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WELCOMING REMARKS, by MUFC President Andrew Donald, IN RESPECT OF THE INAUGURAL DR BRIAN COSTELLO ORATION TO BE DELIVERED BY ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR CHISTOPHER CORDNER ON SATURDAY 6TH APRIL, 2019 AT THE ERNIE CROPLEY PAVILION, THE UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE

The University of Melbourne

In a letter written to the new Vice-Chancellor, Professor Duncan Maskell welcoming him to the University and sent by the Melbourne University Football Club (comprised as we are of our three great tribes Melbourne University Women's, University Blues and University Blacks football clubs), we observed that this University rightly held a reputation as a centre of excellence in academic, research, sporting and other pursuits and that its sporting clubs adhered to the ideals which established, enhanced and continue to maintain that reputation.

Soon after the commencement of tuition on 13th April, 1855 to date and continuing, the University's sporting clubs have been and remain deeply influenced by the belief that team sport assists character-development and nation-building. Established in 1859 and as a flagship sporting club of the University (proudly wearing the colours of our sporting teams of black and royal blue), the football club promotes activity which develops character. Our activities are founded upon meticulous planning, thorough preparation and the ethos of hard work and are centred upon the core beliefs of leadership, responsibility, contribution, cohesion and teamwork whilst making the hallowed turf of the University Main Oval and the Pavilion a happy, inclusive and supportive place in which to be involved with football.

It follows that, other than winning football matches, our purpose is and has always been to instill the values that come with team sport into young men and women: the relationship of effort to reward, the importance of skill and physical fitness, the relationship of a healthy body to a healthy mind, the ability to work in combination, the true meaning of strength, courage and resilience and the benefit of friendship and association.

Our aim is to assist in shaping capable young women and men who are expected to and who will build the nation.

Ian Munro

Ian Hamilton Munro passed away peacefully on 1st February, 2019 aged 87 years. A life member of the Melbourne University Football Club awarded in 1972, Munnors (as he was known here with great affection) served as president of the MUFC (in 1964/5 with Jack Clancy and again in 1972) and in many other capacities over many years, particularly with Blues.

As “Black and Blue” records “with a bigger club, the willingness of individuals such as Marc Marsden, Jack Clancy and Ian Munro to oversee the general business became significant. In 1958, Munnors took over as secretary and introduced a complete set of books centralising the accounts.”

Following his years of service to the MUFC, Munnors became involved with the Association and its executive during which time he served as Vice-President. An obituary published on the Association’s website recorded that Munnors contributed significantly to representative teams and the day-to-day operations of the Association and was central to the formation and running of the Gold Pass Club formed in 1983. As former V.A.F.A. President, Richard Evans observed “Ian was at his best as he loved communicating with clubs and past players, and the Gold Pass Club formed the perfect liaison. When V.A.F.A. home and away games or state representative matches were played at Elsternwick Park, Ian was always there supervising the functions and ensuring all the guests, visitors and club supporters were well looked after.”

Munnors was a great historian not only of the Association but of this football club, and his collection of memorabilia was unrivalled, matched only perhaps by his incredible and well-renowned memorabilia from the 1956 Melbourne Olympic Games where the Association took part in an exhibition match.

In 1996, Munnors was acknowledged for his great contribution to the Association with life membership. As Richard observed further “When we look back over the 127-year history of the V.A.F.A. and ponder why it has been so successful and why indeed it still exists, we can look at the Ian Munro’s to find the answer.

Dr Brian Costello

Dr Costello (whom had turned 100 years on Christmas Day, 2018) died peacefully on New Year’s Eve. A graduate of this University and until retirement, an old school general medical practitioner (practising in Melbourne) and significant contributor to the community, Dr Costello served Australia as a

medical officer in the Second World War where he was known for his courage and compassion.

Dr Costello was also a life member of the Melbourne University Football Club and of the Victorian Amateur Football Association. The first Blacks' game he attended was Round 1 in 1967 at Elsternwick Park and from then on he remained involved with Blacks. On that day, Dr Costello's son, Tony, played his first game and was later joined at Blacks by his brothers Brian (Jr), Tim, Jack, Simon and Frank. Grandsons Andrew, Daniel, Liam and Benjamin were also Blacks' players.

