

# Army Eulogy for Sergeant Timothy John Stewart

12 February 2013

Janet, Claire, Charles and Jennifer.

Tim's extended family, friends and all members of 6<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment, 16 Field Battery RAA and more recently 6/13 Light Battery both past and present, distinguished guests and friends of SGT Tim Stewart.

I would like to acknowledge all of Tim's friends that were unable to make it today due to unforeseen circumstances such as the Honorary Colonel of RAA Tas COL Steve Carey.

Like you, I am saddened, but deeply honoured to speak today on behalf of 16 Field Battery and the wider defence community in delivering this eulogy on behalf of Tim's military family, of which he was a part for over 40 years and through which I had the privilege of both working alongside him for **27** years and later commanding 16 Field Battery from late **2008** through to the end of **2012**.

Words often fall short of doing justice at times like this and there is perhaps little that can be said to lessen the grief that we all share today.

Perhaps words are not required and instead we should each take the time now to reflect on Tim in our own way; his being and his service. Tim was by all accounts a larger than life presence within the unit and highly regarded by all who had the privilege to work alongside him over the years.

In saying that, I can't help but suppress a sly smile when I think that today, when I look around at all the faces gathered to offer their respects and pay condolences to Janet and her family, that the grief we all feel is in itself a mark and testament to the love, regard and friendship that we all shared with Tim.

I hope that in some small way, that Janet, you too can take some comfort in the support that so many have chosen to demonstrate on this day.

It goes without saying that for a member as active as Tim was and for as long as Tim had served, he has a service history that few could expect to match. When I was approached by Janet to help in delivering this Eulogy I was alarmed not at making this presentation but by the challenge faced in going through 40 years of service history to draw from it the relevant points to best summarise Tim's service.

Born 26 June 1955, Tim at age 17 enlisted on 22 August 1972 and was posted to 6 FD Regt.

Promoted to Bombardier in **1976** and Sergeant in **2001**, Tim throughout was always the first to put his hand up to undertake the seemingly never ending army course continuum which changed much as we as a unit progressed from 25 pounders through to 105mm Howitzers and recently to 81mm mortars. Tim was posted to Defence Force Recruiting from 1994 to

1998, deployed to Op Gold in 2000 in support of the Olympics and took on the challenge of a six week Pijin English course as part of his development and preparation to Op Anode.

Tim's service was not without its recognition. Along the way, Tim was awarded:

- the Reserve Forces Medal (RFM) in 1987,
- First clasp for RFM in 1992,
- Tim was the first recipient in 16 Fd Bty for the Soldiers Medallion for Exemplary Service in 1995,
- Second clasp for RFM 1997,
- Third clasp for RFM in 2002,
- Australian Defence Medal in 2006,
- Fourth clasp for RFM in 2007,
- On 22 August 2012 SGT Tim Stewart qualified for the Federation Star for forty years of service.

40 Years is a long time. Time is something that Tim had much to offer. Indeed as Tim's Commanding Officer, I had to appreciate that there were many world time zones that we in the military had to deal with, there was one that existed outside of doctrine and it was affectionately known as **Tim time**.

It was necessary to subtract 30 minutes from all parade timings, just for Tim so that he had some chance of being on parade alongside the rest of the unit.

Tim undertook many roles and responsibilities during his long career which included signals, gun line, driver, forward observer assistant, recruiting, assisting in the unit Regimental Trust Fund and Paterson Barracks Area Mess. More recently, Tim was preparing to once again step forward and partake in next rotation on Op Anode to the Solomon Islands.

Our army is based on a set of values, courage, initiative and teamwork: values by which we are judged each and every day of our service. I can think of no better or more consistent embodiment of these than SGT Tim Stewart. For so many of us and those who have passed through the unit in times past, Tim's regard for his peers and those he served alongside is reflected back at him in the esteem in which we held him in.

There is no question that Tim was loved by us all. He has been described by many as a true gentleman, a husband and father first, but soldier all in one, his inspirational character and decency was apparent for all to see. We were not so shy to show it, and he in return was not so selfish as not to acknowledge it and return it in kind....with interest...

While we at army reflect on our loss, we take some comfort that Tim was, up until the very end, amongst comrades whom he had great love and respect and we today look to acknowledge and, in some small part, repay that.

SGT Tim Stewart, you honour us with your service, your teamwork and your commitment. Your love of the Unit and that of your family. You lived by the values and character that we have all been privileged to observe. It has been an honour to have served with you.

Farewell. MAJ Graeme hOWARD

My name is John Farrell. I met Timothy Stewart in 1969, our first year in high school.

He was a rascal, competitive, reliable, dependable, sociable, a comic, a family man. He was my best man. My son's god father.

He was my friend.

Born in Launceston in 1955, Tim was the second son of John and Margaret.

He grew up in the family home at Sandhill, with three brothers, Ian, Peter and Richard, where backyard cricket test matches were a regular summer pastime.

