Lieutenant Colonel T A COYLE

Colonel Coyle was President of the Club 2020 - 22

Colonel Coyle was elected to Life Membership in 2024

Tony Arthur Coyle was born on 19 October 1946 in Brisbane. His parents were Douglas Arthur [1917 – 1992], a grocer, and Norma Mae (née Elder) [1919 – 2013]. They had married in November 1939, and Tony had an elder sister Robyn [b 1941] and brother Clifford [b 1944]. Douglas had enlisted in the Army for the Second World War and was still serving at the time of Tony's birth (being discharged as a WO2 in November 1946).

The family lived at Annerley in Brisbane until 1954 but moved to Carina into a housing commission house when Douglas had some financial setbacks. In 1958 the family moved to Coorparoo into a classic old Queenslander house where Douglas and Norma lived for the rest of their lives at the centre of the family.

Tony attended Junction Park State School for the first two years of primary school and then Camp Hill State School. He then went to Camp Hill High School where in his Senior year was the school Vice-captain. He was also the Senior Under Officer of the Camp Hill High School Cadet Unit in both his Sub-Senior and Senior years. It was this experience that heightened his interest in a full-time Army career.

We thank the History Interest Group and other volunteers who have researched and prepared these Notes The series will be progressively expanded and developed. They are intended as casual reading for the benefit of Members, who are encouraged to advise of any inaccuracies in the material.
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Tony married Marie-Ann (née Burke) at the RMC Chapel in Canberra in December 1968. Marie-Ann had been a nurse at the Canberra Community Hospital. They have 3 children Darron, Mark, and Nathan.

He was accepted into RMC Duntroon in January 1965, straight from high school, and graduated in December 1968 into the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers.

At the time Tony entered RMC, the academic and military training was transitioning to a four-year degree (in his case in engineering), overseen by the University of NSW and combined with intensive military studies – this was the forerunner of the Australian Defence Force Academy system. While graduates earned a Diploma of Military Studies, a degree in engineering was not awarded. The Institution of Engineers Australia (IEAust) reviewed the course and granted those engineer graduates with sufficiently high academic marks a "Graduate Engineer" status in IEAust. After much negotiation by the Army and RMC, the University of NSW agreed to allow the IEAust "Graduate Engineers" to complete a Master of Engineering Science Degree at the UNSW in 1969 – which Tony did.

In 1970 after completing the Young Officers Course at the School of Military Engineering, Tony was posted to the District Engineers Office (DEO) in PNG as the Design Engineer. The DEO was the provincial Public Works Department for PNG which consisted of RAE personnel and local civilians. He served in Popondetta and Mendi and was promoted to Captain whilst there, returning to Australia in 1972.

Tony served in 1st Field Engineer Regiment in Sydney - during which time he was the Officer Commanding the Lord Howe Island Detachment and spent 6 months in 1974 with about 70 soldiers on Lord Howe Island building the airstrip (to replace the flying boat service) which is still in operation today.

Postings followed in the Directorate of Engineers, AHQ as the SO2 Logistics and Plans – including leading a project updating the "Engineer Planning Bricks" from imperial to metric as part of the national conversion to metric measurement. In 1975 – 1976 he completed a second Masters' Degree – in Administrative Sciences at The City University, London.

He was posted on promotion to Major to AHQ in Canberra in 1977 – 1978 in the Directorate of Personnel Planning – including support for the Regular Officer Development Committee in developing the 8-year transition plan to eliminate the rank of 2nd Lieutenant without disrupting junior officer promotional prospects.

He attended Staff College in 1979 and was OC 20th Divisional Engineer Support Squadron 1980 -81. Promoted to LTCOL and appointed as Chief Engineer 5th Military District in Perth in 1982 – 83 where - apart from the usual responsibilities for R&M of barracks, married quarters and training areas - SASR anti-terrorist training facilities were designed and constructed. He was next posted to Army Office in Canberra in 1984 - 85 in the Directorate of Co-ordination responsible for monitoring Army financial spending by category, and the military history section. He attended Joint Services Staff College in 1985.

In 1986 – 87 he was appointed CO of the then 2/3rd Field Engineer Regiment - with squadrons in Sydney (1 Fd Sqn), Brisbane (7 Fd Sqn, 11 Fd Sqn (Ares)) and Townsville (18 Fd Sqn) plus associated RAEME workshops. The regiment peaked at more than 1,000 all ranks.

At the end of that posting Tony decided to retire from the Regular Army (on 1 Feb 1988) and join private enterprise with Thiess Pty Ltd in Brisbane. He spent 20 years with Thiess in various roles including Marketing Manager (selling services to clients and government); Executive Manager Technical Services (engineering, survey, computer and business development support to the company and its projects); Project Director in Australia, Indonesia and Malaysia; General Manager Process Engineering (throughout Australia, Indonesia and PNG); and raised and was CEO of a subsidiary company of Thiess in joint venture with Siemens in the design and construction of telecommunication facilities.

He resigned from Thiess at the end of 2007 and retired. This lasted six months when he formed his own consulting company - clients including four years to Airport Link (Brisbane) and two years to Thiess Mining. He finally retired in May 2014.

Tony joined the United Service Club in 1988.

Shortly after retiring from full-time work in 2014, he joined the Property Sub-committee of the United Service Club to help with evaluating and managing the "backyard project". In 2017 he was elected to the Club Committee, which led to being elected Vice-President 2018 – 2020 and President 2020 – 2022.

His time as President was marked by the severe restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic – through which he successfully navigated the Club's social and financial well-being.

During his time as President, Tony discovered that he was the oldest President of the Club – at the end of his term he was 76 years of age.

Tony and Marie-Ann remain active in community involvement.

Sources included:
- Various web pages
- *United Service Club, Queensland: The First Century, 1892-1992* by Flight Lieutenant Murray Adams and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Charlton
- Club Meeting Minutes, Annual Reports, and sundry documents
- Contribution from LTCOL Coyle March 2023