

M. Crist Fleming Eulogy

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What a magnificent life. Mrs Fleming lived and dreamed on a grand scale, and all of us here today were fortunate in one way or another to share in that grand adventure.

We know what it was like to be caught up in one of her dreams. It may have been something as truly grand as starting a school some 50, 30 or 20 years ago, or something simple she made grand, like one of her famous picnics on a road trip, complete with silver goblets and her legendary drinking kit.

Mrs Fleming had a magical ability to turn a simple day into an adventure; and she had a way of bringing you along on that adventure and of letting you know that you were helping her fulfill a dream.

When I picture Mrs Fleming I will always see her with a certain mischievous glint in her eye. I think you've seen it too. That look she got when she had a wild idea; that gleam that told you she really meant what she was saying, that she was going to carry through with whatever it was, no matter the obstacles. That sparkle in the eye that said, "Let's get this done, let's have some fun."

I think of that glint, that flashing shine as the reflection of her dreams. And her dream come true, as she said many times, was her school. For generations to come students will walk through its doors and encounter her legacy, her dream.

We've all heard wonderful stories this week, as we reminisce and share memories. I'll tell just one. It's a story about one of Mrs Fleming's assembly talks.

A group of students had just gotten into some sort of trouble the previous weekend. I don't recall what, but they had done something fairly thoughtless, and of course Mrs Fleming asked them, what were they thinking? A chagrined boy made the mistake of saying, "I don't know Mrs Fleming, we were bored". Bored!? Boredom for Mrs Fleming was the worst sort of crime.

So at the assembly she admonished the students about their complacency. "You must exercise your curiosity", she said. "Maintain a sense of adventure, step up to challenges. There is no excuse for being bored in a world with so many wonderful places, populated by such fabulous people."

She told them: "go to the Lugano train station, hop on the first train that comes by, and get off at the 2nd stop. When you get off the train, find out what it is that makes that place special."

I'm not sure our Green Forms and travel permissions allow for such escapades, but that's what she said.

It was true to form MCF. And it reminds me of the way she frequently spoke about learning and education. Like the encounters and adventures of a voyage, learning is about surmounting obstacles, confronting the unexpected, learning how and why to

change course, learning how to find your way after detours; and learning to marvel at people and places as you come to understand them.

That's how she spoke, that's how she lived her life, that's the example she set.

Mrs Fleming's voyage was a great one. It had moments of great achievement and noble purpose. When she encountered detours and disappointments, she re-found her direction from the guiding light of her dreams. And while she took her voyage in style, with her white gloves and tumblers on the dashboard, she shared everything she had with those who accompanied her.

On a personal note, Melissa, James and I are grateful for all she shared with us. We will miss her, but she will always be a part of our life and our dreams.