

Speech by Bob Grey, Hobart Legacy Award Ceremony Stephen Hobbs - RAAF Navigator

I have been asked to say some words to you about SQNLDR Stephen Hobbs, RAAF Navigator. When he was just 17, Stephen joined the RAAF in 1984 after spending his school years, firstly, in Canberra and, after his family moved to QLD, at Caloundra High School. After graduating from SAN, Stephen's first postings were to P-3C Orions at Edinburgh where he flew with No 11 SQN on some complex, demanding and still secret "Cold War" surveillance and ASW missions against Soviet nuclear missile armed submarines and on other special USN tasks.

In February 1989, Stephen was posted to Amberley to fly the unique F-111 with Nos 1 and 6 SQN. In November 1991 Stephen was posted to RAF Marham where he flew RAF Tornado Recce aircraft. It was during his time with the RAF that he flew in the first Gulf War in Iraq. For his service there he was awarded the RAF Medal. In 1994, Stephen returned to 6 SQN to again fly F-111s - now updated and fitted with "Pave Tack".

Sadly, Stephen's life ended tragically on 18 April 1999 whilst he was serving at RMAF Butterworth. This plaque commemorates his service, and that of his pilot Anthony 'Shorty' Short, whilst they were contributing to preparedness, as it says, for *"the defence of the Republic of Singapore and the Federation of Malaysian States"*.

Stephen is on the books of Legacy because he served - and he served well. I did not know Stephen and I have had to rely upon those who did to speak for him.

Fellow NAV Mark Johnson - Because of his youthful looks, Stephen was known affectionately as "Nige" after a skate board carrying character in the Paul Hogan Show. Stephen was a competitive sportsman being good at squash, tennis and running, being 'uncatchable' during fitness tests. On one occasion, Stephen had agreed with Saskia to buy a "sensible" Volvo station wagon but after setting off to make that very sensible purchase, he returned home with a hot Audi hatch. Mark finished by saying that he was "sure that Stephen would be bursting with pride at Kieva's outstanding achievements at school and that Stephen is greatly missed by all who knew him and came into contact with him."

Greg 'Scorch' Choma (PLT) reports that after Kieva was born, Stephen was incredibly proud and protective of her. He even let the Audi go. Greg's daughter was born at about the same time as Kieva and he and Stephen compared notes as their respective daughters grew and developed.

From Ray Perry (F-111 GRP CDR) - "It really was a privilege for me to meet up with him (Stephen) at briefing, receive expert advice on the conduct of a mission and then fly for three hours with a man who is in control of his task." A special word to Kieva from Ray Perry - I know you will "do well at Uni but do have fun".

Other comments provided by Dave 'Steele' Steel (CO) - Stephen was "an outstanding ambassador for his country" - "Always enthusiastic, articulate and reliable" - "missed by everyone".

Kieva, I trust that my report tells you that you can, indeed, be very proud of your Dad.

Legatees, I am confident you will agree with me on two points: that SQNLDR Hobbs' RAAF service was truly significant and exemplary and, that his family and, Kieva in particular, are worthy recipients of support from Legacy.

L/Rob Grey