

Jim and I attended a number of funerals in recent years. Neither of us ever short of an opinion, we had consequent discussions about our own. Jim expressed the view that he emphatically did not want a series of speakers from different parts of his life at his. In fact, what he wanted was for me to be the only speaker – and to sum him up.

I didn't promise that. I told him it was unreasonable and other people had things to say. We haven't complied. We did check whether two of his closest friends needed to speak. Our daughters were, however, of the opinion that the communities of which we are part, did need to hear from me.

What we have tried to do, is to paint an integrated sense of Jim's life – what I think he was asking for in rejecting a series of speakers. We hope we have done him justice and that each of you can find the Jim you knew within the context of the full person we believe him to be.

This is a version of my story of his life in our time together.

Jim and I met at Sydney Teachers' College in 1968, our Dip Ed year, end-on to our Arts degrees. We were both training as English/History teachers on scholarships. We were serendipitously allocated to both the same – of many possible - English and History Method groups. This meant our timetables were almost identical and we were soon spending most days in each others' company.

It was a formative time for both of us – exploring every professional idea, getting used to the idea that teaching might be more than telling students about the literature, or history that we loved ourselves. We analysed our prac teaching experiences, teamed up for small assessable drama presentations - notably a scene between John and Elizabeth Proctor from *The Crucible*.

Our relationship was thus grounded in our professional formation.

In our first year of teaching – he at Doonside High School and me at Vacluse Boys, we phoned each other most nights to deconstruct our teaching days, work out what to do with difficult kids and classes, share the interesting and challenging bits, and every weekend we went to a movie. Jim introduced me to the concept of 'going out to dinner' – not part of my world at that time – and we soon fell into the pattern of returning every week to one of two favourite places – a habit that lasted for 45 years.

We explored together who we were, what we believed in – all in the context of what kind of teachers we wanted to be. It was a time of change, of seemingly revolutionary teaching ideas, like group work and the use of film and media in English classrooms. We played with cameras and created film scripts. We discovered emerging adolescent fiction and children's literature. We were modernist rather than post-modernist.

It was only in September of our second year of teaching – about 31 months after we met – that it occurred to us that our friendship might be morphing into a romance. We might have been slow on the uptake, but once we had our Eureka moment we wasted no time and married ten weeks later.

Looking back in recent years, particularly as grandparents, we recognised that our identities, our marriage and our world views were grounded in those formative teaching years. We saw the world as educators. We raised our daughters from our foundation as educators. Jim's work with the Health Community, the University of South Australia, Juvenile Justice, Educational policy and the

people he met was dictated by an educator's approach to the world. Our partnership was similarly grounded.

Our move to South Australia turned out to be a great opportunity. South Australia has been good to us both. We gravitated here not just because there were jobs, but because of the Dunstan era. If we had to move we wanted to choose a place of new ideas. Here we found new schools, new ways of organising schools, new promotion structures opening up – an exciting start for our family, as well as our teaching. Once again, our personal and our professional melded.

My re-entering the workforce and a career trajectory presented a few dilemmas for us as we juggled family and careers within the same organisation. Jim had grown up with a father who had, from the age of 14, raised his younger brothers. Ted Dellit cooked and did his own ironing. Jim always expected to share the housework and family organisation. Apart from the seven years I spent at home as a full or part-time mum, we split the housework and family organisation equally. Outside of those seven years, I could count on one hand the number of shirts I ironed. Over 44 years of marriage he would have done as many, probably more, loads of washing than I. He much of the cooking.

Our grown-up marriage was achieved with very little struggle for us. It had its own challenges for our daughters.

In the 80s and 90s, as our careers developed within the same organisation, we experienced tensions and conflicts – considerably complicated by affirmative action policies in which we both believed. We learned very early on – earlier than many of our colleagues – to live with ambiguity and work our way to a pathway forward. These tensions created more problems for others than they did for us. We were both hurt in those adjustments and changes – but never, I think, by each other. We learned to step around or through the conflicts, to adjust and change, to analyse and readjust our assumptions – and to look out for each other and gravitate to supportive friendships.

If something had to give, it was not going to be our relationship. That, for both of us, was never in question – we were always going to reason our way through it, holding, if necessary, conflicting ideas together and living a solution. In this process, we made some deep and abiding friendships.

With the help of friends and colleagues who tolerated and shared our ambiguities, we were able to sustain parallel careers that intersected and strengthened us both.

