

OBITUARY

VALE MAJOR RONALD JAMES GLEW (RETD)

Arthur Burke

COMMITMENT and passion were the two words used at Ron Glew's final farewell to describe his vibrant and full life. The very mention of these two words started heads in the chapel nodding in agreement—his Army mates, RSL and Caboolture Orchid Society members, and of course his bereaved family.

Born in Melbourne on 1 August 1944 to plumber George and his wife June Glew during the war years, it was evident from an early age that Ron would set his own agenda for life. Not wanting to follow in his father's footsteps, he joined the Victorian Railways and became a member of the Citizen Military Forces in his spare time. He was an excellent sportsman, excelling in Aussie Rules and loving golf with a passion.

The CMF provided a challenge and stimulation, something which Ron missed working for the railways so, just after his 17th birthday; he enlisted in the Regular Army and was allocated to the 111th Light Anti Aircraft Battery. His younger brother, John marveled at the passion with which Ron cleaned his webbing equipment, polished his boots and took hours to iron his starched uniforms.

Two years later, Gunner Glew had earned two stripes and seven months after that was on overseas service at Butterworth in Malaysia. In stove pipe pants, pointed shoes and Elvis Presley hair style liberally slicked down with Brylcreem, Ron won the heart of and married Rita. He arrived back in Australia in 1966 with a new wife and a newborn son, Robbie.

He continued in the air defence world till 1968 then move on promotion to sergeant to the School of Artillery. Next it was 19th Composite then 8th Medium Regiment and 123rd Training Battery. Ron achieved his warrant officer's cap in 1971 and returned to 16th LAA Regiment. He was held in high esteem by his peers as evidenced when brother John followed in his footsteps. Whilst a recruit at the School of Artillery, John was told quite plainly by his instructor, Sergeant Bluey Bellis, 'So you're Sticky Glew's brother. Well, you have big shoes to fill!'

Mind you, Ron was not always an angel. One day John and he went down to the local pub promising Rita they would be home for lunch. A very chirpy pair arrived after it was dark and sat down in front of the television with a beer. Rita ignored them and continued ironing quietly. However, Ron's comment, 'What's for dinner, love' was quickly answered by an iron hurtling through the air and the miscreants ducking for cover.

In 1971, Warrant Officer Glew was commissioned Lieutenant Glew and enjoyed periods with the 'steam' gunners of 4th Field Regiment in Townsville, the Proof & Experimental Establishment at Port Wakefield in South Australia and the 2nd/15th Field Regiment in Victoria. He returned to his beloved 16th Air Defence Regiment at Woodside, SA in 1977 as the captain quartermaster then Headquarters Battery commander.

Ron never did anything by halves and this included being a consummate host and entertainer. Together with his soul mate, Rita he created a true festive atmosphere for his brother's large family each Christmas—eating magnificent curries, fishing, lounging in the spa, picnicking at the beach. Similar repasts and treatment greeted visiting friends.

Major Glew transferred to the Army Reserve in 1985 but was determined not to rest on his laurels. In 1986 he became the battery commander of the re-raised 13th Field Battery of artillery at Kallangur on Brisbane's northern outskirts. He remained a very committed commander of this unit till 1993 when he was transferred to Brisbane's 7th Brigade Headquarters till he reached statutory retiring age in 1999.

But Ron was already thinking ahead and during the last decade of his service, he became passionate about the Returned and Services League of Australia. From 1991, he served as the president of the Pine Rivers Sub-Branch for nine years and was most instrumental in raising and becoming the inaugural deputy district president of the Brisbane North District of the RSL in 1998.

Mr Glew stepped up to the district presidency from 2000 till 2005 and again served a parallel executive position as a state vice president of the RSL from 2003 till 2006. For his endeavors with the RSL, he was granted Life Membership. During this time Ron also formed Air Defence Queensland, an association for former members of this facet of artillerymen. He proudly led their inaugural participation in the Brisbane ANZAC Day March in 2007. Over the last 12 months, Ron became very energetic behind the scenes of the Caboolture Orchid Society and was studying to become a judge.

Ronald James Glew, passionate air defender, retired major and RSL stalwart passed away suddenly on 8 August 2009. His final parade was held at Burpengary near Caboolture, Queensland where the chapel overflowed with his former service mates, RSL members, friends and family. His wake at the Caboolture RSL resounded with laughter from many stories of a life of commitment and passion. Gone to that Great Gun Park up above at just 65 years of age.

I am indebted to Ron's brother, John Lavery and his old RSL mate, Peter Lawler for material for this tribute.