From the moment he arrived, Dr Costello (whom, during the 1950's, served as honorary club doctor of the Geelong Football Club) assumed the responsibility as the Blacks' club doctor until passing the doctor's bag to Tony which has now been passed onto Dan. Dr Costello's no nonsense persona barely hid a caring person who treated all players (Blacks and otherwise) with interest and respect. As Tony observed in the course of a fine eulogy at his father's funeral, "Dad had zero interest in material possessions."

Dr Costello was held in the highest regard by our three M.U.F.C. clubs and across the V.A.F.A. community. Dr Costello managed the 1974 intervarsity team to Canberra (thereby preserving the reputation of certain persons who are now eminent Victorians!) and for many years, he was the honorary doctor of the V.A.F.A. representative teams hence his life membership of the Association.

The Costello family has given more than fifty year's continuous (and continuing) service to football at this University. Blacks' president, Nick Carah will now introduce the orator of the inaugural of Dr Brian Costello Oration. Chris Cordner, an Associate Professor of Philosophy at this University, a former Blacks' player and a member of the family with a long connection to the University and its football club has kindly agreed to deliver the inaugural oration.

Brian Costello Oration

It's a great honour and privilege to be asked to give this inaugural Brian Costello ('Doc') Oration.

Let me begin by acknowledging the recent death of Munnerns, such a vivid presence around this place for so long. He will appear again later.

There was only one absolute pre-requisite that today's speaker had to satisfy: that he had had stitches inserted by Doc on some Saturday afternoon between April and September during the last 50 plus years .

By that measure, there are many here today who are better-qualified to be standing at this microphone instead of me: Rosco, Fish, Don McCallum among many others. From my early days Wayne Spring and Stu McGregor come to mind. I think in the end their heads were pretty well held together by Doc's stitches.

The reason in Stu's case is etched into my memory. For Stu the word handball might have come from the lexicon of Mandarin Chinese or ancient Greek. If Stu had the ball, it could only escape from traffic if Stu remained attached to it. And he was marvellous in traffic.

He would get the ball and stand with it, sway left, shift right, sway back, shift left again, his opponents moving just a shade later with each shift, trying unsuccessfully to get hold of Stu, and getting increasingly annoyed at being made to look more like floundering fools with each failed attempt. How often, on the 3rd or 4th or 5th shift, one of them would abandon the effort of trying to grab him, and just let fly with a face-high fist as Stu glided by in the opposite direction from the one they were now moving in. Stu would still have the ball, and would get his kick, but Doc on the sidelines would already be mentally pencilling in the next McGregor patch-up.

Funnily enough, Shackles – Roger Shackleton, my first Blacks Captain – was similarly good in traffic. But somehow he seemed to do it without enraging his opponents. They always seemed to see Stu, though, as cocky, taunting them, leading with his chin you might say; and so, boy, were they going to get some work done on that chin.

I digress... I'm glad to say that I do meet the stiches requirement, but equally glad to say that I only just meet it, having only once been stitched by Doc. That was at half time during a game against North Old Boys, lying flat on one of the barbecues, in the sausage fat, at Walter Brens Oval in Royal Park. There was quite a lot of blood, and as it was a warmish day a good bit of sweat as well. I sometimes wonder what delicate flavours must have infused the next bangers cooked on that barbecue.

The memory is still clear, because the NOBS ruckman on whose chin I had cut my eyebrow didn't play again for a year and a half, and I had headaches everyday for the next 2 years. But not, I hasten to add, because of the Doc's stitching. Admittedly, at half-time I didn't have the benefit often enjoyed by those who were stitched up by Doc after a game, of his hand being steadied by several beers. But he did his customary fine job, of course without the

unnecessary and time-wasting intrusion of anaesthetic into the business; and in addition it was and still is plain for all to see that my great beauty was not in the least marred by the procedure.

Well, that at least establishes my bona fides for speaking today.

Doc wasn't, by the way, the only Costello to benefit me health-wise in my time here. Especially in my first year or two, Tony, at full-back, looked after me very tenderly. Resting from the ruck in the back pocket, occasionally (I stress the word) I would get the ball, and begin lumbering out of the backline. I would hear Tony's voice: "I'll get him Frosty!", and when I'd kicked the ball (no handballs then!) I'd turn round and see Tony trotting back to the goal square past one or more opposition bodies. More work after the game for Doc, too, who stitched players without fear or favour for the team they represented.

