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Acknowledge Traditional owners

I would also like to acknowledge those of the 69's who have passed too soon.

A month ago I attended a medico legal conference on board an expedition vessel in the Spitzbergen Islands up near the North Pole. I was invited to deliver a paper on the relationship between brain development in juveniles and involvement in the criminal justice system. I was somewhat nervous about this event given that the audience was made up of Judges, medical specialists and academics. The talk was going quite well when all of a sudden the captain of the ship, an emotional Frenchman, loudly cut across the intercom to advise that a polar bear was right next to the ship on an iceflow and that everyone on board should get on deck so as to not miss this very rare opportunity of viewing this magnificent animal at such close range. I could immediately sense that my audience was weighing up the choice between continuing to listen to my gripping lecture or getting onto the deck to view the bear. It's fair to say that within seconds the lecture hall was empty and I came back and delivered an abbreviated version of my paper some 20 minutes later. I've checked the forecast and I'm not expecting there to be any bears or walrus in Hunter Street tonight even though there has been a reported sighting of a rare group of elderly semi enebriated gentlemen leaving the Clarendon a couple of hours ago who were apparently causing some disturbance. Hopefully we can all get through this without interruption. After I had concluded that shortened presentation I was approached by one of the delegates who was a District Court judge from Brisbane. We chatted about a few things in the paper that I had given. He was about my age and he asked me where I'd gone to school. I replied ... "Boys High".

I interpreted his response as one of "more information needed". I realised that between the North Pole and Waratah there are probably a few thousand Boys Highs so in hindsight perhaps I should have been more specific.

But in this room everyone knows there is only one real Boys High or sadly should I say , there was only one Boys High.

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For most of us who finished school in 1969 our journey to Waratah commenced on 29 January 1964. We were a selective high school. I genuinely don't remember that I was aware of the selectiveness of our school. I'd gone to the Junction and I just thought that once you'd finished primary school, you went to Boys High or Tech High or Central. Or if, as my dear departed dad would say, you were one of those tykes, you might go to Marist.

I was never sure what they did at Tech High even though some of my mates went there. In the Newcastle Morning Herald and Miners Advocate of the 23<sup>rd</sup> of February 1940, the then principal of Tech High, a Mr Price wrote,

"the school exists principally to benefit boys desirous of qualifying for technical professions, engineers, industrial chemists, draughtsmen and architects....work with a technical basis. From the point of view of competitive entrance, this school ranks on an equal footing with the Newcastle Boys High School in that only the top applicants gain admission. Educationally the function of the 2 schools is identical."

I realise that when he made those comments Mr Price could not have been aware of the HSC results from 1969 which clearly disclosed something that I can describe as Turton Rd superiority.

Equal footing with Boys High. Educationally identical to Boys High. The best way to describe these ill informed opinions is to borrow from Daryl Kerrigan in the Castle. Tell him he's dreaming.

I guess that my opinion on Mr Prices comments could well be perceived as combative,provocative and some might even say, pompous. Well, given this audience, I can unashamedly say of course they are. And to cover the field as it were, not only did our HSC results show our academic superiority, we also beat them at cricket, footy, swimming, athletics, debating etc etc.

Central was also a place of some mystery to me. From a purely academic point of view, it seemed in the late 60's that most of the students there were either good board riders or excellent 10 pin bowlers.... You may recall AMF was directly across the road in Broadmeadow. Central has now of course evolved into the Newcastle School of Performing Arts. It's fair to say that I battle to picture any of the lads I knew who went to Central performing a pas de deux or

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reciting Shakespeare. This quick comparative analysis serves only to emphasise just how fortunate we have all been to be students at Boys High. And may I say that I am truly fortunate because I proudly stand before you as , as we call ourselves, a 69er, a year of outstanding achievers scholastically , in sporting fields and within the broader social community.

I'd just like to take a little time to explain why our year, to me, was, and continues to be unique. Each of us will have our own memories of school and we may each recall a particular event in different ways....such is the frailty of recollection of people in their late 60s. What I am about to recite are my own recollections and my own personal perspectives. Some of it might even be true.

