

## Vale Lawrence Gerard Doyle

Sadly, Laurie passed away in the early hours of Tuesday morning, 14 June 2005 in Greenslopes Hospital, Brisbane. My previous missive advised of his ill health over the last 12 months and his fall down a flight of stairs last Friday.

Lawrence Gerard Doyle was a member of the first graduating class from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in June 1952. Destined to be an Army pilot, he established a new mould by being taught to fly by the RAAF at Point Cook, given arms corps training at the School of Artillery and posted to 1st Field Regiment RAA for regimental experience. When coast gunner Ken Fullford was attached to that unit to learn the mysteries of field gunnery prior to a course in the UK, Laurie was his teacher 'in the intricacies of using a director and in setting up an artillery board.'

Laurie's instructional technique was indeed good for he was posted to the School of Artillery as an instructor prior to attending a flying instructors' course in the UK. Lachie Thomson (then a lieutenant) recalls attending his Regimental Officers' Gunnery Course at the School not long after graduation from the Royal Military College, Duntroon and seeing Laurie (who had enlisted at the same time) now at the School as an experienced Gunner officer and captain and pondering that going to Duntroon was certainly the long way to early promotion!

Returning to Australia, Captain Doyle became an instructor in the Army Component of the Air OP Flight. Ken Fullford returned from his Gunnery Staff Course at about the same time, became the senior instructor in Field Wing and recalls, 'I remember very well having Laurie as my first ever pupil Air OP pilot. The RAAF at that time trained our pilots and commanded our Air OP flight. Laurie was attending the gunnery part of his training and I had a lot to do with him. I may have even flown with him as passenger/coach during his practice shoots, but I may not as Ken Oram (the first air OP pilot in the RAA and trained in England) was at North Head at the time as the senior instructor Tactics & Communication. Ken may well have been his coach-in-the-air.'

Proudly sporting a 'Ubique' wings brevet, Captain Laurie Doyle then went off into the Aviation and staff worlds. His aviation record is quite distinguished - instrumental in establishing 16 Army Light Aircraft Squadron at Amberley, the officer commanding 161st Independent Recce Flight in Vietnam 1966-67, commanding officer of the School of Army Aviation and Commandant of the Aviation Centre at Oakey before he retired.

Colonel Doyle was fiercely proud of his Gunner roots and regularly attended the Olds&Bolds Artillery Officers' Lunches at Victoria Barracks, Brisbane. His Gunner anecdotes and lively stories always made him a popular person to have sitting nearby. Sadly, the rock of his life in retirement, his beloved wife Moira passed away a few years ago and this really took the wind out of Laurie's sails. His health began to deteriorate in the last 12 months, but he fiercely maintained his living independence. His attendances at the Gunner lunches became less frequent, but he always phoned or emailed a cheery apology. His fall whilst attending a friend's funeral last Friday left him with injuries from which he did not recover.

Laurie Doyle is survived by his three children: Matthew, Damian and Nathan. Condolences may be passed to Matthew Doyle at [doyle69@optusnet.com.au](mailto:doyle69@optusnet.com.au) or at 65 Stanley Street, Burwood, NSW, 2134.

Laurie's last touch down will be on Monday 20 June at Saint Patrick's Church, corner James and Neil Streets, Toowoomba commencing at 1000 hours. After the service there will be a gathering at Saint Patrick's Church Hall and a family only cremation at the Toowoomba Crematorium.

Vale Colonel Lawrence Gerard Doyle DFC (RL) - Gunner, Air OP pilot and aviator. Flying his last mission at 76 years of age.

My thanks to the following for providing information for this tribute: Ken Fullford, Lachie Thomson, Bill Mellor (president of the Australian Army Aviation Association Inc) and Frank Benfield, (national president of the 161 Recce Flight Association).

Ubique

Arthur Burke

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