Just as our personal was our professional, so for Jim his practice was his theory. Thinking was what we did. Intelligence was what we developed in *all* our students and resulting action and change is what we expected – of ourselves, our students, our colleagues. Jim had no time for whingers, nay-sayers, and ideologues - nor for complacency. Caring and sharing was nowhere near good enough.

When his kidney disease was diagnosed in 1993 he reacted with shock and fear, then as an educator, – looking for data, gravitating to doctors who would say it as it was, listen to him and provide him with information and networks. He then got on with his life and his work.

He detested being defined by his medical condition, pitied, or told he could make himself well by willpower or herbal remedies. He managed his condition, got involved in the renal world, applied his intelligence and got on with his business.

His journey was about discovering the things that mattered, what was essential to being a contributing citizen, a friend, a father, an uncle, a grandfather. He put his energies into what he could change, what he could control, what was beautiful, what he could give.

One of the friendships that helped him was that with Chen Jen Shiu, the Buddhist monk he visited each week for more than a decade, to teach English. Jen Shiu's English improved and Jim learned some basic breathing and meditation techniques and an increasing attitude of how to change himself rather than, or in addition to, the world around him.

He could be grumpy, intolerant and react in anger. He almost always found his own way out of this as he reflected and adopted a self-critical stance over a few hours. He often adopted a pessimistic stance - viewed the glass as half empty rather than half full. He understood this for what it was – his way of preparing himself for the worst so as never to be taken by surprise or unable to deal with trouble.

He loved online shopping and the parcels keep arriving.

He saw himself as shy. All the time I have known him he would consciously put on what he called his 'Sydney Grammar Front', when called on to meet someone new, visit a hospital, or present a public face. Armed with one of his many suits, one of his many ties, and matching shoes he would assume his manners and adopt a stance that gave him confidence and control, focusing his actions and words. It worked remarkably well.

In the last few years, since my cessation of full time work, our lives were habitual. Between 2011 and 2014 we undertook several consultancies together – the first time we had actually worked together as opposed to working in parallel. We both enjoyed it - he loved it. We achieved significant outcomes and were both proud of our work. He was very pleased to be contributing through the Health Performance Council. He believed he owed the Council his full attention and gave it time and loyalty.

He spent much time reading and we discussed his reading and resultant thinking at length. We discussed our writing, our family, the state of the nation and educational directions. In his last week in hospital and short of breath, he read Gonski's address and we discussed the ideas in Dean Ashenden's latest article. We argued with doctors and both pushed to have his test results presented without sugar coating – "we're into data, and risk ", he said to doctors, over and over.

When people approached him with pity he would say "At least I *know* what is wrong with me". The fact that he died of heart failure, rather than renal failure is an irony he would have appreciated.

He often told the story of his long-term renal physician saying to him through the process of assessment for his second transplant:

"Your heart is your best feature", to which Jim replied

" My brain is my best feature", and Graeme retorted: " As I said, your heart is your best feature".

I hope Graeme will now allow that Jim had the last word, at least in the literal sense. In the metaphorical sense, they were both right. Jim had learned to synchro mesh his mind and heart. He

learned to live with ambiguity and wicked problems, without accepting the status quo or giving up – he worked towards balance – between

- family and community,
- lover and friend
- health and education
- the local and the global
- the academic and the practical
- his needs and my needs

towards TS Eliot's 'still point of the turning sphere'.

He learned to manage his health and to get on with the business of applying his mind and his skills to make the world a better place. He exemplified the parable of the talents –from him to whom much is given, much is expected.

No-one expected more of him than he expected of himself.

From your presence here today, I am guessing consensus is that he deserves the response of the master in the story of the Talents in Matthew 25:21:

*Well done, good and faithful servant.*

As I looked to conclude this, Leigh Hunt's simple poem from our childhood came to mind.

#### Abou Ben Adhem

Abou Ben Adhem (May his tribe increase!)  
Awoke one night from a deep dream of peace,  
And saw, within the moonlight in his room,  
Making it rich, and like a lily in bloom,  
An angel writing in a book of gold:—

Exceeding peace had made Ben Adhem bold,  
And to the presence in the room he said,  
"What writest thou?"—The vision raised its head,  
And with a look made of all sweet accord,  
Answered: "The names of those who love the Lord."

"And is mine one?" said Abou. "Nay, not so,"  
Replied the angel. Abou spoke more low,  
But cheerily still; and said, "I pray thee, then,  
Write me as one that loves his fellow men."

The angel wrote, and vanished. The next night  
It came again with a great wakening light,  
And showed the names whom love of God had blest,  
And lo! Ben Adhem's name led all the rest