

## **EULOGY FOR HUMPHREY MALTMAN**

**20 June 2008**

**(Delivered by Mick Hart)**

Scheyville is a little village west of Sydney, near Windsor. From 1965 to 1972, the Army Officer Training Unit was housed at Scheyville. It was the new Officers School, in addition to the Officer Cadet School at Portsea and the Royal Military College at Duntroon. OTU was established as part of the National Service System which then operated. This coincided with the Vietnam War.

Approximately 8% of Australian males were called up during that time – by birth date i.e. if your birth date was pulled out of a barrel. If you were lucky enough to win the raffle, you were compelled, subject to passing medical examinations, to join the Army for 2 years.

Of the 8% called up, 3% of that total number were selected for training as infantry platoon commanders at Scheyville.

In addition, those fellows wanting to be Army Pilots also went through Scheyville – as volunteers!

Approximately 50% passed. For most of us, it was an intensive and tough course.

Graduates include such luminaries as former Deputy Prime Minister, Tim Fischer; former Victorian Premier, Jeff Kennett; former head of Coles Myer, John Fletcher and former head of Flight Training Australia – Humphrey Maltman!!

Humphrey was a graduate of Scheyville in 1972 and was posted to the Army Aviation Corps.

Like most of us, Humphrey's military career was short and, like most of us, did not quite reach Olympian heights. However, by any measure, Humphrey kept everyone entertained during that period.

His great loves, of course, were flying and instructing; and, in particular, Flight Training Australia.

Post National Service, most Scheyville graduates got on with their lives and there was no real urge to maintain contact post graduation – notwithstanding that Scheyville left an indelible mark, generally for the good, on all of us.

However, in the early 90s, there was a surge in rekindled interest in our common Scheyville history. This surge in Queensland has been reflected, since the early 1990s, at monthly lunches (as well as the annual dining-in nights which had already existed and continue still).

Humphrey has been a regular attendee at these functions.

Humphrey is much loved by his fellow Scheyvillians!

He, and one of our other colleagues, is by a country mile, the best joke tellers in the group. Humphrey would be at the top of the joke telling list in any group.

Somewhat surprisingly for males, but not surprising for the gentleman that Humphrey is, his jokes were predominantly clean – but always very funny. The comedy was not only in the content but also (and especially) in the telling.

Humphrey would laugh *with* anyone but not *at* anyone. He could laugh at himself.

Humphrey was our John Cleese!

For better or for worse, for both of us, I have been Humphrey's solicitor for some 15 years. In all his dealings, Humphrey has been honest, open and fair, and saw the best in everyone. Those attributes have been accompanied, at times, by a high degree of vagueness and naivety.

As some of his colleagues have said recently, "As a businessman, Humphrey was a great pilot".

I have been in various gatherings where other pilots have rated Humphrey very highly as both a Pilot and as an Instructor. I have flown with him, on charter, several times and, as best as a layman can judge, he was utterly professional. By sheer coincidence, one of our sons, who is a Commercial Pilot and was previously with the RAAF, did some of his training with Humphrey – before I met Humphrey.

I don't think I have ever heard Humphrey say a bad word about anyone – quite a rare circumstance.

For reasons which don't concern us, Humphrey lost contact with his daughters, Jasmine and Heather, when they were quite young. They found him in the last four or five years. Not only has that been a joy for them, it has been a magnificent joy for Humphrey. Their re-entry into his life elevated his happiness to the nth degree. Humphrey is, by nature, a positive and happy person but this reunion utterly uplifted him.

Humphrey's daily love had been, of course, Flight Training Australia. He now had to re-prioritise that love into a number two position.

Humphrey rang me in mid-January this year, whilst I was on holidays, to inform me of the news of his terminal illness. On the various occasions I've spoken to him since, he has been – as those of us who know him would expect – very stoic. I don't doubt that he had his private teary moments but, in public, the only times I saw tears arrive were when he spoke of his daughters and the times and experiences he had been looking forward to sharing with them.

Our support, of course, is available for Jasmine and Heather but I can tell you that they are also very positive and strong girls.

If I was to single out one characteristic to ascribe to Humphrey, it would that of a gentleman – gentle in spirit and with manly inner strength.

As for us Scheyvillians, we will miss him.