



Thomas Charles Vincent 1949 – 2018

Tribute from Mike Muldoon who became best mates with Tom after they met in Robb College.

Tom was in Robb College from 1968 and left UNE in 1972 having done enough to finish his Economics degree but never got round to formally applying for it as you had to do in the day. So I think that B Ec gong still sits buried in the UNE archives.

We were initially despatched to the Hill Blocks because of overcrowding in the established colleges. Breakfast was at Mary White – then an all female college – which was enticing but too much early exposure to the bad hair day, slipper clad dressing gowned female form was too much information too early. Tom always maintained that he got through the Fronting 101 coursework but always failed at the final exam.

Tom loved his sport and was determined and resilient. In squash he'd run me around the court for hours. Being Tom he even called points in my favour to ensure the encounter was extended well beyond my physical limits.

Tom quickly assumed a spot in the Robb 1st XV rugby side and was an important member of the first Robb 1st XV team which took out the New England premiership in 1969. Robb Rugby had 5 teams in the grand finals in 2018 with the 1sts and the Womens' 7 teams taking out the titles. All teams wore black armbands in deference to Tom's passing – a nice gesture. He went on to represent UNE and New England before presenting to Eastwood RUFC to take on the No.8 position with performances over a long period somewhat akin to a cross between Ron Coote and Ray Price.

Picture of 1969 Robb College 1st XV Rugby Line-out. The Team went on to be Premiers.



Paul Pitman, David Green, Charlie Onus, Tom Vincent, George Souris, John Wilson, Bertie Northcott

Food consumption was almost an obsession with Tom – “need my fuel mate”. The tag of Culinary Predator was indeed very appropriate and applied in all social occasions. In Armidale the rare excursions to the Mun Hing Restaurant saw Tom religiously order Steak and Chips with 2 Eggs. This of course changed later as his pallet developed a longing for hot Thai and Curries.

Later in Sydney he was a regular with Nick Horsley at the “Tom Thai Nick” in Crown Street which saw him offer to be a waiter at the staff Christmas Dinner. He was disappointed when Sumi, whom he had an eye for, offered to introduce him to her mother.

Cricket was not Tom’s forte but did involve a bat and ball to chase so he had a go. Robb 2nds toured to exotic places like Bundarra and Uralla. UNEX was formed in 1973, in Sydney North Shore sub district, to provide a social platform for Saturday nights commencing usually with the San Miguel in Artarmon. It was resurrected in 2009 for an Armidale Oldies carnival and Tom was an integral part of many carnivals.

Wicket keeper, outfielder, opening bat, his particular style bemused and frustrated the hell out of the opposition as did the development of his slow high lob– most effective on the slow low NZ wickets. One thing you could rely on was that Tom would be the first to umpire, to pick up the field markers, to pack and haul the kit. Always recognizable in his not quite immaculate cricket gear and respected by all.

The financial demands of a Rugby dominated social round in the big city were partly satiated by part time maintenance and painting contract work with fellow enthusiasts from Eastwood RUFC. This meant of course that survival was the order of the day. Eventually Tom went into computer work which in the 70s was mainly in installing, maintaining and operating mainframe micro systems. Mobile phones and laptops were non-existent. His major client was in the airfreight business and Tom spent much of his time in the Mascot headquarters ensuring the systems were operating efficiently.

November 1976 Tom had gathered enough resources to venture to UK via Asia, Nepal and Greece – local transport and backpacking with Mike Muldoon. Arriving in London late December he was soon established in the London New Zealand 1st XV captained at the time by good friend from Eastwood, Don Maclean. Part time employment in London was in a ski equipment distribution centre. Salary from this employment was marginal at best but did enable him to travel extensively in Europe, UK and Scandinavia.

Trips were taken in a left-hand drive VW Combi van fitted out in hardwood comfort by the Amsterdam police. The first trip was across France to skiing at Saas Fee in Switzerland. Tom’s first venture into this downhill pastime but one which he took to with his usual gusto if not a zero amount of style. Many trips ensued to ski fields in France, Canada and US over the years.

Having barely survived the ski fields the van continued south east down through the then Yugoslavia to Greece. Near Split on the now Croatian coast Tom as driver at the time was, despite questionable language skills even in English, able to explain his way out of an espionage claim by the police because we had inadvertently entered the space of Marshall Tito the dictator not widely known for his humanity. A spare set of Amsterdam police number plates found in the rear compartment did not make the situation any easier. A couple of international phone calls to London and Amsterdam were the investigation mode of the time.

Carrying on the van plied its way through Greece, fresh bread and sardines being the fuel of the month, to Athens and thence to Crete where a somnorous month was spent on the sands of Matala Beach and in the waters of the Mediterranean. The return to London was via Vienna to not soak in the culture but to attend the 1977 Ice Hockey World Cup with Canadian friends met on Crete. Tom very quickly wearied of Cathedrals and martyred himself by remaining on the steps observing the colourful passing parade.

Back to London for some R&R thence back in the van for north of England. The 1977 test at Nottingham proved painful with Dougie Walters failing again and Boycott getting a laborious hundred, much to delight of the farmers awaiting our daily visit after the game to The Oaks at Carcolston. Then to Northern Europe and Scandinavia.

In June 1978 Tom joined me in Canada for the Calgary Stampede then we took off in an old Chevy Impala across Canada and throughout the USA for a 6 months trip that relied on the charity of many Canadians and Americans that we had met in Europe. Abandoning the car at San Francisco airport after receiving an offer of \$US7 for it we headed home via Hawaii for Xmas 1978.

Back to odd jobs and computer work for Tom and of course resumption of his playing with Woodies. Tom captained the Club and eventually retired after leading the 2nds to victory against Eddie Jones led Randwick team – 1985 I think? His computer work saw him spend time in NZ and Misima Island off PNG working for a mining outfit.

After retirement Tom spent a good deal of time working on the farm he shared with his sister at Bingara - Angus cattle mainly. He very much enjoyed the outdoors and outback life. He trekked with a camel train across the Simpson Desert and ended up at Birdsville Pub. He had many ventures into the outback particularly with his nephew and niece both of whom were working in Alice Springs and the Kimberley. He spent a lot of his time supporting his nephews and nieces and would call into see his brother Arthur on most trips to Bingara. But Tom always had to get back to inner city Redfern and particularly to Eastlakes Golf course where he tried to prove that the putting yips were only temporary even though he had them for 25 years.

Over 50 years I knew Tom as my best mate and friend. From first meeting at Robb College, we went on to share experiences that formed our lives and being Tom, he gave to us and all of our kids uncompromisingly.

Mike Muldoon

India Nepal and Malaysia - Nov 2013.



Mike Muldoon with Tom. Tom top scoring in Kathmandu. (You thought the Ahlamabad pitch was bad?)