



**QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY REGIMENT ASSOCIATION
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING
After dinner address
Friday 17 September 2004
United Service Club**

Chief Justice Paul de Jersey AC

It is, for me, a great pleasure to deliver this address this evening. Like, I imagine, all of us here, I feel great affection for Queensland University Regiment.

For six years from 1966 to 1971, the Regiment managed to consume substantial periods of what would otherwise for me have been leisure time. Having gone through a secondary school cadet corps, I suppose joining the Regiment was a fairly natural extension, and for a university student and prospective professional, the idea of forgoing national service and the possibility of travel to Vietnam carried some appeal: that is, by fulfilling what was accepted as a satisfactory substitute. My birthday's marble, by the way, was not, as it turned out, drawn from the barrel.

But those matters aside, service in QUR turned out, for many of us, to be a uniquely rewarding experience. For what reasons? I would list, in my own case, fostering a disciplined, orderly approach to the solving of problems; then for someone who is basically a non-sportsman, there was compulsory physical fitness; achieving commissioned rank, in a very competitive environment, carried a great sense of personal achievement; and there was a consideration of supervening importance – the forging of substantial friendships within a matrix delineated by responsibility, but full of excitement, enjoyment and a lot of fun. I leave to the end the most significant feature – and that of course is public service, not mentioned platitudinously, but as an ideal I believe we all readily embraced. The tax-free remuneration was welcome, but subsidiary!



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In that era, tilts at authority had become more like shoves, with anti war marches and demonstrations common place. Yet QUR always retained the unstinting respect of the University of Queensland, both the institution and the student body. At that stage, with CMF service an attractive alternative to possible full-time service in Vietnam, the Regiment accounted for one in ten full-time under graduates, and roughly the same proportion of the entire Queensland CMF. It was unsurprising those would remain loyal to the Regiment. But significantly, the rest of the student body accepted the Regiment, to the extent at least that in an atmosphere of general challenge and protest, there was never any demonstration against the Regiment or any attempt to disrupt its activities.

I sensed, and I expect many of us sensed, that we were part of a respected and worthwhile initiative, our membership a source of pride and the basis for enduring loyalty. It is that loyalty we see reflected here tonight.

I am proud to have served for six years of the Regiment's 56 year history. My departure in 1971 coincided with my marrying and commencing practice at the Bar. Some of my more illustrious colleagues served substantially longer periods, and I would characterize my regimental service as comparatively short and undistinguished. But it does, nevertheless, constitute what I would identify as one of the defining experiences of my life, and because of the aggregation of the features I mentioned before.

The pride I feel for the Regiment is annually rekindled on Anzac Day, when from the podium at King George Square I witness the polished performance of the regimental band and even more recently on Australian National Flag Day, 3 September, when QUR personnel comprised the flag party in King George Square. Then of course I am also inevitably reminded of the changes the last



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three decades have witnessed, most evidently I suppose the introduction of women to the ranks. Though the contemporary regiment presents as a substantially different organization from the regiment in which I served, its vitality is palpable, and that warrants special commendation, for the struggle to maintain the special identity of QUR and to secure the resources necessary for its vibrant persistence, has I understand not been at all easy. Its success bears fine testament to the brilliance of those who have led it over the years, and in that regard, I personally recall with great respect Ken Gaulton and then Sam Harrison. Of the contemporary regiment, I was proud to read the Commanding Officer's description in the recent Association newsletter: "the premier officer training unit".

One of the challenges facing those who have led the Regiment over the years has been to quell the envy unsurprisingly directed, from elsewhere, towards a perceived educated elite. There was of course envy of the unit's officer training role. But then many QUR graduates have served with great distinction in other units, and overseas, and there is no doubt the educational levels of QUR graduates have been generally beneficial.

In listing earlier the features which rendered the QUR experience uniquely beneficial, I did not include annual camps only because I was adopting a broader genus. Camps were always the striking events of the regimental calendar. Enjoyment aside, it was then also that we noted the inadequacy of equipment, and what we private soldiers at the time considered discrimination against the University Regiment: the OCTU had priority in equipment, obtaining 56 pattern webbing, for example, well ahead of us. But we learnt to do well with what we had, and we did well. There were the time hallowed features: civilian cooks ashing their early morning cigarettes into the cooking eggs – not intentionally of course, and the private soldiers "making do" while the officers lived in imperial splendour. Certainly the camps entrenched the



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collegial spirit which, we realize, is in most cases essential to effective leadership. In now seeking to lead the Supreme Court as best I can, with collegiality the stipulation, I do often recall that regimental spirit, and the principles of what we were then allowed to term “man management”: what would be the contemporary version – “person personagement”?

I referred to my QUR experience as, in life terms, defining, while acknowledging that it was comparatively brief and undistinguished. This may be a somewhat precious sentiment. But there was a marked directness about what we were required to do, and did, and that did appeal to me. Pine Mountain and Tin Can Bay aside, there was little beating about the bush. The objective was clearly defined and one set about securing it with a minimum of fuss. We spoke plainly and directly to each other: there was no room for equivocation.

In applauding the efforts of the Association, I acknowledge your support, ladies and gentlemen, which has been much more substantial than mine. I will have spoken this evening of little if anything you will not yourselves have experienced. I hope however that my attempt to synthesize the basis of my debt to QUR, may have been of some interest.