

EULOGY FOR KEITH GRUNDY AM (1929-2024)

The name, Keith Grundy sits comfortable with those of WP Nicholls, Rufus Ray and Jock Mackinnon, the great statesmen of Pulteney Grammar School during the 20th century.

Keith, or KMG, as he was referred to in the somewhat Dickensian parlance of the day is fondly remembered and respected, by colleagues, Old Scholars and past parents, alike.

Having trained at Adelaide University and Adelaide Teacher's College during the late 1940's Keith taught with the Education department of SA, at Kingscote on Kangaroo Island and Karoonda Area Schools. At the latter, he achieved a record at that time, as the driver of the longest school bus route in South Australia – 72 miles or 120 kilometres a day.

Joining the Pulteney Prep School Staff as a Form master, in 1956, Keith commenced on a starting salary of 915 pounds per annum. He was soon seconded to the organisation of all Prep School sport, as there was no specialist Sports Master at that time. This saw an upward adjustment of a further 45 pounds, per annum.

In one of his 1966 notes, Keith recalled that, and I quote “as white summer clouds floated freely in a blue sky, cows grazed quietly on the brown grass waiting patiently to be milked.” A familiar scene at the time, the cows, the property of AMSCOL, in Pulteney Street, grazed across the road on what were then, and now, our playing fields, little more than designated areas within a paddock. Keith went on to say that “If you were playing football on the paddocks, you had to be rather careful where you fell!”

The dual role of class teacher and sports master continued until 1966, when the then Headmaster Canon Rufus Ray, appointed Keith, Master of the Preparatory School. During his 35 years as Master, the Prep School grew from some 150 boys to just over 300. All 311 boys were known to him by name, a trait he learned from Canon Ray. He was able to write a comment on every boy's report, based upon face-to-face contact. He also knew every parent's profession or trade and treated them all equally, as he did, prospective parents. To the boys he was, at once, formidable, warm, and engaging. I met yesterday with a 1961 graduate, now 80 years old, who recalled Keith taking him gently to buy pyjamas in Mt Gambier. He'd cried all that way after realising he hadn't packed any for the camp trip.

Keith lived and worked by the premise that one's title doesn't make one a leader. One's actions, integrity, vision, accountability, and empathy, do.

Keith carried all of these attributes through his daily life. Furthermore, he employed staff, he felt held these qualities and he was rarely disappointed. He was happy to delegate to his staff, knowing he had selected them carefully, but maintained high expectations. He would often make surprise classroom visits to hear students read or observe their maths work or spelling. This was a subtle surveillance of teacher programs and staff appraisal and it certainly kept everyone on their toes.

Having said that, his leadership style and mentorship, enabled staff to respect him, have fun with him and engage any topic with him. This included family and personal matters, which received a listening ear, and sage, non-judgmental advice, with the utmost discretion. He always supported his staff; however, they knew when they'd done something wrong and worked doubly hard to rectify their mistakes, never wanting to disappoint him. In reality, he built a family from his team.

Keith's staff meetings were great "think tanks" – sharing of ideas but never long winded, always short, sharp and shiny. He listened to suggestions and took on board those that he needed to, in the end he always made the final decision and his team never doubted it would be the right one. He constructed opportunities for his staff and the School, to grow but the buck always stopped with him. Keith was innovative, the ELC and pre and post care, are examples of this.

Reflecting on his first 20 years at Pulteney, Keith wrote in 1986, with some concern, that boys had much broader and more worldly knowledge due to the influence of television. He ventured that some boys even had a television set in their bedroom! Imagine what his contemporary reflection might have been, with the advent of computers and social media.

He introduced School tours which took new boys to all points of the campus compass. Keith promoted a sense of community amongst Preparatory School Families and was ever alert to their needs and to those of the boys and staff in his section of the school.

Perhaps one of the most beneficial and enjoyable of his innovations in the Prep School were the annual exchanges with Malvern House (the preparatory School of Caulfield Grammar in Melbourne), allowing sporting and academic exchanges for boys and professional development opportunities for his staff.

Keith regarded major changes in the facilities enjoyed by Prep boys as one of his greater achievements "The most significant," he said, "being the move in 1976, to the Kearns building on Gilles Street, which incorporated the old Gilles Arms Hotel and a new classroom block.

Keith developed a unique knowledge of Preparatory School education – an era in which he became known as the doyen of Adelaide's schools. He occupied almost every position of responsibility in the Junior Schools Heads' Association of Australia, at both State and Federal levels. His prominence at a national level led to his election as Federal chairman from 1986 – 1988.

Keith retired from his role as Master of the Prep in 1989, only to return, appointed to my current role, Director of Community Relations in 1991. With almost more farewells than Dame Nellie Melba, in 1993 he was appointed School Registrar perhaps the most knowledgeable enroller ever known on South Terrace!

Keith retired from Pulteney, finally, in 1998, potentially the only staff member to have received 3 retirement parties.

To mark the end of his 37 years of service to the School, the Council of Governors hosted a Gala at the Adelaide Convention Centre, enabling generations of Old Scholar families to honour the significant part Keith played in their lives.

Keith was recognised with a rare Life Membership of the Pulteney Old Scholars' Association. During his time at Pulteney, Keith taught innumerable fathers and sons of Pulteney families...and that is evidenced here today.

Throughout his career Keith received strong support from Margaret, who proffered the view that "if you love the guy, you love what he does". Keith and Margaret regularly entertained staff in their home at Galway Avenue, Broadview, and to this day, are regarded as a warm and welcoming team.

I found a letter from Margaret, addressed to the then Headmaster Peter Tooke, and I share a little of it with you, as it so elegantly portrays her commitment to Keith and the School...

“Dear Peter,

And so the curtain comes down on my forty two years as a Pulteney spouse. Such a long association could, in some circumstances, lead to complacency but it can also have fulfilling rewards. My enthusiasm for and about Pulteney has never waned. I shall certainly miss my involvement.”

Thank you Margaret, for all you have done for Keith, and for Pulteney.

Keith was a foundation Member of the specific Learning Difficulties Association of SA, serving the association for 25 years, including 6 years as President, was a member of the Australian College of Educational Administration and served as Chairman of the Pedare Christian College Board.

Hew as a Member of the Naval, Military and Airforce Club, an energetic and conscientious parishioner at St Philips, Broadview and a Freemason.

Amongst my papers I found an endorsement of Keith’s candidature for Freemasonry. It reads “Keith is a man of outstanding qualities, one who already, in his heart could be called a freemason, and one who having set his hand to the plough, will never look back. It is signed, W.R. Ray, Clerk in Holy Orders. As Ray was then the Grand Master of the Lodge in South Australia, I imagine Keith’s progression was immediate and unquestioned!

Keith was awarded the Queens Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977 and in 1987 was invested as a Member of the Order of Australia, his citation reading “for services over an extended period to Education in general and SPELD in particular.”

Men of the ilk of Keith Murray Grundy are rare, I am privileged he influenced my life. I am humbled by being offered the opportunity by Margaret, to provide this reflection to honour Keith’s professional life.

I am indebted to the many past staff who have shared their stories and love for Keith.

VALE, KMG.

Mark Bouchier

October 19th 2024