

***Speech made by Gareth Jones at Murray's cremation ceremony,
Wednesday 13 January 2021.***

Let me say it is both an honour and a privilege to be asked to offer some words on behalf of so many people who knew and were close to Murray. I can assure you, it is a truly humbling experience.

I know that I speak for all of us, and our broader community, in offering our deepest condolences to Murray's wife Sam, their children Zach and Sophie, their extended family and friends.

I was fortunate enough to be able to get to know Murray in both a personal and professional capacity and I have become a better person for that.

For me, Murray was a character with character. An authentic person and authentic educator at a time where so much of what we read, listened to or watch is regarded as being 'fake'.

Murray was the polar opposite of this. The real deal. This authenticity came naturally to Murray and was never, ever contrived.

My admin team colleagues very much appreciated this and we witnessed it on a day to day basis, whether in individual interactions or at various team meetings. It is why we enjoyed working with and being with Murray so much.

Before moving on to share some further thoughts and perspectives, I would like to share a brief biography.

Early in his career, Murray taught High School Mathematics in schools in Western Australia.

His talent was clearly recognised very early on in his career. After just four years in teaching, he moved into a Head of Department position, which he continued in at different schools between 1994 to 2008.

By August 2008, he and Sam made the decision to start their family's international school adventure - joining The Western Academy of Beijing, where Murray was initially the Head of the Mathematics before moving into the Assistant Principal position, which he held for 5 years.

It was around this time that Murray demonstrated the notion of lifelong learning, as he earned his Masters of Educational Leadership.

In 2017, Murray and Sam moved to Cambodia where Murray joined ISPP as Secondary School Principal. During his time at ISPP, Murray showed us his commitment to the vision of our school, the IB philosophy and, most of all, to the development of the young people in his care. All of his decisions were made with the best interests of students in mind.

Before writing this tribute, I searched up Murray's application to ISPP for the Secondary Principal role:

In it, he highlighted the phrase '**make a difference**' that appears in ISPP's Guiding statements.

Murray noted the following,

'This is a wonderful statement, one that presupposes that you can make a difference and one that I believe encourages you to make a difference immediately.'

In reality, this vision is applicable to all in the communities.

It is a statement that requires action and our main function is to encourage that action.

Something we know Murray lived by and encouraged.

Murray believed that schools should be places where kids have fun and are encouraged to follow their passions.

In conversations with Murray and Sam and others, as well as my own observations, it was clear that Murray had a natural talent for helping students who were in adversity or students who were perhaps making what is sometimes referred to as 'wrong choices'.

I am aware that many of the students that have sent their condolences to Murray's family have referenced turning points in their life where Murray helped and nudged them to explore different options and avenues for the better.

Noting perhaps where they might have ended up if it wasn't for Murray's care for them.

Murray's talent and passion for music and abilities as a guitarist brought him closer to students and colleagues and was a basis for many friendships. This would be evident when he would play at our annual Battle of the Bands competition.

On moving here, Murray made an instant connection with ISPP, Cambodia and the Cambodian people. He would often remark how lucky he was to have had the opportunity to be a part of these communities.

Naroth on behalf of the secondary school office staff noted that:

Murray was a man who always arrived first in the early morning, sitting in front of his laptop working away, sometimes with music in the background.

On the first day that he started at ISPP, we wondered what he would be like.

After the initial weeks and months, we met with him and were able to tell him how we felt at work. We were able to thank him and let him know that he made us feel like the secondary office was our second home.

And that it felt like we were coming home every morning to enjoy doing our 'housework'.

In meetings that followed we repeated the same thing. We wanted him to know that not many people have the privilege to work with someone as caring, humbling, respecting and understanding as him. Today we have to say goodbye to you and we will miss you so much.

Dara who teaches Khmer Literature in our Secondary school noted:

Murray was a great boss, colleague, and friend. He took care and paid attention to everyone and made sure no one was left out.

He helped me personally to ensure that my teaching practice went smoothly, that I was fully supported. He gave me what I needed in order to ensure my teaching practice was successful.

He inspired, motivated, and encouraged me to do things that I would have never done, such as playing the drums and growing long hair.

"Do what you want to do Dara" and "I want to see your long hair before I leave ISPP".

Murray, you have not left us, you're still with us. You're in our hearts. I can see you smile and laugh while I am writing this. Thank you for being a part of Cambodian education. We are so proud to have had you here.

The ISPP Administration and Board of Trustees wanted to contribute their sentiments to this service also and honour Murray's commitment to education and to ISPP.

Noting that Murray will be remembered as someone who always had a ready smile and time for a congenial chat whenever you bumped into him around the school.

Murray stood for what was right, making sure that the students were at the centre of the decisions being made.

He was a key driver in the development and design of the current ISPP scholarship program.

He was passionate and committed to providing a high-quality education to bright and talented Cambodians who financially could not afford ISPP's tuition.

He worked with his team to develop the systems to identify these students and then work with them to prepare them to be successful at ISPP.

Murray stood for what he believed, and the Board and administration knew that his decisions and motivations were driven by his dedication and commitment to ensuring the best education for the students under his stewardship.

Murray embodied what it means to be an educator and a humanitarian -- always gracious, genuine, generous, and saw it as a privilege to help others. He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, neighbours, colleagues and the wider school community.

There have been many messages coming in from near and far and we will be sharing a link to an electronic book of remembrance so that others will not only be able to share their condolences but also messages of inspiration, fun, stories and pictures of the times that they have spent with Murray.

I would, however, like to share a message that came yesterday from Lori Hastings the Principal at iCan with her permission.

Gareth, This news filled me with sadness, made even more personal as Murray and I were going through treatment at the same time a few years ago (him in Singapore and me in the UK) and we shared our experience with each other from a distance.

One thing we shared was a sense of humour about various embarrassing side effects.

Having been connected to ISPP for many years now, I can say with confidence and knowledge that he was without a doubt the most inspirational, human and emotionally intelligent Secondary Principal that worked at ISPP. I know what the students and community thought about him. He was an incredible person, and I know how much he will be missed by all.

I can echo these sentiments and as the reference to Murray's humour.

Even on the most difficult days, from hospital beds in Bangkok and Phnom Penh, Murray's humour and stoicism would shine through.

Whilst I am tempted to share a few of the stories now - I have agreed with Sam that we will share these at a different time and place.

Finally, I feel it is important to share words from Murray's immediate family.

From Zach and Sophie

It is with great sadness that we cannot be present today, but would like to use this opportunity to give our warmest and most sincere thanks to this wonderful community.

In recent weeks I recall Murray telling me how making the chance decision to move to Cambodia was one of the best things he ever did.

He told me to take risks and not get too content with comfort.

He told me that he was nervous to leave his former school of nearly a decade and take a leap into a new chapter of his life.

It came to be that he and Sam found a country, community and friends that they came to love.

We are once again so sad to not be present to celebrate Murray's life on this sad day, but truly grateful for the rich experience and warmth of support that has made this one of our family's most valuable chapters in all our lives.

And from Sam, simply and succinctly:

That Murray was the love of her life and the most loving Papa to Zach and Sophie.

He certainly added much colour and adventure to our lives.

In closing, I would like to thank you for coming today. I also wish to thank the pagoda and monks for their blessings.

The many people that have worked hard to enable this ceremony to take place.

As well as those who are not able to be here today but have Murray, Sam, Zach, Sophie and their families in their thoughts or prayers.

I hope that in time we will be able to take solace in that Murray made an incredible impression to those who knew him as a person, an educator and as someone who **really made a difference**.

Thank you Murray.