



Jacinta Zhu with Emma Gee

inspired by emma

On the morning of Friday, 13 February, Old Strathconian Emma Gee stood before us relating the panic and fear with which she struggled to navigate the gap between train and platform as the doors were closing, encumbered with a walker.

With a career as an occupational therapist, Emma had recently completed a marathon when a tangle of nerves was discovered at the base of her brain. It was during the operation to have it removed that the surgeon mistakenly sliced off the top of the nerves, inducing massive hemorrhage. At the age of 24, Emma became a stroke victim.

Rather than becoming embittered about the fate that had been unfairly dealt her, however, Emma chose to bounce back and to put all her positive energy into learning how to walk, talk, and gain control over her body again.

Choice. It has the ability to determine what the outcome will be when we are faced with adversity. Emma could choose to be resentful towards the mistakes of others, or to set her own terms for life with a positive attitude. She opted for the latter. I remember well a quote of hers, 'Suing the surgeon wouldn't change what had happened. Only I had the power to change my life.' So she chose to define herself not as a victim, but as a survivor.

Of course, she had to make some adjustments to the way she lived. She was no longer able to run marathons as she did before, so she took up

swimming. She was unable to return to her old career of occupational therapy, so she elected to pursue something equally as fulfilling to her, motivational speaking.

Did she feel frustrated at having to undergo rehabilitation therapy when she had herself been a therapist, enquired an audience member. Absolutely, Emma responded. It was here that a good sense of humour, and having outlets for her frustration, including her newfound love for swimming, proved most important.

Emma, a Strathy 'old girl', voiced her gratitude for her schooling, where she received an excellent education, established her leadership as House Captain, and formed a supportive friendship circle, all of which would help her to recover after the stroke.

We, too, are so fortunate to have such opportunities to form our own supportive networks and to test our own resilience, be it at House competitions, or more recently for the Year 12s, English oral SACs! I am confident that, faced with our own gaps between train and platform, we will traverse them with confidence and determination.

Jacinta Zhu, Year 12E