Since then, too, my immediate family has benefitted from the medical services of all four of the next generation Costello doctors, as this club too has continued to benefit from the Doc's offspring in many ways.

It's not Costello doctors who are the focus today though; it's Doc.

In future years the themes of this oration can broaden. But today, the spotlight is on Doc himself, though in the wider context of the importance of this club as an institution. That involves putting his name alongside some others who will also be well-known to all of you. There's a longer list first, then a shorter one. Doc, Jack Clancy, Peter O'Donohue, Croppo (Ern Cropley), Alex Johnson, Munnors (Ian Munro, whose recent death), Marc Marsden, Neil Watson, Frank Baines, Keith Horsley, Tom Moffatt, Alan Sharp, my father Donald, and (of course) Andy Smith.

These men, and I know I'm overlooking some, were all regular presences around here across the years I played, from 1968 (in the Juniors) to 1982, during which time I managed for various reasons to play slightly fewer than half the games eventually chalked up by Harry and Rosco.

The shorter list is the first 5 names of those I just mentioned: Doc, Jack Clancy, Peter O'Donohue, Croppo, and Alex Johnson.

In the years of my closest connection with this club, these are the men who stood out as beacons in its life.

I recognise that I'm a man of a particular age, and that shapes my perspective on this club, as it helps determine the names on my list. Others younger, or even older, can adapt the perspective, and some of the names, to fit their own experience and memory. But what I say today is born of my time and experience.

Over the years, how many young men have come into this club at the age of 17 or 18, either from Melbourne or from country Victoria? Entering a new phase of life, finding it all rather strange and challenging, thousands of young men have gravitated to this club, and found in it a haven and a support, a place to have fun, find friends, and feel secure while crossing the threshold into manhood.

That very situation in which those young men come to this club also means that they are enormously receptive to and ready to be shaped by whatever influences they encounter in it. With some young men, as we well know, their coming at this impressionable age into a secure and welcoming institution can end up with their being jihadists strapping on suicide bombs. That's an extreme example of course, but my point is that there is enormous responsibility, and power, in the hands of any institution through whose doors so many young people, in this case young men, enter.

So it matters very much indeed what kind of influence, what kinds of figure, what kinds of 'role model' to use today's terminology, they find there. How lucky then, in my view, were the young men who came through the doors of this place! (The actual physical doors were a bit less impressive in the days of the Old Pavvy than they are now!)

Let me say a bit about why they were so lucky.

In his eulogy for his father at Doc's funeral, Tony spoke of Doc's integrity, loyalty, compassion, intellect and courage. He did also gently suggest that these qualities didn't necessarily always predominate in his father's relations with his family and children. The night before his first Blacks game, in April 1967, Tony arrive back home around 4 a.m. He opened the front door to find his father standing there. He looked at Tony without expression, and simply said: "You're a disgrace." Perhaps Doc hadn't yet quite got his head around what Tony had intuitively grasped: the well-known fact that for some curious reason, to this day unfathomed by medical science, in Blacks players a night on the tiles can often bring out their best football.

Another instance of what might have seemed less than compassionate response from Doc: "I think I've broken a couple of ribs Dad." "Run it off!" As the son of a medico of the same vintage as Doc I can testify to not dissimilar experiences.

But as Tony also pointed out, these were men of enormous fortitude themselves, who took the same attitude towards their own physical ailments. Tony mentioned Doc's refusing to attend to his own broken leg sustained from a parachute landing until all the rest of his men were securely landed.

For forty years or so after he retired from League football, my father Donald was second only to Richmond's Skinny Titus in consecutive League games played, at 144. Jim Stynes of course went well past both of them, and played with all sorts of injuries to do so. But I'm pretty sure that even in Dad's day you didn't get to play for almost 8 consecutive seasons without missing a game, without a fair share of physical toughness, resilience and tolerance of pain.

It's worth emphasising that this attitude was not in the least inconsistent with the compassion Tony spoke of in his father. One of my father's women patients once said of him: "Dr Don can be a bit brusque at times, but he's always so nice when you're dying." It is very easy also to imagine that being said by one of Doc's patients.

Alongside compassion, back also to those other qualities of integrity, loyalty, intellect and courage.

I would say that each of the six men I mentioned had a large measure of all those qualities – though maybe some of them would have been uneasy at being described as having an ‘intellect’, and ‘life wisdom’ might be closer to the mark than intellect, as it is also in the end more humanly important.