On day one when I arrived at Boys High for the first time, I now realise that I had developed some perceptions of self during my first 12 years of life. I had formed a view that I was fairly accomplished in certain of lifes pursuits. From that first day of high school I quickly learnt that these perceptions of self may not have been entirely accurate. I also learnt that remarkably there were boys in Newcastle who didn't live in Merewether and some of this new breed even had surnames that ended in a vowel. I really had so much to learn about so many things.

Let me confess to some of these perceptions of self and explain the effect Boys High had on them. I had been Dux at the Junction in 1963 and my headmaster, one Les Maguire, had told my parents how smart I was. " He'll be a lawyer or a doctor " he told my mum and dad to which my mother unhesitatingly responded "I think he'll be prime minister". Well thank Christ that didn't happen.

So as I walked into those hallowed grounds on Turton Rd, I believed that I was very smart, maybe even the smartest. Having a surname beginning with HO, it was an inevitability that on day one I would be lined up with others of similar alphabetical construction. It was here that I met Glenn Holmes. Vale Glenn. He was like no one that I'd ever met. He looked studious, he was studious, he was an avid bird watcher in the purely ornithological sense , he didn't play footy ,he didn't surf and he didn't live in Merewether. And he was a bloody genius. I then met guys like Phil Paterson, Ross Dunstan Russell Cheek and the list

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went on and on. None of these blokes lived in Merewether. I was in a world of academic ginormity and I had quickly discovered that my first perception of self had been but an illusion.

My next confession of misplaced ego relates to cricket. Now I have known Rob Wilkinson for most of my life so I knew there was at least one human who was superior to me in the noble arts of willow and leather. But I was gifted in the sweet science of bowling left arm over the wicket inswingers. It was in fact the only type of delivery I could bowl but I did it with some efficiency and a modicum of guile. Not even Wilko could bowl this ball....after all he was right handed. This would be my passport to acceptance as a sportsman of some worth to the school. Regrettably it did not take long to discover that there was someone else in our year who had some talent in that particular discipline. There has only ever been one Gary Gilmour. In all sports involving hand eye coordination, Gus was singularly the most naturally gifted sportsman I ever met.

As to my perception of myself as a cricketer suffice to say that I ended up playing City and Suburban comps in Newcastle and Sydney and Gus played with distinction over a number of years for Australia. We all felt a connection with Gus because he was one of us...no bragging and no pretence despite his immense talent. We all miss him.

But all was not lost. I had a secret talent....one that I was sure would allow me to stand above all others. I was an expert in the somewhat mysterious and archane art of "yo yoing".

My dad fought in New Guinea during WW2. Like so many others he lied about his age and just before his 17<sup>th</sup> birthday in 1941 he had become a soldier. After the war he had to find work without the benefit of a particularly strong base of academic qualification. He became a travelling salesman and remained so until he retired. In the early 1960s Dad was working with a mob called Stuart walkers selling butchers and bakers supplies. Stuart walkers produced a yo yo as a promotional gimmick to be handed out to their clients. Incidentally Coke had first introduced their yo yos in the USA in 1958. By 1961 I had my first yo yo. I became skilled in the art. So by 1964 I was good ...indeed I was very good. Some of you may recall that, in the park area on the walk up to school from the

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train, usually a 32 class steam engine, Coke would occasionally have a couple of experts doing demonstrations and having competitions with the winners receiving yo yos and other Coke merchandise. Competitors would be required to do the tricks from a prepared sheet, starting with the spinner and then walking the dog increasing in difficulty up to Rocking the Baby and the very complicated and often dangerous manoeuvre known as Round the corner. As each competitor faltered as the difficulty increased, they were eliminated. I was breezing through the earlier tricks and watched with increasing confidence as my fellow students faltered. This was my time to shine.

Approaching "around the corner", the last trick on the sheet, there were 2 of us left, Sam Stathopoulos and Me. We both navigated this most difficult of tricks with ease. How would the King of yo yo be decided? Loop the looping. (demonstrate) The person who could do this for the longest would prevail. I will describe the outcome with these words.....Fuck you Sam. Incidentally I still have a yo yo in my chambers at work. I regularly practise and have tried to maintain some expertise just in case I come across another yo yoing competition for the over 65s to enter.

