

**Eulogy by the Head of St Mark's College, Professor Don Markwell,
at a service of thanksgiving for the life of Dr Ian Baker Wall AM
St Peter's Cathedral, Adelaide
Friday 11 November 2022**

Ian Baker Wall was the only child of parents of modest means and generous spirits.

His father, Sydney Harry Baker Wall, and his mother, Rita Edith Wall, were devoted to their son. Recognising his special abilities and his strength of character, they wanted the best opportunities for him and, with "countless gifts of love", did everything they could to enable him to fulfil his potential, as he so brilliantly did.

Had Syd Wall not been a master butcher, he sometimes said, he would have wanted to be a clergyman. Active in the Anglican church, even attending General Synod in Sydney, his Christian charity was reflected in doing all he could to help people in need – an approach inherited by his son who, throughout his life, helped others whenever he could.

Growing up, Ian was always – as he once put it – "interested in how things worked, electrical things, about dismantling them and putting them together again". And so by the age of 13 or 14 – perhaps, he suggested last year, even by the age of 10 – he was set on becoming an engineer. Ian said that he never wanted to be anything else.

His parents did all they could to help him. After two years of home schooling with an aunt at Ramco in the Riverland during a long illness of his mother's, Ian's parents enabled him to attend leading Anglican schools and then an Anglican university college.

Ian was over seven and a half when his formal schooling began - at Pulteney Grammar from 1939 to 1947, where he became a prefect. He took night classes in intermediate physics and chemistry at the School of Mines and Industries, before completing his secondary education at St Peter's College, where he was awarded a Bowman prize and was a server in Chapel.

At Saints Ian also participated in the Science Society, of which he was Secretary in 1949, and in the Automotive Society. These interests would remain with him for the rest of his life. Teachers noted that Ian was "hard working and intelligent", and Headmaster Gordon wrote that he was a "thoroughly decent boy" and "good natured", and wrote of his "humility". Some things never change.

When Ian went on to study electrical engineering at the University of Adelaide, his parents – and his marks from Saints – enabled him in 1950 to become a resident student at St Mark's College, next door to this Cathedral. His parents had what Ian called "a great belief in the University College concept of education", the benefits of which he embraced, fully immersing himself in College life.

As he later said, "my life was really centred around St Mark's for five years".

The College magazines from 1950 to 1954 record aspects of Ian's undergraduate life – his progress through his degree in electrical engineering, including his being recommended for the Electricity Trust Prize in 1954; his participation in the University Squadron; his service for three consecutive years on the College Club Committee; his role in an annual student escapade in the Adelaide Hills, including in one year his making “a lightning detour home” to collect “a large quantity of chops and steaks” to rescue his fellow students from the grim prospect of spaghetti and saveloys; and there is more.

For a time as an undergraduate, Ian also taught back at Pulteney, as he was later to teach back at the Institute of Mines and Industries.

At St Mark's, he became a well-regarded College identity with the affectionate nickname “Prof”.

In 1954, the President of the College Club expressed thanks to members of the Club Committee, in which Ian was Treasurer, for “the efficient manner in which they performed their various tasks”. The Club President wrote: “I would like to pay particular tribute to Prof. Wall, who moved as facilely within the complexities of the treasurership as he does within those of a ten-valve high frequency amplifier...”

The interests and the abilities that would lead Ian, together with Alastair Wood and Jim Bettison, to create EILCO, the forerunner of Codan, just five years later were already clear.

Along the way, a friend of Ian's leaving for Britain asked him to look after his girlfriend, Pamela Hogon. Never one to fulfil a task by half, Ian took on this friendly mission with his characteristic determination.

Pammie was then working at the National Bank before nursing at the Women's and Children's Hospital, close by to where Ian was at St Mark's.

One evening, when Rita and Syd Wall were hosting some of Ian's friends at their home, Pammie overheard Ian's mother say, in tones of hushed excitement: “I think Pammie's the one.”

And so she was. And so she is.

This year, Ian and Pammie celebrated their 68th wedding anniversary.

By the time Ian and Pammie married in 1954, when he was 23 and she was 20, Ian already had a vision of creating an electronics company, about which he was determined; and they also had plans for a family.

Annabel was born in 1955, and Lucinda Jane in 1957. Cindy's death as a young woman was a devastating blow.

In the early years of a young family, and then in the early years of the business, when money was short and hours were long, and Ian was striving hopefully, Rita and Syd Wall

continued to give unstinting backing in practical ways and in love to their son, their daughter-in-law, and their young granddaughters.

Annabel recalls that, to earn extra cash, amongst other things Ian would fix broken traffic lights, while she and Cindy waited – perhaps impatiently – in the car, to be rewarded with an ice cream in Rundle Street, watching the passers-by.

Through vision, hard work through long days and nights, often into the early hours, through sacrifice and some good luck along the way, Codan grew to success beyond Ian’s imagining, and when it did, he became – with Pammie – one of South Australia’s most generous philanthropists.

Amongst all the good causes which Ian and Pammie supported, they did not forget the institutions that had helped to shape Ian and had made his success in life possible.

Pulteney, Saints, the University of Adelaide, and St Ann’s College as well as St Mark’s have all benefited from their grateful generosity, and have been grateful in return.

In an oral history interview in 2013, Ian spoke of his years at St Mark’s – how College life developed the social skills of this only child; the lively discussions with a broad mix of fellow Collegians, including Colombo Plan students from Asia; the wise counsel of the Master, Archie Price, and the Vice-Master, Bob Lewis; the tutorial system, including the tutorial support in mathematics of the Principal of St Ann’s; the pastoral care; the interesting guest speakers – what Ian called “the total experience”.

He said that his years at St Mark’s gave him – I quote – “good preparation for the things that I needed to do in my adult life”, and that without St Mark’s, he would not have had the success that he had.

On his election as an Honorary Fellow of the College in 2008, Ian spoke of his feeling – I quote – “almost a duty that you should reinforce the opportunity for those who are to follow in your steps”.

Grateful for what the College did for him, and wishing to reinforce the opportunity for those who followed, Ian became, with Pammie, the largest donors in the College’s history.

This afternoon, at Annabel’s suggestion, Ian was driven for one last time around the College he loved – past the College carpark that he and Pammie built and then extended, the Ian and Pamela Wall Academic Centre, the Wall flats, and the flags at half-mast in his honour. Students and staff lined the way in gratitude and deep respect.

On the back of today’s Order of Service, there is a photo of Ian from his Pulteney days, and of Ian as an undergraduate, and the portrait of Ian and Pammie by Tsering Hannaford that hangs in the St Mark’s dining hall, where I hope you will see it during the reception following this service, to which all are warmly invited.

When you see the portrait, you might notice that Ian is wearing his St Mark's College tie, as he is today.

And it is fitting that the gown and cap of his honorary doctorate, presented by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Adelaide in Ian's hospital room just two nights before he died, adorn his coffin.

The Queen famously said that "Grief is the price we pay for love". All of us who loved Ian are grieving, and our hearts go out to Pammie and to Annabel, who loved him most of all, and whom he loved so much.