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IN MEMORIAM: LIEUTENANT MATTHEW DAVEY, RANR

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.



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

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.



We kept working, although it was the last thing any of us wanted to do. I'm glad we did, however; Matt would have, and how better to honour him, and all those others who died, than by finishing the task of which they were so much a part and for which they gave their lives.

Matt died being the very person that I had come to know. He was on the job as a dedicated professional, working as a member of the Australian Defence Force, giving humanitarian aid to a devastated population, but with thoughts of his loved ones in his heart. He will always hold a special place in my heart and those of all he touched.

Ironically I write this whilst on patrol off Iraq as the Medical Officer in HMAS PARRAMATTA. I still feel like Matt is with me. His impact on my life always will be.

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.

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