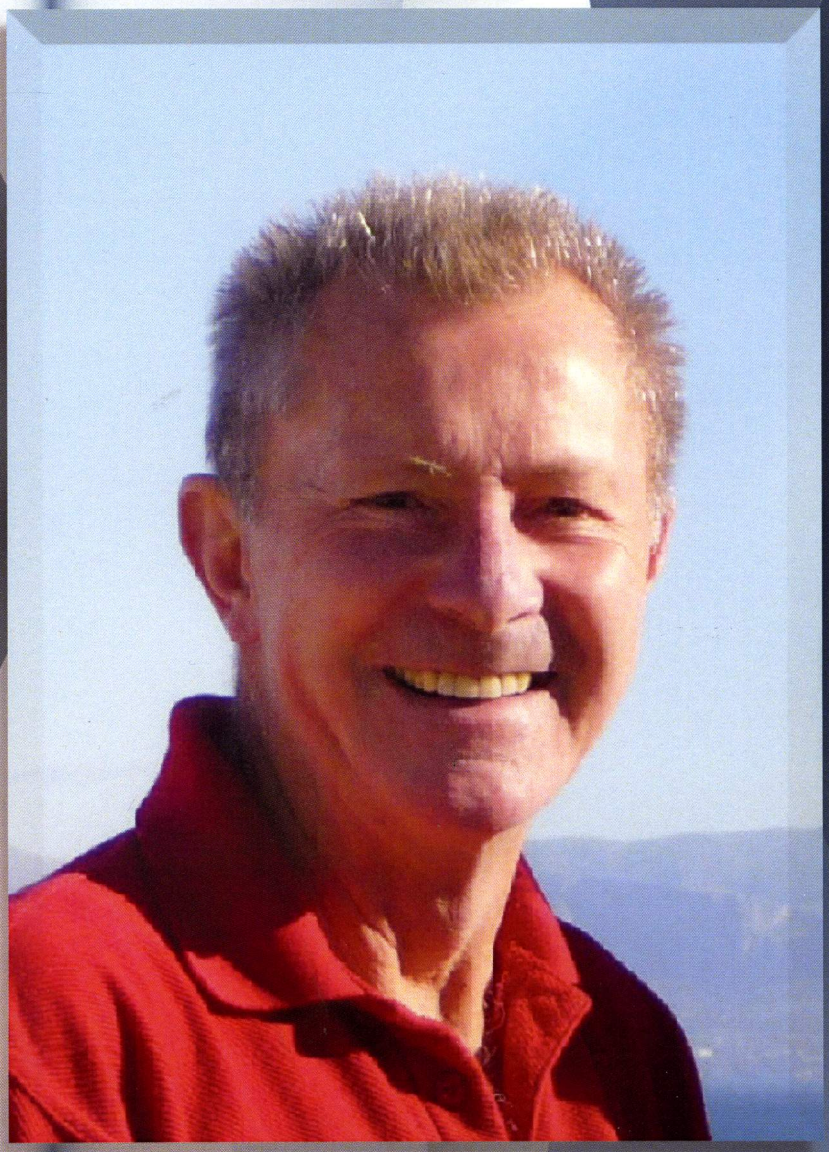

A LIFE WELL LIVED

Told mostly in Warwick's own words.

17 NOVEMBER 1939 WARWICK RONALD HAMILTON WAS BORN IN LEICHHARDT, SYDNEY. HE WAS THE FIRST OF FOUR SIBLINGS BEING FOLLOWED BY ROBIN, PETER AND TONI.

School

Orange Grove Public School then Fort Street Boys High School

Army Career

1957-1960 Royal Military College, Duntroon

1961 & 1962 After graduating from Duntroon, the next two years were spent at RMIT Melbourne completing an electronics degree. During the 1961-62 summer break, as a member of the Army modern pentathlon team, and to avoid having to re-join the army proper for that period, I completed the Victoria Mounted Police basic training course, including peak hour point duty at Flinders Street Station in full Army Light Horse uniform – not bad for a city boy from Leichhardt!

1963
111 Light Anti-Aircraft Battery at Holsworthy to learn to become a Lieutenant again.

1964
After a hurried preparation of 111 Battery for operational service in Malaysia I was left behind to clean up the mess. As a thank you I was posted to the School of Artillery as Radar Troop Commander/Instructor. Here I first met some of the troops who would later be part of the Detachment, South Vietnam. Promoted to Captain in December.

17 April 1965
Luda Gruszecki and I were married at Seaforth in Sydney.
The start of 25 very happy years together.

1966
131 Divisional Locating Battery Holsworthy in preparation for South Vietnam. This was my introduction to the eclectic group of National Servicemen who would form the Detachment.

April 1967 – February 1968.
Privileged to be Officer Commanding, Detachment 131 Divisional Locating Battery, South Vietnam.

1968-69
Back to the School of Artillery as Instructor Locating.

1969-70
Posted to The Royal Military College of Science, UK, on the Guided Weapons course. This added Aeronautics to my post nominals. Promoted to Major.

1970-72
Materiel Branch, Army HQ Melbourne for a very short time till someone found out I was supposed to know about guided weapons and I was sent to Darwin for two years (1971-72) to create and command the UK Rapier Surface to Air Missile Hot/Wet Trials Unit, including the final test firings. This posting was 'interesting' to say the least, and a great success.

1973
Materiel Branch, Army HQ Canberra, as a Staff Officer something or other technical.

1974
Our son Iain was born in February and I was a student again, this time at the Army Command and Staff College, Fort Queenscliff, Victoria, for a year. Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel in December.

