



Service History and Tribute to  
**78262 (NZ) SAA N Armiger (Spike)**

7<sup>th</sup> May 1956 to 10<sup>th</sup> May 2012



1956	RNZAF Woodbourne	Boy Entrant School	Aircraft Apprentice u/t – enlistment, attestation and basic recruit training.
1956 -1959	RAF Halton	Technical Training Command	Aircraft Apprentice Training (Instrument Fitter Navigation)
1959	RAF St. Athan	Maintenance Command No: 32 MU	2 <sup>nd</sup> Line Servicing OJE - Vickers Valiant B Mk1 and navigation instruments, in particular auto pilots.
1959	RAF Abingdon	Transport Command	2 <sup>nd</sup> Line Servicing OJE - Blackburn Beverley C Mk1.
1960 -1965	RNZAF Wigram	Operations Command No: 3 Squadron	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Line Servicing - Bristol Freighter Mk31M. With plenty of flight time on Freighters up to Singapore and outlying NZ dependencies in the Pacific Islands.
1965 -1970	RNZAF Base Auckland	Operations Command (Hobsonville) No: 3 Squadron	1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> Line Servicing – Bell Iroquois UH1D helicopters. Army tactical transport support operations.

**RANK ON COMPLETION OF SERVICE**

Sergeant

**AWARDS**



(We believe these medals were entitled during service)

NZ Operational Service Medal  
 General Service Medal (Malay Peninsula)  
 NZ Defence Service Medal



## **CIVILIAN CAREER AND ADDITIONAL STORIES**

### **CONTENTS**

1. *A Tribute to Norman Walter "Spike" Armiger by Don (Shorty) Gray*
2. *The Indomitable Spirit of "Spike" – 'e' mail correspondence with Spike up to his demise*

When we first embarked on the task of bringing together Spike's Service Record, Civilian Career, Additional Stories and Tributes to put onto the 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry website no one could have known that it would trigger many 'e' mails between the UK, New Zealand and Australia involving Spike's daughter Helen and his family and many friends who served in the RNZAF and RAF.

It has been a fascinating time bringing together the different facets of Spike's life and the content gives you what we have been able to unearth (so far).

### ***A Tribute to***

## **NORMAN WALTER "SPIKE" ARMIGER**

***by Don (Shorty) Gray***

On 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2012, Spike passed away in Whangarei hospital following treatment after amputation of a lower leg due to circulatory problems. He had been under treatment for some time but his passing was unexpected.

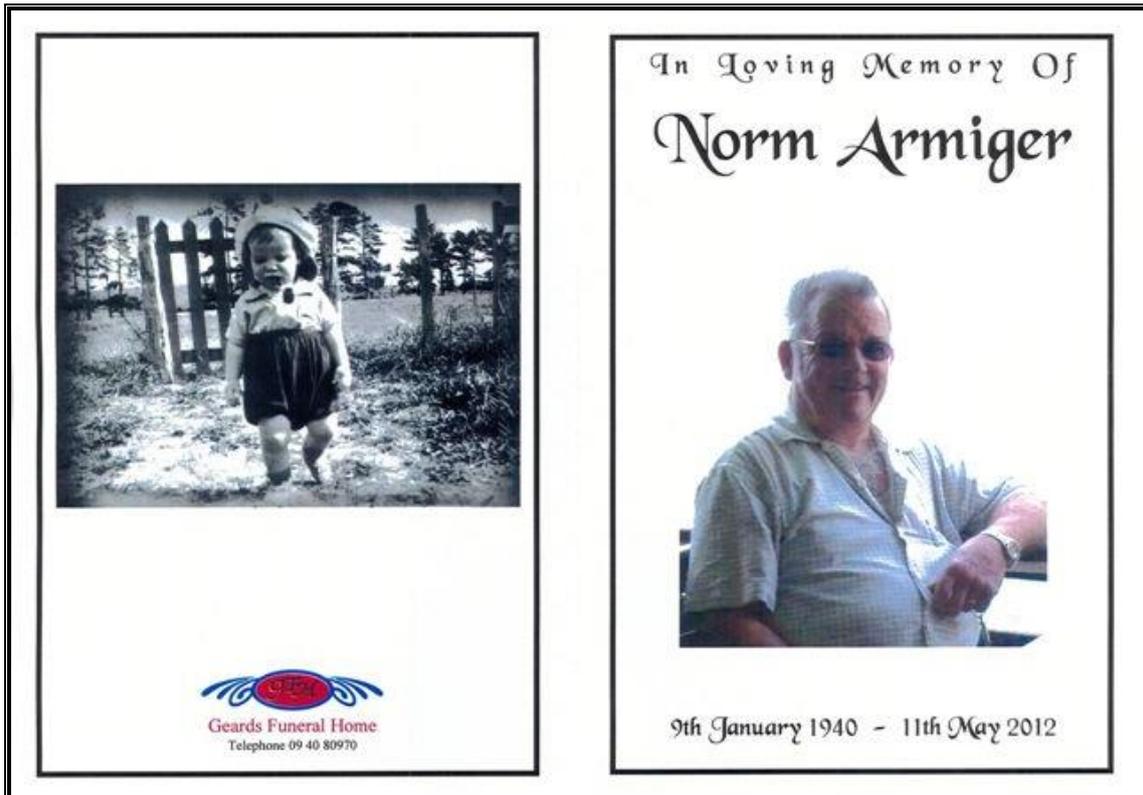
Spike was predeceased by his wife Libby and their son Raymond. He is survived by their daughter Helen, son-in-law Greg, grandchildren Jaime and Dillon O'Leary, and his two younger brothers, Allan and Stan Armiger.

