

Reflections on Paul Ruwoldt

Reader: Max Carmichael, Max Ruwoldt's friend, on behalf of Paul's work colleagues at TRG, Inc.

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In 1997 many of us here in Australia lost contact with Paul Ruwoldt. We knew he had gone to work and live in America but beyond that our knowledge was a bit limited. The closest I came to extra knowledge was whenever I stayed overnight at Max and Heather's the bedside clock was set at some unusual time.

I suppose many of us assumed Paul had simply landed himself a good job and was living a similar life to what we were here, only he was over there. But aside from being lucky with his employment, Paul's life was in fact very different to what many of us may have imagined.

Paul had initially taken an appointment with Price Waterhouse as a change management consultant based in Washington DC. In this position he was routinely contracted out to various organizations and companies and soon gained for himself a reputation for high standards of performance and perfection. However he was also noted by his work colleagues as a man who was prepared to give of himself to others and one who was not so concerned with receiving. It will be no surprise to many of us here that he was also seen as a man who would take charge of the situation, never asking for help unless it was absolutely needed (Now I wonder where he got that characteristic from?).

In 2006 Paul joined the company Training Resource Group Inc. This was in fact no small achievement in itself for TRG are most selective in their appointment of their operatives. TRG's confidence in their new man was well founded for within a very short time of arriving on the staff, Paul was required to go to Namibia as a Work Force Support Adviser. Paul had little knowledge of Namibia beyond that it was an African country, but he readily accepted the challenge. Arriving alone, hiring a car and somehow arriving safely at his destination.

There followed a series of similar projects in other parts of Africa including Zanzibar, Tanzania and Ghana. His work in these countries was focused on improving the health care workforce for the HIV/AIDS ravaged populations. Some of Paul's projects included:

- Making health workers more productive in Zanzibar;
- He worked on how to retain health workers in Tanzania – how to keep them from migrating to countries with better working conditions; and
- He helped Namibia create and implement a new Human Resources for Health Strategic Plan.

In all of these projects he enjoyed remarkable success and his work colleagues speak of a man with great compassion and an ability to relate to those he was there to help without any sense of superiority. Where we might consider giving a few dollars to a charity fund in support of an overseas charity or relief fund, Paul was actually out there working directly with the people. If the young people of Mount Gambier are ever looking for a positive role model to follow, they could do far worse than following Paul's example.

Paul's life away from us was not all work. He remained proudly Australian and played Aussie Rules football with the Washington DC Eagles, playing many of his games as full forward. He also tried to educate the Yanks on cricket. He enjoyed a beer and sport and outdoor activities were a particular passion. Canoeing, boxing, racquetball, walking, hunting, motor cycling, not to mention the renovation of a house were all activities he enjoyed. In amongst all of this he found Natalie and it is clear from comments by his friends in America and from my own observations reading *Caring Bridge*, he loved Natalie unconditionally.

Paul became ill in 2007 and immediately the qualities that enabled him to face unknown African countries alone became apparent. Paul loved life and he fought to live. It was a fight that he went into knowing the odds and throughout his great struggle his spirit never faltered. He even continued to work!

A descriptor I have seen in several accounts of Paul's life in his last few years is "heroic". Another South Australian who was also destined to die too young, and to whom the term "heroic" was justly applied was World War Two hero Lieutenant Tom Derrick. I believe Derrick has left us with some advice which we can apply to our grief and thoughts of Paul. Derrick's battalion had been training for a sea borne operation when there was an accident and a number of Derrick's men were drowned. When someone commented on this tragic loss, Derrick said to them "They are still with us. Never underestimate a good man, they are never lost to us".

Paul Ruwoldt was a good man.

Max Carmichael then read the following letter from Jim McCaffery, Paul's friend and co-worker at TRG. This letter was also read at the U.S. service.