



NEW PLYMOUTH BOYS' HIGH SCHOOL

TE KURA TAMATĀNE O NGĀMOTU

Kia Ora Koutou Boys.

I trust you had a restful and productive study break.

I have an extract of an email I wish to read out.

"How can I begin to express the honour given my father by you and by the boys of the school? I do not believe my mother, or any of us, will ever forget the agonising, yet redemptive, drive past Ryder Hall on the day of TTR's funeral. The boys 'defied' you, Paul (that's me), in a way that you, too, will recall to the end of your days. The camera does not lie: 'go in, boys', you rightly said. But out they came again, in the driving rain, to make local history; a local mythology. They showed themselves men. Tell them that. And that the haka was simply electric, spine tingling so incredibly powerful, tears in the rain from my family, a haka conducted with courage and mana in the rain. I am mightily humbled. Please also tell them that in those words.

To Reece (Reece Innes-Gray), I say: thank you. You led a mighty, mighty haka. At the tender age of, I guess, 17, one of the best—and perhaps the greatest—of your life. Remember it, always. You saw off a great man, and you will be a great man. Focus your mind on all that you can be. My father would have wanted no less for you. Thank you, Reece. I look forward to meeting you.

Paul Ryder."

That young man was part of a long thank you email I received from the son of Tom Ryder, the Schools 7th Headmaster.

I was so proud of you all that day. I know you did not know Mr Ryder, I know you did not really appreciate at the time the importance of the funeral procession 'Drive by' before I asked you to do it. But you all showed discipline, strength of character and courage that to be fair I am not sure ordinary teenage boys would do. Getting selflessly drenched for someone else. In the name of school pride out of respect for the crest and the tradition and mana that it stands for. Young men, everyone has a few moments in one's life they will remember forever, one they will talk about when they are old. This might not one be one for you. I hope it is, it certainly is one for the family of Tom Ryder and it certainly was one for me. I am extremely grateful to each and every one of you and I am thankful for the quality extraordinary young men you are, and, on yet another occasion I was so proud of you all and proud of NPBHS.

I showed my two sons (aged 5 and 3) the picture on FB of Reece, drenched and stoic leading the haka. They said, we want to be like him, what's his name. I was proud, told them his name was Reece. Can I be called Reece, Yeah lets call ourselves Reece they said. They said they want to do the haka in the rain and be big man like him then. I said that would be just great!

But, I said you probably won't be allowed to do a haka in the rain, your Headmaster will have better luck than your dad had with the weather... They paused thinking about what I said... Will our Headmaster be bald like your dad...

I do feel I need to let you know more about Tom Ryder.

Mr TT Ryder was appointed, in 1979. He quickly began to vigorously restore the school's ethos and values, which had dropped over the years. He demanded high standards of behaviour, clear expectations of performance and quickly understood the important role boarding and the Hostel played in developing the special character of the school. Pridham House was demolished, boarders who had been separated into junior and senior groups were again placed in the restored Carrington and Moyes Hostels. School buildings were also a focus of attention. The 'Old Block' (including the Assembly Hall) was named Pridham Hall, renovation of the science blocks began, and determined lobbying led to a new biology wing being built in 1980 on the old Pridham site. Plans for a new gymnasium were proposed, and a new tuckshop was built.

Curriculum changes were aplenty. Music also had a resurgence. The Houses were renamed to celebrate distinguished Old Boys: Syme, Barak, Donnelly and Hatherly. Boarders who had been spread alphabetically through all the Houses were now all placed in Hatherley House, while the day boys were spread, alphabetically through the others.

Plans were also afoot to celebrate the 100 years of NPBHS at which the foundation stone for the new gymnasium was laid by the Governor General Sir David Beattie. Over \$15,000 was raised by the boys which allowed a viewing gallery to be included in its design (the seating you enjoy today). The Top Ground and Webster Field were resown, the School painted and a new library planned.

The Centennial marked the resurgence of both the school and hostel. The hostel roll had dropped to 117 and was in line for closure. Operating deficits were addressed, old buildings were demolished, and a new laundry built. Social conditions changed, meetings with parents and prospective parents were held and good staff were appointed, all of which turned the tide and by 1987 the hostel roll had risen to 179. Incidentally close to the numbers we still have today.

