

### **Class 1/71: Williams P A (Peter Williams 713, 1/71)**

It was early January 1971 and busloads of Army Recruits from 1RTB, Kapooka, 2RTB, Puckapunyal and 3TB, Singleton, delivered the young men ready to comprise 1/71 Intake at OTU Scheyville. All 144 lined up on the parade ground and surnames were called out by members of the staff, in alphabetical order, and recruits were allocated to one of the four OTU companies. As the numbers remaining on the parade ground dwindled down from 144 to very low double figures, the name calling got to the "Ws".

Then the circus began – "Williams" called out the Sgt – "Sir" - "Sir" were the replies from two recruit-. "Williams PA" called out the Sgt – "Sir" - "Sir" were the replies from the same two recruits. "Williams Peter" called out the Sgt – "Sir" - "Sir" were the replies from the same two recruits.

This was the start of the confusion by having **TWO** Peter A Williams, both from NSW, in the same intake. We both became fully aware that we were 'earmarked' from the beginning for 'special attention' to relieve the confusion for other now Officer Cadets, but more so, from the instructional staff at OTU.

In an attempt to uniquely identify both of us, we were 'christened' as "Williams (713)" and "Williams (845)" with the numbers being the last three digits of our regimental numbers. '713' was allocated to Chauvel (then the Governor General's Coy) and '845' to Bridges Coy. Defying all the odds, both Peter Anthony Williams (713) and Peter Alan Williams (845) graduated in July 1971 but, to continue the confusion, both were allocated to the same corps – RAAOC! Whilst I took a Short Service Commission towards the end of my National Service obligation and subsequently a permanent commission, completing 28 years of service, Williams (845) completed his National Service obligation before taking discharge. He eventually moved to Tasmania.

In April 2006, '845' organised a very, very memorable 35<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Reunion for Class 1/71 at Devonport, Tasmania, where he and his wife Margaret had the Gateway Inn. Everything ran like clockwork from the greeting drinks, the Reunion Dinner, a Commemorative Dawn Service to the Church Service. All along with a specially bottled 1/71 35<sup>th</sup> Reunion Port. You will be missed 845 – Rest In Peace.

### **Address by Geoff Noble at Peter Williams' Wake**

In September 1968 the Australian Government conducted a birthday ballot for the eighth time to select young men who turned 20 in the past quarter to be called up for national service in the army. A marble was drawn bearing the date 5 September.

Peter Allan Williams (service number 2796 845) was then committed to serve in the Australian Army for a two-year term.

After a deferment due to study, Peter was enlisted into the army on 27 January 1971 for an experience which had a major impact on his life.

After two weeks recruit training at Kapooka NSW, which included an unfashionable haircut, a searching medical examination, some crude dental treatment and a uniform three sizes too big, Pete was selected to attend the Officer Training Unit (OTU) at Scheyville NSW. This was a very demanding six months course with a third of the recruits failing to complete. Pete with his typical grit and determination graduated with a commission and the rank of 2nd Lieutenant. There were two recruits in the first intake of 1971 (1/71), named Peter A Williams. This led to Pete becoming affectionately known by all his army mates as "845" his service number.

Pete was then posted to Gaythorne in Brisbane as the Quartermaster in charge of stores and equipment in the Ordinance corps. Pete and I, also recently graduated from OTU then shared the Officer's quarters for the next twelve months and became lifelong friends. We were the only officers living in quarters and were waited on hand and foot. Life was good.

Pete's influence as Quartermaster ensured that we ate very well in the Officers Mess with increased orders for butterscotch brickle ice cream perhaps at the expense of blankets and boots.

Lieutenant Williams (Pete) was the only officer on the Enoggera/Gaythorne base to drive an E-Type Jaguar,(red of course) which also had a 007 number plate. Officers driving into the Enoggera base past security demanded that MPs gave the appropriate salute. It was known that the salute was for the car and not Pete whose hat was always pulled well down. “The Hat” became another tag that Pete carried during his time at the base.

Pete and I enjoyed being part of a social group which included a number of OTU graduates living away from their home state. They were Leon & Jan Miller, Ron & Jenny Dennison and Frank Le Faucheur who also became lifelong friends.

A special moment was when Pete and I went to a party in Brisbane (in the E-Type of course). A number of Army officers from Enoggera and nurses from Brisbane’s PA Hospital were invited. This was where I met Denise who was driven home in Pete’s car. It obviously made a good impression as Denise and I have now been married almost 50 years. Pete was best man at our wedding and Pete and Margaret godparents to our children. At left: Peter with Geoff on the right



The Government then reduced the national service term from two years to 18 months as part of the gradual withdrawal from Vietnam. Pete was discharged in July 1972 to work in Sydney in auditing then property development before returning to his hometown in Wagga. Peter met the love of his life, Margaret, during his time in Sydney.