1975-76
Department of Defence Canberra to work for the Chief Defence Scientist. Welcome to the upper levels of bureaucracy; really fascinating with lots of travel to Defence Science establishments I didn't know existed. In July 1976, our daughter Chandra was born.

1977-78
Posted to the UK again as the Rapier Project Officer, responsible for the building and delivery of the system for Australia.
At the risk of sounding smug, it was delivered on time and on budget!!

1979-80
In a surprising display of logic by the Army, I was then posted to command 16 Air Defence Regiment, Woodside (Adelaide Hills) to oversee the delivery, commissioning and introduction of the Rapier system, including creating two new batteries and a super high tech workshop, all to be operational in two years. It was a challenging and very fulfilling job.

1981-82
Posted back to the Command and Staff College as a Directing Staff (instructor). Two very busy years, including raising the National award winning Fort Queenscliff Museum in my (and many others') spare time. Originally an open gun emplacement in 1860, the Fort was constructed in 1881-2 and is the largest walled fort in Australia, complete with a dry moat. We managed to recover and restore many of the guns used there including a rare 8 inch 'disappearing' gun.
The Fort was brought back to near original state, which included removal of 100 years of good thick military painting over everything, researching the original paint design, type and signage, and clearing out the overgrown and filled in moat which yielded many historically significant finds. Prisoners from Pentridge Gaol, with their armed guard, provided additional labour (on a horticultural work experience basis, of course).The end of 1981 saw the official opening by the Governor General and a weekend celebration of the Fort's centenary. In all quite a posting!

1983-89
Back to Canberra, to the Directorate of Logistic Operations, developing contingency plans for 'what if' situations. I even had to implement one of our plans when, on a liaison visit to New Guinea, there was a mud slide in Lae, and I was thrown in to coordinate the Army response. That was a salutary exercise, particularly experiencing where we had not quite got it right! I stayed in Logistic Operations moving to other really interesting challenges, including, as a simple Artillery officer, disposing of obsolete stores in the Ordnance system.

No Ordnance officer would touch it! ('If we get rid of it what happens if we need it' syndrome.) Oldest find was hundreds of spare guy ropes for bell tents from the Boer War. Included were Centurion tanks and over 100,000 .303 in rifles. I managed to actually sell these at quite a profit, but the system had a hernia trying to work out what to do with the money!

Since my youth I have enjoyed the theatre and been involved in acting, producing, and directing many amateur and pro-am productions while still carrying out my Army Officer day job. Some fun highlights were playing Frank N Furter in the'Rocky Horror Show' and having to learn to do a jazz dance routine on roller skates for 'They Shoot Horses Don't They'. I was at Army Office in Canberra and since I had never roller skated, I thought it would be a good idea to wear them all day to get used to them. Most people were bemused at me rolling around HQ in uniform until I managed to crash into my General. After picking ourselves up from the floor he merely commented 'Which show are you in now Warwick?'

In January 1989 my wife Luda died of a massive heart attack while on holiday in Bali with our 12-year-old daughter. This altered my life dramatically, now becoming a single parent with my daughter Chandra and 15-year-old son Iain. The Army 'family' was fantastic and I held on till November 1989 when I retired at age 50 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel after 32 years service.

Life after Army

1990-2008 To a lot of peoples' surprise I then created a special events company, Well, I did come from a theatrical family and had the project management skills from the Army! This did very well and won several awards nationally and internationally, for shows ranging from a few hundred to about 10,000 people. Early in this period, I met my lovely partner Kate. In 1996, I moved the company to Sydney as that was my main client base and added 'International' to the company name as we had a number of overseas jobs. 2002 I was asked to help teach the new event management courseat Brookvale TAFE. For a long time, I had thought that the events industry needed proper training so I said yes. This grew from a small part time teaching role to full time (and running the company as well). Additionally, I became a part time lecturer at University of Technology, Sydney. The Department of Education, in their wisdom, decided I needed another post nominal

so in 2005 I completed the Graduate Diploma in VET (Vocational Education and Training, nothing to do with non-human animals). I had also taken up sailing again on Sydney Harbour and was invited onto the crew of a 50' racing yacht which I did for six seasons and loved every minute of it. Kate and I also bought a smaller yacht for leisure sailing which we enjoyed immensely.

Retirement

2008 This frenetic working style continued till June when Kate presented me with a one-way ticket to Europe and a choice: keep working or come and have fun. I retired! Best decision I didn't have to make!

2008-14 Six years of amazing travel including lots of bush walking, wine tasting and meeting interesting people. Europe in 2008/9 and 2010. In 2011 having cancelled our planned four months in the Middle East due to the "Arab Spring" we ended up camping around Australia for 19 months in a 4WD and a small dome tent, then back to Europe for 2013.

2014-15

We moved back into our house in Lane Cove mid 2014.
The travel bug was still there and we spent a lot of time catching up with friends who live all around Australia.

2016-18

In January 2016 I was diagnosed with Acute Myeloid Leukaemia but was in remission again by August. The next two years I devoted to regaining my strength with the help of an exercise physiologist and between courses of chemo, enjoying life to the full with Kate, family and friends in Australia and New Zealand.

2019

Warwick's leukaemia returned. He fought bravely against a succession of infections throughout the year but they took their toll. Unable to fight any longer he died peacefully on 26 August surrounded by Kate, Iain & Eliza and Chandra & Sam. Warwick leaves to all of us the privilege of having known him and the gift of our memories of him.