

Wonderful guests.

Wonderful presents (unexpected but appreciated).

Wonderful comments.

Thanks so much, particularly for those who have come so far. It all makes me feel rather special.

Now, it may be my 80th birthday, but my theme for tonight is the number **five**.

Friends, at age 80, this makes me the oldest surviving male member, ever, of the Manners and Stevens clans.

That could indicate that we are breathing better quality air, eating better food and drinking better wine than all of our ancestors.

If that's the case; long may we continue to do so.

Now I am going to use my 80th birthday as an opportunity to make a few changes, and I had a long talk to my friend, Bob Day, this morning and he suggested that I adopt his 3 best Russian friends:-

Morov

Lessov

& Ridov

He says, that helps you chose what to do:

More of!

& Less of!

& Get rid of!

Many people use their 80th birthday as an excuse to give a long, long speech.

However, these **five** books (remember the theme of '**five**') are there to remind me that I have written it all down for anyone who is interested enough to delve into history.

I have given copies of these books to my eleven grand children and the books will all be available as free e-books online, so that's my reason for this short speech tonight.

The books tell the stories of some remarkable ancestors who many of us share. I just mention one, big Jim Stevens, the clarinet-playing prospector.

Big Jim, or Pom Pom as he was known, invested in a very good clarinet but didn't have enough money left over to buy a music stand.

So, he made his own music stand and here it is, now over 100 years old.

I used this for many years, myself. Every time I picked it up I sensed the love and attention to detail, the craftsmanship, the joints and the angles.

Pretty clever I thought, making your own music stand.

I wonder how many of us could do that today.

I wonder what we will be leaving behind that people will be discussing 100 years from today.

So, as I said, the **five** books remind me not to delve too far back into history.

So, to continue the theme of **five** tonight, I wonder what I could claim as my own **five** main achievements.

Perhaps these could be the **five**:-

1. Back in the middle of last century I imported some salt tolerant seed from Turkey. This, Puccinellia plant, actually eats salt and it helped in rehabilitating much salt-damaged farm land in Esperance and throughout the wheat belt (and won me a Duke of Edinburgh Award).
2. Then, on Singapore Airlines flight 216 - Singapore to Los Angeles - on April 28th, 2001 I became the first person to what? (No, not that.....)

I was the first person to send an email from a commercial flight (that email was to Jenny and I still have a copy).

3. In 2015, I became the person responsible (with much help from Judy and Geoff) to get Mannwest Group over the line for its 120th Anniversary.

What have I learnt from 60 years of running that business?

- ❖ I realized how fragile companies are and how they require constant nurturing and care and sacrifice if they are to survive.
- ❖ I've learnt how lonely it can be from time to time, running your own business (particularly the years following my father's death after being not only my business partner but my mentor and best friend).

Just digressing for a moment, prompted by my mention of 'loneliness', people often say to me that I have no understanding of the word 'depression'.

Well, all I can say to them is that they should have a long talk to my therapist sometime.

4. Now, to the fourth thing which is having four wonderful children, all specializing in being very unique individuals and I'm proud to have all four of them with me tonight, along with five or my wonderful 11 grandchildren.
5. My fifth achievement was, meeting Jenny in Esperance all those years ago and then many years later reconnecting and working so hard to get her to take me seriously.

Since then I've been fortunate in having a wife who encourages me to have the courage to live my life and passions to the full.

"Courage" is what Judy, Geoff and I were talking about with Sarah & James in the office, on Wednesday, and how Aristotle said that "courage is the first of human virtues because it makes all other virtues possible."

Scott, you might remember the part you played in getting me down from fixing the roof in Kalgoorlie, one Saturday afternoon, to take a phone call from 'a lady ringing from Perth'. That was the moment that I reconnected with Jenny after many years.

Well, that's my five main achievements of which I'm extremely proud.

To conclude and also to continue the theme of **five** I'd like to read my most recent poem as it deals with special people doing special things together, like we are today.

Remaining Sane in an Insane World (A Festive thought for you)

Don't judge the world
just by today's headlines.
The mob rarely gets it right,
so who will guide you through?

It could be a rough journey
on your own.
Sanity preserved,
By just a few.

They may never ever meet each other,
although each with
a strong link,
just to you.

Their numbers may be,
as few as five,
importantly each, a vital ingredient,
to keep you sane and alive.

Value each, for without their help,
you would have to reassemble
the many shattered pieces.
A daunting task that makes us tremble.

So, here's a thought for you,
as we enter this Festive Season.
Identify those special few
and explain clearly the reason.

Then do something special,
separately with each,
before such opportunity
is beyond your reach.



Your adventure starts @
Mannwest.com

Ron Manners
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