

MELBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL

ANNUAL PARADE

15 OCT 09

PRINCIPAL, CO OF THE UNIT, GUESTS, MEMBERS OF THE TEACHING STAFF, PARENTS AND FRIENDS & THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN OF THE MELBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL CADET UNIT, THE CEREMONIAL BAND AND 415 SQUADRON, AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS – THANK YOU FOR THE HONOUR OF REVIEWING THE ANNUAL PARADE.

MAY I FIRSTLY CONGRATULATE YOU ON YOUR DRESS AND BEARING – AND THE EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE OF THE BAND. A MILITARY PARADE IS GREAT TO VIEW BUT I KNOW THAT AFTER ALMOST 29 YEARS IN THE ARMY THE PROCESS OF PARADE REHEARSALS TO GET TO THIS STAGE CAN BE LESS ENTHRALLING.

TODAY MARKS THE LAST TIME YEAR 12 CADETS WILL BE ON PARADE – AT ANY POINT OF TRANSITION IT IS WORTH REFLECTING ON THE EXPERIENCE GAINED AND THE LESSONS LEARNED.

THERE ARE A MYRIAD OF LESSONS OR POINTS THAT MAY COME TO MIND, SOME PRACTICAL SOME MORE ESOTERIC. FROM MY FOUR YEARS OF CADET SERVICE AND FOUR YEARS OF TRAINING AT RMC DUNTROON I KNOW THAT RIDING IN A VEHICLE BEATS WALKING ANYWHERE AND DEPENDING ON THE SURROUNDINGS – A HELICOPTER RIDE BEATS BOTH. I KNOW THAT THE NOVELTY OF BEING SOAKED TO THE SKIN PASSES VERY QUICKLY, I KNOW THAT YEARS AGO THE PRINCIPAL AND SENIOR OFFICERS WHO REVIEWED THE PARADE LOOKED ANCIENT BUT IN FACT THEY WERE ACTUALLY IN THE PRIME OF THEIR LIFE.

NOTWITHSTANDING THE OBVIOUS – THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN MARCHING OFF TODAY AND THOSE TAKING UP THEIR MANTEL ACTUALLY HAVE A DISTINCT ADVANTAGE OVER MANY OF THEIR PEERS. THIS GOOD FORTUNE IS DUE TO THE FACT THAT YOU HAVE HAD TO WORK IN A TEAM ENVIRONMENT – NOT ALWAYS UNDERTAKING TASKS THAT APPEAL TO EVERYONE IN THE TEAM - AND IN THAT SAME ENVIRONMENT LEAD AND MANAGE OTHERS. TEAM SPORT HAS SOME PARALLELS BUT IS NOT THE SAME.

THE BENEFIT OF THIS AWARENESS WILL ASSIST YOU IN MANY WALKS OF LIFE –MY BROTHER – WHO NOW MANAGES A FIVE STAR HOTEL FOR AN INTERNATIONAL CHAIN – CREDITS MUCH OF HIS EARLY LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE TO SERVICE IN CADETS AND THE THEN CURRENT ARMY PUBLICATION – “LEADERSHIP – THEORY AND PRACTICE, 1973” WHICH WAS A CADET STANDARD IN THE LATE 1970S AND EARLY 1980S. MANY OF THOSE LESSONS ARE STILL APPLICABLE TODAY.

OF COURSE TO THE OUTSIDER, MILITARY SERVICE – PARTICULARLY THE LEADERSHIP ASPECT, SEEMS STRAIGHTFORWARD. AN ORDER IS ISSUED AND GAINFUL ACTIVITY ENSUES. THE REALITY – PARTICULARLY WHEN THE AUSTRALIAN SOLDIER OR THE MELBOURNE HIGH SCHOOL CADET IS INVOLVED – CAN BE SOBERINGLY DIFFERENT. A TASK NOT EXPLAINED FULLY, THE SETTING OF A POOR EXAMPLE OR THE LACK OF ATTENTION TO BASIC REQUIREMENTS CAN DERAIL THE BEST INTENTIONED YOUNG LEADER. ALTERNATIVELY, ATTENTION TO SUCH ASPECTS CAN BUILD YOU SOME CREDIT – THE ODD ERROR WILL BE FORGIVEN OR FULL EFFORT WILL BE APPLIED WHEN SOLDIERS OR CADETS KNOW THERE IS NO TIME FOR DISCUSSION.

MANY OF YOU HAVE EXPERIENCED THE CHALLENGE OF LEADING AND WORKING WITH THE MOST DIFFICULT GROUP YOU CAN FACE - FRIENDS AND PEERS. ON REFLECTION THE RESULTS MAY HAVE BEEN GOOD BUT THE ROUTE TAKEN COULD DO WITH SOME POLISH. YOU MAY HAVE DISREGARDED WELL INTENTIONED ADVICE TOO QUICKLY – THUS JEOPARDISING A HELPING HAND IN THE FUTURE, YOU MAY HAVE BEEN OVERLY OFFICIOUS WHEN EVERYONE KNEW YOU WERE IN CHARGE ANYWAY OR YOU MAY HAVE PROMISED MORE THAN YOU COULD DELIVER.

ALTERNATIVELY, YOU MAY HAVE STUMBLED ACROSS THE REALISATION THAT A RANGE OF SKILLS CONTRIBUTE TO A TEAM RESULT, INTELLIGENT PEOPLE COME IN ALL SHAPES, SIZES AND GENDERS, LEADING IS NOT ABOUT THE PERSON WITH THE LOUDEST VOICE AND, OCCASIONALLY, HARD DECISIONS NEED TO BE MADE – AN INEVITABLE FACT BUT A DIFFICULT TRUTH WHEN MORE THAN A WORK RELATIONSHIP IS AT STAKE.

FOR CADETS SERVING ON – IT SEEMS SELF EVIDENT – THERE ARE PLENTY OF EXPERIENCES TO GAIN AND ENJOY, TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS, LEAD AS REQUIRED AND DON'T TAKE YOUR SHORTFALLS TOO SERIOUSLY – EVERYONE HAS DAYS THAT CHALLENGE A SENSE OF HUMOUR.

TO THE PARENTS, FRIENDS, OFFICERS OF CADETS AND TEACHING STAFF THANK YOU FOR THE ONGOING SUPPORT YOU PROVIDE – YOU CAN BE JUSTLY PROUD OF THE YOUNG MEN AND WOMEN BEFORE YOU.

IN CONCLUSION – WELL DONE ON THIS PARADE, FOR THE CADETS JOINING THE DEFENCE FORCE – YOU ARE JOINING AT AN EXCITING AND DEMANDING TIME, MAKE THE MOST OF THE OPPORTUNITIES PRESENTED TO YOU, AND I WISH YOU ALL - THE BEST OF LUCK FOR THE FUTURE.

BRIG D.H.M.SAUL, AM