

Jacque Scott – 2017 Catherine McAuley Alumnae Award Recipient

Thankyou

Christine Robertson, President of the Alumnae, Members of the Alumnae committee, Stephen Walsh Principal, Members of the Faculty, Sisters of Mercy, Anne Box for nominating me and of course you the students of this great College.

Not only has OLMC given me an enormous honour but I consider this experience a great privilege.

I have been asked to wrap up how I became a Mercy Girl and offer an overview of my professional life and conclude with words of wisdom in 5 minutes, so never wishing to not take on a challenge - here goes!

A little about me, I am the eldest of six and we are now spread across two continents. As a family we were considered £10 Poms and we sailed into Sydney in 1966 settling in Killara initially. My parents were very brave and I owe most of what I have to them – I say mostly because my dads sister my auntie Peg became my inspiration.

In the 100 year anniversary of the suffragettes I am reminded of how important we are as women and how much we have to offer society – world. I am not a strong feminist but I do believe we need to remember how important we are! My aunt peg gave me the added confidence to just go and do it!

I went to 13 primary schools and sixth class was at St Patrick's Blacktown which I believe is not there anymore. The natural feed was Nagle school but I had my heart set on OLMC- even in those days it seems I was destined to be different. My parents sacrificed a lot for me and my sisters to come here and I can certainly say it was worth it. While at school I also had a lot of support from Fr Paul Hanna who was at Blacktown and Fr Jim Grainger who I initially met at St Mary's and worked with for some years in Forest Lodge, knowing both of these two amazing men was also a life saver for me and inspired me to achieve what seemed the impossible.

For those sisters and teachers that might recall me as a student I suspect I would not have stood out- mind you I was never a shrinking violet but apart from being McAuley captain each year except for the final year, I would not have stood out academically.

I was not the student most likely to succeed!

I was always wanting to be involved so was in the netball and tennis team and I recall Yvonne Goolagong coming to meet us; seems so long ago now. I was good at swimming and would come especially early to practice in the pool before school and had a go at hurdles javelin and the like.

My unabiding memory is of always being encouraged despite your ability and that we were all treated as equals- something I have always tried to emanate with those whose I have been in contact with and over the years now that has been hundreds of nurses and students.

Sr Kathleen was the most influential person at school for me, a constant all six years she got to know me, I always say I am hopeless at maths but thanks to Sr Kathleen's confidence in me in the round, I managed to pass and the points gave me what I needed to get into nursing.

It would be fair to say I wanted to be a teacher despite my rubbish grades, which I suppose reflected how much I respected the efforts of the teachers at the school but I did not have the points or the money to go down that route so I was very happy to take up my place at St Vincent's.

As a young naïve girl from a good school I did not really know what I was letting myself in to and for all the exposure and experiences I would say I wouldn't trade any of it. One of my biggest faults is not to ask for help and yet I am the first in line to offer it.

Lesson one: ask for help don't struggle on your own, there is no shame. FAITH makes all things possible

Nursing is a privilege - we are invited into people's personal world rapidly and often share intimate stories – this is enriching and developed the mercy girl within me – I have been humbled by the coloured lady on the 6th floor who said thank you for treating her like a person. I found that really odd – but of course realise she found prejudice in healthcare. Honoured to be asked by a young 15 year old's parents to do the reading at their son's funeral when he died of leukaemia – at 18 that was quite something.

My nursing has taken me down many roads and experiences which this 5 minutes does not allow me to share but I have been a ward manager leading many teams and young girls like myself encouraging and nurturing just as I was offered support. I travelled to London for a 12 month working holiday and stayed. I specialised in trauma and orthopaedics and found myself leading the Royal College of Nursing Society of orthopaedics in London so spoke, chaired and organised many national and international events over the years.

Not liking to be told by non clinicians (managers) how to do this and that I decided to join them so part of my bucket list was to become the head of nursing – director. I loved that role as it allowed me to flex the mercy girl in me and ensure nursing was on the radar – I wrote many professional articles and chapters for books which as a young girl here I could not foresee happening. Mr Pantis and Sr Paulinus would have been impressed!!

Lesson two: ensure the college teaches you how to structure an essay. Don't wait until uni to learn this skill. Many leave school with no skill in this area and it causes so much heartache and unnecessary stress and pressure during the first year in tertiary education.

