**PAUL RICHARDSON known to us all as RICHO**

RICHO WAS A CAREER SOLDIER WITH TWO TOURS OF VIETNAM WITH THE 1ST BATTALION, ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT.

THE FIRST TIME I SAW RICHO WAS DURING MY RECRUIT TRAINING WHEN WE WERE SHOWN THE DOCUMENTARY CALLED PROJECT 66 WHICH WAS ON 1RAR’S FIRST TOUR OF VIETNAM AND ONE OF THE SOLDIERS SHOWN WAS A PRIVATE PAUL RICHARDSON, NOT KNOWING - AT THAT TIME - I WOULD BE POSTED TO IRAR AND GET TO KNOW THE MAN AND BECOME GOOD MATES FOR THE NEXT FORTY SEVEN YEARS.

SINCE HIS DEATH ON MONDAY – TRIBUTES THROUGH EMAILS HAVE BEEN RUNNING HOT WITH MATES AND COLLEAGUES PASSING ON THEIR THOUGHTS ON THE PASSING OF A GREAT FRIEND AND I WOULD LIKE TO SHARE SOME OF THEM WITH YOU TODAY;

BUGGER, BUGGER, BUGGER!!!!

RICHO WAS A GREAT SOLDIER, A CHARACTER AND ANYONE WHO SAW THAT VIDEO/MOVIE ON 1RAR’S FIRST TOUR WILL REMEMBER HIM WITH THE BIG CHEESY CAHD MORGAN GRIN. I KNOW THAT TONY HAMMETT RESPECTED HIM, AS DID I EVEN THOUGH HE WAS NOT IN MY PLATOON. HE HAD THAT AIR OF PROFESSIONALISM ABOUT HIM, WITH A WICKED SENSE OF THE RIDICULOUS AND – IF YOU ALLOWED HIM (AND YOU DESERVED IT) HE WOULD QUICKLY PUT YOU IN YOUR PLACE. AFTER HE LEFT THE ARMY HE LIVED IN TOWNSVILLE FOR A WHILE AND MANAGED A BLOCK OF UNITS DOWN NEAR THE MARINER. HE DREW THE YOUNGER SOLDIERS AROUND HIM LIKE A MAGNET. IN THESE DAYS WHERE COMFORMITY IS DEMANDED, RICHO WAS A COLOURFUL CHARACTER, AN EXCELLENT SOLDIER, A BETTER BLOKE AND A REAL FRIEND. WE NEED MORE LIKE HIM. NEIL WEEKES MC

AT THIS TIME – I WOULD LIKE TO CALL UPON JOHN SLATER MC, WHO BETTER TO SAY A FEW WORDS ABOUT RICHO THAN HIS FORMER PLATOON COMMANDER ON HIS SECOND TOUR OF VIETNAM 68/69 – JOHN

TRIBUTE BY JOHN SALTER MC

TODAY AUSTRALIA LOST A WARRIOR, A LARRIKIN, AND AN INCON. RICHO WAS A SOLDIERS SOLDIER WHO THRIVED IN THE BUSH AND CRETAED HAVOC IN THE BARRACKS. A BLOKE WHO COMMANDERS NEEDED WHEN IT MATTERED BUT DESPAIRED OF, WHEN IT DID NOT. AN INSPIRATION TO OTHERS AT WAR AND PEACE AND THE BLOKE YOU WANTED TO WATCH YOUR BACK. HE WAS A HARD TASL MASTER AND ONE WHO BELIEVED THAT TOUGH REALISTIC TRAINING SAVED LIVES. HE WORKED AND PLAYED HARD, SWORE, AND DRANK, AND, ALTHOUGH NOT BORNE OF THIS LAND, WAS A TRUE AUSTRALIAN.

BYE MATE, ENJOY VALHALLA, YOU WILL BE MISSED.

JOHN ALSO READ OUT A LETTER OF CONDOLENCES FROM THE GOVERNOR GENERAL, SIR PETER COSGROVE.

WHEN I ARRIVED AT 1RAR I WAS POSTED TO A COMPANY AND SOON LEARNT ABOUT THE RIVALRY BETWEEN A COMPANY AND D COMPANY, RICHO’S COMPANY, ESPECIALLY WITH THE ANNUAL TOUCH FOOTBALL GAME AND THIS IS WHERE MY FIRST MEETING FACE TO FACE WITH RICHO OCCURRED. THE GAME WAS TOUCH FOOTBALL – BUT – I FOUND IN WORD ONLY AND WHEN WE PLAYED THE ANNUAL GAMES IN VIETNAM IT WAS NO DIFFERENT WITH RICHO SENDING ONE OF OUR PLAYERS TO HOSPITAL AFTER RAISING HIS KNEE INTO YOU KNOW WHERE. IT ALWAYS CAME UP WHEN WE WOULD GET TOGETHER.

THIS STARTED A GREAT FRIENDSHIP AND WE GOT TO KNOW ONE ANOTHER MORE WHEN OUR TOUR OF VIETNAM CAME TO AN END AND THE BATTALION AFTER A SHORT STAY IN AUSTRALIA DEPLOYED TO MALAYIA THEN SINGAPORE WHERE I AGAIN SAW FIRST HAND THE RESPECT RICHO HAD WITHIN THE BATTALION FROM ALL RANKS.