He was educated at St Patrick's College, first at the junior school in York Street, then secondary school at the Prospect Vale Campus.

Tim wasn't a Rhodes scholar, nor a master tradesman, but he gave his all to everything asked of him, and never stopped giving.

We were in the school cadets together at St Patrick's College. He enlisted into the CMF in 1972 whilst completing his 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school and also still parading with the school cadet unit. I caught up with him when I enlisted 18 months later into the Regiment.

The 1973 annual camp at Tin Can Bay in Queensland remains as one of his Army highlights!

Tim and Janet met in 1976 when both were in the Army Reserve. Janet, a recruit, first saw Tim when he had just attempted to light a “choofer “ which had exploded in his face. He had singed hair, no eyebrows or eyelashes. Janet thought he was a funny looking character. Theirs and many other romances blossomed at the Paterson Barracks OR’s Club social events.

Cpl Archer and Bdr Stewart were married on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 1979. I had the honour of being Tim’s Best Man. A duty he repaid a few years later. Claire arrived in 1981, Charles in 1983 and Jennifer in 1986.

He was thrilled to be a father and would have had more children if Janet had cooperated! He was a big kid at heart and loved his children and his pets. He would sneak guinea pigs in at bedtime and put them in the children’s bed. The house would reverberate with the shrieks of laughter coming down the hall, when he should have been tucking them in.

There for several years he bred rats! Apparently Jenny came home with one from school. Tim took it upon himself to bring it home a mate. You can imagine where it goes from there....

Charles tells me Tim gave them all grand names Marilyn, Algernon, Bridgette and the like. They even went camping with the family!

There was always the annual holiday at the beach with swimming and fishing. The kids recall mum would have to put up the tents as Tim never got the hang of it (he must have missed that soldiers five), but he seemed to enjoy the responsibility of emptying the port-a-loo!

Tim started his working life at Fotheringhams, a sport and saddlery store, where his interest in sport was fostered even more by the many acquaintances he made. A junior member of staff was a young Michael Roach, who went on to play AFL football with Richmond. Tim followed his career with great enthusiasm.

A senior staff member at the time was Peter Bowles. A talented runner and Gift winner, he became Tim's coach and mentor. He and his family made a lasting impression on the young Tim.

Tim loved sport and in his younger days was a very good runner, competing at the Christmas Carnivals. He was good enough to win the J C Leary Mile at the Burnie Carnival and was even King of the Carnivals in 1976. One of his proudest achievements was winning the Lavington Mile in NSW that same year, which at the time was the miler's equivalent of the Stawell Gift.

Tim enjoyed tennis, his father being a well-known and talented player. He and Janet played doubles in social tennis for a number of years.

For many years he was a football boundary umpire and was a keen Aussie Rules follower. His team was the Richmond Tigers. Many a winter weekend featured wagers and text messages bouncing between his mates. He'd have Claire and Jenny sitting with him on the couch dressed in yellow and black.

He taught his girls the correct, but derogatory, terminology when commenting on the umpire's decisions. Initially they were the white so-and-so's then it became either the yellow or orange so-and-so's much to Tim's disgust! Janet found this most ironic given his own umpiring experience.

I remember vividly his interest in the horse racing industry, which was nurtured by sales visits to country trainers and owners. He liked a punt, even back then. On our way to the church on my wedding day he had us stop at the Mowbray Hotel so he could run in and put on a bet before the first race.

Get me to the church on time still rings in my ears!

This brings me to another aspect of Tim's character, his inability to be on time for anything. Tim Time Major Howard called it.

He was notorious for being late. He was once fronted by his OC when posted to Reserve Recruiting. The young officer was reprimanding him for constantly being late on parade. Tim said it was the Missus fault because she never had his tea ready. The young officer accepted this excuse and they both ended up comparing notes on the subject! He had an answer for everything.

Tim worked for Rossetto Tiles - as a salesman. Here he also learnt the art of tiling. He was willing to tackle any job for his mates and was thorough but verry slooow. Janet is still waiting for him to finish the bathroom.

When he was doing a smallish tiling job for Helen Waldron, she arrived home after work to find him sitting in a chair having a coffee, watching TV. He then requested a meal which she duly provided. Helen Bennett has a similar story but she found he had helped himself, and was cooking a meal in her kitchen.

He then worked for Job Net. While there he used the interviewing skills he had acquired with Defence Force Recruiting as a recruiter and counselor. A role he excelled in. Once again he found himself back on the road visiting regional centers, always to return with a tale or two about an adventure, or character he had met.

He joined Metro in 2004 and loved the job. The people person he was, he made many more friends both with workmates and passengers.

Tim was well known to his friends as a dreadful driver. We were both horrified and amused when we heard that he started work as a bus driver. We had visions of little old ladies flying down the aisles when he took off, before they had a chance to sit down.

I recall one episode where Tim was driving a 5 ton Army truck, flat-strap, on a narrow bush track at Stony Head en route to a bushfire. Jack'O was upfront with his eyes closed. I and a dozen other gunners were in the back, ducking low branches and holding on for dear life. We all swore, never again!

