

Eulogy 4 January 2022  
61766 Colonel David William Kibbey, AM JP  
Royal Australian Infantry  
13 January 1947 to 24 December 2021

Family and Friends of David

It's my great honour, and probably one of the hardest things I have ever had to do and that is to farewell my best mate of over 60 years. He was my best man, the brother I never had, a fellow soldier and a dam fine person.



I would like to start by thanking all those in attendance and those following the service on the internet. I know the Tassie crowd have hired a hall in Kingston to follow the broadcast service and followed by what I know will be a serious wake. Our OCS Classmates all over, members of David's Vietnam platoon and David's many friends around Australia who couldn't be here today likewise will be helping us celebrate David's life.

David was the type of person who was not just a fair-weather friend but one who sticks with you through all the trials and tribulations of life. The type of person never afraid to stand up and be counted, jump to your defence, fiercely loyal, would give you his last dollar. I know we all have stories to tell and maybe many will come out later.

I think Abraham Lincoln summed it up well when he said:

*"In the end it's not the years in your life that count, it's the life in your years."*

## Who was David Kibbey?

David was born in Kerang Victoria in January 1947 and moved to Ranelagh in the Huon Valley just South of Hobart in the late 1940's. His father worked as an engineer and mechanic for the apple industry which was at its peak in the 1950's. He, his sister and three brothers grew up in an idyllic part of the world living the dream of Huckleberry Finn in



their many fishing, shooting and trekking adventures along the Huon River. (No helicopter parents around in those days!). David completed his early education in Huonville and finished at Hobart High as a boarder. He then spent two years as a cadet surveyor with the State Government before joining the Army. During this time, he spent many months surveying the rugged wilderness areas of SW Tasmania. An area few have traversed to this day.

David and I knew one another since we were about 14 in the school Army cadets. We grew up in a great era, had a wide circle of friends and getting into more than our fair share of mischief around Hobart. We are classic baby boomers, born immediately after our fathers returned from the war, growing up in a time of great expectation, few riches but with a will to make the best of what we had. The lack of money, the 21-year-old drinking age, shared cars, diving, fishing and shooting, Christmas at Orford and chasing the young ladies of Hobart were all challenges to be relished. Our formative years were the late 50s and 60s- what a great era - the sport, the music, the lifestyle, the opportunities, the freedoms and of course the development of great friendships which we savour to this day.

We both joined the Army on the same day 6 January 1967 and have consecutive regimental numbers. We survived Officer Cadet School Portsea working under the clear knowledge that we were destined for the Vietnam War not long after graduation.



2Lt D. Kibbey at Kapooka in 1968

I know a large contingent of our Portsea class would have been here today but for COVID. We all formed a very strong bond during that time in 1967 which has endured and probably increased to this day. These guys have been tireless in visiting and calling David during his time in hospital to offer their support I think this is some measure of the high esteem in which David was held.

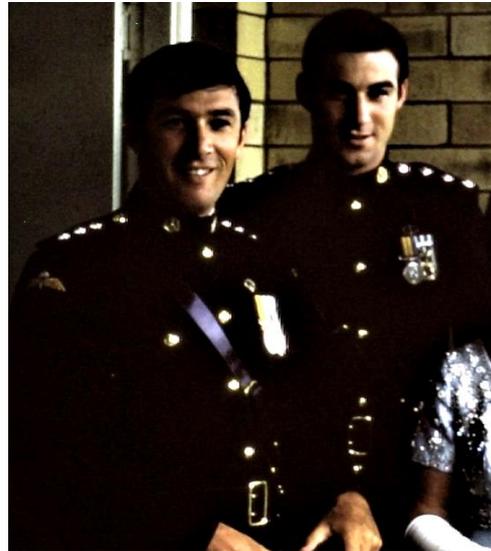
From Portsea, David initially graduated to Engineers but after finishing his engineer officer training he got his enduring wish to transfer to Infantry as a Platoon Commander. I next saw David on the tarmac at Nui Dat Vietnam where I was able to welcome him to the war in March 1970 with a riotous party in the 1ATF



officer's mess. This culminated in the Task Force Commander sending a message to the effect that if those two bloody Lieutenants don't shut up and go to bed they'd end up in the stockade. Well, the next morning, I remember waking up with David's smelly feet under my nose and both of us in my bed - just as well we were good friends! Well, we both survived as infantry platoon commanders during the Vietnam War; but

David did bring home some emotional scars from several awful landmine incidents that have regrettably endured over the years.

