

Asia Australia Foundation Dinner
RACV Club Melbourne
7 June 2017

Remarks by Carrillo Gantner

Thank you very much for inviting me here this evening – Cheri Ong in particular whose idea this was. It is a great pleasure to speak to those of you who have been long time travellers on the philanthropic road and to those of you who are just setting out. With Chinese influence getting negative coverage in the news at present, it's a very good time to consider how more positive images might be generated in the Australian community through philanthropy.

I have been asked to speak to you tonight about the origins and activities of Myer Family Philanthropy, to try to give you some insight into my own personal philanthropic journey, and to offer further encouragement for yours. All in 20 minutes, which means that, as Mao ZiDong said, "I will be looking at flowers from a galloping horse".

Definition of Philanthropy

From the Greek, meaning "the love of mankind."

The New Oxford Dictionary:

"The desire to promote the welfare of others, expressed especially by the generous donation of money to good causes."

Often thought of more broadly as "The donation of time, talent and treasure", attributes that very much apply to Sidney Myer.

Sidney Myer – Merchant Philanthropist

- Born Simcha Baevski in 1878 small village in what was then Russia, today Belarus.
- Escaped from the Jewish pogroms in Russia and arrived in Melbourne penniless in 1899. Today he would probably be called an asylum seeker.
- Changed his name to Sidney Myer and became an itinerant hawker in country Victoria.
- 1900 opened his first small store in Bendigo.

- 1911 first small Melbourne store. Expanded over time to cover almost two city blocks.
- 1920 Married Merlyn Baillieu. Four children in following years.
- 1925 Myer Emporium became a public company.
- 1932 bought a store in Adelaide, first move interstate.
- 1934 died suddenly at age 56. 100,000 people lined the funeral route to Box Hill Cemetery.

Why so loved and respected? Not because of his success as a retailer but because of his wide philanthropy.

Loved in community as pioneer in philanthropy:

- 1926 25,000 Myer Emporium shares for University of Melbourne
- 1930 Christmas lunch for 11,000 destitute in Great Depression
- 1931 construction of Yarra Boulevard and Como Park
- 1932 10,000 shares for annual free open air concerts by Melbourne Symphony Orchestra which he had helped to establish.
- Board member and donor to Royal Melbourne Hospital
- Extensive and anonymous personal giving

Personal experience of hunger and hardship as a young man guided his philanthropy later in life – focus on hands-on, needs based charity.

Loved in his business as a pioneer in services for staff:

- medical and dental clinics
- creches for staff children
- choral, sporting and social groups
- company shares for managers
- holiday homes for staff.

Sidney Myer Fund

- Established by will in 1934
- One tenth of estate – 150,000 Pounds
- “.....For charitable purposes in the broadest sense.....including purposes for the benefit of religious benevolent and education objects societies and institution in the community in which I acquired my fortune.....”
- Four trustees representing four branches of the family

SMF - Some Major Initiatives

- Sidney Myer Music Bowl, opening in 1959
- National Performing Arts Awards from 1984
- Sidney Myer Creative Fellowships and Innovation Fellowships
- Programs in Poverty & Disadvantage, Education, Arts & Humanities

The Myer Foundation

- Established by Myer Family second generation in 1959
- Object: “the good of mankind” especially “in supporting new ideas”
- From 1961 the first professional Executive Director of a foundation in Australia – a “philanthrocrat”
- 1983 first 3G Director – CG
- 1992 Ken Myer’s will leaves major capital gift to Foundation
- 2000 first 4 G Director
- 4G Committee choose to support Mental Health as their priority
- Up to 11 Directors - majority Myer Family members across three generations with several outside experts

TMF – Some Major Initiatives

- 1959 Department of ‘Oriental Studies’ at University of Melbourne
- 1964-75 Asian Fellowships Scheme for Australian academics to study in Asia
- 1960s major studies on government policies for aboriginal Australians and The Henderson Report on poverty in Australia
- 1975 with Potter Foundation established philanthropic industry umbrella body “Philanthropy Australia”
- 1989 established Asialink to build Australian capacity, networks and knowledge. Part of wider “Beyond Australia” Program
- Sustainability & Environment Program
- 1993 established Cranlana Program – values based leadership

SMF and TMF have a large capital base and together give away around AUD 15 million per year. Shared professional staff of six. Focus area committees and specialist panels.

In addition to SMF and TMF, there are c. 10 Private Ancillary Funds (PAFs) among Myer Family 2G and 3G members with another AUD 50+ million total in their capital base.

- Commenced in 2001 under Howard Government
- Capital gifts into the PAFs are tax deductible. You can build a capital base
- Controlled by individual, family, corporate or collective group
- Sole purpose to make gifts to charitable DGRs
- Mandatory minimum donations of 5% of previous year's assets
- Can engage children in programs, teaching values of giving and educating them in financial, governance and community issues. Our children tend to be too focussed on material things – engagement in philanthropy helps them think about the needs of others.

As with Sidney Myer, the founder, the reputation of the Myer Family in the Australian community rests more on philanthropy than on business.

Why be involved in philanthropy?

- To give back to the society that supports us – it's about generosity of heart guided by the experience and knowledge of our head.
- Makes us sensitive to real need of others and helps take us away from a narcissistic focus on ourselves.
- About doing good and creating opportunities for others rather than about status or benefit for ourselves. Myer Family philanthropy does not make political donations.
- If you share your philanthropic journey with your children it can build family values and family 'glue'.
- For Asian Australians, as for Sidney Myer 100 years ago, it's a way to help integration in the broader community, a way to earn respect.
- Selfish pleasure in giving, in seeing something good achieved which otherwise would not have happened.
- Another description of philanthropy is "the venture capital of social change". Philanthropy can be innovative and work in areas that are hard for governments to touch.

Some Simple Guidelines for Personal Philanthropy

- Be focussed on one or more areas in which you have a real passion and/or professional interest. Don't try to spread yourself too widely. This needs discipline as so many areas worthy of support.
- eg. Playking Foundation set up by Ziyin and me to focus on performing arts and Australia's cultural engagement with Asia.
- Your choice of mental health is excellent as it's an area of great need.
- Organisations need annual budgets and so does personal giving: I target a set percentage of my annual income for philanthropy (20%)
- We do not have ability or time to know everything, even in our chosen field, so we must depend on others to deliver good outcomes. Find good people and good organisations to support. We achieve our goal in philanthropy by helping others to achieve their goals.
- I would encourage a commitment of at least three years support for any venture rather than 'hit and run' philanthropy
- As in most things, collaboration can be very effective in philanthropy, offering new knowledge and wider opportunities.
- Ziyin has taught me the Chinese saying: "Three men walking together, one of them will be my teacher", so talk to others in the sector. People working in philanthropy are happy to share experience, information and ideas.
- Keep it simple. Beware of jargon and fashionable buzzwords – "Strategic philanthropy", "social impact analysis", "optimizing stakeholder engagement".

Let me close with a simple maxim attributed to Winston Churchill:

"You make a living by what you get; you make a life by what you give."

Thank you.