The Army connection continued in later years through a number of reunions of the OTU graduating class from the 1/71 intake. In 2006 Pete organised and hosted a wonderful reunion in Devonport. In typical style he had a committee of one and marshalled the family troops to produce one of the most successful reunions of the group. It demonstrated his great leadership in making things happen and through it all showed great compassion and warmth to all who came in contact with him.



Peter lived his life with boundless energy, courage, grace and a deep love of his faith. We are all so grateful and truly blessed to have known this wonderful, generous and kind man.

Peter (845) Williams and Geoff Noble at the 30-year reunion at Canberra in 2001

## VALE:

**Peter Alan Williams (845)** was born into a strongly religious Catholic family in Wagga, NSW, on 5 September 1948. He was one of six children. Peter completed his secondary education at Christian Brothers College, Wagga. He deferred his National Service to complete an accountancy course and was employed as a Trainee Accountant before entering the Army as a National Serviceman on 27 January 1971 at the 1<sup>st</sup> Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka, just outside his home-town of Wagga. Peter was selected for Officer Training and commenced with Class 1/71 at OTU Scheyville on 15 February. There were two Peter A Williams in Class 1/71, so the two were known by the last three digits of the Regimental Numbers. Peter Alan became



Williams 845, while Peter Anthony Williams became Williams 713. Both Williams graduated with their class on 14 July into the RAAOC. Williams 845 passed the course using his 'stick-at-it-ness'. The following day Peter Alan Williams commenced with the Ordnance Corps as the Quartermaster for Northern Command at 1 Base Ordnance Depot at Gaythorne in Brisbane with OTU Classmate Geoff Noble. They were the only 'living in' officers at 1 BOD. At the end of his eighteen months Williams 845 discharged from the Army on 26 July 1972.

Peter then worked for the Lend Lease Corporation as an Auditor. From there he went into property development company in Sydney as a Financial Manager. Peter became involved with Dick Dusseldorp and the Harry Seidler designed Australia Square in Sydney. A 50-storey building, from 1967 to 1976 it was the highest building in Sydney. For some time, Peter worked as an Internal Auditor on the 48<sup>th</sup> Floor and stated the 'he had 2,000 people working under him!'

Peter returned to Wagga working for a local building company before setting up a short-lived accountancy practice. In the 1970s Peter met Margaret and they married in 1975. Their first child was born in 1976 and their youngest, twin girls, were born in 1993. Of Margaret, Peter said 'I won the jackpot on that occasion!' He and Margaret branched out into other business ventures and have owned and operated motels, hotels and bottle shops. Some forty years ago the family moved to Tasmania.

One of Peter's brothers, Tony, was his business partner for 50 years. Tony described Peter as 'quirky' and that 'time didn't set Peter's agenda!' 'Peter never complained about his personal situation or pain.' Peter's ethos mirrored that of TV Presenter Bear Grills: 'Always keep the big picture in mind, you are quietly loved by Jesus, your job is to love him and others in return, the rest is detail!' Consequently, Peter loved his family: he lived with humour and curiosity.

Peter had a love of cars (as a 2<sup>nd</sup> Lieutenant in the Army driving a red 'E' Type Jaguar), an interest in military aircraft and military books, and a thirst for knowledge. At university he had studied philosophy and religion and was a member of a debating society. Later in life he was a member of SWAP (Salesmen With A Purpose). Peter's philosophy to life was 'the more problems you have, the more alive you are!' On a visit to China, early one morning Peter went to leave the building to go for a run in his singlet and shorts. The Security Staff would not let him leave the building. He could not speak Chinese and they could not speak English. The reason they would not let him outside was due to the extremely cold weather conditions!!!

In 2003 Peter suffered a stroke that affected his speech and processing ability. He had aphasia/dysphasia. While this slowed him down, he kept going, albeit at a slower pace. Peter died on 11 January 2022 after a very brave battle with brain cancer. A celebration of his life was held by way of a Mass of Christian Burial at St Brendan-Shaw College Jubilee Chapel, Devonport, Tasmania at on 24 January 2022. Viktor Frankl - 'Yes to Life: In Spite of Everything.' Peter leaves behind his wife Margaret and family Xavier, Alexandra, Alan, Felicity, Prudence, Marianne, Sara, Francesca, Siobhan, Jacinta and Miriam.