I then found other opportunities and it appeared I was a problem solver and could lead the team to develop new projects to improve patient care and experience and also save money – so I went down that route for a while and loved it! A couple of examples were setting up the first in the UK Bone infection unit in Oxford for people who had infected hip and knee joints osteomyelitis HIV etc another was saving an NHS trust £3m by process mapping a more efficient temporary staffing service. Winning a couple of awards along the way also helps boost team morale and confidence.

In between times I completed a fast track Bachelor of Education honours degree and became a university lecturer.

Lesson three: never say never – it may take time but HOPE makes all things work.

Not content with this I went on to become a Senior Lecturer and then found I missed the buzz of patient contact so diverted back to hospital work and became a CEO of a small Catholic hospital.

There begins another story which is a talk of its own so I wrote a book to make sure everyone knew what wonderful work people do for others.

It is also important to note that parallel to all this was family – I was drawn into family life in London and we travelled the world, became committee members to local societies such as the floral art society, horticultural society and I ran an allotment for 12 years where we grew most of our veggies and being active in the local community offering time and skills to others. I have raced Ferrari's at Thruxton circuit competed in triathlons and cycled London to Brighton for the fun of it but also learnt how important it is to remain grounded and be thankful for what I have been given. I spent 11 years 'moonlighting' at Wembley stadium as the lead nurse and was part of a great team providing an emergency medical service I saw hundreds of concerts and sports fixtures and a lesson I learnt too late there was that loud music ruins your hearing!!

I often refer to my days at OLMC and proudly regale my time here even though I was not a leading light at the time.

The school taught me to be kind, thoughtful and respect everyone, aim to achieve your dreams, you of course cannot like everyone but play hard and have fun doing it! Live well – the things we don't do are what we often regret.

Lesson four: find your passion stay true to yourself and follow it. This is not in things but from within, grounded in people if you have not found that passion yet then trust yourself challenge and be inspired by those you respect until it becomes apparent.

What is important to me is that I only start what matters and I always finish what I start. I am grateful for many of the things and that sense of purpose. Being brought up an Aussie as given me many advantages including a can-do, hard work attitude. Failing or not being the best in some things has made me want to be the best I can.

Success does not come to you, you have to go and get it – do not be told you can't. The word is not in the dictionary. If I am told that I cannot do something it makes me more determined to ensure I can - you just need to build your resilience.

That being said I have learnt from some of my failures, and I have had to learn the hard way so listen to the voice in your head.

Respect – honesty- belief in yourself- motivation energy and love yourself!

Somehow I also found myself making 120 people redundant, including myself, another test of strength and humility. The challenge was then to rebuild what had been destroyed so for the charity. I led a £6M development and opened a residential and nursing home for retired clergy and laity. It has been open 11 years and I am the Chairperson. Non salaried for 22 years.

We are now planning to create a dementia service next but have decided to have a break - hence this trip!

After the home was opened and the matron was running the show, I needed a different focus so I signed up for Clipper round the world yacht race and went away for a few months – I now have my competent crew certificate and a lot of stories! My best friend is/was my aunt and as she became older I became her carer. Over the years many of my school and nursing friends have visited our home and she was great fun to be with.

Our past determines our future and when things don't go quite right then it helps us reassess the way we do things next.

I have kept in touch with many of my friends and there are two dear friends here who were with me when we started here in 1970! Anne Mc Mahon now Box and Ann Bathurst now Tomson.

It is important to form relationships and each party needs to work at keeping in touch. Life is very fragile and you need to hold on to the good times and treasure the memories. Distance should not be a reason for losing touch. A couple of years ago I came back to the college for the big anniversary hoping to meet up with some of my contemporaries but there were very few about so Anne Box (McMahon) set about arranging a school reunion at her home and we were overwhelmed in 2016 when so many arrived you can imagine the chatter and it has for some rekindled old friendships.

Everyone has done well and their stories are special because we are all Mercy Girls.

I trained at St Vincent's and again I kept in touch with a core group but I was keen to know how others lives had developed so while in London I arranged a reunion at a Sydney hotel and wrote a book cataloging everyone's life. All but 4 people from the cohort attended and now this group meet up regularly and this trip has fitted in beautifully with an event last Sunday.

Lesson five: enjoy life as it is not a dress rehearsal

I suspect this has exceeded the 5 minute challenge but I felt maybe it was worth a minute or two longer. Thank you again for this opportunity to be standing here sharing some of my mad experiences and thank you for listening.

I am humbled to be here and am grateful to God for the life he has allowed me to share with others.