So it had come to pass....the realisation that I was just an ordinary Boys High student starting High school in 1964 with a group of young men, some of whom like Glenn Holmes ,Gus Gilmour and Sam just happened to have extraordinary gifts beyond anything I'd ever experienced before. But being one of the "ordinary" young blokes in our year at Boys High was, in itself, something special. Our year had it all. Footy players like Pud Howlett who went on to play for NSW. Pud played twice for the Blues and won both games, I think in 1973. Peter Humphris Clark who, in 1965, captained the 7 stone 7 NSW schoolboys team ,was another of extraordinary talent. He again captained NSW the following year and led that team onto the SCG in the curtain raiser to the Australia England test match in front of a crowd of 63 and a half thousand. Pete went on to be selected in 1969 for the NSW CHS Rugby first 15.

Rob Wilkinson not only went on to play cricket and rugby at the highest levels, but he was also a schoolboy champion golfer. We had outstanding swimmers like Gary Jones and Steve Bland. Steve Bland was also the best looking bloke on the planet and went on to become an international man of mystery.

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But I guess the worth of a school should not only be measured upon the excellence of those who were extraordinary in their youth but what was later achieved in life by the others who made up the very fabric of the 69s.

As to those achievements I first make particular mention of Leo Pinczewski, who in this years Queens Honours List became a Member of the Order of Australia for his services to medicine, particularly in the advancement of knee surgery. Sincerest congratulations to Dr Leo Pinczewski AM. I was hoping some of Leo's work may well be tested later tonight on the dancefloors at those well known establishments Henry Mousetraps or Bustop only to discover they had both closed 45 years ago. So I made some enquiries as to the places of pace presently dominating the Newcastle entertainment scene and came across the King St nightclub, described by Dr Google as a tri level, industrial chic space for electro, hip hop and cocktails. Just the place for a tribe of juiced up 68 year olds. On second thoughts we'll probably go to the Clarendon for a few beers.

Any year from Boys High worth its salt should have a rocket scientist in their midst. We've got one of those and it's great to see Trevor Sorensen here tonight from Hawaii. Trevors prepared to travel for a drink with his mates.

We have produced doctors, dentists, professors, teachers and school principals, thespians and quizmasters, internationally acclaimed travel writers and we produced a bloody lot of accountants. Despite this disproportionate number of members of the number crunching profession, our year is nevertheless considered by some to be interesting and even possibly a bit quirky.

And of course we produced lawyers, the most noble and trustworthy of all professions. You know how it goes....trust me , I'm a lawyer. I'll briefly and I mean briefly tell you about my career. Fate has been very kind to me and aided by a fair amount of good fortune and having been mentored by some wonderful people, I have found myself in a most rewarding and challenging judicial role within the legal world. I was lucky enough in the mid 70s to become the associate to Mr Justice Evatt of the Federal Court of Australia. Thereafter I conducted a large personal injuries practice for about 12 years in both Sydney and Newcastle fighting for the rights of humble , oppressed

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workers against the dark forces of employers and their insurers. I was then appointed senior Legal registrar for both the Compensation court of NSW and the Dust Diseases Tribunal, roles which I performed simultaneously for about 7 years. In 1997 I was appointed to the Bench of the Compensation Court and continued in that role till the end of 2003 . I was then appointed to the Local Court bench. A condition of that appointment was a requirement to do country service so shortly thereafter I was starting a new life 650 kms west of Sydney in the Riverina. My base was Griffith, a notorious town of 24000 mainly Italian people. It was a place of fine food, good wine as well as the alleged murder and disappearance of the anti drugs campaigner Donald Mackay. Being the judiciary in Griffith thus brought its own challenges.

The Friday afternoon story

Detectives from Sydney

Warrant refused then granted.

