

Mr Chancellor,

Cathryn Harvey, whose distinguished service to the University we are honouring this evening, was born in Rochdale on New Year's Day during the longest and coldest winter of the twentieth century. She has a twin brother, David who is the elder by ten minutes, but has never let this accident of birth hold her back. Nor has she been deterred by the fact that despite being a Stansfield on her mother's side, it has proved impossible to prove a connection to either of her famous namesakes, Lisa Stansfield or Gracie Fields (née Stansfield). Her father was a Methodist Minister, so the family moved around every few years and she spent her childhood in Leeds, Huddersfield and Lancaster. Her leadership skills were evident from an early age. As a child, she was regularly to be seen shepherding other children around the local neighbourhood, despite being the same age as many of them. Later, as Head Girl at Lancaster Grammar School, she demonstrated the dispassionate, pragmatic decision making which has made her the woman she is today. One day, whilst walking to school with her younger sister, Christine, she realised she had forgotten a critical piece of equipment. I am told that she promptly ordered her sister to return home to collect said equipment, under threat of a detention if she didn't!

By the time she retired as Academic Registrar in 2011, she had clocked up an impressive forty five year association with the University. This included three

periods of study and several key posts, including Director of the Careers Service and Director of External Relations. In all of her Newcastle roles, Cathryn's lodestar has been the student experience. Under her leadership, Careers achieved the MATRIX standard for the quality of its information, advice and support services, - the first University Careers Service in the country to do so. In articulating her vision for a unified student services in King's Gate, she demonstrated a capacity to grasp the bigger picture whilst simultaneously keeping an eye on the detail; whether it be the colour of the skirting boards in King's Gate (black – easier to keep clean), or the number and location of the filing cabinets. This eagle-eyed approach is also evident in her critique of the written word. Cathryn is one of that rare band of people who know exactly when and how to use an apostrophe and her red pen was often deployed to highlight the errors of those less rigorously schooled in the grammatic arts.

Reflecting on her multi-faceted career, Cathryn told me that she was simply in the right place at the right time, or depending on your perspective, wrong place, wrong time! So what are the qualities that have made her successful in so many different roles?

A love of people - Everyone I've spoken to agrees that Cathryn will do absolutely anything for anyone, provided there is an opportunity for a good chat. She regularly strikes up conversations with complete strangers and her brother suggests that the main reason she loves train journeys is because she can

“gently interrogate” whoever is sitting next to her. Simple trips often evolve into prolonged outings where she deploys her skills as social worker, therapist and critical friend in the service of those she meets. She has a profound belief in social justice, fairness and equality, formed during her early career as a social worker in some of the most deprived areas of Manchester.

Friends and family describe her as wise, honest and caring, with a wonderful sense of humour. Visitors to “Hotel Harvey” can be sure of a very warm welcome. Bathrobes and slippers are provided, the rooms are cleaner than a science lab and meals are meticulously planned and prepared in advance. As a manager, she was loyal, straight-talking and totally reliable. A great champion of young talent, she encouraged her staff to aim high and many people have benefitted from her interest in their career development.

A sense of adventure - At the age of eighteen, Cathryn was accepted as one of the first VSO volunteers, having been tempted to apply by a notice she spotted at school. She remembers the occasion vividly – it was a pale blue notice on a green baize noticeboard. There’s that attention to detail again. The interview was tough. She was faced by a panel of twelve people; an experience which led her to consider every subsequent interview a breeze by comparison. She hoped for a Caribbean posting, but was sent to Borneo for a year, where she taught young children in a remote village. Fortunately, the locals proved amenable to the Lancashire Methodist way of life and she found the experience

transformative. Highspots included a visit from the Bishop of Coventry, who arrived by sea plane, and the journey home, which included a stopover in Bangkok, where the presence of American GIs provided an unexpected bonus.

The capacity to multi-task - Cathryn was renowned for being the first port of call whenever someone left the University or was away for a period of time. In the space of a few years, she managed the Development and Alumni Relations Office, the International Office, the Student Wellbeing Services and Quality in Teaching and Learning – all on top of the “day job” of Academic Registrar.

Whatever she took on, she quickly ascertained what needed to be done, dealt humanely but firmly with any issues that arose, and created a collaborative and effective working environment for those around her. Her organisational skills are legendary. She has never been known to miss an appointment, a train or a flight. Indeed according to her son Dan, when travelling as a family, they invariably arrived at the station so early they could have caught the two trains preceding the one they were booked on!

Cathryn is a firm believer in seizing the day and never puts off till tomorrow what could be done today. In retirement, her formidable energies have been transferred to more pleasurable activities - planning adventure holidays, learning Spanish, helping to look after her granddaughters, Olivia and Alice, shopping at Marks & Spencer and discussing the latest episodes of “Strictly”

and “Coronation Street”. She is looking forward to the marriage of her son James in December.

It is typical of Cathryn that almost the only thing she asked me to mention tonight was her pride in the fact that this fellowship is being presented to someone from the Support Services because she felt this validated the role of professional support in the University.

Mr Chancellor, in recognition of her innovative, inclusive and inimitable contribution to the work of this University, I commend Cathryn Harvey to you for the award of an Honorary Fellowship.

Jill Taylor-Roe

Public Orator

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