

## **MODELS OF ACHIEVEMENT EP 6 SEG 1 SCOTT**

ANNETTE SHUN WAH: Hi, I'm Annette Shun Wah welcome to Models of Achievement. In this series we're exploring the successes and aspirations of very determined Australians who have discovered their own inspirational path through university study. First up let's meet Scott who has served as both an ambulance officer and a fireman before deciding to study medicine. Now this father of five is on the way to forging a successful career as a doctor.

SCOTT: My name is Scott and this is my story.

Re-adjust everything.

I grew up in Revesby, most people don't know where that is. It's near Bankstown in south-west Sydney. Pretty average sort of upbringing, I suppose. My father, for most of the time I was growing up, worked in the bank as a teller and went through as a loans manager, whatever. Mum, stay-at-home mum. Went to the local high school. Unfortunately I was probably a bit of a knuckle head at school so didn't make the most of the opportunity there but it wasn't a bad school.

Okay, so going youngest to oldest, the first is Lachlan and then we have Natasha and then we have Sam and then we have Daniel, Kezia and of course the person who actually helped me get through uni and do everything else is my wife Colleen. Are you happy with this? Is this sufficient?

I bugged up my HSC, I didn't do the work I needed to do. It was no surprise that my mark wasn't really worth the paper it was printed on.

Dear God, thank you for this beautiful day, thank you for the food and family and all the good things you give us, amen.

It was enough for me to get an initial spot at uni. I didn't know what I wanted to do in my life and so I ended up initially enrolling in a Bachelor of Chemistry. Did six months of that and that really wasn't for me. I hadn't matured any, my study habits hadn't improved. I basically flunked out of that. My uncle at that time was a fiery and he thought I might enjoy that so I applied to join the NSW Fire Brigades and then I eventually got in, was accepted and started as a probationary fire fighter at the Fire Brigades College in 1987 and went from there. Ended up stationed at Darlinghurst, spent 5.5 years at Darling - or Darlinghurst/Kings Cross Fire Station, which was a bit of an eye opener for a boy from the western suburbs in a positive way.

Yeah, fire fighting itself is exciting, the Hazmat stuff, rescue, it's satisfying to do a job where you feel like when you work you actually can do something to help people and it's fun to be able to do it with a bunch of blokes you like. So going to work was great.

I want to make sure everyone's got besides your wetsuit you need your rashes, you need shorts to wear outside, spray jacket, beanie and a jumper, some dry gear for afterwards, okay, and your backpack.

On my days off as well as hanging out the blokes and doing things I was actually involved in a little bit of volunteer work. So I did some work with a local special school just helping out like a teacher's aide just helping out at the school there. I used to do camps for disabled kids, like respite camps for disabled kids and did some stuff around my church and I was doing my own sort of study and I was encouraged by a pastor at my church at that time that I should pursue this further. I guess I came to a bit of a crisis point in what are you going to do. At that stage there was no availability to do what I wanted to do part time so it was with great regret that I left the brigade for the first time and did my Bachelor of Divinity at Moore Theological College and actually was accepted as a candidate for ordination to become an Anglican minister.

Also at that stage married for the first time. During all that my oldest son got cancer and

I probably didn't handle him getting cancer very well. He ended up palliative. My wife and I separated, ended up divorced so I've sort of felt that I hadn't fulfilled my vows, if you like, so I resigned as an Anglican - that's what led to me resigning as a priest because in the end I didn't I sort of kept my integrity to do that.

But obviously still interested in helping people. So basically I joined the ambulance service. Went to Ambulance College and retrained as an ambulance officer and worked at Liverpool for nearly 3 years which was again a great experience. Worked with some great people. It was a really interesting area to work as an ambulance officer. Probably that's when that really piqued my interest in further study in the biological setting plus my son who had cancer by this stage was totally palliative and probably one of my way's of coping with his illness was to actually try and read up and understand about his cancer, to understand about the chemotherapeutic agents and all those things.

I hadn't had anything really to do with doctors before that. My family didn't know any doctors. I was lucky to be a healthy bloke so never ever visited a doctor and we had then ended up with quite a bit to do with Jacob's oncologists. That then, I guess, started the ball rolling for the next phase of my life because my first - actually my first training officer in the ambos she decided to leave the ambulance service and do medicine. She was a good ambulance officer, she was very good at her job, quite switched on and she thought, you know, be good to take this further. So she then went through that path and that sort of put a bit of an idea in my head but again I wasn't sure because at that stage I was 33ish thinking oh, maybe I'm too old, I'll pursue the rescue angle. So I applied for the fieries got in, another whole career change again. My long-suffering second wife and my crazy blended family and kids were very patient as I changed careers again and was another graduation to come and visit.

