

Past Student Spotlight

Perry Collier (1986)



As a past student of St George High School, I have been asked to convey my experiences since leaving school in 1986.

While attending high school which funnily enough I enjoyed very much due to close friends I had at the time. While at school I was heavily involved in the school sport at the expense of my academic schooling. The High School had a great sporting reputation with past and current students going on to represent the school and zone plus even state in such sports as cricket, rugby league, touch, athletics and swimming. Fortunately, I was able to represent the school and zone in these sports.

While at school I was lucky enough to hold the lofty position as Mitchell house captain.

Always had great competition with the other houses Taylor, Leichardt and Nixon.

My time in high school, was filled with great memories and lifelong friends.

I applied to join the Army in July of 1986, after travelling to Brisbane to visit a recruitment centre to undergo mental and physical assessment to assess my suitability to join the Army. That was a long and slightly stressful anxious day. The final part of the day was sitting in front of the military recruiter asking some final questions and then telling me that I have been successful and then having him ask when would I like to start. I had to think for a bit because I wanted to finish off the footy season with another Grand final with my mates before leaving.

October 8 1986 I was on a plane heading to Kapooka where I would stay for 12 weeks. Those 12 weeks would be some of the toughest times I have faced in my short life at that time. Learning how to march in a straight line, shoot a rifle confidently, make a bed and shave and get to breakfast in 15 mins was always interesting. Even though the 12 weeks spent at Kapooka were stressful, it was also enjoyable having met and made new friends who were going through the same time.

After completing Kapooka then it was off Singleton for Initial Employment training as an Infantry soldier for again 12 weeks. If I thought Kapooka was stressful and difficult then

Singleton was that times two. While at Singleton we learnt how to again employ weapons from rifle to machine guns, throwing grenades, living in the field for two weeks in a dug out hole in the ground while in the field. Physical, training was tough going on long marches from 8 – 15 kms at times carrying weight of up to 30kg (which was fun.... not). Again while at Singleton doing this hard training you were with mates doing the same thing forming that bond, I've got your back you've got mine.

From Initial Employment training at Singleton I was lucky to be posted to Brisbane to the 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment. While posted to 6 RAR it was more like a normal job 0730 – 1600 time. A normal day of training would include PT (fitness training) for 60mins, then into a training day which would focus on bettering our skills, such as weapon handling, navigation training, combat first aid, radio work or lessons on a new bit of kit that was coming in.

If a field exercise was coming up we would conduct preparation to best set ourselves up for going into field for anywhere two weeks to a month at a time. It was not all hard work during this time. We would also have sports days on a Thursday which would include Rugby Union, Aussie Rules, soccer, and other such sports. My interest was rugby union of course. Weekends were our own and you would again play civilian sport, go travelling to the Gold or Sunshine coasts to visit family or friends.

I have now completed nearly 37 years in the Army and have been lucky enough to travel all over Australia with work and on exercises.

I have been also fortunate enough to be deployed overseas on Operations in defence of Australia and allies. It's what you do all your hard training for to one day be able to put it into practice when called upon. During those deployments again placed into stressful situations where you are fighting for yourself and the brother beside you, knowing full well he is doing the same.

While I have enjoyed my time in the Army it has been like any other job, you have your good and bad days and you work your way through with the help of family and friends along with work mates.

Also during my time, I have been very fortunate to meet my partner Laury who has been my rock for the last 15 years. Although we have been through some challenges during this time especially with me away on deployment and in harm's way, Laury has been staunch and I would have to say as I have said before, my rock on the good and bad days. We have moved around a fair bit as well dragging the kids from NSW to Cairns to Darwin to Adelaide to Hunter Valley, unfortunately at times being detrimental to their schooling.

I am currently in the Sunset of my career with only a handful of years to go then to Laury's relief, it will be the end of the constant picking up and moving every two to three years. We have decided to call the Hunter Valley home and build our home there.

I would like to thank St George State High School for all the sporting and academic opportunities that I was given. The support of the staff and friends really helped set me up for success in what has been a rewarding career in the Military.

Perry Collier

