

RADLEY DENZEL REID – A TRIBUTE BY KATHRYN STEWART

Master teacher. Past Dean of Studies, Vice Principal, Principal. Loyal Campionite (despite his other CC affiliation). Mr Radley D. Reid O.D. has worn many hats throughout his 40 year association with Campion. The one we recognise him for today in naming this refurbished Chemistry lab in his honour is that of Master Science Teacher – and Science is used deliberately as Mr Reid has taught Mathematics, Physics AND Chemistry...only missing Biology from his skill set!

Today we celebrate the Master Chemist: Mr Reid, the Teacher.

In chemistry, there is a fondness for listing properties of various elements and compounds. What might this list look like for Radley Denzel Reid? Like the **ubiquitous** carbon atom, Mr Reid can be found everywhere – literally and figuratively – getting an impossible number of jobs done, and seeing or speaking to countless people, often simultaneously. Like carbon, he is capable of forming many bonds and is integral to a long list of organisations. Tied to Campion with an attraction stronger than any **covalent** bond, Mr Reid is loyalty personified. Unlike carbon however, he has proven to be quite reactive – maybe even **volatile** given the right conditions – litter, for example, arouses a flare-up that could compete with the intensity of lit magnesium! So too will uncharitable behaviour, deliberate obtuseness, or any act betraying a lack of courtesy or integrity. Many will remember pointed references to “pond scum” and “quivering masses of protoplasm” on such occasions. Indeed, Mr Reid is a man of principle who insists on adherence to a path of self-improvement – those of us who have been here for a while remember his introduction of the motivational acronym LIMIT: Lord I Must Improve Today. With such a philosophy, how then could he demand any less of others?

Efficacious. To list the myriad accomplishments of Mr Reid in the time allotted is just not possible. Suffice it to say that he made an indelible impact on Campion – spiritually, from an infrastructure standpoint, in the area of morale and camaraderie, and of course academically – Mr Reid undoubtedly was key to the transformation of Campion College into what it is today – a widely recognized educational powerhouse in the Caribbean – through his insistence on excellence, his persistent drive for development, his methodical analysis of results, and his determination to not merely identify problems but to solve them – a true scientist indeed. Lending stability, keen insight, a positive outlook and irrepressible energy, even in the face of challenges, Mr Reid’s contribution to Campion has been and continues to be invaluable. His efficacy as an instructor is without question – one need only look at the achievements of the thousands of students who have experienced his expertise and the teachers who have been inspired by his practical approach and inimitable enthusiasm.

Catalytic. Mr Reid has been a catalyst in so many areas of his life – his church, Rotary Club and by extension Interact Club, Campion, other schools where he serves on the board, and now the government – just to name a few. He can be relied upon to shake things up and make things happen, fast, with his own particular brand of persistence and powers of persuasion (that usually incorporate a mischievous smile and a twinkle in the eye). There is no shortage of stories about Mr Reid’s catalytic effect in the classroom. A man whose name is known throughout the length and breadth of Jamaica; students can recount with ease the vitality, insistence on accuracy, and impatience with laziness. There are accounts of being “doomed” if one does not learn the periodic table, and threats of ending up “digging yam hill”, honourable though that may be, if one did not understand the concept of molarity. One sought to avoid at all costs the withering look, disbelieving stutter, and curled lip that would inevitably follow foolish comments. I was privileged to have him on a few memorable occasions in sixth form – right here in this laboratory – when he filled in for Father Farrell, and believe me, he made a definite impression with his sharp wit and rapid-fire questions. To quote Khalil Gibran, Mr Reid is a teacher who does not merely “bid you enter the house of his wisdom, but rather leads you to the threshold of your own mind”.

No one can doubt his competence as Sir Rads, as he is affectionately known, is able to share his extensive knowledge and life lessons with unmatched passion. To witness Mr Reid in full flow is truly a marvel, so worked up is he, particularly when his temper has been set aflame by vague answers and mindless questions. That is not to imply that Mr Reid does not welcome questions in the classroom - he is a man of many words who enjoys a vigorous discourse on a variety of topics. The words “I shall be brief” still echo through the auditorium, so often were they uttered as a preface to a somewhat lengthy

homily. The thoroughness of Mr Reid's responses to questions ensures that classes extend beyond the given time – the generosity of this man with his time and knowledge, and the depth of his care for each individual student, is truly remarkable. Only a teacher who cared would see fit to inspire his students to achieve their maximum potential. A stickler for discipline, Mr Reid will push, prod, and cajole each one to aspire to excellence in all aspects of life. Moreover, he did likewise for his teaching staff – pushing them to dig deeper, to give more, to strive for the 'magis'. What more could one ask of a catalyst?

While his boiling point could be defined as fairly low, Mr Reid's **freezing point** has not yet been determined. Anyone who has come into contact with him can speak of his warmth and compassion, albeit coupled with firm discipline! He is a true family man and devoted friend who loves a good laugh, even at his own expense. We at Champion know that he also cares about the environment – he led a war on litter here as he strode rapidly around the campus, sharp eyes spotting the tiniest speck, and, knowing what came next, the nearest student would rush to pick it up and deposit it in a nearby bin without a single word being uttered by either individual. Ah, the power of the extended hand.

Our beloved Mr Reid – a man who kept his finger on the pulse, who knew what was happening, on campus and beyond. In the days of Zeeks (the unofficial school dog), there were rumours of a camera fitted to Zeeks' head, feeding images back to Sir Rads' office – and when I was in 3rd form, we actually referred to him as Boo Radley – related to the Literature text of the time but also reflecting his unnerving ability to turn up when one least expected or desired his presence. The phrase "Boo a come" did not always give one much time! Unlike many volatile chemicals, Mr Reid seemed almost undetectable on approach, allowing him to catch many a wrong-doer red-handed. And of course, he will forever live on in the Champion chronicles as the fearless, fleet-footed principal who chased down a thief on Hopefield Avenue, bringing him back to tumultuous cheers. The Radley Reid Road Race lives on in tribute to his athletic ability!

I could not complete this tribute without making reference to Mr Reid's **tensile strength**. Unbreakable. A man of character, faith, vision, and tenacity; he has been a solid, reliable driving force, although it has been reported that he will dissolve in the presence of his grandchildren.

A quote from The Emperor's Club seems fitting in closing: "A great teacher has little external history to record. His life goes over into other lives. These men are pillars in the intimate structure of our schools. They are more essential than its stones or beams, and they will continue to be a kindling force and a revealing power in our lives". Radley Reid. Teacher extraordinaire. Master chemist. Generations of students have you to thank for keeping them on the straight and narrow, for achieving success in the classroom and beyond; they, and Champion College, are forever in your debt. Thank you.