

PETER TASKER

(A Tribute by Andy Brierley)

The 'crossing of the bar' of Pete Tasker who, in sixty odd years of letters, I always called 'My right royal marine' will leave a void. Phone calls Sunday mornings, during the free period, were timed to avoid encroaching on his telegraph crossword, at which he was no slouch. He seemed not to have a malicious thought or deed in his body, such things being a waste of 'good life' time. If you know the last couple of lines of Sea Fever, Masefield's poem, they sum up his demeanour for me, I quote:

All I ask is a merry yarn from a fellow laughing rover,
And a quiet sleep, and a sweet dream, when the long tricks over.

In my haven of tranquillity (garden shed) is a constant reminder of a time he and I strolled down a seaside street, stopping to view a window of musical instruments, grand pianos to triangles. A non-descript little box of tin whistles gained our attention.

The upshot was that we left that shop with a 'Pied Piper' type tin whistle each. To the best of my knowledge neither ever managed to master the most simple tune, both being as musical as breeze blocks. Lack of hearing did get Pete frustrated, frayed at the edges and impatient at times. An extended period as 'small arms instructor' was the culprit, long before ear defenders were deemed an absolute essential.



Superb was his one and only ship, an acknowledged and cherished time for him. Prior to that, Cyprus during the unrest, then on to Borneo during the fall out with Indonesia. At its conclusion Blighty was to be next stop but Korea got very ugly. 42 Commando upped sticks to go further east. It's said 'we live life to build a memory bank' for when we grow old. I shall bore you no further with mine, but ask a small indulgence for a wee epitaph for Pete; no maudlin sentiment, on which he would choke:

Underneath the growing grass,
Underneath the living flowers,
Deeper than the sound of showers,
There you shall not count the hours
By the shadows as they pass.

Rest in peace my 'right royal marine, life was richer for your presence

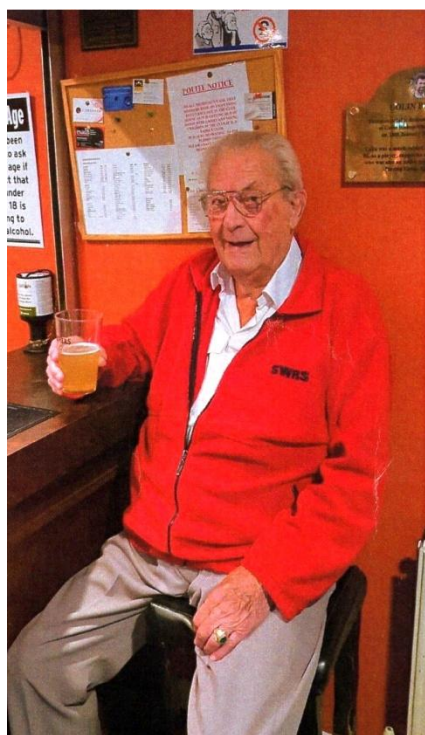
When fit and well Pete Tasker R.M. was a regular attendee on reunion days. Five members of our association attended his cremation on 11th January at Exeter. S.M. Jim Copus drove Josie and me down from Kent, Brian and Carol Hill came from Plymouth, the late Len Sturdy's three daughters drove down together from Mark in Somerset. The chapel was jammed solid, up each side and in the wide centre access for the pall bearers; standing room only. Half from his

sports' club, other half ex-marines of 'advanced age' in civvies, but all wearing their green berries, fallen in, heads up, chests out to salute the hearse on its arrival.

Pete's coffin was draped in an R.M. Standard with his dress peak cap on top; very impressive, emotive. A silver bugler in full dress uniform, white pith helmet followed into the chapel. A hymn was sung, prayers said, last post sounded, then reveille, beautifully played by the young bugler.

A celebration of Pete's life was given by one of his sons; it raised some good laughs following the very sombre proceedings. A 'one pip' officer, in full dress uniform, read a synopsis of Pete's service career that spanned twenty three years. We matelots knew him as a Corporal, he left the service as a Colour Sergeant, with a glowing reputation; a 'true warrior'.

As said in the chapel: 'Wherever shit hit the fan, there was Tasker', from Hosin-Korea to L.C.M's on the Rhine for B.A.O.R, Borneo and Malaya, when operating in the jungle was a very hazardous undertaking.



Pete's other 'face' was as an 'independent living' member of his village Feniton, known to everyone as an affable, helpful upholder of all village life, a staunch member of the sports' club (bar) no more than 100 yards from his front door, visited daily 'elevenses' .

An anecdote, then I'll cease: A football pitch was needed for the village kids; Pete, instrumental in negotiations, for space required. Seeing grass too long for planned match he drove across country to the

Marine's Depot at Lympsham and scrounged a loan of a large mechanised cutter, used on the depot sports' grounds. As he drove out of the front gate it must have raised some eyebrows. At a maximum speed of 10 m.p.h. he drove up the main road all the way to Feniton, cut the grass, then drove all the way back, by the same route at 10 m.p.h. with an ever growing convoy of tax-paying motorists in tow.

His legend as a 'doer' lives on, one who would raise a grin at any excuse, on all occasions.

He will also live on as one of us!!