

George Giummarra, 1/70

John George Giummarra, born in Ragusa Italy in May 1945, completed his secondary education at St Joseph's Technical College in Melbourne, Victoria. After attending the Royal Institute of Technology and gaining a Fellowship Diploma in Civil Engineering in 1969, he worked for a short time as an engineer with the Country Roads Board.

George started his National Service (NS) at 2 RTB, Puckapunyal, Victoria on 28 January 1970. Only there briefly, he was selected for officer training at Scheyville NSW, with the next course commencing in mid-February. On graduating from the Officer Training Unit with Class 1/70 on 15 July 1970, he immediately commenced 3 months of Corps Training at the School of Military Engineering at Casula in Sydney NSW. He was then posted to Headquarters Central Command (HCC) in Adelaide SA on



Rear: Roger Blazey, 2nd from left. Front: George Giummarra, left. A 1971 Army/civilian Cricket Team

19 October 1970, completing his NS there in November 1971. At HCC, George was mainly responsible for various infrastructure developments. He lived in the Officers Mess at Keswick, a leisurely walking distance from Adelaide CBD. At an officers' ball in 1971, he met Sue, his future wife. He was married to Sue for some 48 years and they were rewarded with 2 daughters and 3 grandchildren.

Post-NS, George returned to civilian life with the Country Roads Board (now VicRoads), but perhaps decided that his 2 years of NS was merely a work in progress. Within 5 months of his NS discharge, he signed on with the Army Reserve. By any yardstick his 24-year contribution to the Reserve was substantial. It involved some 14 postings of varying length, starting with 10 Field Squadron and concluding with the Headquarters 3 Training Group. The postings included a couple of senior instructional roles, potentially mentoring environments in which one suspects, he thrived. George exited at Lieutenant Colonel with a Reserve Force Decoration, honouring his long and faithful service.

After VicRoads, George commenced work in 1993 at the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) for a further 20 years. A 1/70 OTU classmate and fellow engineer reports that, when at ARRB, he was a highly regarded, recognised expert in the field of cost-efficient pavements for low volume roads. He disseminated research and provided training to engineers in Victorian municipalities. George conducted over 300 technical “roads” workshops across Australasia.

George became gravely ill in February 2021 and immediately underwent surgery for a brain tumour. Sadly, he lost his battle with cancer and passed away peacefully on 11 November 2021. Within 48 hours of receiving the news on the OTU network, over 20 of his 1/70 classmates hit the “reply to all” button and made a number of perceptive comments about him. Here are three:

“5 ft something in the flesh and well north of 7 ft in the heart and spirit”

“his determination, humility and humour just made him the greatest of mates in the lines or in the field”

“a very amiable, tough, not so tall guy with resilience and a subtle sense of humour.

One with whom a friendship was easily established.”

We all have our varying perceptions of George. I didn’t know him all that well at Scheyville, as he wasn’t

in my lines. However, after a shared year at Keswick, I reckoned he was the most grounded and well-rounded NS officer in the mess. Occasionally, and perhaps pointedly, he engaged me in a philosophical conversation on “what constituted a balanced life.” Achieving that balance in life was seemingly important to him. His history suggests that he approximated that on many fronts emanating from his public Army service, his public civilian service and his private life. On 3 March 2020, at his invitation, I prophetically caught up with him in Perth WA. After reminiscing about OTU and Keswick, we proudly talked about our families. He was clearly proud of his family and especially his 2 daughters, one following him into engineering and the other a teacher in media and drama. I promised a further catch up when I was in Victoria, confident that would materialise in a year or two. As it turned out, that wasn’t do-able. As we went on our way, my parting thought on George was, “There goes a pretty healthy looking, sanguine bloke of some substance. Being generally at peace with the world, he’ll be around, for a very long time.” How misconceived was I.



George, “husband, father and pa,” is survived by his wife Sue, his daughters Cindie and Victoria and his grandchildren Katarina, Isabella and Miles. We send our sincere condolences to them. May they be assured that George’s 1/70 classmates will miss him. As a man of faith, whose life was clearly lived out in the service of others, he will be fondly remembered for all the right reasons.

Above: Roger Blazey (left) and George Giummarra at the Marina Mindari, north of Perth, March 2020.