

# In Memoriam: Lieutenant Matthew Davey, RANR<sup>1</sup>

Author Geoff Day

*Lieutenant Matthew Davey RANR was tragically involved in the crash of a Navy Sea King helicopter in Indonesia in April 2005. The attached personal recollection was written by Commander Geoff Day RANR and published in Goorangai, the Occasional Papers of the Royal Australian Naval Reserve Professional Studies Program in April 2006. It is reprinted by kind permission of the Editor.*

I have been asked to write an 'In Memoriam' of the late LEUT Matthew Davey RANR. I could write about all of Matt's achievements throughout his life, and there were many, however I did not know Matt for long enough, or in the non-military setting, to have first hand knowledge of these. I feel it would be more true to Matt to write of the man I knew. This is only one aspect of him as a person, but it is the person I knew and saw on the day he died.

I first met Matt in April 2002 whilst we were both on course at Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla. During this course we spent many hours together discussing 'life'. I found him to be an exceptional person in so many ways. He was not only talented and intelligent, but a profoundly caring human being. It was also obvious that he had quite an adventurous streak. At this time Matt was an Army Reserve Medical Officer. He was eager to do operational and overseas postings, but also to get to sea. This led to lengthy discussions about him transferring to the Naval Reserve, a transition he ultimately pursued.

On Anzac Day 2002, always a special day, I was with Matt at the 'gunfire' breakfast followed by a day of course work, and then an enthusiastic evening out on the town with several other course participants. Matt was wonderful company, and true to form, he remained that touch more sensible and looked out for the rest of us. I will now move on to the Nias earthquake of 2005. Two days following this natural disaster I met up with Matt, Fabian Purcell (RANR Anaesthetist) and Annette Holian (RAAF Reserve Orthopaedic Surgeon) at Sydney Airport. We had all been called up for Operation Sumatra Assist II and had flown in to Sydney from different locations. Matt had in fact been recalled having arrived home less than 24 hours prior from Sumatra Assist I. Over the next two days the four of us spent most of our time together as we were transported by a multitude of means to the devastated region. Matt, as always, was enthusiastic about everything in life. He spoke so fondly of his partner Rachael and his desire to spend the rest of his life with her, of his family, of his civilian job as an Intensive Care Registrar in Canberra, and of his plans for anaesthetic training. We also

discussed whether he should deploy in late 2005 in HMAS PARRAMATTA for an Op Catalyst deployment to the Middle East. He had been offered the deployment and was quite eager, but had concerns of how big an impact it would have on his personal and civilian life. Once on location in Nias the work began in earnest for all of us. We saw little of each other except in the work environment. The last time I saw Matt was in the casualty clearing site adjacent to the landing zone in Telek Dalam (southern provincial town in Nias). We had four earthquake casualties requiring evacuation to HMAS KANIMBLA. Matt and his aeromedical team arrived in Shark 21. My most vivid memory is of Matt kneeling next to one of the casualties receiving my handover. He was quiet and totally focused on the task. None of our normal light hearted banter on this occasion, just absolute professionalism. I recall him looking up at one stage and giving me a smile. Not a smile of amusement but one of camaraderie, we were in this together. Two hours later as I stood on that very spot with four more casualties I awaited Matt and his team. We were expecting them within minutes of dropping another medical team in Amandraya. They became overdue, and then we were informed by radio that Shark 02 had gone down. Even then I had a profound sinking feeling that Matt had died.



*Matthew Davey in a C130 on route to Nias  
(Photo provided by CMDR F. Purcell)*

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always will be. Published by: The RANR Professional Studies Program, Office of the Director General Reserves (Navy). The opinions expressed in this publication are entirely those of the author and do not necessarily reflect Navy, Department of Defence or Government policy. **Editor's Note:** This paper was written by CMDR Geoff Day, RANR who served with LEUT Davey on board HMAS KANIMBLA during OPERATION SUMATRA ASSIST TWO. In recognition of LEUT Davey and his service to Australia, the RANR Professional Studies Program's Overseas Study Grant has been renamed the Matthew Davey Award. It is fitting that the Award be named after a member of the RANR who gave his life on foreign soil while caring for those in need.

Health support is an important consideration in any joint or combined operation. From a practical perspective, health support, both preventative and therapeutic, exists to conserve the fighting strength of the forces, ultimately contributing to the maintenance of operational capability and the success of the mission. Health support is also influenced by Australian societal expectations that injured members of the armed forces will have access to competent medical care from the time of injury until completion of the rehabilitation process.

The level of health support to any Australian Defence Force (ADF) activity is based on a hierarchical system of casualty management (from Level One to Five)<sup>1</sup> that may be affected by numerous factors, including the nature of the activity itself, weapon systems and other

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## In Memoriam: Rear Admiral John Costell, AO RAN (Rtd)

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### **Rear Admiral John Cotsell AO RAN (Rtd) – *In Memoriam***

The following is a copy of a message dated 17 November 2006 from the Chief Navy.

It is with much regret that I inform the Navy of the death of Rear Admiral John Cotsell AO RAN (Rtd).

Rear Admiral Cotsell served in the Royal Navy during World War 2 as a medical officer. Following a short period in private practice, he joined the RAN as a Surgeon Lieutenant from the United Kingdom in 1951. He served in HMA Ships and establishments Rushcutter, Australia, Tobruk, Penguin, Cerberus and Melbourne. In 1956 he was appointed Honorary Surgeon to His Excellency the Governor General and in 1967 was appointed Honorary Physician to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II.

Rear Admiral Cotsell served as Medical Director-General in Navy Office from 1970 to 1976. In 1972, he was appointed as an Officer of the Order of Australia and promoted to Surgeon Rear Admiral.