

## **Colonel John Hugh Phillips**

Published below is an edited version of the eulogy delivered by Brigadier John Jansen

Ladies and Gentlemen – my name is John Jansen and I've known John for 40 years – we were classmates at the Royal Military College Duntroon. John was born at Echuca on 26th November 1943. The first child for his proud parents John and Jean. At this early age he developed his initial liking for gardening – he used to pull out of the garden all of his Grandad's vegetables – including the "parsnugs" – which his Mum and Aunty Dos had to quickly replant. In 1953, John's Dad's employment with the bank took them to Junee where John and Peter had a memorable Guy Fawkes night, and then in 1955 to Ganmain. Whilst at Ganmain, John was a weekly border at Narrandera and he would return to home each weekend on the train.

His devoted Mum would meet him at the station each Friday afternoon, but he told her not to kiss him at the station – she had to wait until they got home. In later life, John was a person who rarely publicly displayed affection and certainly never wanted people publicly showing affection to him. In 1957, at age 13, the family moved to Griffith where John attended Griffith High School. During this time, the school was visited by some Army personnel who delivered a lecture on the Army. That night he announced to the family that he was going to enter the Royal Military College Duntroon when he left school.

In late 1958 John's Dad was posted to Manly, and the family lived at Balgowlah Heights. John remained at Griffith for a short while to complete his School Certificate. During 59 and 60 he completed his Secondary Education at Balgowlah High School where he was head of the Air Cadets (there were no Army Cadets). In 1961, John entered the Royal Military College Duntroon and graduated as a Lieutenant in December 1964 into the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery.

I didn't see much of John during our Duntroon years as we were in different companies – but we certainly made up for that during our Army careers. His initial regimental postings were with 1st and 12th Field Regiments at Holsworthy, Sydney and soon after that, promotion to Captain, and off to South Vietnam for 12 months as a Forward Observer with 4th Field Regiment. In July 1968 he was posted to the School of Artillery as Adjutant. I arrived at the School soon thereafter as an instructor, as did another classmate of ours, John Griggs, and it was during this time that the three John's established what was to become a very strong, close relationship. On 6 January 1969 he married Carolyn Sinclair. In 1970 and 1971, John served with 7th and 1st Field Regiments. In February 1972, he was promoted to Major and spent the next two years at the Officer Cadet School, Portsea Victoria and then in January 1974, he was posted to 1st Field Regiment as the Battery Commander 101st Field Battery at Wacol in Brisbane.

I was the other Battery Commander in the Regiment, so it was a great opportunity to renew our social and gambling activities, however obviously these never interfered with our extremely professional approach to our work. I left 1st Field Regiment in late 74 on posting to the School of Artillery as a Senior Instructor. John joined me at the School in late 75, in a similar posting, as did John Griggs. The three Johns together again – what luck! That's what we thought, but we were not sure that our Commanding Officer Colonel Mick Crawford had a similar outlook. But thanks to Mick this was to become a very enjoyable and professionally rewarding time for each of us.

1977 was 12 months at the Army Staff College in Queenscliff Victoria and then back to Canberra for six months. Back to Canberra in 1980, staff work, promotion to Lieutenant Colonel and then to probably John's most enjoyable and rewarding posting, Commanding Officer 8th/12th Medium Regiment at Holsworthy in Sydney for two years, 1983 and 1984. On completion of this posting he again returned to Canberra for staff appointments and he was promoted to Colonel in December 1985. He remained in staff appointment in Canberra until he resigned from the Army on 16th September 1991 after 30 years of service. Soon after his retirement he was appointed Executive Director of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects. He held this appointment until his untimely passing away.

I have been advised by Directors and Members of this Institute that John has made a significant contribution during this time, and I am personally aware of the extensive botanical knowledge he has gained. John Phillips, Phlipsie, Bucky, Johnny Boy – and the many other endearing names we had for him – was certainly a real man's man. His soldiers respected him, he was an excellent communicator and listener, he was genuine, he would never allow people in his presence talk with disrespect about somebody else, he was however very much the quiet achiever. He loved discussions – he was intellectually astute – he would have lengthy discussions on a wide range of topics, and he always had a firm point of view.

His family was always uppermost in all that he did, but he rarely outwardly displayed the love he had for them all. He was a very proud Dad but was never boastful. He had a special, individual relationship with his Mum, Carolyn, his children, and his brothers, and I know from the other side, they absolutely adored him. Inwardly he was just so proud of them all.

As a mate, to Griggsie, Fred, Dick, myself and many, many others, both male and female, he was genuine, happy, caring and fun-loving. Our lives have now been left with an incredibly large vacuum. The lives of all of us gathered here today have been deeply enriched by the love and friendship we have shared with John. But let not today be a sad day, you know how he hated people fussing about him.

Let us remember that happy smiling face, a person always full of action, a person who brought so much happiness and fun to our lives. Mate, go and get a pack of cards – I'll go and put our bet on – Dapto Dogs – we'll have a boxed trifecta 1, 2, 7 and 8 in Race 4 – since that's what you always want to do. You deal the cards – we'll play 7 card stud, 4's, black 5's, red 10's, one eyed jacks and the king with the axe are wild. That's what you always want to play. Tell Griggsie to straighten the paintings in the Mess and fix the Visitor's Book, the PMC might drop in early in the morning – and be careful not to set fire to the carpet, you know what happened to me. I'll get you a packet of Camel cigarettes while I'm out.