

**Peter William Commerford** (4/68) (with input from Peter's daughter Bridie Schibrowski)

Peter Commerford was born at MacLean, NSW, on 30 April 1948, the second of five children born to William and Mary Commerford. He was brought up on a farm at MacLean near the Clarence River in NSW. In 1958 the family moved to Sydney where Peter went to De La Salle before completing his schooling at Chevalier College in Bowral. While at school Peter lost all his front teeth and his 'Dentist appointments'



gave him many opportunities to be out of school and meeting his friends. He began work as a Law Clerk and began studying law. In 1968 he was called up for National Service and went in with the fourth intake for that year on 9 October as 2791171 Recruit Commerford at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Training Battalion, Singleton. On 26 October Peter commenced Officer Training at OTU Scheyville, reaching the rank of Sergeant in his Senior Term. Graduating with Class 4/68 on 24 April 1969 Peter was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps and posted to 1 RTB Kapooka.



In August 1969, the call came out for Infantry Platoon Commanders at Kapooka, and the other Recruit Training establishments, to volunteer for service in Vietnam. 'You can be there by Christmas!' it was said. Along with Tony Martin of OTU Class 3/68, Peter took up the challenge. On 15 September Peter was transferred to the Infantry Centre, then at Ingleburn, undertook pre-deployment training at the Jungle Training Centre, Canungra, in Queensland and on 5 November found himself in Vietnam with the 1<sup>st</sup> Australian Reinforcement Unit



(1 ARU) where, as Peter would later say, 'I started a government sponsored trip to Vietnam.' Four weeks later he was transferred to 8 Platoon, C Company 5 RAR. His Platoon Sergeant referred to him as 'A breath of fresh air.' Peter was in the thick of things, using his bush skills to the utmost, with 5 RAR. He participated in the battalion's last operation in February 1970. Peter returned to 1 ARU, then, to complete his 'tour' on 11 July transferred to 12 Platoon, D Company, 7 RAR. His platoon members stated that he was a good man to follow. Peter extended his National Service to complete the tour and was discharged from his commitment on 1 January 1971.

Peter returned to the law field. In 1972 Carolyn met Peter and some say, taken in by his sports car, she married him. They had two children Bridie and Steven. Peter went away from Law and commenced a 36-year career as a Social Worker, undertaking studies through the University of New England. His law background helped him greatly in this new area. Peter enjoyed cross-country skiing, rowing, surfing, hiking, canyoning, camping and any other outdoors activities. These all helped with his involvement with Cubs, Scouts and Venturers. Peter's lessons to his children were: get involved, keep calm, respect others



and ‘do it properly’ as he showed when building the retaining walls in their home’s garden.

Known as Peter, Pete, Pedro or Luigi, his life changed ten years ago when hereditary Huntington’s disease began to take over. In the early stages of the disease, with the help of his daughter Bridie, Peter attended the Class 4/68 Reunion in 2013. Until January 2020 he was being cared for by his wife Carolyn and remained living in their home in Drummoyne. Peter’s condition worsened to the extent that he was no longer able to move himself nor talk and Carolyn could no longer manage his support. Thus, Peter had to be moved into a nursing home in Mortdale, NSW. Fortuitously, Classmate Les Boag was able to visit Peter at the nursing home on 16 March 2020, before the Corona Virus ‘Lock Down’ took hold.



Peter passed away peacefully early on Sunday 3 May 2020, with his wife Carolyn and his daughter Bridie by his side. He leaves behind his mother Mary, sisters Maureen and Anne, brothers Greg and Christopher. His funeral, held under the COVID-19 restrictions, was held in the Lotus Pavilion at the Macquarie Park Crematorium on Monday 11 May 2020 and ‘live-streamed through Guardian Funerals.

OTU 4/68 Classmates remember Peter as calm, considerate and self-disciplined. A strong and admirable character. One we can be proud to have known! RIP Peter.



Left: Peter Commerford addressing some of his platoon at the Horseshoe near Dat Do in Vietnam. (Graham Cornes provided photograph)