

Vale

NOTICAS

JOHN PAUL SCHOTS

Dear Member / Friend

John Paul Schots Born Blantrye Malawi 5th November 1953

1st Battalion 2 Commando RLI – Died Richards Bay South Africa 19th November 2002

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John Paul (JP) had a tough childhood. Despite two bouts of rheumatic fever as a child, he signed up for 5 years military stint with the Rhodesian Light Infantry. Prince Edward School and JP didn't really get on together, probably because he was dyslectic. He was a wonderful mimic and had a keen ear for inverting a phrase. His Afrikaans didn't get much beyond.

"Hoya morra Manure; Whose done dis shit." which very vaguely with the accent he gave it sounded like an attempt to say Good Morning Sir, How are things with you. His teacher found his efforts insufferable, but his class mates found it most amusing.

Glad to leave the educational system behind, he found the camaraderie and action life in the army suited him well. When he finished his initial five year stint he signed on for an extra 12 months of service in the Rhodesian Bush War now known as the second Chimurenga of Zimbabwe during which time he saw the war degenerating into rounds of increasing brutality from all three parties involved; the Rhodesian army, ZANU and ZAPU.

There was pressure on him to sign on again but having won the Bronze medal for Bravery and lost good friends he finally felt he had done his bit. He left the country to travel the world with Barbara a childhood sweetheart. He lived life to the full and had a great time. Barbara however gave up on him and stayed in Israel while he went back to Zimbabwe where he met and married Janette who then had a babe in arms. Janette and John and Heath her son, moved to South Africa, however their union didn't last. Sadly although John had from the time they met, till they parted, treated her child as his own, she would not allow contact to continue with the child when their relationship broke down. They had no children together. He died without any known issue.

John's trade interests in South Africa, where he and his partners set up an ice production facility for supplying the townships, ran into problems when his business was boycotted as part of the anti-apartheid struggles. He returned to Zimbabwe followed by his then girlfriend Jill. John's old army buddy Paul Holt gave Jill a job administering the sale of motor vehicles for him and John took over the farm.

John married Jill in 1991. Her mother Sheila visited 30-31 May-June 1991 and presented an observation list of birds on the farm. This has now been made into a kids illustrated guide of

birds of the area. Sheila was a member of the Witwatersrand bird Club at the time, now she has returned to Ireland.

John was dropped behind enemy lines on a parachute that 'roman candled'; that is it didn't open properly and he plummeted to earth unsupported. Once Mother had recovered from seeing the Army Chaplain approach along the driveway to give her that information she was allowed to phone JP in hospital.

"Are you alright?" she asked

"Who the hell has been worrying you, I'm fine." John never liked people making a fuss of him and he suffered his injuries stoically.

"Can you wiggle your toes" Mother butted in

"I can wiggle my toes Mum but I can't wiggle my bum."

His helmet broke on impact but his head was undamaged, just his pelvis was cracked, a real miracle. John fell into thick Jesse bush which broke his fall, his helmet, and his pelvis, but saved his life. His Aunty Jessie said it was the first mention of Jesse she had been really glad of. Till then she had never really liked her given name.

There are other well documented cases of people surviving a fall from an airplane without a parachute. None-the-less we felt especially well blessed. He had been carried by angels my aunt said.

On a separate occasion John was bitten by a poisonous snake and on yet another he was shot through the chest. He was a sensitive soul and very good hearted. In his last years he became very ill. Even then there would be periods when his old, 'golden hearted self' came to the fore, as Jill explained it.

In the end he was sick with cancer of the liver, doubtlessly exacerbated by heavy drinking and was unwilling to seek either curative or later palliative care. He had a damaged heart from early youth and probably should never have gone into military service. However it was not alcohol alone that created the symptoms he exhibited.

We were so concerned about our young men being killed that we had scant regard for the mental turmoil that was created by asking our young men to kill. So many of our ex servicemen took to drink after the experience, attempting to forget. They need a lot more psychological support. It would have been a good start for him to know that an internet memorial would be raised to those guys. Then it has to be admitted that John exhibited bizarre behaviour that points beyond drunkenness or alcoholism, to an aflatoxin like affliction.

Aflatoxin is a poison found in mouldy corn, peanuts, bread, fruit and wheat grain. This is an important contributory cause of primary cancer of the liver particularly in Africa and Asia. An aflatoxin episode can start off with the sufferer saying mean things, expressing unusual, irrational thoughts, feeling emotionless or unreal, before even having one drink. Take note if you recognise these systems.

Victims have sudden unexplained mood swings, even unexpected crying spells, or fits of bad temper, then, when the episode passes they will be unable to remember any of these things. Very similar to drunkenness except the loss of memory is permanent, and they don't need a drink to bring it on. They have no creeping doubt about memory loss that the drunk has the

morning after. Often after exploding with an aflatoxin fuelled fury John would, as is typical with this type of poisoning, remember nothing of the incident, and couldn't even imagine why we were behaving so dreadfully in accusing him of such awful behaviour.

Aflatoxin moulds have been observed to induce or lead to heart attacks. They produce a long lasting and debilitating condition. While exposure is difficult to evade entirely, it is really important to highlight the dangers in eating even only slightly mouldy products. If you have the kind of character that hates waste and you would rather toast an old piece of bread than compost it, or you are inclined to cut off the mouldy corner of your bread and eat the rest, please please don't do it. The contamination acts slowly, so it's difficult to immediately associate cause with effect. Nuts are the worst offenders and only a small amount of mould can start this terrible suffering. Aflatoxin is also immunosuppressive, and particularly in Africa is likely to prove long term to be far more devastating than AIDS and may even be as devastating as malaria. This poison boils up a fury in people who eat it.

A cheap test to help separate mouldy nuts and other dangerous foods from that which can be rescued without unnecessary waste, could help alleviate some poverty and a lot of suffering in Africa.

John Paul went down to Richards Bay to take a rest from the Zimbabwe 'situation.' After which he was going to try and sort some insurance payments.

Mitch who he was staying with called us early Monday morning after a wild weekend party to say.

"John Paul has had a heart attack and we've taken him to hospital."

"What hospital" I asked "and do you need any money for the treatment."

"Send all the money you can, he's got in without payment as it's an emergency, but it'll cost plenty soon." was his reply. He phoned next morning to say he'd passed away. That was on 19th November 2002.

He left an estranged wife who, unhappy with the war-vet take over of parts of the farm and unable to handle JP's bizarre behaviour and unable to persuade him to be treated for his heart problems, had left him July before. John or as his mother knew him JP also known as Johnny o sometimes mis-pronounced 'Shodtzy' served in 2 Commando RLI.

We have inscribed on a plaque in his memory the ancient Malawian saying which is translated as:-

"Though we cannot find where you have gone,
Whenever we hear the branch of a tree crack,
We will remember you have been here in our hearts,
You have left happiness and sorrow behind"

Kindly supplied by John's sister Erica Woods, from the book I did not shoot Mugabe - Why that's the wrong way to tickle Mary by ETY Schots

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