David was my best man when Clare and I were married in Brisbane in 1972 and I clearly remember after the reception he and my father who got on like a house on fire going into the city very late to Harry's Café de Wheels for a "pie floater" in their shorty pyjamas.



Apparently, they caused quite a stir. To my parents, David was the second son they never had and they relished his company. My father Donald and my uncle Frank O'Brien particularly loved to share a scotch with him on his frequent visits home and there was always a spare bed at the Edwards and O'Brien households.

The ancient Greeks only asked one question when a man died and that was "did he have passion". If "Passion" is the love of what you're doing, energy, commitment, determination, and perseverance, I think we would all agree that David certainly manifested passion in his many endeavours over the years.

David reached the rank of Colonel and had, by any measure, an outstanding and distinguished career particularly, a platoon commander in the Vietnam War, Commanding Officer of the Corps of Staff Cadets at Duntroon, and Commandant of the Army Recruit Training Battalion at Kapooka. He was subsequently awarded the Member of the Order of Australia for his outstanding leadership and achievement particularly during these training postings. Like many of us he saw out his later army years here in Canberra with distinguished service in Intelligence and Army Public Affairs.



David remained dedicated and concerned over the years with welfare of his platoon from Vietnam. It was only recently that several of them spoke to him and I know they had great respect and admiration for him.



I would like to pass on a comment from the 7 RAR Association:

*"Dave was so full of energy, vitality and seemingly bulletproof that it's hard to imagine him not being around. Rest In Peace Dave, you will be sadly missed by the 7RAR Family."*

David's post Army career was full of variety and achievement. As with one of his enduring mottos, to "Never die wondering", he left the Army in 1997 to try his hand in politics in the Riverina and if effort and dedication counted for anything in politics then he should have been elected by landslide but that was not to be. We all know he would have made an outstanding contribution to the nation.

He then managed the Canberra Multicultural Festival which was a resounding success and this must have been a challenge bringing together all the political and cultural egos, agendas and differences.

In 2000 he was selected to take part in the Olympics baton relay and a crowd of us lined up to cheer him down Anzac parade - that must have been a great thrill.



He was a foundation member of the Brumbies and an avid supporter hardly missing a game and in his inimical style of never doing things by half he was for a time on the Brumbies Board and even billeted young and upcoming players in his own home.

In the 2003 local government election he again tried his hand at local politics but without success - again it wasn't from want of effort or ability and I make no apologies when I say that we desperately needed him in ACT Assembly with his great talent, imagination and drive. He was an active member of the RSL frequently visiting some of the old soldiers.

He has been involved in many business activities in the past few years but Kibbey Liaison Services probably sums up where his talents lay. He was a great spruiker, had an astounding list of contacts and was a consummate wheeler and dealer.

More recently David has been involved in the security vetting for the Government and it is probably some measure of his talent and standing that he was the one often selected to security vet the departmental heads and senior executives.

After the Army, the Kibbey's had several on-site vans down the South Coast including one jointly with the Edwards' at Racecourse beach near Bawley Point ("The Bunker") which regrettably we eventually had to sell due to local redevelopment. Our two families spent many enjoyable times, sitting in front of the log fire, consuming copious quantities of red, discussing issues of great import, on several occasions trying to sink my boat, fishing off the beach and having the legendary Bunker Breakfast (which I can only describe as a "collesterol catastrophe" of bacon, eggs, sausages and lambs fry washed down with a couple of beers).



Over recent years we have had some great trips together including:

- a number of outstanding OCS Class reunions all over Australia Malaysia and NZ,
- tracing the Targa Tasmania route in our respective Audi's and Alpha's sports cars,
- many winery visits across the southern states;
- tracing the Kibbey heritage at Kerang along the Murray;
- frequent trips back to Hobart to see our families and old friends to name but a few.



David was a great dreamer and we loved to discuss our bucket lists and it was only a couple of weeks ago he wanted me to organise a snapper fishing expedition to South Australia, and a trip to the Huon Valley. I guess he was if nothing else the eternal optimist. Like Jack Nicholson in the movie "Bucket List", I guess I have a duty to complete the list in his honour.

The last three years have been terrible for David and of course the family in dealing with his terrible sickness. He endured extended periods in hospital and put up with the ravages of pain and the body wasting away. If anyone wants to know what courage, strength and determination is all about then they need to go no further than David Kibbey.

It's difficult to talk about David in isolation because both he and Helen made such a great team. Married on April Fool's Day 1972, they clearly complimented one another producing three outstanding children, clearly a product of their good genes and upbringing. Their staunch love for each other was very evident to all of us that know them well and I know that this love will help comfort Helen in the days ahead. While I have mentioned David's courage and strength; it applies equally to Helen who has had to shoulder the exhausting burden of David's wellbeing over these last three years.