On Wednesday, 16<sup>th</sup> May, my wife Cath and I were privileged to attend Spike's funeral and represent the 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry as well as ourselves. The funeral was at St. Saviour's Anglican Church in Kaitia, New Zealand's northern most town, and his family home since leaving the RNZAF after his 12 year service.

We were able to meet with Helen and relations for luncheon at Spike's home prior to the service that afternoon. St. Saviours Church was packed with friends and relatives, and it became clear that he was a well-liked member of the community who had heavy involvement as a local historian, RSA member, museum promoter, etc.

As well as local speakers I was able to speak on behalf of the 83<sup>rd</sup> and offer condolences to his family and mention the apprentice scheme and our involvement. I was followed by Athol Kitchingman, who expanded on my comments and also named the entire RNZAF contingent in the 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry.

Maurice Raven's son, David, also spoke on behalf of their family. Maurice and Pauline have been regular visitors to New Zealand to visit their sons, and Spike and I have seen them regularly, up to earlier this year.



Funeral Service for

**Norman Walter Armiger**

Officiating: Michael Withiel

On  
Wednesday 16th May 2012 at 3.30pm  
Followed by Private Cremation

Service held at  
St Saviour's Anglican Church  
Church Road, Kaitiaki

**Order of Service**

Greeting and Remembrance

Eulogy - Allan Armiger

Family Tributes

Open Tributes

Bible Reading - Psalm 26: 5-9 Stan Armiger

Reading and Prayer - Jaime and Dillon O'Leary

The Lord's Prayer

Our Father who art in heaven,  
Hallowed be Thy Name. Thy kingdom come;  
Thy will be done: On earth, as it is in Heaven.  
Give us this day our daily bread.  
And forgive us our trespasses,  
As we forgive those who trespass against us.  
And lead us not into temptation;  
But deliver us from evil; For Thine is the kingdom,  
The power and the glory, For ever and ever. Amen.

Hymn - Amazing Grace

Commendation and Committal

Recessional Music  
The Royal Scots Dragoon Guards - The Black Bear

At the Hearse

RSA Tributes

Floral Tributes

**Amazing Grace**

Amazing grace - how sweet the sound  
That saved a wretch like me!  
I once was lost, but now am found,  
Was blind, but now I see.

'Twas grace that taught my heart to fear,  
And grace my fears relieved;  
How precious did that grace appear  
The hour I first believed.

Through many dangers,  
Toils and snares,  
I have already come;  
'Tis grace hath brought me safe thus far,  
And grace will lead me home.

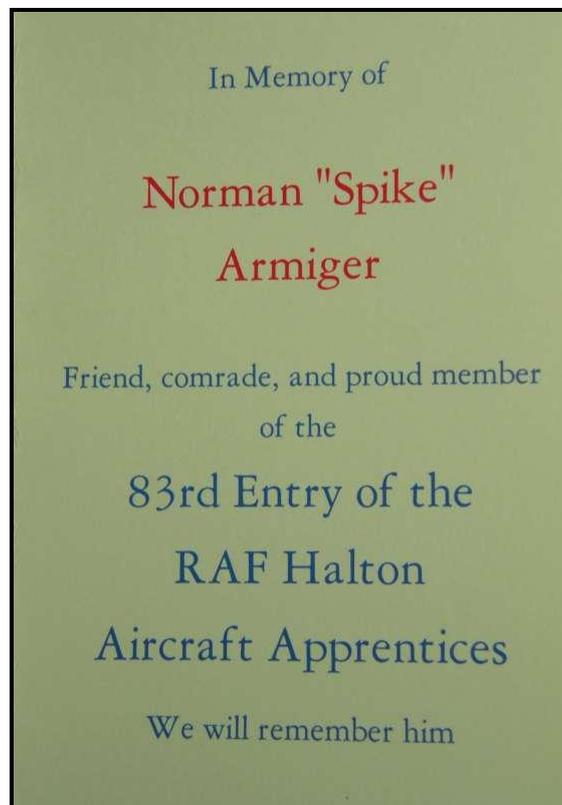
When we've been there ten thousand years  
Bright shining as the sun,  
We've no less days to sing God's praise  
Than when we've first begun.

The family thank you for being here today and at the conclusion of this service extend a warm invitation to join them and share refreshments at the Kaitiaki RSA Matthews Ave. Kaitiaki.

I was also able to provide a floral arrangement for the Church and managed to produce a card from the 83<sup>rd</sup> to suit. The wreath on the coffin is from the local RSA (Returned and Services Association) as is usual protocol when a member is involved.



