

## REFLECTIONS - CODSSOCS REUNION 2019

Terry Reason proposed the topic "*Reflections*" .....and it is a natural one for this occasion. "Colonel" Reason then pulled rank and ordered me to address the subject !

The principal reason we are gathered at this place of memory today is to reflect upon, and remember, those of our comrades who have passed on .....and Paul Asbury will be handling that in a few moments.

My first reflection however is that Italian L5 .... the 105 mm pack howitzer over there ..... a gun used in Vietnam and one that Paul Tys, Harvey Fewings, Dennis Bird, Chris Prickett, Gus Rivers, Grant Box, "Tubby" Bennetts and I trained on after graduation. It was a great bit of kit, could do anything with it, very versatile – a bit like us at the time. Now it is a museum piece. Again, a bit like us - it is there but with some parts frozen.

It is a bit of a shock to realise that, now, we are as relevant to today's young soldiers as those old men, the World War One veterans, were to us in 1967.

We have gotten old, folks ! The future has arrived for us.

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A lot of water has passed under each of our individual bridges over the last 52 years. We have all travelled different paths in our lives. We have all done different things and had different experiences that have moulded us, over the years, into the very distinct individual personalities we are today.

At least so I thought until a year or so ago when, at a gathering of OCS graduates here in Noosa, a lady made a comment that caught my attention. She said, "*You blokes are all the same*".

Now, while obviously not absolutely 100% correct as we have all acquired different beliefs and attitudes to life, it nonetheless got me thinking.

As a group, when we started off together in January 1967, we were similar in only a few respects:

We were **young and fit**...and, with a few exceptions, reasonably good looking.

We were **intelligent**.

We were **enthusiastic**.....we were all volunteers, prepared for the rough and tumble of life in an Army at war.

And that's about it ! Those are about the only similarities I reckon we had as a group when we first started at OCS.

Today hardly any of those commonalities apply. We are not exactly young and fit and ready for Army life nowadays. And forget the good looks.

Instead, that year at OCS inculcated in us a set of common character traits that I believe has generally stayed with each of us. If you like, a common, permanent template that has been overlaid with individual experience over the last 52 years.

Now, while self-assessment must be weighed for what it is... and while I must not piss in our collective pockets too much .... I believe I am being quite objective when I say those common characteristics we share today are:

We tend to be **organised** individuals.

We show **self-discipline**.....from the imposed discipline of the Army.

We have a logical, factual, no-nonsense approach to **problem solving**. .....the concepts of the Military Appreciation stayed with us....and our bullshit detectors were tuned...for a lifetime.

We tend to be **decisive**.....we dislike stuffing around.

We value **loyalty** and **honesty**.

We are **reliable**.....we do as we say we will.

We accept **responsibility** for our actions and the actions of those in our charge.

We are **self confident** individuals.....you do not lead and command Australian soldiers (and Kiwis....Alastair) without belief in self..... and one's abilities.

We exhibit a robust sense of **humour**.....usually a gallows humour that is most evident in times of adversity....and/or inappropriateness !

Lastly, we have shared experience and **mateship**.

There are not many groups in the community that can lay claim to all those common characteristics.

The lady who said, "*You are all the same*", was working off instinctive gut feel at the time.....but she was correct in many ways.

OCS Portsea gave us all that.... in one short year ..... and it has lasted a lifetime. It was a great curriculum and training program.

My final reflection is just a small criticism of that curriculum – they should have allocated more time to handling the Browning 9mm pistol !

Thank you.

(Ian Gill 17 September 2019)