

## **Over 60s Lunch Thursday 27 September – Final**

When Catherine suggested that Stephane and I speak at today's lunch she was clearly trying to redress the balance after the last 3 speakers at this event were 2 Oxbridge graduates one of whom is a QC and the managing partner of an international law firm! I cannot speak for Stephane but I am not, in any way an academic and the only quotes I will come up with will be from the likes of Hugh Hefner who said appropriately for this gathering:

“Age ain't nothing but a number”

Stephane and I were in Second's together, very different characters with differing interests but we became friends. After school our lives followed very different paths and we lost touch but about 10 years ago we met again at an event at Lancing and I am delighted to say that we rekindled that friendship.

My life at Lancing was very much focussed on the outdoors; sport and the CCF. In fact I would like to start by apologising to the masters in the room Tom Aubrey who tried to teach me Geography, Jeremy Tomlinson English, Robin Reeve it must have been a nightmare as we had double history on a Saturday morning, I sat next to Nigel Pitcher, who many of you will know and we just stared out of the window willing the minutes away so that we could get away to play either cricket or football. Robin, you will be pleased to know that I still have a copy of your book on the industrial revolution and having just opened it for the first time I realise if I had read it in 1975 my A levels may have turned out differently!

Alan Evans – Jones is also here and I have to say that he had more success, not in the Physics lab but on the cricket field where I have many fond memories of walking the boundary with him and on cricket tour in Holland where he and Don Smith felt that our education was not complete until we had seen all the sites that Amsterdam had to offer!

I came to Lancing as result of my parents moving from Essex to Sussex due to my father's work. He had been to another Woodard school, Ellesmere College, and was friends with Tim Clark's father, Tim is also here today. My father was a great believer in the Woodard foundation's Christian values and ethos.

Lancing was ideal for me as whilst I played rugby at prep school my real passion was football. It could not have been a better choice as whilst I may not have been academic I thrived on what I learnt about performing as a team and

being stronger together. This has held me in good stead all through my working life, and laid the foundation for some lifelong friends, some of whom are here today.

There are two themes from Lancing that I would like to quickly explore. One I have already mentioned – team work and the other is the way that, as I have navigated my way through life, Lancing old boys have continually popped up.

I joined the army thanks to one David Pexton, we played in the football XI together, his father was a Colonel in the Army and as a result David knew his way around the system way better than I did and with his guidance I started to explore the possibilities of a career as a commissioned officer. He however did not! I was quickly caught up in the selection process and felt that going to Sandhurst and then onto an infantry battalion would be like a continuation of Lancing, where you play a lot of sport, be amongst a group of like minded people, and I could delay the inevitable task of finding a proper job. I was right!

Sandhurst was all about learning to work as a team, something that I had been doing for years as a footballer, cricketer and as a member of the CCF. Whether it be a 10 mile run in full kit, patrolling in Northern Ireland or overnighing on Dartmoor in the middle of winter you were always stronger together.

This was particularly true when I did my Jungle Warfare instructors course. It is an intimidating place even when nobody is shooting at you what with all the snakes, wild animals, bugs and grubs. You work in pairs checking for ticks, leeches and suchlike. We were sitting having a brew when my “buddy” sitting opposite me said “stay still very still you have a scorpion on your knee” I froze, he took out his machete, missed it first time but fortunately not the second time! That is something else you learn – TRUST! It doesn’t always work that way as on another occasion my platoon sergeant woke up in discomfort with a tick on his scrotum – we left him to it.

For a relatively small school Lancing has an incredible reach and I have been lucky enough to bump into OLs in some weird and wonderful place around the world.

In the audience today is one Brigadier Alistair Fyfe and whilst he may not remember it he was my company commander at Sandhurst and I thank you as somehow, I managed to pass the course and was commissioned into The Queen's Regiment in December 1976. In '77 I joined the 1<sup>st</sup> Battalion in Germany, Neal Peckham from Field's House had joined the year before, he was a hard act to follow, except in the clothing department where he had a reputation for loud check suits! Neal went off to University at Bangor, coming back every summer, and we have remained life long friends, in fact we were at his wife's 60<sup>th</sup> birthday party just last weekend. Neal is not here today as he is currently working in Nigeria.

Some of you may remember the Monty Sketch about Aardvark Ice cream, 3 of us in the summer of 1998 drove down to the South of France and whilst lying on the beach we heard some ice cream sellers calling out; "strawberry, chocolate, vanilla aardvark"! Amused, we called them to find they were led by one Tim Lucas who was 3 years behind me in Second's House!

Then, in the early 80s I was posted to HK where one night I found myself in a seedy nightclub where one of my fellow officers failed do the basic male/female checks on the person he was dancing with, needless to say it was not what he was expecting! He was not the OL but in the corner supping a beer who should I see but one James Barrington, needless to say he was doing nothing untoward and we still play golf together.

I left the army at the end of 1987 and went straight into the world of recruitment. I started 2 businesses sold one and floated the other before embarking on a non-exec career. They say the first position as an NED is the hardest to land but I was fortunate in that Martin Phillips, a much younger OL was one of the partners and I am sure that smoothed the way for me to be appointed. Surprisingly in a company of 40 people there were 4 OLs of differing ages.

I am still working but take great pride in the fact that I have now become involved with the Lancing College Foundation Council, with a particular focus on raising money for Transformational Bursaries. I have now met several of the beneficiaries of the scheme and it is impossible to exaggerate how much they have benefitted from their time at Lancing. It is a fantastic cause and any support, large or small, you are able to give I am sure Catherine would be delighted to hear from you.

I started by apologising to the masters present, but as I finish I would now like to say thank you as I must have learnt something as it has not turned out too bad.

Hugh Hefner summed it up better than I can:

“Living in the moment, thinking about the future and staying cemented to the past . That’s what makes me feel whole.”

Thank you for listening.

Over to Stephane.