

EULOGY FOR THE DEGREE OF
DOCTOR OF LAWS (HONORIS CAUSA)

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Most of us recall the First Gulf War in 1991 – or perhaps its code name Operation Desert Storm – when the US liberated Kuwait from Iraqi occupation under President Saddam Hussein. It was the first televised war, and new words crept into our language, like “Exocet missile”, along with euphemistic propaganda such as “surgical strike”. As the guns fell silent and the occupation was forcibly ended, the war claims came in – claims by persons whose lives had been turned upside down by the invasion (including the expatriate Filipina maids who had been abused by occupying troops), claims by businesses whose oil refineries, equipment or dams had been taken or blown up in the fighting, and claims by countries whose coastlines and lands were devastated by deliberately spilled oil and raging fires. Altogether claims of \$350 billion were made by companies and individuals from 116 countries of the world. These would take years to adjudicate.

The United Nations established the UN Compensation Commission to make findings. Looking for suitably qualified persons to appoint, and especially people with demonstrated experience in sorting out big money claims, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali called New Zealander David Mace. David was then weeks away from retiring after a 38 year career with global consultancy Ernst and Young, the last 14 years in Hong Kong. He was on the verge of returning to New Zealand with plans for golf as well as a new career. But for the next seven years, down to 2003, David served as an adjudicator of the Gulf War compensation claims, assisted by teams of lawyers

with a secretariat in Geneva, reporting directly to the UN Security Council. The work was like nothing that had been done before, requiring a sophisticated system of adjudication to ensure parity and principle amongst claimants. Ultimately, of the awarded claims – totaling some \$53 billion – more than \$48 billion has been paid in full by way of deductions from Iraq’s oil revenues and the balance of \$5 billion is on track for settling by 2021.

David Mace has had a professional career dealing in numbers with many more zeros on the end than most of us are used to. As with the UN Compensation Commission, it is a life and career that is characterized by restoration, of bringing a measure of justice and opportunity, to the disadvantaged. These, we shall see, have been recurring themes.

David was a Remuera Primary and an Auckland Grammar boy, whose flair for numbers and getting big things done propelled him into the accounting profession after studying at this University. His early career was with Wilkinson Wilberfoss which, in the way of accounting firms, became in the 1980s a part of the global firm Arthur Young and then Ernst and Young (now just EY).

The next move was to Hong Kong, still with Ernst and Young. There David had been called upon to manage the liquidation of a major corporate collapse – that of Carrion Investments. The Wikipedia entry gives the flavour of that assignment:

Following allegations of accounting fraud, a murder of a bank auditor, and the suicide of the firm's adviser, the Carrion Group collapsed in 1983, the largest bankruptcy in Hong Kong.

While in Hong Kong David walked in the worlds of both the expatriate community and the Chinese. Ernst and Young had major US clients, and David headed up the New Zealand Hong Kong Business Association. His work lay in making connections. He had, he says, “enough Cantonese to get into trouble and enough to get out of

trouble.” But one senses that getting other people out of trouble is what he does best. His links to both local and expat communities enabled him to marshal financial and other supports for those in need. These included, notably, those Chinese refugees who had fled the Red Guards in China and who were at the mercy of unscrupulous Hong Kong landlords who housed them in sub-human conditions. David’s contacts enabled him to assist in establishing the Helping Hand charity organisation, along with other charities. Helping Hand built accommodation for the needy at a rate that suggests we would do well to have them operating in New Zealand today.

Those times in Hong Kong were before the handover in 1997, when Hong Kong was still a mostly self-governing United Kingdom Territory and Hong Kong nationals eyed rather nervously the looming imposition of Chinese control. There was a need for trust and assurances, not just about how business would be treated in the new order but how the least fortunate, such as the prison population, would fare.

David and his fellow members of the Business Chambers saw that the combination of British law and the Chinese enterprise and work ethic was a powerful engine for good. He and another Hong Kong business leader were granted a rare audience in Beijing with two of the Vice Premiers of China. This led to him being appointed a Goodwill Ambassador, for China, in Hong Kong. He worked on the appropriate regulatory models for business under the new economic order that was to come. He saw the potential in a new legal order that, as it has turned out, has been vindicated.

The winds of change were blowing in those dying days of British Hong Kong. For David the Carrion liquidation work was done, retirement from Ernst and Young just weeks away, when the call from Dr Boutros Boutros-Ghali came.

The Compensation Commission work was to occupy much of the next six years, involving commuting to Europe. A planned partial retirement and the perfection of the golf round at Millbrook was put off. Nonetheless, David established an international consultancy practice operating out of New Zealand and Hong Kong

advising multi-nationals on their Asian strategies and capital raising. He continued to develop significant business interests of his own, now including the very nearly completed UHT milk plant in Kerikeri, as well as an interest in aquariums throughout Asia.

But we have not yet spoken of the Freemasons, with which David has been associated since 1963 and of which he served as Grand Master from 2004 to 2006, still continuing as Chair of the Freemasons Foundation. The Freemasons form a network of community-minded people who together raise the funding to be a major benefactor not just to this University but to the whole New Zealand community. Freemasonry has been a natural home for one whose talents include, as David's do, connecting people who can do things with things that need to be done.

The quiet benevolence of the Freemasons in modern New Zealand is hugely impressive, ranging from support of opera, orchestras and literature, to facilitating discoveries and education in science and the environment. There is a significant investment in health and well-being. While much of this involves very large sums of money, some of it doesn't yet is perfectly "fit for purpose" (as the modern phrase goes) – one thinks, for example, of the funding for particle-board hand-painted wooden shoes on which young autistic children can be trained to tie their own laces. This illustrates that philanthropy is more than allocating money to problems, it flows out of involvement in the community and seeing what needs to be done.

But it is the Freemasons' extraordinary benevolence to the University of Auckland that needs to be mentioned this evening. For David Mace, who has been involved throughout, what he has appreciated is the sense of partnership between the two organisations. That relationship began with the funding of the Gerontology Chair in the Medical School around 40 years ago, still continuing with Professor Martin Connolly as the current holder. In more recent times David and his colleagues have been able to work closely with successive deans and leading researchers at the Faculty of Medical and Health Sciences, seeking to understand current needs and concerns.

The Freemasons' support has extended to ophthalmology and especially neurology and neurosurgery. The relationship has blossomed, opening up opportunities for the Freemasons and the University to make things happen for advancing the public good.

For a research-led University and its research staff this type of relationship is its lifeblood, increasingly so in times when funding from Government is constrained. The Freemasons now ranks as a member of the University of Auckland Foundation's Sir Maurice O'Rorke Society, the top rank of donors, having given more than \$7 million to support the University's mission.

Beyond his important work for Freemasonry, David continues to be personally involved in the Centre for Brain Research Advisory Board, and on other wider community boards such as the Auckland Regional Tissue Bank, a partnership between the University of Auckland and the three district health boards, which the Freemasons also supports and on which he serves as the Community Representative.

He has found the time, even so, for many other things - to be a founding member of what is now the Starship Children's Hospital Trust, finance director of the Committee that won the 1990 Commonwealth Games for Auckland, to serve on the Dementia Prevention Trust Board and the McDougall Rankin Education Trust.

For all these endeavours and others David was made an Officer of the New Zealand Order of Merit in 2011. For his contribution particularly to the University of Auckland, and recognising also the very generous support of the Freemasons, Chancellor, I present David William Mace for award of the degree Doctor of Laws (Honoris Causa).

