

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Gordon Cyril John Robinson

23 September 1935 – 19 November 2024

By Simon and Rowan Robinson

A good word about Gordon Cyril John Robinson

Aka George

Aka Ripitup tearitup stuffitup

Gordon was born in the tiny town of Deepwater, NSW, around 4.30 in the morning on the 23rd September 1935 after a shotgun wedding at the behest of his maternal grandparents. Not only was his shearer father attempting to avoid any matrimonial entanglements, but with the law as well, marrying under an assumed name. Cyril Phister [aka Arthur C. Robinson] joined the army late in 1939, but was soon discharged in early 1940. From there he disappeared. Other men in the family served in the Boer War, as well as WWI and WWII. His abandoned mother Beryl moved Gordon and his sisters to the Toowoomba area, finally gaining employment in the Cabarlah store. From there he walked the 8km round trip to Geham State School. The boy payed to walk him to school in the early days taught him the art of truancy and smoking rollies under the bridge at the ripe old age of 5 [for which Beryl gave both of them a flogging upon discovery]!

Legend has it that Gordon became known as George because an elderly family friend always got his name ballsed up. This dementia-before adventure type called him George so much that even his own mother started calling him George as well!

Booted out of home on the completion of primary school Gordon went bush and worked on cattle and sheep stations until he was old enough to get a license. He got a job driving the Mitchell-Bollon Mail. There were twenty-one stations on the run. He carried their mail, stores, fuel and general freight, along with the yearly wool clip, which ran into a few thousand bales. Gordon swore that a bottle of rum by the gear stick would keep a driver awake on a long haul. He was also sworn at by a local copper when he was discovered in a bar, underage, casually smoking and drinking whilst preparing to go truck-driving for the day.

In 1959 Gordon joined the army, electing artillery in which he had done his national service in fifty-four. He served four years in Malaya: 61-63 in Malacca; 64-66 in Butterworth with the air defence. During that time he acquired the nick-name Ripitup tearitup stuffitup. He further acquired a healthy derision of our British allies, a love of face-meltingly-hot curries, and sarongs as sleepwear [the second to the later delight of his sons, the third to their chagrin]. 67-68 saw him in Vietnam with 106 Field Battery, Four Field Regiment. He returned to Australia and instructed in the School of Artillery from which he served out his time and retired in Manly.

In 1969 he moved in with Judith Marquet, career nurse and midwife, whom he'd met a number of years earlier – very avante-garde! Finally marrying in 1974 in a rained-out garden ceremony at the in-laws home in Taree, he went on to have two sons with Judith: Simon Rip and Rohan Judd. Both went on to be professional bullshitters – the first an Anglican Priest, the second currently working for Bundaberg Council.

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Whilst in Manly Gordon intermittently ran a taxi truck and furniture removal business over eight years before returning home with his family to Toowoomba in Queensland. A chronic illness nearly ended his life in 1980. In recovery he gave up smoking and heavy drinking and pushed through ongoing illness by renovating the family home, learning a lot of skills along the way. After many years he made his way by stages back into the workforce with handyman jobs and painting houses. The nineties saw him return to the trucking game. He ran his own truck for a time with a good mate, and also worked for a firm out of Gatton. Eventually he landed work with the Thargomindah Shire. During that time he was sent to clean up the town of Hungerford – a job that took twelve months of surveying, fencing, removing over a hundred years' worth of junk, and navigating the intricacies of remote small town living by getting along with everyone. Another time, while working on a road crew driving a water-tanker, he had a rock punch through his windscreen at 80km. He had to drive to a stop blinded by his own blood. Staunching the wound with the dirty old towel he'd been sitting on, he radioed for help himself with his face torn open and lip flapping unhelpfully in the breeze. He was airlifted to Toowoomba where he required facial reconstruction from that sizeable chunk of iron ore. His last paid employment was working alongside his wife Judith at Rangeview nursing home: she, the Director of Nursing; he, the handyman.

Retirement years saw Gordon take the typical grey nomad trip around most of Australia with Judith. They settled into life, for a time, with family in Leigh Creek, South Australia, where they helped them get the local caravan park accredited. Indeed, much of his retirement was spent with Judith visiting or supporting one son or the other. His taxi truck skills were handy for moving from one town or state to another. Simon's parishes especially benefited from Gordon's generous presence when he appeared: building, painting, fixing, cementing, along with maintaining the said priest's morale with the generous application of libations daily at 5pm! Gordon and Judith, after building a beautiful home together in Meringandan, downsized to a cottage in Oakey in the early 2010s.

Retirement years did have a down side. He survived 20 years of scrapes with three primary cancers. They cost him his prostate, nose, lung and a goodly chunk of his hide. He barrelled through it with his characteristic yarn-spinning and cheerful whistle. Gordon surprised us all when, in the early stages of recovery and having never been a pet owner, he bought the most annoying dog to have ever wagged a tail. Naming it after his surgeon, Mr Wraggles became Gordon's master for the best part of 13 years before he karked it.

In his last days Gordon suffered a bout of the worst pneumonia Judith had ever seen in a patient. Typically he refused hospitalisation as long as possible. Entering Oakey hospital, it was discovered that not only did he have pneumonia, but the lung cancer was resurgent. After a few brief days in palliative care where he spent time with his wife and sons, he died in his sleep at 1.50am on the 19th November 2024.

Gordon could have been anything with the brains God had blessed him with. There was a sense of regret near the end, that he could have achieved more.

Gordon will be remembered as one of life's big characters – quick to spin a yarn, quick to offer an opinion, quick to the bar!

Apparently he was never wrong...

He was:

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A great bush mechanic and handyman.

A great driver.

A great wordsmith and poet.

A not-bad dad and husband.

A deep thinker

Extremely intelligent, creative, quick-witted and shrewd.

A stubborn bastard

Tough

Resourceful

The word 'eulogy' in the ancient Greek means 'good word'. There are more good words we could say about Gordon. There's probably even more of face-palming lament as well over the things he said and did. But this is not the time for those.

May he rest in peace and rise in glory at the return of the King: Jesus.

See ya later, Gordon 😊

Judith, Simon, Rohan, Lekky and Ari