

Gerard Eugene Tobin was born on 14 August 1943 to Annie and Noel Tobin. He became a teacher. Gerry was serving in the Citizen Military Forces with 2 RVR, Ballarat, in the mid-1960s. He was a member of Tom Laffey's platoon with John Sonneveld, who credits 'Tobes' with coming up with 'The Old Black Dog' logo that the platoon wore on their 'giggle' hats said that Gerry was good for morale in the company, he was all 'fun and games'. In 1968 Gerry decided that becoming a Pilot with the Army looked an attractive life. He applied for Pilot Training and was accepted, but first he needed to pass the officer training course run for National Servicemen at the Officer Training Unit at Scheyville, an outlying western Sydney suburb. John and Gerry went to Scheyville together. The course was nominally twenty-two weeks long. Gerry went well in the 'Junior' Term of the course, but by the end of the 'Senior' Term was struggling. He was given the option to 'Repeat' the 'Senior' Term, which he accepted. However, it was not to be, he left the course before completing his 'Repeat' term. John, however, passed the Scheyville course, and his flying training and for decades flew helicopters for various organisations.



Returning to Ballarat, Gerry rejoined 2 RVR in early 1969 as a Temporary Corporal. No doubt due to his teaching location he discharged some six months later. From 1979 to 1981 Gerry was the School Principal at St Augustine's School in Maryborough, Victoria. The St. Augustine's Parish remembered Gerry as a 'once met, never forgotten' type of person.

Leaving teaching, Gerry went to work at Sovereign Hill, Ballarat's world-renowned tourist attraction. He was a jack-of-all trades there for some thirty years: a musician, performer, larrikin etc, the face of Sovereign Hill. Gerry was also seen in television advertisements, a familiar one being for Ballarat's Cheapest Cars where Gerry drove people around in an ex-Army early Hi Ace bus with the catch-cry of 'Stop the Bus!' In 2004 Gerry competed in the World Goldpanning Titles and as President of the Victorian Goldpanning Association helped to bring the championships to Sovereign Hill for the first of numerous times.

Gerry married Rozzie and they were together for 48 years before Rozzie passed away several years ago. Their children were Paul and Deborah, who had also worked at Sovereign Hill. Gerry died peacefully at Ballarat Base Hospital, aged 79 years, on 20 May 2023. He leaves behind his children and five grandchildren. Family and friends joined together at the Ballarat Funeral Centre on 29 May to farewell him.



Deborah spoke on the family's behalf and entertained the attendees with some of her father's antics.

Right: Deborah and Gerry at the 2007 World Goldpanning Championships at Sovereign Hill

