

Vale: Gary Ticehurst

Gray Edwin Ticehurst was born on 10th October 1950 and commenced his NS as 2801428 on 27th September 1972, commencing with Class 4/72 at OTU on 13th October. Soldiering was in Gary's blood as his father, Noel, had been a Survey Corps Warrant Officer. Gary continued serving when NS was cancelled and graduated as Graduate Number 1785, on 19th April 1973 into Army Aviation and commenced training at Point Cook. He graduated as a pilot on 7th December and was posted to the School of Army Aviation on 23rd January 1974 for helicopter training, qualifying as a Sioux Pilot on 21st May, then doing a four-week transition course for the Bell 206B-1.

He attended the RAAF Survival Course, had detachments to 1 Avn Regiment and 171 Op Spt Sqn, attended the RAAF Flying Safety Officers Course and on 1 June 1977 was posted to 161 Recce Sqn. From September 1977 he was employed by the Surf Life Saving Association to fly Search and Rescue tasks on weekends. Gary participated in Ex Long Look for four months in 1978 and whilst on Leave-Without-Pay



commenced as a helicopter pilot for the NSW police Force. He discharged from the Army on 13th April 1979.

Right: Gary and his parents.

In December 1980, Gary formed his own company to pursue television and film production support to the Australian Broadcasting Corporation and became the ABC's first full-time pilot. He also donated his time helping the Variety children's charity. Gary continued to work closely with the Australian film production industry and flew during the making of several films: Fool's Gold, Nim's Island, Superman Returns, Stealth, The Matrix, The Matrix Reloaded, Mission: Impossible 2 and Anna and the King. He also flew for TV Commercials and numerous sporting events. With Reporter Paul Lockyer and cameraman John Bean, Gary Ticehurst was piloting a helicopter on 18th August filming a third documentary of Lake Eyre filling up with water when the helicopter crashed on the eastern side of Lake Eyre. All three died in the crash.

Gary covered 29 straight Sydney to Hobart yacht races and during the tragic 1998 race, he did more than just cover the race. The yacht Stand Aside was the first to fall victim to the wild weather, with Ticehurst's chopper among the search and rescue crew. Gary said: "I'm used to flying through weather fronts, but this was sitting like a whirlwind, and here was Stand Aside in the middle of this with half its roof missing." Six men died during the 1998 Sydney to Hobart, but a total of 55 were rescued including 14 crew members from stricken yacht Business Post Naiad, which lost its skipper and a crew member. Gary was also involved in the rescue of the upturned yacht Skandia. His memorial service was held on 30th August alongside yachts moored at Rushcutters Bay in eastern Sydney. There was standing room only as hundreds of mourners gathered in a marquee to farewell one of the national broadcaster's finest. Veteran ABC journalists, cinematographers and loved ones remembered a "60 year's young" man who was due to become a grandfather of twins this year. The ABC's man in the sky was described at his memorial as having the "eyes of an eagle and the hands of a surgeon" when it came to helping to capture beautiful images of Australia.

Gary was also a big-hearted, gregarious character who rescued stranded sailors and bushwalkers, and brought joy to children in small towns by letting them sit in the cockpit of his ABC "squirrel". His son Matt Ticehurst described his dad's love of the Sydney Swans and said he would have loved the turnout at his memorial service. "I have a direct message to you from him: "How bloody good is this?", he said. "Dad was someone who saw the inherent 'bloody goodness' in every single aspect of life." Gary's wife Teresa, whom he met in 2005, recalled how he proposed to her from his Sydney hospital bed on a first date. "The doctor was in shock when, after Gary had delivered 'the mother of all kidney stones', he gets down on bended knee in his backless hospital gown and, in fits of laughter, joy and love he begged me to marry him," "How could I not?"



A wake was held at the nearby Cruising Yacht Club of Australia with the song Whiter Shade of Pale by Procol Harum being played as mourners filed in.

On 18 August 2021 Peter Bons wrote his **Memories of Gary Ticehurst**

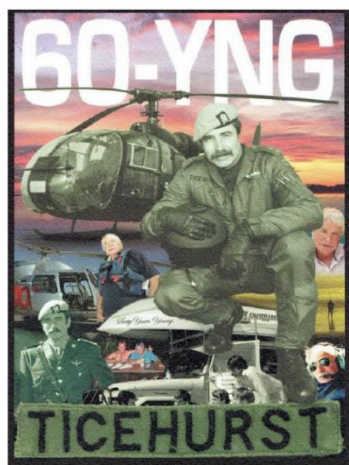
G'day all, I couldn't believe it's been 10 years since we lost Gary when the emails came through this morning. I would like to share some of my memories. We both wanted Aviation Corps after the 4/72 Grad. We were both summoned to the CO's office for our corps allocation. I got Armour and Gary something else (actually allocated to AAAvn- Ed). Neither of us would sign anything (knowing that Whitlam had just come to power saying "ya can go home or stay", so we held the trump card). When querying why no aviation, the CO reacted with a very raised voice lecture "You're an Army Officer first! and pilot second.... not the other way around. Is that clear?" I'll get back to you two! Now get out'o'here! On our way back to wherever it was, I don't know whose grin was bigger, Gary's or mine.

Several days later, after an assembly of sorts, a still very angry CO hollered out BONS, TICEHURST, TO MY OFFICE NOW!" He didn't say much. Just forcibly placed a bunch of papers in front of us both. "AVIATION!... STARTS IN 1 MONTH, ... PT COOK ... IS THAT GOOD ENOUGH?" Well, Gary's strong rustic voice answered for both of us "Yes Sir" ... With the CO still frothing at the mouth, he said "SIGN THERE!" ... and so that's where Gary's flying started.

I soon found out that Gary was quite an artist. We wanted to come up with a badge for our Army Course 18 at Pt Cook. Gary figured that most of the military called us 'grunts' anyway, so we might as well be one one. He did the drawing and commissioned the badge shown. That's a VB in the Pig's trotters. Then Gary came up with the idea of a real pig for our mascot on Grad night. Well, he turned up in his Torana XU-1 with this squealing pig to our rental place in Hopper's Crossing, a couple of weeks in advance for us to nurse this pig till Grad night. Well, keeping the back yard reasonably well presented was quite a challenge. The photo with Gary holding the pig was taken on Grad night. Yep, cape an all. The other chaps came from other Corps for the flying course.

Well, on the night of course the pig got out. Last memory that night has some drunks wandering amongst the buildings and out onto that big airfield. I can't remember whether we found After Pt Cook, our advanced flying training on type took place at Oakey, Qld. Gary onto choppers and myself on Porters..

Cheers Gary with fond memories, I'll look you up when I join ya...
Kind regards all, Peter Bons



Right: Gary's drawing. He commissioned the badge

Left: Gary's Celebration of Life Memorial by his Family and Channel 2 (ABC for whom Gary was flying when he crashed on Lake Eyre)

2023: The classmates are now reunited!
RIP Peter and Gary.

