

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Maw

Compiled by Major D.T. (Terry) Brennan

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Maw was born on 1st February 1959. He commenced his career as an Army apprentice in 1975. Colonel Chris Burns enlisted with him and recalled Peter fitted in very easily to Army life. Always the one to see the positive in everything, he quickly made friends and was able to find humour under some of the most demanding of circumstances.

He observed that Peter loved being a 'chippy' and quickly became a perfectionist and an artist at his craft. Being a chippy came easily as he was a natural builder, not just of bricks and mortar or timber and steel; throughout his life Pete worked at building successes from everything he undertook. He valued everybody and relished getting to know people and building lifelong relationships based on mutual respect and friendship.

At the end of the first two years of their apprenticeships, they were posted to the School of Military Engineering in Sydney in 1977. He said Pete loved learning to be a 'Sapper' and enjoyed all aspects of role whether it was building bridges; laying minefields or just plain blowing things up. Towards the end of their apprenticeships it was suggested to a group of them, including Pete, they consider applying for officer training. I recall us all going to the soldiers' club to consider our futures and, after a number of beers, collectively deciding 'why not', it seemed like a good idea at the time.

In January of 1979 we headed off to the Officer Cadet School, Portsea. Pete's previous four years of service meant he was one of the 'old soldiers' of the course. Pete's natural leadership came to the fore and he became a mentor to those cadets fresh from civilian life, not only offering assistance, but wise counsel, a compassionate ear as well as a taste of his unique sense of humour.

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Maw graduated in December 1979 and commenced his long association with the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery. He marched into 1st Field Regiment as a Second Lieutenant in 1980. He served as a section commander, gun position officer and forward observer in the Regiment and was eventually promoted to Captain in 1985 and posted to Headquarters 1st Division.

In 1986 he returned to the Army Apprentices School and among other appointments, served as Officer Commanding B Company until 1988. Lieutenant Colonel Maw was then posted to 8th/12th Medium Regiment in 1989, where he served as battery captain and adjutant and was then promoted to Major in 1990.

He commanded 103rd Medium Battery from 1991 to 1992. He was subsequently selected for overseas staff college and attended Command and Staff College overseas at Quetta, Pakistan and on his return to Australia was posted to the Land Warfare Centre as an instructor. Although posted to Army Headquarters in 1999 he decided to transfer to the inactive Army reserve in that year.

Colonel Burns observed the abilities of Peter were well recognised and respected throughout Defence. It was no accident that he was given very demanding and arduous assignments both in Australia and overseas. It was a testament to the value and regard in which Peter was held that he was repeatedly asked to serve and represent our nation overseas. Colonel Burns said he felt it a very great honour to have served with Peter in the Middle East as a UN Peacekeeper. He described Peter as a great warrior and ambassador, always the consummate professional; he had a great sensing for his surrounds. Peter respected the life and culture of others without taking sides or apportioning blame.

On transferring back to the regular Army in 2002, he was posted as the Staff Officer South Queensland Australian Army Cadets until 2004. In 2005 he served in Headquarters Northern Command. A further posting followed, this time as Staff Officer Grade Two Training in Washington until 2006. Peter was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and posted to the Land Warfare Development Centre on his return to Australia. In January 2010 Peter was posted as the Assistant Defence Advisor in Port Moresby.

Lieutenant Colonel Graeme Phillips observed Peter was a bit of a larrikin who enjoyed a good laugh, but who had a serious and deeply caring side. He recalled that whilst going through old photograph albums; he was struck by how much time they had spent together and in all corners of the globe. He said the photographs did not just stir memories of the fun seeking, happy go lucky Peter Maw but the deep conversation about the meaning of life, have we made a difference, are we good people. It was a side of Peter that not everyone was privileged to share.

A great memory I share about Pete was when Annie and I met up with him and Deb in Cairo. We did all the touristy things together, led on with Pete's slim but humorous grasp of Arabic. We decided to see the pyramids on horseback, much like the Light Horseman from the First World War. But of course, the horses weren't just any old horse – they had to be Arabs, a truly feisty breed of horse!! So there we were, no helmets, galloping across the sands around the pyramids without a care in the world. And who was out in front without any fear? You guessed it – Pete!! It was pretty much how he led life – from the front, full on, lots of friends close by, and lots of laughter!

Egyptian mythology states that before you are allowed entry in to heaven, you are asked two questions, and the answer to both must be yes. The first is 'Have you found joy in your life?' and the second 'Has your life brought joy to others?'

Well I know Pete's answers to both will be an emphatic YES. He had much joy in his life, through his family, his friends and his never ending pursuit of fun. He has also touched many lives, especially mine, and brought joy to many. He will be deeply missed, but always fondly remembered.

Colonel Burns described him as a loving and caring husband, father, son, brother and mate. Sometimes the joker, he was always compassionate and put others ahead of himself. A passionate patriot he loved serving his country, living life to the full and getting the most from every experience life offered him. He loved his sports and the outdoors lifestyle. In particular he had a great passion for fishing.

It was only last year that the 'Class of 79' gathered at Portsea for the 30th anniversary of our graduation. It was an amazing weekend to reminisce with stories of our adventures and experiences. I can't describe the outpouring of grief from Pete's classmates at the news of his death.

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Maw is remembered as an officer who was highly professional, dedicated, cheerful and resourceful. As a clear and insightful thinker his guidance, advice and opinions were always eagerly sought and the counsel and judgement that he offered was always well appreciated. There is no doubt that he held the respect of all who knew him because of his contribution and dedicated service to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, the Army and the Australian Defence Force

Lieutenant Colonel Peter Maw passed away suddenly in Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea on 12th May 2010 whilst serving as the Assistant Defence Advisor in Port Moresby. His funeral was held in Canberra on the 20th May 2010. Peter is survived by his wife Deb and children Ashley and Harry. I thank Colonel Chris Burns, Lieutenant Colonel Graeme Phillips and Major Greg Metcalf for providing the information for this tribute.