

WATERKLOOF HOUSE PREPARATORY SCHOOL

Extract from a speech delivered by Tiny Barnettson to Grade 7 Leavers

You are probably aware that the world is experiencing economic difficulties, the extent of which is not yet clear. What is clear however, is that South Africa, although fairly well positioned, will be affected.

We are coming to the end of a sustained period of growth, probably the longest in my career, and it is during this period of growth, that we have seen enormous wealth falling into the hands of a relatively few number of people. In many cases, such wealth way exceeds the inherent value of such individuals, and is often gained, either by manipulating systems, or plundering the reserves of institutions that they never created.

What generally follows, is a seeming need to display the fruits of these ill gotten gains, which in turn, puts great pressure on the have nots. Needless to say, these huge disparities have the potential to destabilise, not only our society, but many other societies, throughout the world, and there must be repercussions.

In almost every case, the primary driver behind this lust for wealth has been that most unpleasant human characteristic, greed. The noble characteristics of compassion, thrift, generosity, and humility, have in many instances been abandoned. Families have felt the negative impact of these reductions in moral standards, and schools have not been unaffected. It seems that certain parents feel that by throwing considerable sums of money at the education of their children, they can outsource the responsibility of raising their children to the schools, little realising that the school has no chance whatsoever of succeeding, if the fundamental values and standards have not been established and maintained in the home.

The fallout from these deteriorating economic conditions will continue to be felt, and it is my fervent hope that the shock of what is to come, will bring society back to its senses, and that the moral standards, so necessary for a society to survive, will be reestablished.

You may ask why I am conveying this message to boys. The fact is that the boys of this school will become the leaders of tomorrow, and it is on them that the hopes and aspirations of the generations ahead of them, and behind them, will fall. WHPS is about those very noble characteristics, and my recommendation to these young men, is that they need to nurture and develop these qualities, to lay the foundation for their roles as the leaders of tomorrow.

As you go out from here, you are going to be faced with increasing challenges. These will be interesting, exciting, daunting, and stimulating, and we believe you are well prepared to capitalise on the opportunities facing you.

But do remember, that nothing of any consequence, or lasting value, comes without effort. There is simply no short cut for hard work.

Prepare yourselves mentally and physically for the tasks ahead. You need to broaden your horizons and experience as you get older, and develop life skills. In order to accomplish this, I would strongly recommend that you expose yourselves to as many and varied experiences as possible. When your tasks are complete, offer to do more, volunteer for every activity you can, and always go beyond the call of duty. Not only will this do wonders for your own development, confidence, and self esteem, but nothing enthuses employers more than those who go the extra mile. Each one of you has the necessary ingredients to make a success of your lives, and we know you will.

You probably realise, and if not, you will come to realise, that you have had a privileged education at WHPS. Judging from the lists of schools to which you are proceeding, your privileged education will continue. Whilst I don't refer to privileged in the negative context, you must be conscious of the millions around you who have not been as fortunate as you, and in years to come, you need to actively consider how you can extend the benefits that you have received, to other communities, for the privileged cannot live in isolation from the rest.

Remember too, that WHPS's reputation is largely influenced by the performance and behaviour of the old boys. Be conscious of this, and ensure that you live up to the high expectations the school has of you.

One of the many unique features of this school, is the huge support that it gets from the WHPS constituency, and in particular from the Old Boys Association.

We are not aware of any prep school in the country that enjoys the same old boys support. You are all members now, so we urge you to remain in contact. If possible, join the Old Boys committee, which you will find to be most rewarding, and by doing so, you will strengthen the WHPS community, ensuring the continuance of this important institution, and the role it plays in influencing the future of South Africa.

Good luck to you all. We will be most interested observers of your careers and do hope that you will remain in touch.