

THE BISHOPS TRUST 175 CAMPAIGN



On Monday 21st November the Bishops Trust 175 Campaign was launched, at the Woodlands Pavilion. After a welcome from the Chairman of Council, Mr Mike Bosman, the Bishops Trust Chairman, Mr Andrew Selby, outlined the background of the Bishops Trust and the reasons for the new campaign. The objectives of the Trust are threefold:

- To provide funding to construct or rebuild facilities of the highest international standard.
- To provide bursaries and scholarships for talented boys, who otherwise would not be able to afford the opportunity.
- To build the Bishops General Endowment Fund, to ensure the future sustainability of Bishops.

The current campaign's aim was to raise R175 million in the next few years to undertake some major upgrades to key infrastructure. Mr Selby emphasized the need to create an ongoing "culture of giving" at Bishops so that major fundraising initiatives in the future would not be necessary.

The Principal, Mr Guy Pearson, then presented an overview of the school's most urgent needs, which had been developed in consultation with DHK Architects over the past 8 months. The 6 major projects were identified as follows:

- The conversion of the Prep School Library into a modern media and resources hub.
- The building of a Multifunctional Sports Centre at the College which would include basketball, squash, fencing, indoor hockey and a gymnasium.
- The upgrade of the Frank Reid Pavilion and the Aquatics Centre.
- The building of a new Life Sciences (Biology) Block and the upgrade of the current Science Block.
- An upgrade of the current Memorial Theatre to increase seating capacity.
- The building of a new Music Conservatoire.

Mr Pearson presented conceptual drawings and the proposed site plan for these developments. **(The full Bishops Trust 175 Campaign Brochure can be viewed on the School and OD websites).**

Mr Mike Bosman then announced that the President of the OD Union, Mr Raymond Ackerman, had pledged R20 million to launch the campaign. In paying tribute to Mr Ackerman, the Chairman had this to say:

“Our OD Union President, Raymond Ackerman, has been involved with the Bishops 175 campaign from the first time we at the school started discussing it amongst ourselves, more than a year ago. He has met frequently with Guy Pearson and me to pass on ideas and share his experiences with us and we have really appreciated that.

When any of us think about Raymond, we can think of many things.

One thinks about an enormously successful OD and businessman who basically introduced South Africans to the way we buy groceries in South Africa today. The concepts of massive supermarkets and hypermarkets were previously unknown in South Africa.

One thinks of the incredible amount of good Raymond, Wendy and their family have done for so many people and for so many causes over the past 65 years. Some of that may have had its faint origins at Bishops and also at a Convent in Kimberley.



In the late 1940s about 8 or 9 Bishops boys, including Raymond, with the support of a Bishops master, the famous Wilke, used to run a Night School each week to teach local waiters and gardeners and other adults, who had been deprived of a proper high school education. In Standard 9, Raymond was elected as the Principal of the Night School. Later when he left Bishops, he was involved with a similar Night School program at UCT and after he left Varsity, when he was again the Principal. He had to work with the new young men and women students who wanted to be teachers on the program. One of teachers he met was a beautiful young woman called Wendy Marcus. They fell in love and were later married.

It is more than 62 years later and as was said in John Wades' 1839 book, 'The rest is history'.

It would be impossible to think about Raymond without thinking about Wendy. They are an enormously powerful team and Wendy, in her own right, has made such a huge impact on Raymond's life, with the family, at Pick n Pay and with her huge number of philanthropic activities.

One thinks of Raymond regularly appearing on TV for years, as he did in the 1970s, 80s and 90s, always taking on the Apartheid government, or some Control Board or another, and always fighting for the rights of the ordinary South African consumer. Always making a compelling point using his same pen - which I believe he still has.

One thinks about someone who has been awarded seven honorary doctorates from top universities around the world.

Who can forget that Raymond, in an amazing act of reconciliation, put aside an intense historical anti-Semitic prejudice to attend an OD Union dinner, a few years ago at which we had the first black OD guest speaker.

When thinking about Raymond, we can think about an excellent sportsman; someone who gave up snow skiing at the age of 80, someone who still plays golf at the golf club his family founded, and who can score less than his age!

One just sees success and more success!

But it wasn't always like that for Raymond. It is all too easy, if not convenient, for us to forget that when Raymond was in Matric at Bishops, he was dropped from the First XV rugby team when they toured then Rhodesia in 1948, because some masters at the school felt that it would be inappropriate for a Jewish boy to go on a Bishops tour of church schools, especially in the year that DF Malan's National Party won the national election.

Raymond was also blocked at school from being involved in certain parts of school life, including being nominated as Head of House, because it was felt by some at Bishops that Jewish boys could not, or should not, for example, read or speak in chapel.

It is also all too easy to forget that after studying at UCT, Raymond later joined the Checkers group and grew the group to 85 stores, before being called in to a meeting on 6 October 1966 and unceremoniously fired at the age of 35. He then found himself unemployed with very little cash, an ill wife and 3.9 children. (I say that because Jonathan was soon to be born).

He somehow managed to round up some support from some friends - '90% guts, 10% capital', he called it. He bought 4 small grocery stores from Jack Goldin, who went on to start Clicks, and Raymond started growing Pick n Pay, as we know it. Today there are more than 1 400 stores in the Pick n Pay group. Approximately 9 million South Africans shop at Pick n Pay. The group has revenue of about R72 billion and about 70 000 people are employed across owned and franchised Pick n Pay stores.

Raymond's story is a great Bishops story and one that resonates with many of us personally.

It is a story of how a boy became a man, how he developed a deep resilience and a high level of mental and physical toughness; it is a story of overcoming obstacles and one of overcoming prejudices and discrimination; a story of reconciliation. It is the story of someone who, time and time again, has taken the lead in so many areas of his life.

So it is my great pleasure to be able to announce this evening that Raymond has once again decided to take the lead, and that he is officially launching the Bishops 175 Campaign tonight by making a donation of R20 million to Bishops.

A portion of this donation will go towards projects in Founders House and School House and a portion will go towards staff housing projects. The majority of the gift will be used to fund, or partially fund, one of our new building projects.

Raymond, it is very difficult for me to adequately express our appreciation to you, Wendy and your family for this wonderful and incredibly generous contribution to start our fundraising efforts for this campaign.

So perhaps a simple and very sincere thank you from me on behalf of all of us would be a good start. Thank you very much indeed. It is quite simply the biggest gift we have ever received at Bishops and something that we are extremely grateful for. We are so very proud of you and everything that you have achieved.

I know that you know that your donation will be used wisely towards the costs of our new buildings and that thousands of Bishops boys in the future will be able to enjoy using excellent facilities here at Bishops thanks to your generosity.”

In his response Mr Ackerman thanked the audience for the acknowledgement they had given him. Despite the fact that he had faced many challenges during his time at Bishops, he reflected that it had taught him many good lessons; particularly the ability to be tenacious and determined in the face of difficulties and setbacks in his life. In addition, it had given him the strong conviction to stand up against any form of prejudice and discrimination throughout his life. Mr Ackerman said that he was proud to be associated with Bishops and the way it had changed over the past few years. He pledged his full support for the Bishops Trust 175 Campaign.

Mr Raymond Ackerman, Mr Mike Bosman & Mr Michael Watermeyer



Mrs Wendy Ackerman & Mr Mike Bosman