

WARRANT OFFICER CLASS 1 ROBERT JAMES HANN

On the Occasion of the Spreading of his Ashes at the Royal Australian Regiment, National Memorial Walk Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera, Queensland 19 January 2015

Ladies and gentlemen it is a great honour to be asked by Deslie to speak of Bob during the ceremony here today.

On Deslie's behalf and that of their families, I would like to thank the president and members of the RAR Association of Qld, the national RAR Corporation and the Department of Defence for their approval and support. I would especially thank the members of Dad's Army for their care and support.

According to Bob he first began his life, not only his Army life but his actual life, on 15 December 1960 when he marched into 3 RAR from his Infantry Corps training and into the huts where the RAR Memorial Walk stands today. He was 18 years old and surviving a very tough life when he told Deslie, his lovely girl friend at the time that he had walked down to the Diggers Canteen, had his first XXXX beer, met Deslie and wondered if life could get any better. Unknown to Bob, life did get better as later he married Deslie and he served in 4 RAR. He loved Queensland on first sight and it seems only fitting that he be laid at his request, close to those beginnings so that he can come home.

He told Deslie early in their courting days that he would always look after her and he did.

Deslie tells of the night that her life began as well; the night that she met Bob at a party to which Bob and other soldiers had been invited. Deslie had a girl friend with whom she had an agreement that unless they had a better offer, they would go dancing together at Cloudland every Saturday night. On this particular night however, her friend had been invited to the party on the other side of town at Red Hill and had asked Deslie to go with her. Deslie was told that there would be soldiers there and was a bit reluctant to go because she had heard that soldiers were nearly as bad as sailors and she did not want to get mixed up with them, but her girl friend insisted that they both go.

They went; and by night's end Deslie had fallen head over heels in love with a soldier who was just above a sailor on her social ladder but who was the best looking man that she had ever seen and who had asked to take her home. Deslie said yes but on condition that he, Bob Hann her new found soldier friend, take her girl friend home as well. Bob agreed but was disappointed when Deslie hopped out of the taxi first insisting that Bob continue in the taxi to take her girl friend home. Bob agreed but only on condition that Deslie allow him to take her to the movies the following Monday night.

Bob, unknown to Deslie, had lost most of his money at the races that day and after dropping Deslie's girl friend off at Mount Gravatt, discovered that he was a bit short of the taxi fare to take him back to barracks. The taxi driver was of no help and dropped Bob off at Dutton Park to walk home. Bob then hocked his watch the following Monday to get the money to take Deslie to the movies. So started their life together; in Brisbane, in debt but in love.

Bob is actually the second 4 RAR warrior to have his ashes spread in this sacred place. The Association did the same for Snowy Mathews back in 2009 but there is a reason why Bob selected this particular spot to have his ashes spread.

Pte Kingston–Powles was originally the batman for Major Franz Kudnig, the OC of D Company and at the time had a bit of an opinion about his status as such and resented Bob's indifference to it, consequently Bob's pay book would mysteriously disappear on some pay days resulting in a great deal of rigmarole for Bob to receive his pay. Bob correctly assumed that Pte Kingston-Powles had something to do with the constant disappearance of his pay book. Pte Kingston-Powles later fell foul of Franz Kudnig in Vietnam and as a result he lost his job as batman and returned to his platoon as a machine gunner.

Pte Kingston-Powles was unfortunately killed in action during the battle of Nui Le and was buried in Townsville but when Alf Handley, the then president of the RAR Association asked for sponsors to provide plaques for the fallen within this sacred place, Bob chose Keith Kingston-Powles to sponsor, more or less to spite him but to also be forever looking after him and to keep him in line.

Bob's love and respect for his fellow warriors was also greatly reflected when as the D Company Regimental Quarter Master Sergeant (RQMS) he, with the help of the cooks, sent out fresh bread rolls in the resupply to his soldiers in the field, his relentless professionalism and respect for his soldiers in providing them with all their needs when they wanted them, sometimes before they asked for them and sometimes without the authority of his superiors; Then there was the unforgettable time that he organised a work party of volunteers from his own and other units to fill rifle magazines and organise precious ammunition and water resupply during the battle of Nui Le. The bullets and ammunition that the D Company soldiers received during the battle and some are present here today, had Bob's name, his respect and his love engraved on them.

Bob served his thirty years in the Army mainly in the Pacific Islands Regiment, the Royal Victorian Regiment, the Royal Military College and the 2nd, 3rd and 4th Battalions of the Royal Australian Regiment retiring as a Warrant Officer Class One , Sergeant Major, Infantry and when asked on civvy street in later life what he did for a living, no matter his job at the time, he always replied, "I was in the Army" and when asked what unit he served with, his reply was always, "4 RAR".

Such were Bob's principles and ethics that his loyalty towards his D Company members will forever be acknowledged and appreciated and from this place his spirit will exemplify the spirit of the Battalion and the Regiment as he looks after and over his fellow soldiers, all of whom like Bob, are in good company. Rest in Peace old mate, well done.

Deslie has graciously accepted a life time membership of the 4 RAR Association and we will look after her and her family and never let her go.

Alan Price
President
4 RAR Association, Qld Inc