

16 November 2021 – Kimberly Crabbe-Adams

Good morning,

[I don't believe that this event is one in which the official protocol has to be observed – but if I may, I would like to recognise the presence of our honouree – Dr Mathavious – who we are so happy to be celebrating this week, and today]

I have been tasked, as President of the BVI Bar Association, to pay tribute, on behalf of the members and friends of the BVI Bar Association, and as such, that is one of the capacities in which I stand before you this morning.

Fortunately for me, my opportunity to speak in that capacity also affords me the opportunity to speak in a personal capacity, on my relationship with, and the profound impact that our honouree, whom I affectionately call Uncle Robert, has had on my life.

Those of us who were in attendance last evening were regaled with the chronicles of Dr Mathavious's journey through academia, the civil service and the FSC. We were entertained with stories of his strong will, his academic success, and the meticulous skill employed in his masonry when he embarked upon the journey to build the house we know as our Financial Services Industry.

Just in case it was lost on any of us, or, for those of us who were not in attendance, a key take away from last night's celebration was how important it is to appreciate that our life's journey is what we make it and that the most important part of the journey is not how we start, but how we finish our leg of the proverbial race, when we hand the baton over to our teammate to journey on.

Last evening, Dr Mathavious glossed over his early academic battles (which I hasten to add, were battles brought about not as a result of a lack of ability, but rather, as a result of his very own complacency). One of my favourite stories of this battle, is the academic report of his then Mathematics and Spanish teacher, the late Mr Elton Georges, who – in one of Dr Mathavious's earlier secondary school report cards wrote words to the effect – If Robert knows anything at all about Mathematics and Spanish, he does a very good job at concealing that knowledge. This report card and the message written in it was, I say, a turning point for him – because we know the will of the man – he had to show Mr Georges that those words would not define him or limit his growth.

Show Mr Georges he did – it was years later, in another life, when Dr Mathavious was the Financial Secretary and Mr Georges was the Deputy Governor, that he Mr Georges often sought out Mr Mac for advice – and in many instances had to endure the ribbing of Mr Mac on how he felt taking advice from and consulting with someone who knew nothing!

After over 35 years of service to the BVI Financial Services Industry, Uncle Robert passed his baton on. We have all heard about the strides he made in his leg of the race – from the creation of a financial services department within the civil service, to championing the establishment of the BVI FSC as a statutory body – a body that would later see the BVI’s transition from a singular economic pillar jurisdiction in tourism – to a twin economic pillar jurisdiction, in financial services AND tourism.

Our economic advancement in the Financial Services space would later see the development of a Commercial Division of the High Court – a Commercial Court that rivals most in the world and churns our quality jurisprudence, resolves multi-jurisdictional disputes, and attracts the most seasoned and qualified legal professionals – as permanent residents, and as visiting advocates. For the foundation you have set to enable us these countless opportunities – we say thank you! We are reaping the seeds that you have sown and we honour you today for your vision and your dedication to the advancement of the BVI, its product, services and people.

And now me, I thank you!

Many of you know, some do not, - for those who will have this misfortune of hearing these stories again, I apologise in advance.

My journey with Uncle Robert began in 1982 – before I was even born! Later that year, he would give me my name and become my only God-father.

He jokes now about my mild manner and virtual mute status as a child – an account that many believe to be a fable! I can attest to its truth. I was somewhat of a bore then, hardly speaking and being painfully shy.

Our relationship began to blossom in my last year of Secondary School, when I found my voice! He became my mentor. All important decisions in my life have been taken under his wise counsel – beginning with his selection of the university that I attended in Canada to complete my first degree (stick a pin here – I was required to compile a list of my choices, and march them to his office for vetting – he disapproved of EVERY SINGLE ONE – he tore up my list, threw it in the garbage – I have a vivid recollection of the way he rolled his chair away from his desk and the look of disdain on his face when he saw my list – he then proceeded over the course of the next few days to compile his own list of schools for me to apply to and approving the one I eventually chose – FROM HIS LIST!)

I consulted with him on my opportunities during my gap year between my first degree and law degree – again when I went on to pursue my LLB, he had to approve of the university I chose.

I don't recall the year, but I think the occasion was a celebration of either 20 or 25 years of the IBC – when I got a call that I had been entered into a speech competition. I didn't ask any questions, I only said ok, I would participate because I knew instinctively who'd put my name forward...and yes, it was Uncle Robert.

When I was called to the BVI Bar, the then resident judge lamented that I must be important because she could not recall ever seeing the likes of Mr Mathavious (as he then was) in her court room – ever!

When offered the job at Harneys, I had to sell him on the training programme ... he approved. Then when I got the opportunity to work in HK – it was a very easy decision to make in very difficult circumstances – having just started a family and being just over 2 years married – it was an easy decision because of the support I had, support of which he was a key part

He has ALWAYS been there for me. A difficult situation which required some finesse and guidance would see me eating out of Aunty Pru's pot – and lying on the couch – like I was in a psychologist's office.

He has always made time for me and I would never ever ever forget the pearls of wisdom, dedication and unwavering support that he has given me.

I am just very happy to have been able to say thank you in this very small way. I love you dearly. I am incredibly proud to be your god-daughter and I thank you for bestowing me the honour of being God mother to your precious Jadyne – an honour I do not take lightly – and a role in which I endeavour to pour into her in every way that you have poured into me and the wider BVI.

We all love you uncle Robert – “Well done, thou good and faithful servant”!