



Capt George Devine 1937-2001

George came to 216 Para Sigs in 1974 as a mature 37-year-old WO2 (YofS). Although quite older than most of the youthful warriors, he fit right in because he was a gem of a Glasgow Scot, who cared for his fellow man, and knew many, if not all, of the answers. In addition, with quiet humour and tolerance he became a voice of reason for the younger Sgts when they conflicted with the Old Guard. As life became a bit fraught they knew they could go and see George, who would calm them down, pour water on the flames, and discuss alternative assassination techniques. For that alone he won their undying gratitude.

At the same time as his performing his Yeoman's role in the Sqn, he was heavily involved with the world of Military Display Free Fall Parachuting. He jumped regularly with the Red Devils, and the R Sigs Blue Helmets. His team mates included Major Mike Forge - later killed in the Falklands War; Sgt Jim Robins - died in a tragic parachuting accident before George's very eyes; and Sgt Steve Whittick - a 216 veteran since the 1960's. George continued with Free Fall long after he left 216, making his final jump in 1997. He was both well known and highly respected in that particularly elite world.

As a foot note to his FF days, George was one of a few presented with a Gold Lanyard by HRH Prince Charles at Airborne Forces Day in 1979. This award was for Para Bde soldiers who had completed a minimum of 1,000 FF jumps. The story goes that when HRH stopped in front of George he noticed that, like himself, George wore a Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal. "How did you come by this?" asked the Prince, poking at George's chest. "I was in the right place at the right time, Sir", retorted George. "Funny enough so was I," concluded HRH - cue smiles all round. The tale was later published in Readers' Digest's Humour in Uniform.

George left 216 after a couple of years, on promotion to the post of WO1 (SMI) at the Signals Wing of RMA Sandhurst. On retiring from regular service he became PSAO with 31 Sig Regt (V) in London. He and his wife, Margaret, bought a house in Fleet, which remains the family home to this day. George retired from TA service in 1997, aged 60.

For many years, George and Margaret had enjoyed themselves as active members of a Scottish Country Dance Society. For example, in 1997 they attended the Society's Summer School in St Andrews, and visited Aberdeen for the Scottish Society's Annual Grand Ball. As an extra relief from the stresses of service life, George took to the hills, quite literally. He travelled to the north of Scotland where he joined an old FF chum, Alec Munro, late 3 PARA and Red Devils, so they could wander over the hills, enjoying the freedom and the scenery. George had planned to visit Shetland in 2001 to walk along the seashore, but that was not to be.

In late 2000, George was diagnosed with a particularly aggressive form of cancer. Nonetheless, in January 2001 he successfully "Addressed the Haggis" at no less than four Burns Suppers, AND he was still dancing in February 2001, against all medical advice - grimly determined, or what?

On 31 March, he died in his sleep at Frimley Park Hospital, with Margaret and their children at his bedside. On 6 April, a Requiem Mass was held at Church Crookham, followed by interment at Aldershot Military Cemetery. The funeral was attended by a large group of family members and friends from across the globe, as well as many of his comrades from Para Sigs, Red Devils, and Blue Helmets.

It was a privilege and an honour to have known and served in the shadow of George Devine, an Airborne Signals comrade and mentor, "*par excellence*".

R.I.P., George, 'til we meet at the final RV.

(Author Richard Hamilton, 2001, re-written 2012)