

Master's speech at Banquet 27<sup>th</sup> January 2009

**Wardens**

**My Lord Mayor Locum Tenens**

**Sheriffs**

**My Lord**

**Distinguished Guests**

**Ladies and Gentlemen**

As members of the Livery we are well aware of the demands on the Lord Mayor's time and this year our Banquet has coincided with one of his trips abroad on City business. So unfortunately he cannot be here tonight.

He has, however, left us in the very capable hands of Sir Michael Savory, who was Lord Mayor a few years ago, who we are delighted to welcome here in his place

I am pleased to say that Sir Michael has kindly agreed to respond to this Civic toast.

Sir Michael, would you please give the Lord Mayor and his wife our warmest greetings and best wishes for a happy and memorable year. Would you also thank him for permitting us to use Mansion House tonight.

Without wishing to tread on the toes of my Senior Warden who will shortly propose the toast to our guests, I must say how splendid it is that we have both Sheriffs here tonight. This is, I understand, a rather exceptional occurrence when the Lord Mayor is away on City business as he is often accompanied by at least one of the Sheriffs on those travels.

Before going further I must thank the staff of Mansion House and of the caterers for their attention and for the splendid repast we have just enjoyed. Also thanks to Roy Warman our Beadle and David Barnes who is undertaking the duties of toastmaster this evening.

We must not forget the musicians and in particular the trumpeters for their wonderful contribution.

I will also mention somebody without whom this evening could never have got off the ground, Gaye Duffy our Clerk.

The City Corporation, what is it? One thing that it is not, is backward in telling you about itself, if you take the time to look. Its website is a mine of information and there is a multiplicity of booklets and leaflets produced by the City's PR Office.

The Corporation is the organisation that looks after the Square Mile. It has a special role and wide remit that goes beyond that of an ordinary local authority, and a part of that remit is the promotion of the business City. The Corporation also has an important role in welcoming foreign dignitaries and heads of state on behalf of the government at Mansion House and Guildhall.

You can thus never tell when you come here who may have previously occupied the chair you are sitting on!

We are honoured and privileged to be here tonight.

The Corporation is also responsible for looking after the built environment that you see around you as you walk about the City. And a splendid job they make of it too.

Whilst on the subject of the environment and being in the company of friends I thought I would remind you of the tale of Noah building the Ark.

It goes something like this

The Lord spoke to Noah and said, "In one year, I am going to make it rain and cover the whole earth with water until all flesh is destroyed.

I want you to save two of every kind of living thing on earth. Therefore, I am commanding you to build an Ark."

In a flash of lightning, God delivered the specifications for an Ark. In fear and trembling, Noah took the plans and agreed to build the ark. "Remember," said the Lord, "you must complete the Ark and bring everything aboard in one year."

Exactly one year later, fierce storm clouds covered the earth and all the seas of the earth went into a tumult. The Lord saw Noah sitting weeping next to a few bits of timber which formed a roughly boat shaped structure. "Noah!" He shouted. "Where is the Ark?"

"Lord, please forgive me," cried Noah. "I did my best, but there were big problems.

First, I had to get Local Authority permission and your plans did not meet the building regulations. I had to hire architects to redraw the plans and then a QS and structural and services engineers

They also wanted a planning supervisor, a project manager and a geotechnical engineer to ensure that the ground would not be washed away unevenly once the flooding commenced.

I was also told that I couldn't start until I had a compliant adjudication clause in place, whatever that is.

Then I got into a fight with the authorities over whether or not the Ark needed a sprinkler system, authorised escape routes and signs that could be readily understood by all the occupants.

Then, my neighbour objected, claiming I would be violating his right of light by building the Ark in my front garden. As one side of the Ark was near to his boundary he forced me to engage a Party Wall Surveyor. We ended up going to the President of the RICS for an appointment as we couldn't agree.

I was told that I could not build the Ark without producing an environmental impact statement for your proposed flood. They said who is this Creator of the Universe chappie, he can't ride roughshod over us. They told me that they wanted a map of the proposed flood plain. I sent them a globe.

They came back and said they couldn't agree and, as it involved more than one country's jurisdiction, an arbitration would be appropriate. They sent me the names of a couple of very senior retired Judges who they said would make admirable arbitrators.

Then, I had problems getting enough wood for the Ark, because there was a ban on cutting trees to protect the owl population. I finally convinced the tree huggers that I really needed the wood to save the owls. However, the RSPB won't let me take the 2 owls.

Once I got started the planners came round and told me that I was using the wrong colour wood and the Building Inspector said that the concrete pads that I was using as temporary foundations weren't deep enough. So I had to start all over again.

I ended up in dispute with the carpenters and this adjudication clause came into force and they went to the President of the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators for an adjudicator. That was eventually resolved, I now have 16 carpenters but still no owls.

When I started rounding up the other animals, an animal rights group sued me, I also received a complaint from the Equal Opportunities people. They said that I am practicing discrimination by only taking two of each species aboard.

I had to start thinking about supplies for all the animals and there was a dispute about quality and we had to go to the President of FoSFA for an arbitrator.

HM Revenue and Customs has seized my assets, claiming that I'm building the Ark in preparation to flee the country to avoid paying taxes. I've just got a notice from the Local River Authority that I need a license and I have failed to register the Ark as a 'recreational water craft'.

And to cap it all, the Church Commissioners went to the courts to try to get an injunction against further construction of the Ark, saying that since God is flooding the earth, it is a religious event, and they have sole rights. The Judge in charge of the TCC soon sorted that out but it delayed things again.

I really don't think I can finish the Ark for another five or six years.

Noah waited. The sky began to clear, the sun began to shine, and the seas began to calm. A rainbow arched across the sky.

Noah looked up hopefully. "You mean you're not going to destroy the earth, Lord?"

"No," He said sadly. "I don't have to. They've beaten me to it."

My year is a quarter gone. The highlights so far? Other than my Installation and tonight, our traditional annual Carol Service at the church of St Mary le Bow and walking in the Lord Mayor's Show.

The sum total given by the City to charitable causes exceeds £40 million every year.

We are a part of those charitable efforts. Our many grants made to worthy causes related to the City and dispute resolution include sponsoring a student at the Guildhall School of Music and Drama, donating the annual peacemaker prize at King Edward's School, Witley (a school supported by the City) and prizes for services to the School at the City of London School which generally go to the two deputy Head Boys. We have also been able to assist a member who has fallen on hard times.

I am pleased to say that only a couple of weeks ago the Trustees of our Charitable Trust decided to provide a Fleet Air Arm gliding scholarship.

The impetus for this came from Liveryman Bertie Vigrass, one of the founding fathers of this Company, himself a distinguished airman. I am delighted that he and Betty have made their way from Yorkshire tonight.

I should now like to continue the pleasant tradition whereby this Company supports the Lord Mayor's Appeal. This year it is in aid of Pitch Perfect, a charity joining the London Symphony Orchestra and the Cricket Foundation to bring sport and music to London schools.

Sir Michael, it gives me great pleasure to ask you to accept, on behalf of the Lord Mayor, this cheque by way of contribution to his Appeal.

*Hand cheque to the Lord Mayor Locum Tenens.*

This Company, now approaching its thirtieth year, is in rude health and continues to take a full part in the activities of the City.

I expect that the City will overcome its current difficulties before too long and will maintain its position in the international business community.

We are very proud to be associated with it and those who govern it.

Would you please stand?

I have the honour to propose the Civic Toast.

**The Lord Mayor, the City of London Corporation and the Sheriffs.**