

23/02/81

NORMAN CECIL ADDLESON : A TRIBUTE

We are gathered this afternoon in solemn assembly to pay our tribute to the memory of one of the University's most devoted, loyal and faithful sons, Norman Cecil Addleson.

Born in Queenstown in 1926 he had his schooling at Selborne College, East London. As with so many both before and after him from that school and city he came to Rhodes, obtaining successively his B.A. and LL.B. After being called to the bar in 1948 he served his whole professional career in Grahamstown, apart from a short period reading in chambers in Johannesburg with Advocate, later Judge, Kuper. In his antecedents, education and work, therefore, he was as completely identified with the Eastern Cape as it was possible for him to be.

The details of that professional career, and the contributions he made in his chosen field, have been movingly and eloquently set forth in a splendid tribute delivered by the Judge President, himself an Old Rhodian and former chairman of Council. Judge Cloete, who unfortunately cannot be present on this occasion, owing to official duties, also described Norman's commitments to public life, including his involvement in the National Institute for Crime Prevention and Rehabilitation (NICRO) and the South African Institute of International Affairs. I cannot hope to emulate Judge Cloete's eloquence, nor would it be wise for me to attempt to cover the same ground. My task this afternoon is to express, however inadequately, the enormous appreciation and gratitude

we, all sectors of the Rhodes community, students, academic and administrative staff, Convocation, Old Rhodian Union, Board of Governors and Council have for the invaluable contribution Norman made to this the University he loved so much. He was part and parcel of its activities for thirty-eight years.

Many of us here today, perhaps the majority, have only had the opportunity of experiencing life at Rhodes from one, or perhaps two perspectives, the most obvious being those of student and staff member. Norman must have been close to unique in the spectrum of roles he played, and the contributions he made in them, during his association with the University. With virtually no break in continuity he was successively undergraduate, postgraduate student, part-time lecturer in the Law Department, Convocation-elected member and then Vice-Chairman, and finally Chairman of the Council. He furthermore found time to serve on the Board of Governors of the Rhodes University Foundation, and also on the Senate, in the not very widely known capacity as a Council Representative.

In all these roles he played his part to the full and never fluffed his lines. The theatrical analogy is particularly apt, because the theatre was a lifelong interest. In association with one of his closest friends, the late Leon Gluckman, he made an enormous contribution to student drama, in the days when there was no teaching department. At this

point it is appropriate to quote an excerpt of a message from Dr the Hon Henry Gluckman, Leon's father:

"I have lost a warm personal friend who did so much to comfort me in the death of my own son, Leon, and who so warmly supported me and Leon's brother, Michael, in establishing in this university a living memorial and lasting tribute to Leon.

Leon Gluckman and Norman Addleson were friends and contemporaries at Rhodes and Norman shared Leon's enthusiasm for the theatre, taking part in some of my son's productions.

I shall treasure the memory of Norman's generous and heartwarming tribute to Leon on the occasion of the presentation to Rhodes of the Leon Gluckman Memorial Scholarship in Speech & Drama. Norman's address on that evening summed up his whole character, his generous spirit and his profound understanding."

A high water mark was Leon and Norman's joint production of "Murder in the Cathedral", a production whose excellence and fame has made it part of the folklore of Rhodes. Those of us who were privileged to see it will know how deserved that reputation was. When it was presented in the Grahamstown cathedral the logistics called for the knights sent to rid Henry of the turbulent priest to clank into the cathedral through an external vestry door. Norman was very fond of

telling of the inebriated citizen attempting to cross the square who encountered four mediaeval knights and fled in terror. This was too much even for Grahamstown.

Although I stand before you in my official capacity I cannot avoid a personal element in this tribute, because the relationship between a Vice-Chancellor and a Chairman of Council necessarily has a personal dimension. When I entered Rhodes as a humble ink in 1947 student life was more hierarchically ordered than it is today. Norman was already firmly established as a senior LL.B. student, and he was in the same hall. Furthermore, Leon Gluckman produced what was surely the most professional inky-concert ever performed and Norman was frequently to be seen in his company. As a consequence my initial respect for him was immense. As I followed his subsequent career and then came to know him well on my return to Grahamstown I had no cause to revise my judgement, except in an upward direction. I frequently had reason to seek his advice on delicate and seemingly intractable problems. No matter what the urgency of his other commitments that advice was always offered cheerfully, constructively, generously and skilfully. Many was the occasion when he spared me from reacting superficially and hastily. It has been said that sought advice is always the best advice. Norman's was of the best.

In committee meetings and on other formal occasions he did not waste words, but what he did say was of cardinal influence. His contribution was frequently prefaced by a

characteristically self-effacing phrase such as "I yield to no one in my ignorance of" When, as did occur, this phrase was directed toward some aspect of the law, the listener realised that this was not the false modesty of one who knew little of the matter, and was honest enough to admit it. It was rather the true modesty of one who, like Sir Isaac Newton, knew a great deal and realised that there was a great deal more to know. Behind that humble exterior, one immediately perceived, was a razor-sharp mind tempered by wisdom, a knowledge of the affairs of mankind and, above all, a superb sense of judgement. His puckish sense of humour, too, was one of his hallmarks: it enlivened a social occasion, or defused a tense one.

Normal Cecil Addleson, wise counsellor, true friend, man of compassion, the balanced and cultured man of catholic tastes extending to drama, music, photography, literature, even flying, we all miss him deeply. Our innermost sentiments of sorrow are made bearable by gratitude for his contributions and achievements in relation to his profession, his University and to each one of us who benefitted from them. He persevered in the path of duty and committed obligation right until the end. No one, for example, who witnessed it will ever forget the courage, grace and dignity with which he presided over a Council lunch and his final Council meeting at the end of last year.

To his widow Peggy, his sons Mark and John and their wives Jen and Shelley, and to his parents we extend our deepest

sympathy and condolences during these days of bereavement and sorrow.

A verse from the prophet Micah (Chapter 6, verse 8) is a fitting summary of Norman the man we all knew, and offers the note on which to conclude this tribute:

He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doeth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly before Thy God?

D S H

23 February 1981