Citrus/cannabis/citrus/cannabis etc

Owner arrested clean skin 2 men sitting at the back of the courtroom

Bail Application

Bail granted with conditions

Reporting, forfeiture of passport ,residence, acceptable person to give surety...\$50000 in cash

The 2 bags

Upon my return to Sydney after 5 years in the bush, I commenced sitting in the Childrens Court. It's a specialist jurisdiction dealing mostly with juvenile crime and a jurisdiction known as the CARE jurisdiction...cases where FACS remove children from their parents for reasons of child protection. It is a job that challenges me every single day.

The Wagga Case story. I am often asked how I deal emotionally with dealing with cases like this day in and day out....cases that involve the abuse of children...physical abuse verbal abuse and all too often sexual abuse. I would be lying to say these types of matters do not leave their mark but having said

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that, I can honestly say that what I hear and see at work only makes me more aware of my own fortunate life, my own loving family and the importance of things like the education and friendship that I had at school. And of course if it becomes too much and I need therapy, I always have my yo yo.

Likewise in the criminal jurisdiction, I often hear of worlds in which children are forced to live which frankly beggar belief. They can be dark, quite horrific worlds.

The Port Kembla school case story.

Not the sort of thing that happened regularly at Boys High but I must admit in some of my dealings with L.T. Richardson , rumblings of revolution crept into my mind along with thoughts of the possible use of weapons. Speaking of Mr Richardson, I have it on good authority, albeit hearsay evidence, that when he was addressing the prefect elects for 1970, he described the 69s to be possibly the worst, most difficult and anti authoritarian bunch he had ever dealt with. Given that this was an assessment made by Mr. Richardson, I think that most of our year would consider these comments as praise indeed.

I do suppose as a bunch, we were anti authoritarian but 1969 was a time of world change, of social and musical revolution, man was on the moon, the conflict in Vietnam was dividing thoughts and beliefs in Australia, hair was getting longer ,pot and other drugs were becoming part of the teenage social fabric. There was an air of anti establishment and it was happening right at the time the 69s were finishing school and going out into the world.

I loved the way our year responded to its time in history. I loved the way Col Taylor, Phil Archer. John Farrell and others stood their ground on the issue of long hair. I loved the involvement of some of the 69s in those humanely named organisations...the Society of Anti Violent People and the Friends of the Friendless. I would describe our year as gently yet stoically rebellious.

However the notion of rebellion in any guise was difficult for the Bald Eagle and many of the older more staid teachers to accept and I can tell you that in



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my role as school captain I had many run ins with the headmaster ...our planets never truly lined up.

Fortunately we also had some wonderfully free thinking teachers...guys like Vic Rooney who encouraged the love and appreciation of literature . I always loved Charlie Goffatt...idiosyncratic, erratic , maybe even a bit mad.....but someone who I will always remember as someone who viewed life with openness and enthusiasm and through the bottom of a DA bottle. One of Charlies daughters, Julie Sutton became Mayor of Warringah council as well as being a marriage celebrant. I was married by Charlie Goffats daughter.

Our year has remained a close knit bunch, particularly since the advent of email. The electronic age has allowed contact to happen from all parts of the globe. Friendships have been renewed and reinvigorated. Life stories have been exchanged. Social gatherings, if that's what you call a few beers and a meal at the Bar Beach Bowlo , occur each year. Its here that I'd like to give significant recognition to Garry Jones. Gaz has been an incredible force in ensuring that the spirit of 1969 continues and flourishes. He is the epicentre of our social connection and he does it with a consistent enthusiasm for which we are all immensely grateful. It should also be mentioned that he is still an extremely dangerous bloke to get into a shout with.

It might be a strange thing to say but personally I consider these gatherings that Jonesy arranges each January to be what our year is all about. Some of us, like Leo, may have reached the heights of our professions and some of us may have embarked upon careers that have taken us all over Australia and to all parts of the world but on that Friday in early January each year we are simply mates from school, mates from 50 years ago, comfortable and happy in each others company. There is no pretence and there are no secrets. We are bonded by our time together at school. It is this mateship that is the ultimate legacy of our time together at Boys High.

There is no doubt that each individual year Boys High produced its own share of superstars, each year shares its own stories and shares its own pride of connection with the school, but may I say there is no one prouder than me tonight because I was given the honour to speak to you about our unique and wonderful year, the 69s.