School organisation also changed in the 1980's to address the changing learning needs of the boys, brought about by the increasing number remaining at school in the senior years but not intending to pursue a University path. The curriculum was expanded to include Home Economics, Horticulture, Music as a full subject, and Business Studies. Woodwork, Metalwork, Technical Drawing and Art remained popular. In the senior school Construction, Engineering, Legal studies, Economics and Horticulture, Classics and Phys Ed (the latter three became Scholarship courses) were added and boys were given the freedom to choose options rather than follow prescribed courses. Teachers were appraised and schemes of work monitored. These, with other initiatives, saw all academic results improve markedly. Something Tom was really proud of.

The connections to the Maori community were also strengthened: the Maori Language Classroom (Kokiri Te Reo) was added, aspects of tikanga were included in formal school activities, and the school Haka rewritten. Mr Ryder was ahead of his time in that regard. The first school haka has lots of english words in it (very inappropriate) and I believe the maori words didn't make sense. Something like a goat was in the clouds eating apples. Mr Ryder was keen to see that put right. Most old boys including myself can still do the old haka with actions and for a small fee some might be willing to share it with you. I must say your efforts are significantly better than ours were.

The fabric of the school was also improved in the Ryder years. A new swimming pool was added in 1986 by carving out a new site in the hillside adjacent to the old pool; the new Library was opened and the new science quad landscaped. In the decade over \$5m was spent by the Government on various projects including creating a senior physics complex, upgrading the administration area, remodelling the Woodwork Block, upgrading the Music suite and Memorial Block, increasing the size of the Art Block, and establishing a Student Services Centre housing the Counsellor, Transition Teacher and Careers Advisor. Two computer rooms funded entirely by the school were set up in the South Block. Eight prefabs, over-looking Webster Field, needed to house the growing roll and expanded curriculum were built (the roll had grown to 1150 by 1992). In 1993 Pridham Hall was structurally strengthened to meet the new earthquake codes.

Much attention was also paid to the landscaping and up-keep of the grounds. Flower beds were added, seats were erected on the Gully terraces, the Top Field re-sown, cricket practice nets built, Webster and McNaught Fields levelled and drained, and a new pavilion built on the Gully Ground in 1994. Called the Fookes Pavilion, this housed showering and changing facilities.

Additions to the new Assembly Hall included a number of Honours Boards to celebrate high achievers in all aspects of school life, and photos of many were displayed in the main corridor. The Pou you see here, carved by a Maori Old Boy were erected on each side of the stage, and a museum of artefacts giving substance to the school's history was added to the Chapel area of the Hall. This has been named the Ryder Hall in recognition of the service Tom gave to the School. His era, marked by almost continual enhancement of the school, spanned a time of increasing social change in the wider community, including increased drug and alcohol use; changes to discipline practices - caning, which had decreased over the years and was used only by senior staff as a last resort, was abolished by law in 1990.

Young men, I know you will be impressed by that incredible legacy pretty much most the school facilities and tradition you enjoy today has in some way been positively influenced and enhanced by Mr Ryder. We are all indebted to him for that.

I haven't said much about his personality about him as a man. I don't have time to go there in detail today. Mr Ryder's three assemblies a week averaged 39 minutes, I won't match that today. What you need to know about his personality and I won't sugar coat it, is that he was tough, uncompromising, relentless in his pursuit for excellence in making NPBHS the best it could be. He was unreasonable at times, I and many students and staff disliked him on many occasions.. He could be mean, stubborn and arrogant. He even makes me look carefree and laid back which admittedly is quite hard to do. But, and here is the important bit. Everyone, everyone I have met who knew Mr Ryder, all say the same thing, he was so good for the school, so good for the community and cared deeply for the young men of this school. His intentions and drive to do the best by the boys, for the boys, never faltered or wavered. His unrelenting work ethic was unrivalled.

We all know term one was a term with disruptions. We all know it was unusual. This is not an excuse to fall behind in your studies, this is not an excuse or a series of events to keep blaming and defining our year by. It's happened - it is what it is. We can't change that don't dwell on it. What I need us all to do is put all our energy on each lesson, each day and work incredibly hard for the remainder of the year.

Rather than a minutes silence I would like us to honour Tom Ryder in the way he would like most, in the way that he felt was an important part of school life, one that demonstrates a respectful young man, a disciplined young man, one who always strived to be excellent every minute of every day. By being silent and incredibly still when you stand and when the staff leave. School Stand.

Paul Verić

Headmaster