

Paul Francis Cotter was born in Burwood, Sydney on 5 August 1949. One of Frank and Joy Cotter's seven children, he found work upon leaving school as a Bank Officer and Tax Officer. However, being not happy with his life he decided to go into the Priesthood. After two and a half years in the seminary, he withdrew to undertake a university degree. Before he could go to university however, he needed to obtain his HSC and went back to Sydney Tech part-time, five nights a week to do so. To support himself at this time he worked as a Cleaner and Handyman. In 1971, he heard about the Army's expansion and applied for officer training at the Officer Cadet School (OCS), Portsea. The Army accepted more Officer Cadets than Portsea could accommodate and selected a number of single men to undertake their training at OTU Scheyville instead of at Portsea itself. Paul, Regimental Number 221971, was one of the 37 men who went to Scheyville in January 1972 as Class OCS 1/72.

On arrival at OTU, Cadet Cotter was allocated to 13 Section, 7 Platoon, Blamey Company. His 'father' was a National Serviceman, Officer Cadet P. C. Gill of Class 4/71, who did not graduate. Paul's 'Brother' was Cadet Max Harvey of Class 1/72. While Nashos had a Junior Term and a Senior Term, the OCS Cadets spent four terms at OTU. In his second term, the now Officer Cadet Cotter was a 'Senior' in 13 Section, a 'Father' to National Serviceman Cadet David Barker. In the third term, Paul was the Battalion Quartermaster Sergeant. In his final term, Paul reached the pinnacle of postings at the OTU and became the Battalion Sergeant Major with the rank of Senior Under Officer.

OCS Class 1/72 had a 'Graduation Parade' at Scheyville in the form of a 'Beating the Retreat', followed by a party in the Officer's Mess. The following day, 2 December 1972, the day of the election that saw the Labor party come to power and suspend National Service some three days later, Paul and 25 fellow OCS Officer Cadets travelled to Portsea to join with their fellow OCS Cadets and participate in the December 1972 Graduation Parade on the grass Parade Ground, which overlooked Port Phillip Bay, at the Officer Cadet School at Portsea. (Below: Paul, front rank, centre)



On graduation Paul was allocated to RAEME with the promise of gaining a degree in Mechanical Engineering. However, due to cutbacks in Defence funding at the time, Paul's promised civil schooling did not eventuate. Not seeing a future in a Technical Corps without that degree, Paul was enticed to transfer to the newly established RACT in early 1974. He consequently undertook another Junior Officer's Course with his new Corps, which he 'topped'! Paul married Anne, a teacher, on 29 December 1973. They would have four children: Deborah, Sarah, Rachel, and Simon.

In 1975 Paul finally received that civil schooling posting he had sought and along with fellow Portsea classmate, Rick Hanger, attended a three year full-time degree course at the (then) Royal



Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) where he completed the new Bachelor of Business, Transport and Economics Course, with a Distinction! Paul remained in the Army until February 1982. His postings included:

- HQ CRAEME 3 Div (1973)
- Puckapunyal Transport Unit (1974)
- Long Term Studies at RMIT (75 – 77)
- Mov Div, HQ Log Comd (77 – 79)
- HQ Forces Comd (79 – 80) and
- 10 Terminal Regt (80 – 81).



Leaving the Army, Paul used his Army experience and worked for a number of

logistics and transport firms before starting his own business. Paul was involved with the Scouting movement, becoming a Regional Commissioner. He was also active in Rotary and Lions. Post-Army Paul would enjoy his passions of camping, hiking and bike riding. The family went along with him, visiting places such as Booti Booti National Park and Elizabeth Beach near Forster/Tuncurry. Paul's brother Gerard died at 43 years in 2000, which made Paul begin to work through his 'bucket list'. This included, firstly, walking the Kokoda Track (right). Other 'adventures included sailing around Antarctica, walking the Inca Trail in Peru, the Milford Track in New Zealand and eventually Cape York.

Three years after Gerard died, Paul was diagnosed with Parkinson's Disease. A further seven years on Paul went in for an operation for deep brain stimulation to control the Parkinson's. Paul survived Parkinson's a lot longer than the average ten years, however towards the end he was also suffering from dementia and needed walking aids. One walking Stick, then two sticks and finally a walking frame. However, this did not dim his spirit, as seen by the report in The Scheyvillian 1 of 2023 about Bob Deer's catch-up with Paul following the 2022 OTU Reunion.

Recently OCS Classmate Gary Barker sent a letter that Paul, received a short time before his death. Anne read the letter to Paul, who obviously took in the words, on the day he died, 16 June 2023. A memorial service was held for Paul at Greenway Chapel, Green Point, near Gosford, NSW, on 23 June. During the



service the family recalled many of Paul's sayings, such as his usual question before heading out "Where's ma?" (eg Where's my keys?) or his first comment on arriving home: rather than being "Hello" it was "What's for dinner?" "I'm not often wrong, but I'm right again!" He introduced RHIP (Rank Has Its Privileges) to his children with "Because I'm Dad, that's why!" What shone through during the service were two things: his sense of humour and his integrity.

Paul leaves behind his wife, Anne, four children and eight grandchildren.