Tim did manage to teach both Claire and Charles to drive. Jenny was happy to wait for Mum.

Back to the buses. We've heard stories where he had taken detours to drop off senior citizens closer to their homes or to avoid traffic lights and busy intersections. He once delivered Jack'O right into the barracks carpark.

He would pull up at the traffic lights in town, outside a certain frock shop, blast the horn and Julie Campbell would come racing out, jump on board, give him a hug and jump off before the lights changed to green.

He was on the OH&S committee at Metro. A position he enjoyed and coveted. He was very concerned at the last election that he would not be re-elected as there were two others standing against him. Janet reassured him that he would romp it in as the other two would split the vote between them. She was right and he was re-elected. Tim was happy. He brought skills from Army to this position and other committee positions he held.

Never one to shy away from volunteering, he served on various [committees](#), including the Royal Australian Artillery Association Tasmania, Hon Secretary of the Launceston Artillery Old Comrades Association, and had just taken on President of the 6 Field Gunners Association. There were various mess appointments, too many to mention. He was also on the football umpires committee at one time and currently a member of the Parish Council here at St Peters.

He has been an active member of the congregation here since 2004, working within the church and grounds and also on the new ramp that was completed just prior to Christmas.

This is Tim's church and he had said this is where he wanted his funeral. Janet stood by Tim's wish.

The parish also has another country church at Patersonia. Tim and Janet would each month attend and assist in the cleaning of this church and its grounds, then attend the service, have cups of tea with the local parishioner's followed by picnic lunches and drives around the district. This was a regular social outing they both enjoyed.

On a number of occasions.... Very memorable occasions.... Tim attended the annual pilgrimage with his army mates to the Swim Cart surf fishing competition.

Tim had a taste for fresh oysters which were always in abundance; unfortunately they didn't like him, and mixed with the local brew Tim would disappear into the boobyalla for hours at a time!

Tim loved his food (and Drink) and quite a few anecdotes have arisen regarding his prowess at cleaning the plate, so much so that bar snacks at the mess were never seen again once he had first dip.

He enjoyed the odd alcoholic refreshment. We often reminisced how as 17 year olds we could go to the mess after parade, share one long neck bottle of beer for 54 cents, and go home somewhat merry!

Guinness became his drink of choice. Many of us amazed at the speed and fervour with which he could consume the iconic beverage. Mess dinners were no longer as entertaining once red wine was banned from Tim's drink menu!!

From our first year in the CMF we participated in Anzac Day cenotaph guard duties. We were up early to attend the dawn service, then back to the barracks to change into uniform for the Perth 9.00am ceremony. Five of us would pile into Tim's brand new bright yellow mini, his pride and joy. SLR's and bayonets stowed in the boot.

We would always stop at the local milk bar on the way. "Need to line our stomachs, was Tim's reasoning", I'm not really sure why?

Then off to meet Bdr Max Gibson for a quick rehearsal and uniform check at the local footy ground. "No braces lads"...not happy was Max!

But we all performed diligently, frost or not, then a quick refreshment at the local café, and off to watch the Launceston service.

Duty done, the day would eventually lead to a few quiet ales in the mess before heading out to the local discos that night. Battle dress, boots and all. Apart from a tightening of the rules regarding uniform and weapons, Tim continued this tradition throughout his service, and I'm sure this Anzac Day will have an added dimension for many of us.

Tim could remember every detail about everyone he knew... names... addresses, associations, children, parents... but when it came to putting petrol in his car, or where the keys and his phone were.. they were minor details... and checking the time was just as much an issue at home as at Army.

Recently when Tim returned from a two week course he never noticed the new couches the girls had purchased, nor the old ones on the balcony near the front door. But when he came home and sat down watching the new wide screen TV and didn't notice it, Janet just shook her head.

Tim enjoyed acting and had a wonderful singing voice. He was never backward in taking the microphone. He performed in several Launceston Players productions, one being the musical South Pacific. Impersonations of famous people were a particular talent. Gough Whitlam, Paul Keating and Chad Morgan were his old favorites. It was not unusual to get a late night phone call from Mick Malthouse or Farmer Brown wanting to buy some sheep.

This comic, mischievous side would at times get him into trouble. On an Army weekend in Hobart, Tim, as usual, went out on the town and on his return to the barracks found that the gates were locked. When challenged by the security guard he replied that he was General Cosgrove. The guard and his superiors failed to see the funny side. But that was our Tim....a true character

Tim's family have re-lived some wonderful memories these last few days, especially searching for photos for today, but admit to having difficulty finding any where he wasn't in silly clothes, pulling a silly face, or in army attire.

Tim was a true friend, a kind, caring and loving husband and father, and showed this in so many ways.

He honoured his God, by serving his country,

By respecting all he came in contact with,

And loving his family that was so proud of him

Ex WO2 John Farrell.