I missed the patient care, I realised that I actually quite like working with people. So we talked about going back to the ambos or going - whether I did nursing and then realised that there are some different options now for studying medicine as well. So potentially whether that was going to be something worth pursuing. Although I never had the

privilege of serving in the military I quite like the SAS's motto of who dares wins. I thought what have I got to lose. People can say no to me. That's the worst that can happen to me in this. So basically I started kicking the ball to see what would happen.

So we initially decided one of the other entry requirements was the UMAT, the undergraduate medical admissions test. So the course that I applied for I had to score a particular mark in the UMAT. I could use my GPA and then if I got a high enough score in those components I'd be offered interviews and then if you scored in the interviews they put that all together, throw it in a box, throw it up in the air, I don't know how they score these things and then decide whether against the other potential candidates whether you get offered a spot.

Anyway, eventually the results came out and could have fallen over because I got offered an interview. At that stage I thought you know what, maybe I'll have a bit of a chance because I didn't know how they score them but I think the one advantage to being an older candidate is I'd done lots of interviews. So I turned up, did the interviews, again thought well we'll see what happens. And I was actually on a night shift when, you know, they released the results in I think it was the Herald or whichever paper has the results and at about 6 o'clock the next morning I said to my offsider, we go for a drive and go to the twin service centres on the M4 because, yeah, because I knew the papers got delivered there pretty early, let's go and see if there's a copy of the Herald and see if I got a whack at this and my name was in and I realised I had a position which was like my goodness.

By this stage I still hadn't fully figured out how we were going to pay for this. I was actually quite lucky because it was a serendipitous thing. At that point the brigade, they wanted to trial a permanent part-time roster to bring them into line with the coppers and ambos because a lot of women who come into the job want to have families and then they want to look at their options for work so you lose people you've trained up because they might want to change the way they do their work. So the brigade was trying this.

I put my hand up to do this trial and I then found out that I'd been accepted which would then allow me to work Friday, Saturday night shift one week, Saturday, Sunday day shift the next week which would mean I could work every weekend, I could still be at uni for lectures and then in the clinical years on clinical placement and still feed our family, clothe them and be able to live.

So when I finally graduated I was very happy, obviously. My kids were excited, my wife was blown away, probably tinged with a bit of sadness because I knew in the end I probably would have to pull the pin from the furies.

Okay, so I finished my intern year at the end or beginning of this year and got full registration and obviously have another year of - normally the way it works is you have another year of hospital training but one of the options I chose was to come out into a prevocational general practice placement which enables me to see what general practitioners do as a subspecialty and I get, I guess, a taste of see if that's where I wanted to head and I think after having done this placement this is where I'd like to be.

My first thing, as I say, is you've got nothing to lose. The worst someone can say is no. It might cost you a couple of hundred bucks to do the UMAT if you get to that point. So you really - there's nothing to stop you from rolling down that path and I would encourage anyone who's interested to try and see, you don't want to, like I said my personal philosophy is I didn't want to die wondering. If you have this desire then go for it.

The second thing I guess I'd say then obviously if you decide to pursue that path then you need to be a little bit practical so depending on what your practicalities are as far as family, as far as mortgages, I guess work out the work and study balance. I was very lucky but I probably couldn't have worked many more hours than I did and still put in the study. The other thing I'd say is you've got - I think there's an advantage to being mature age in that as the soft part of medicine, so to speak, the people sort of stuff you bring that with you which is a good thing. So I think most of my peers were academically

probably sharper than I was but what you will bring is if you've worked, particularly you understand how to work in a team, you understand the dynamics of the supervisory role and all that sort of thing. You understand how to work with people and that's a real strength.

Doesn't matter what you, do I don't care what you do for a job, I don't care who you are, being able to learn, having that skill set is invaluable.

My name is Scott and this is my story. I worked as a fireman, I was an Anglican minister, I was an ambulance officer, at the age of 37 I returned to university and they now call me Dr Scott.

ANNETTE SHUN WAH: Scott is now very busy working at a general practice since graduating with a Bachelor of Medicine and a Bachelor of Surgery.

END OF TRANSCRIPT