AS YOU HEARD FROM JOHN, RICHO HAD HIS UPS AND DOWN WITH PROMOTION BUT IN THE END WENT ON TO MAKING WARRANT OFFICER CLASS TWO AND THANKS TO HIS GUIDANCE THROUGH HIS MILITARY CAREER – MANY SOLDIERS, SOME STILL SERVING TODAY OWE HIM SO MUCH.

IT WAS IN MALAYA AND SINGAPORE WHERE I SAW THE EXTENDED FAMILY IN ACTION. AS WE WERE AWAY FROM OUR OWN FAMILIES WE WOULD HAVE OUR OWN HOUSE PARTIES AND THE WIVES WOULD ENSURE THAT THE SINGLEES WOULD BE PART OF THESE ACTIVITIES AND NOT BE LEFT OUT AND THIS IS WHERE I BELIEVE WE HAVE BECOME SO CLOSE AND LOOK OUT FOR ONE ANOTHER AND RICHO PLAYED A BIG PART IN THAT.

I ASKED WALLY FIEDLER THE OTHER DAY OF HIS MEMORIES OF RICHO, HE SAID, TIME DOES NOT TREAT OUR MEMORIES VERY WELL, BUT I CAN SAY THAT I SPENT A BIT OF TIME WITH RICHO, JIMMY DALY, DAVE CUNNINGHAM AND OTHERS PRIOR TO VIETNAM AND THEN IN MALAYSIA AND SINGAPORE. I REMEMBER SOME OF THE BEST TIMES I HAD OFF BASE IN THE ARMY WERE WITH RICHO AND HIS SELF EFFACING WAYS. TO GIVE AN EXAMPLE OF HIS SENSE OF HUMOUR, IT WAS EITHER ON THE WAY TO NAM OR ON THE WAY HOME TO SYDNEY, WE WERE WALKING AROUND THE FLIGHT DECK AND THE CAPTAIN OF THE SYDNEY WAS ALSO WALKING AROUND AS WELL, AS WE PASSED THE CAPTAIN HE TOLD THE CAPTAIN THAT IF HE NEEDED ANYONE TO CLEAN THE BARNACLES OFF THE SHIP HE WAS AVAILABLE, WHEREUPON HE BARED HIS TEETH TO SHOW WHAT HE WOULD USE. THE CAPTAIN NOT HAVING A SENSE OF HUMOUR TOLD RICHO TO “F” OFF, RICHO’S COMMENT WAS THAT HE OBVIOUSLY WASN’T GOING TO GET THE JOB WITH THIS BLOKE. THERE ARE OTHER EXAMPLES WHICH ARE BEST LEFT FOR THE BAR - WALLY

READ EMAIL FROM RICK BARNEY BIGWOOD……..

ALL HERE TODAY HAVE THEIR OWN MEMORIES ABOUT RICHO AND NO DOUBT OVER A DRINK LATER SOME OF THOSE STORIES WILL BE TOLD.

I WOULD LIKE TO FINISH WITH THE WORDS SENT OUT BY PEPE WHEN HE RECEIVED THE WORD ON MONAY FROM WALLY ON THE DEATH OF RICHO;

OH SHIT. BUGGER

PAUL ATTENDED HIS LAST REUNION IN ADELAIDE AND IT WAS OBVIOUS THE BIG C HAD A STRONG GRIP ON HIM, BUT CHATTING TO HIM, HE WAS UPBEAT ABOUT GETTING A FEW MORE YEARS. A LONG HISTORY OF 1ST BATTALION SERVICE WITH MALAYA AND TWO TOURS OF VIETNAM, FIRST AS A FORWARD SCOUT AND SECOND AS A SECTION COMMANDER UNTIL AN ERROR OF JUDGEMENT BROUGHT HIM TO ME AS MY PLATOON SIG. HE IS JUST ONE OF THE REALLY GREAT CHARACTERS IN OUR INFANTRY FAMILY.

HE HAD A WAY ABOUT HIM THAT ALLOWED HIM TO DRESS OFF ANYONE WHO HE THOUGHT HAD “GOT IT WRONG” OR IF SOMETHING WAS IMPACTING THE DIGGERS, BUT IF YOU WERE SMART YOU RESPECTED HIM FOR IT. I KNOW BECAUSE HE PULLED ME UP SEVERAL TIMES AND I RESPECTED HIM AND ACCEPTED IT. HE WAS GREAT TO WORK WITH.

BUT WHAT A LOVELY, FUNNY, INTELLIGENT PERSONALITY HE WAS - TO WHO SHOWED SO MUCH ABILITY AND CAPABILITY THAT ALL WHO KNEW HIM RESPECTED AND LIKED HIM. I HAVE MANY MANY FOND MEMORIES NOW TO REFLECT ON AND REMEMBER HIM. I TAKE PRIDE THAT HE REFERRED TO ME AS A GOOD FRIEND OF HIS.

REST IN PEACE NOW RICHO, A SOLDIER DIED TODAY – FROM A SAD PEPE

IT WAS GREAT TO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO TALK WITH RICHO IN ADELAIDE AND SEE HIM CATCHING UP WITH EVERYONE – THAT WILL BE NEVER FORGOTTEN BY ALL. REMEMBER VICKI – YOU ARE PART OF THE EXTENDED FAMILY AND WE ARE ALL HERE FOR YOU.

TRIBUTE BY JOHN SALTER MC

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