The simple and profound fact of these men being men of such qualities has been an enormous force for good in the influence this institution, the MUFC, and in today’s context particularly the Blacks, has exercised on the young men in its care over such a long time.

I have gained a very great deal from my connection with this institution, and still reap benefits from that connection. I am only too well aware that I have never repayed half of what has come to me from it. Doc, and those others I’ve mentioned, also got enormous pleasure and satisfaction from their connection with the club. But in their case, the club and others involved in it were the greater beneficiaries. And not only, or in my view even mainly, because of what they did for the club. They all did a very great deal across a long time, no question, and for that we are all indebted to them. But their still greater contribution came from their simply being the men they were, with those qualities Tony described, and the kind of spiritual nourishment and growth – yes, I think that is the right phrase here – they helped generate in the young men who came through this club.

It is a remarkable fact, and tribute, that any parent, if they had come to vet this place before their son came to play here as a 17 or 18 year old, could have pointed to any one of those men and said: “If my son grows to be a man like one of these, then I will be well pleased, and grateful.”

This club has been a place, and created an environment, which helped shape a great many young men in just that way. That was good for those young men, yes, but it was good also for the wider community into which they then ventured, and into which some of the good influence that had helped shaped them thereby flowed.

For a very long time Doc, Brian Costello, played a seminal role in this continuing process.

I’ve spoken of this club as an institution, and I want to end with some broader remarks about institutions and their importance.

Institutions of many kinds have for a good while been under increasing pressure, even attack, in contemporary society, at every level of life: Universities and other educational institutions, hospitals, churches, political parties, the family, and even the nation-state.

Why? The short two-fold answer I think is: the excessive influence of the radical individualism of our culture; and the still-increasing influence of consumerist capitalism. And these two factors work together.

To be sure, this critical pressure on institutions is far from all bad. In addition to sometimes harbouring and even nurturing sexism or racism, institutions can serve to cloak and protect arrogance, complacency, cruelty and exploitation. Proper respect for and attention to individual human beings can often enough be ridden roughshod over by behaviour and practices that are protected and even shaped by institutions, whether a school, a political party, a church, a bank, a family or a nation. Contemporary society has become increasingly sensitive to these issues, and concerned to rectify them.

Fine, right, and very important, but here (as in so many other contexts) it is important not to lose the baby with the bathwater. Human beings need identifications and identities forged through belonging to things larger than themselves, and to grow and develop in relation to such institutions, beginning from the intimate context of families and working out from there.

Our rightful suspicion of the dangers that inherently lurk in institutions has ever more edged in the direction of suspicion of institutions per se. As I said the radical individualism of our culture, and the consumerist capitalism it supports and is supported by, combine to increase this suspicion.

As a culture we need to do what we can to counter this corrosive and increasing general hostility to institutions; and, while being grateful to this one for what it has bestowed on us individually and as a wider community, we should not be complacent about the future of any good institutions, including this one, in the world we now inhabit.

I must finally comment on one thing that might seem to have been overlooked in my praise of this institution, the MUFC, and that some might think should qualify that praise. After all I've spoken about only one half the human race today – all about MEN! What about the other half!?!??

Carmel Costello, Val Johnson, Marg O'Donohue, and my mother Moyle were all regular and very vivid presences in the club in my time here – and once again I speak only about my immediate time. But for all that, the ones they came to watch and whose exploits on the field were celebrated were all men. I can only say that I am delighted there is now a Melbourne University Women's Football Club, and that women get to share the space on the field as well as off it. My daughter Harriet plays for Melbourne in the AFLW, and I just love it! So in speaking only of men today, I'm not for a moment excluding or ignoring women; my focus has just been shaped by the actual facts of history. That this space is changing to embrace women is great. Bring it on!!

But we end with Doc. Doc didn't say a lot. In addition to those qualities Tony mentioned, Doc's quietness and old-world politeness were important qualities of his. Strangely, they didn't detract from, but actually increased, your sense of the weighty presence of the man before you. If we call him a pillar of this club, the connotations of strength, solidity, stability, support and sustaining of an edifice in that word 'pillar' are perfectly apt about this man.

Both in his own right, and also as emblematic of so much that has made this club the force for good that it has been, we salute you Doc.

Chris Cordner

The Pavvy

April 6, 2019