is also the story of why I gave up my job at Standard Bank over a weekend, to become the CEO at Liberty, to do my best to restore the dignity, health and competitiveness of that great company, and to honoUr Sir Donald Gordon in my own way for what he had done for my family.

Just like tonight, I was equally proud to tell that story of my Grandparents to Sir Donald's family in the evening after his funeral, as family and friends gathered at one of his sons' homes. Lil, my wife, and I were meeting almost all of them for the very first time; we had had no time to even introduce ourselves. Incredibly, the family present had always known that their father had made this incredible act of generosity, but they had never known who the beneficiaries were, or why he had done so.

In that moment of sharing our families' story, several circles finally closed for them. Before I started to tell them the story, most of them did not even know that I was the CEO of Liberty at the time. Having the opportunity to speak tonight has given me the opportunity to close another circle for my family by telling this story to the Red Army.

So to everyone present here this evening,
sons of this place,
sisters, mothers and fathers of this place,
educators, coaches and staff of this place,
Headmasters of this place,
you too have stories such as these in your lives.
Tell them, and inspire others by what the Red Army is capable of – its predictable miracles.

More importantly, you, and our sons today at the School, have the opportunity and potential to write these kinds of stories into the future, to have an impact far beyond what we thought was possible,
to be inspiring,
to change lives,
to reach our potential and go beyond –
Simply by answering that call of the Teddybears:

Sons of this place, let this of you be said, that you who live, are worthy of your dead.
I thank you and wish you an extraordinary evening!



APPENDIX - FAMILY NOTES

My family is blessed to have had sons who went to the School; educators who gave their lives to the School; wives, mothers, daughters and sisters who love the School as their own - in our family, our blood is Red – that special King Edward VII red.

My own maternal grandparents (we called them Ouma and Oupa) gave their lives to King Edwards, and its boys. As a result, we were all brought up on a strict diet of jungle oats and King Edwards VII School. They both taught maths at the school for many years – indeed my Oupa for more than 47 years interrupted only by service in the Second World War. He was the first coach of the “first” First Rugby Team in 1932, alongside his great friend Dan Henning – they introduced the Red Jersey and white shorts, red and white socks - and together my Ouma and Oupa ran the boarding house for the Grade 8 boys, then called Buxton. My Ouma taught maths in the lower grades for many years.

My mother grew up in Buxton, she and her siblings called the School grounds home, her brothers attending the School. My father attended the School from 1950 to 1954, my brothers and cousins in the 70's, 80's and 90's.

My Dad has been a dedicated contributor to the school's Pipe Band from the age of 13 till his last participation in the 2019 Armistice Parade, and incredible span of nearly 70 years participating in and inspiring the success of the band and its members.

My wife and daughters are passionate supporters of the Red Army, and we thank God for the blessing of being able to send our son to the School today.