

SIR TRUCK SAMS THE MAKING OF AN HONORARY GOLDEN KNIGHT

On the evening of Saturday 19 December 2009, one of our boldest, but by no means oldest members achieved the high recognition that comes with a Knighthood.

It was not a Knighthood of the Realm as we would traditionally expect. In fact in many ways, it was a much harder won prize. One earned through the display of far more courage, tenacity and thirst for adventure. In this case, it was Warrant Officer Class Two Laurie Truck Sams, SC Retd who was to have the title of Honorary Golden Knight bestowed upon him by the US Army's Premier Parachute Display Team, The Golden Knights. The significance of this honour should not be underestimated and it is best illustrated by the fact that Truck is one of less than five foreigners ever to receive this recognition.

Perhaps the most famous Honorary Golden Knight is former President George Bush Sr which gives you a sense of the company Truck keeps. As the Golden Knights state Honorary Golden Knights have contributed tremendous

amounts of time and effort to support the Team and its activities. This honor is the Team's way of saying Thank You for their valuable service. For Truck, this service has been rendered through a lifetime commitment to parachuting in all its forms military and civilian. Many of you will know of Truck's work in the pioneering of Military Freefall while serving with SASR and PTS. He combined his passion with the needs of the unit and the

passion when he survived a double malfunction on a Tandem jump in 1998. For the actions he took to save the life of his passenger, Truck gave a leg and won the Star of Courage. This incident was my first introduction to Truck when I was a young sport jumper in Brisbane. Meeting him during his rehabilitation was an inspiration and it was a pleasure not to be repeated until now.

Between 1974 and 1988, Truck served several tours of duty in the US on exchange with both the Golden Knights and various Special Operations units. These exchanges included competing as a Golden Knight in the World Cup of Champions in Sienna Italy and being invited to participate in the US Navy



Chaloner, Truck, GK & LTC Greg Hampton (R)

Army to support design and testing of both equipment and techniques that are common place today.

His legacy is no doubt evident in the operational freefall insertions SASR Patrols have made in Afghanistan over recent years. Truck was also able to find time to invest in the civilian sport of parachuting becoming National Champion in Style and Accuracy no less than fourteen times amongst other national and international achievements. Truck came close to making the ultimate sacrifice for his

SEAL led World Record Formation Skydiving attempt in 1985. Unlike most transient exchangees, Truck managed to make an indelible contribution to the development of military parachuting in the US as well as to the development of the Golden Knights Parachute Display Team. It was for these reasons that on the 50th Anniversary of their formation, they chose to recognise him.

To this end, it was a rare privilege to witness Truck's Knighting at the home of the Golden Knights, Fort Bragg, North Carolina. Like all things

in America, occasions of this nature must be big in every sense of the word. In marking their 50th Anniversary, the Golden Knights hosted a week of displays and demos and hard core partying for current and former members of the Team. If there was a year to be Knighted, this was it. Truck was clever enough to bring his son Will as his moral guide for the week that featured

the gathering of some of Parachuting's greatest living legends. Amongst them, retired Command Sergeant Major Spider Wrenn seemed to have the worst stories about Truck's reputation as a brilliant parachutist who seamlessly blended a punishing party

routine with award winning accuracy under canopy. It was

friends that rotated through congratulatory handshakes and photographs with Truck for an hour after. It is a reminder of the high regard that Australian SAS Operators, past and present, are held in around the world. As Liaison Officer to the US, I have had the great privilege of meeting America's finest Warriors and listening to countless stories that go back to



for this sort of performance that Truck was recognized. The accuracy, not the partying.

At the appropriate time, Truck looking sharp in Dress Blues was commanded to take a knee while The Golden Knight replete in armour stood sentinel at his shoulder as the CO of the Team used a Broad Sword to make his Knighthood official. I quietly noted the significant round of applause that accompanied his Knighting and the long train of past and present Knights, Warriors and

Vietnam. For all that we might criticise the Americans for, their courage has never been in question and earning and keeping their respect is no easy task. The actions of all our members, like Trucks, have had a disproportionate effect on the unique relationship Australia shares with the US.

Truck continues to be an inspiration with the treks he undertakes both at home and abroad and the ongoing service he provides to military and sport parachuting around the world. Good on ya and congratulations 'Sir Truck'!

LTCOL Brett Chaloner