I must say I have been absolutely inspired by the Kibbey siblings, Jane, Sam and George in their love, dedication and commitment to looking after their father and mother over what has been an exhausting three-year ordeal. I know David was absolutely proud of his children and their extended families, their achievements and their untiring efforts in looking after him.





David's interest and concern for his immediate and wider family was very evident from the patriarchal activities he readily assumed across the Kibbey and Rava clans. He took great satisfaction from attending family events all over and particularly his visits back to the homeland - Tasmania. David was particularly dedicated to the welfare of his surviving brothers who have had their own medical challenges of late. I know the Tassie crowd will be with us in spirit to celebrate the life of such an outstanding individual. I hope they will raise a glass or two at the "stack of bricks" (Huonville Hotel) for old-times sake.

Helen would particularly like to acknowledge the great love and support from her dear friends the Telfers, Warfe's and Edwards', who have been tireless in their support for Helen over these last several years. Of-course the Kibbey and Rava clans have really rallied to help bear the load dodging COVID restrictions to visit; particularly while David was hospitalised in Sydney.

Helen has also asked me specially to thank Dr John Howe, David's GP for many years; the Doctors and Nurses from RPA in Sydney, National Capital Private and the Canberra Hospital for their dedication and support provided to David over these

last three years. Helen particularly wanted to recognise the outstanding support she has received from the Department of Veterans Affairs.

In addition, I would like to thank all David's friends who made a great effort to stay in contact with him by phone and who made special trips to offer him support and

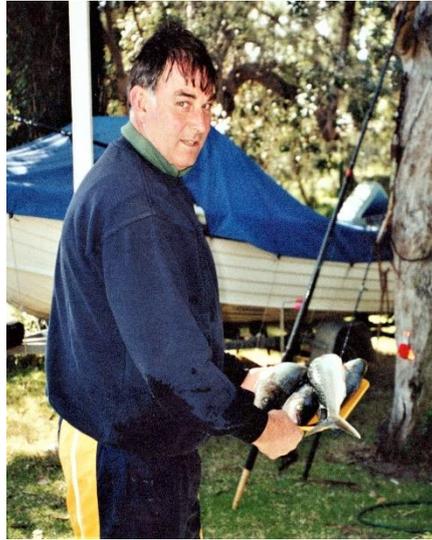


encouragement throughout all his recent ordeals. These friends travelled long distances dodging COVID to see David; from Noosa, Hobart, Perth, Orange, Adelaide, Brisbane and not forgetting his many friends in Canberra. David was most appreciative of this friendship and wanted me to ensure that I specially thanked all the usual suspects.

In recent years David converted to Catholicism and I know his faith was a great comfort to him in his final years fighting this dreadful disease. Particularly I would like to thank Fr Trenton van Reesch for officiating today and for his many visits to David offering him the sacraments and spiritual support.

I think we all know that David had a terrible time of the last year or so and was a mere shadow of his former self. So, I would invite you to remember David as I will: (You might like to close your eyes)

*It's 0530 on the sand dunes overlooking the idyllic Durras Beach South Coast in mid-Summer, David and I are standing on the top of the dunes looking East at the beautiful sunrise. Dressed in an outrageously coloured T-shirts, shorts and thongs, looking suitably sun tanned and dangerously fit, 12 ft rod in one hand, fishing bag over the shoulder surveying the beach for suitable fishing gutters. We look at each other, an irreverent scratch of the crutch, a prestigious and resounding fart and David looks over with a wicked grin saying: "Oooo - that was good - com'on mate, let's go and terrorise some fish followed by a good bunker breakfast".*



Those of us that have known David well are much richer for the experience and will miss him terribly. As we all know, David was never short of providing us all with a bit of free advice whether we needed it or not so it's now our turn. Mate you have been a dear and faithful friend and I will miss you greatly but there's a few things still on our bucket list that we might have to do in the next life so start planning. Just remember we have adjoining plots in the Woden Cemetery and your duty is to stand guard and have a sumptuous bunker breakfast ready for me when I arrive in a while.

*I think the words of Ernest Hemingway really sum it up:*

*"Every man's life ends the same way. It is only the details of how he lived and how he died that distinguish one man from another."*

David Kibbey lived and died with great dignity, honour, courage and conviction. Go in peace dear friend with the love and admiration of your family and friends for a life well lived.



61765 Colonel M John Edwards OAM  
Royal Australian Infantry  
4 January 2022