



John Angus (1945-1984)

John Angus enlisted in Royal Signals in 1961, and joined the All Arms Junior Leaders Regiment in Wales. In 1962, he graduated from JLR and moved to Catterick for training as a Radio Operator. Later that year he volunteered for Airborne Forces and travelled to Elles Barracks, Aldershot for Pre-Para training. Subsequently, he passed 'P' Coy at Maida Barracks, and completed a Basic Parachute course at RAF Abingdon. He joined 216 Para Sig Sqn later that year. During his early service with 16 Para Bde he carried-out Operational tours in Cyprus (1963), and Bahrain (1964), for which he was awarded UN Medal (Cyprus), and GSM with clasp S Arabia. At this time he re-qualified as a Radio Telegraphist. John was promoted Cpl in 1966 and Sgt in 1970. According to many of his comrades from those days, John Angus was one of the best Radio Detachment Commanders in the Sqn, ever. In addition, John was, without doubt, one of the smartest soldiers in uniform or in civvies. His attention to meticulous detail was absolute, his turnout and bearing a shining example.

Similarly, his NCO's bunk in 'E' Block, Arnhem Barracks was tidier and better kept than any other. John, a proud and patriotic Scot, possessed a dry, often cutting wit, but much humour and friendship was to be found in his company. Like many of his peers in the Sqn, he found it hard to tolerate fools, low standards, craphats, or non-supporters of Glasgow Rangers (he was an ardent fan). John was also a very fit man, who represented both Sqn and Corps at Cross-country Running and Soccer. He had a trial for the Army Soccer XI around this time. In 1969, John met and courted Valerie Moncur, who was in WRAC Signals at SE District Comcen. They were married in the summer of 1970 at the Registrar's Office in Aldershot, supported by Dick Hamilton (Best Man) and June Morgan (Maid of Honour). It was a quiet wedding with no guests other than Valerie's parents. Further promotion would have meant serving away from his beloved Para Sigs, and so John decided to make a break and leave the Army in 1971. John and Val moved to a flat in Wimbledon, and a son, John Richard, was born soon after. John took employment with Shell International Comms HQ in the city, where his Army training and skills worked well for him. In his spare time, still a keen footballer, he joined Wimbledon FC and played for their Second XI. John rarely visited Aldershot after he left as his family and work kept him fully occupied, and disbandment of 16 Para Bde in 1977 meant that his comrades were spread to the four winds. Sadly unbeknown to many of these old friends, John, diagnosed with spinal bone cancer, died in late 1984, aged 39 years.

Mick Granitza represented Para Sigs at John's funeral in Wimbledon, which was attended by friends and colleagues from Shell HQ London. Paul Richardson, who served in 216 in the early 1960s, said he had worked beside John at Shell International Comms HQ in London, where John, *"the red-haired ex-Para, was well liked as a good guy and a hard worker."* In the years prior to John's death, early stages of the cancer were shrugged off with comments about, *"a bad back from poor Para landings at Hankley Common"*. Even when chemo treatments must have caused agony, John made light of his condition, and soldiered on at his desk, showing a grimly determined airborne spirit to the end.

Postscript

I first met John in early 1969, while waiting for Pre-Para. We were both Cpl's, though he was a veteran Para, and I was just a "hat" from BAOR. Nonetheless, we were both from East Lothian, had a similar outlook on life, and so we became friends. For Easter leave, we drove home to Scotland, me to Musselburgh, John to Macmerry, a few miles away. We went in my Mini; John did not drive. We had agreed to use this leave so that, (a) he could help me get fit for 'P' Coy, and (b) I could teach him to drive. John took a bus every morning up to Musselburgh, where he and I ran up the A1 to Portobello, (sweatshirts, OG's, & boots), and had a ½-hour swim in the Public Baths. After a brew and a bacon banjo, we ran back to Musselburgh for lunch. In the afternoon we went for driving lessons on minor roads round the town, with much gear-crunching by John, and lots of *"Ferchrissake watch that car"* from me. Then we drove to Macmerry for tea and John donned his *going-out-for-a-few-beers-and-birds kit*. We drove to Musselburgh so I could do the same. After a few beers 'n birds in Edinburgh, we invariably ended with fish suppers in Musselburgh, where I poured John onto the last bus to Macmerry. Next day, repeat. Over the leave, we ran about 9 miles each day, which, with the swimming, improved my fitness, and helped me pass 'P' Coy. The driver training knackered the clutch, but helped John to pass his driving test in Aldershot.

In 1970, I was honoured to be Best Man at his wedding to Valerie, while June Morgan was Valerie's Maid of Honour. John attended a Para Sigs Officers & Sgts Dinner in Aldershot in 1976, in fine spirit and with long hair. After that, with the exception of the odd Xmas card, we lost touch. Then in 1984, out of the blue, he 'phoned my quarter in Shetland, and we had a rare old chat. He sounded frail, but when I asked him how he was, he said, *"I'm not too well, but no matter, how are June and Sarah?"* He was interested to hear how we had all progressed since we last met. We spoke of our times together in the Sqn. When I asked how Civvy

Street was treating him, he stated quite firmly that he was still, "*never, never caphat, always ex-Brigade!*" Eventually we said cheerio, having agreed to speak again soon. What I didn't know then but discovered weeks later, was that he was really saying farewell because he was dying from bone cancer. He had worked through a 'phone list for a final chat with his pals. Sadly, when I eventually called his home he was too ill to speak, Val was obviously distraught, and we never spoke again.

R.I.P. - John Angus, Airborne Brother and friend.

(Author Richard Hamilton, 2006, re-written in 2012)