*The 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry Floral Tribute and Card*



*The message inside the 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry Card*

Spike was a longstanding member of the Far North Returned and Services Association, and at the conclusion of the main service, there was a formal address by the RSA President, and "The Last Post" was played on the bugle.

By special request "the Bear" was played as the Recessional as the coffin was leaving.



*Final journey embraced by the New Zealand Flag and to the sound of 'The Black Bear'*

The congregation then adjourned to the nearby RSA club for fellowship and refreshments.

After leaving RNZAF and settling the family in Kaitaia, where Spike had grown up, he eventually retrained as a surveyor and worked for over 17 years on survey and land development with the Government Department of Lands and Survey. Large tracts of land were developed and subdivided into productive farms. This time was followed by small business involvement including photographic and picture framing in later years.

In 1992, Spike and Libby along with Athol and Lois Kitchingman, Ken and Ngaire Butcher attended the first 83<sup>rd</sup> Entry Reunion and they appear in entry website "Rogues Galleries" (Reunion Groups). Since 2002 I have been in regular contact with Spike via Email and occasional visits north, and we will sorely miss those reminiscing times.

Below is a photo of Spike and me in front of the memorial he designed for the site of Waipapakauri Airfield, the northern most airfield during WW2, a few miles north of Kaitaia.



Regards to all, Don "Shorty" and Cath Gray

## THE INDOMITABLE SPIRIT OF “SPIKE”

The dictionary states that *indomitable* means: unconquerable - brave, determined, and impossible to defeat or frighten. During his long period of suffering Spike exhibited all of those traits and this was demonstrated in 'e' mail correspondence that he shared with our members. Very clearly, Spike's ability to confront his serious illness head-on with humour along with his thoughts and concerns for family and others, should be an inspiration to us all.

The following are extracts from various pieces of correspondence from September 2011 up to Spike's demise. It's a hell of a read and it will take some time!!

### 27<sup>th</sup> Sept 2011 – From Ivor

Maurice & Pauline Raven go to NZ each year to visit their children there. Over the years they have built up a good relationship with Spike Armiger when they are visiting in NZ. Maurice sent me an update on Spike and I have copied the section that is of most concern.

'QUOTE'

"Spike Armiger has suffered a severe setback in his fight against circulation problems. Despite frequent pruning of extremities (fingers and toes), it has finally been necessary to amputate a leg below the knee to stop further deterioration. He had the operation on Sunday and I am in contact with his daughter, who informs me that so far all is going as planned. It's early days yet, but looking hopeful, so perhaps you can pass the word around. I have passed a message on with best wishes from the 83rd and will keep you updated with progress".

'UNQUOTE'

I think it would be a good idea, especially those that knew Spike well at Halton plus others to send an 'e' mail or write. Spike came to our first Reunion with his wife Libby. Libby died a few years ago, plus there have been other family traumas for Spike to contend with. We all wish Spike the best, the fellowship of the wheel is always there. Best regards

### 4<sup>th</sup> November 2011 - From Spike

Hi everybody, Lovely summer day i.e. raining!!

OK the great drama is over thank God. Wednesday appointment with vascular surgeon (chronic ischaemic ulcers x 4, bones exposed, dry black gangrene = ultimate pain!!) he offers amputation soonest; admit AK hospital Sunday for theatre on Tuesday. Gap in Monday's theatre list, would I take it? Fine.

Pretty emotional I can assure you. Op was under epidural plus mild sedation, so f—n mild that I woke up (partial) to the sound of an air driven saw making two definite cuts as in both leg bones! No pain. Amputation was 7" below now which is a definite plus as I will have a totally flexible prosthesis. This process starts in a week (14<sup>th</sup>) and the following week 21/22/23<sup>rd</sup>. It will be fitting, fine tuning etc. Great!!

My sincere thanks to you for your cards which, along with those from other 83rd members, came close to a roll call. Certainly a great "brotherhood" we have.

During the whole 5 week period there were some periods of the ultimate pain (tears even), lots of morphine but now settled down really well. At home I have Beryl (my regular home-help lady) who has an extra 5 hours a week, 2 wheelchairs (one in lounge and my own personal, permanent one upstairs. I have to navigate those three steps on my butt and using arm strength to lift and heave myself up. One fall so far but according to the experts everyone has this experience and

usually once only as it is not forgotten!! It was like doing a loop in a Chipmunk-very slow over the top & then the downward acceleration. The ones in the Chipmunks were far more pleasant.

Numerous “extras” have been added to my house inventory such as frame over the bog, seat across the bath, etc. New leg process begins next week (14<sup>th</sup>) with cast of stump, etc. followed by three days (21/22/23<sup>rd</sup>) for final fitting, fine tuning etc. all done at the Limb Centre in Auckland. I can't wait.

Then it will be a whole new life, especially without constant pain and severe limitations. Of particular interest is that I received a message from a very pretty 61 year old widow in the Philippines. This was apparently “meant to be”. She was staying with family in NZ when she chanced upon my “pedigree” in NZ Dating web-site. There have been so many “coincidences” in so many respects of our individual lives, quite incredible actually. Needless to say we are both very happy and comfortable with each other and my new leg may get a holiday in the Philippines in the pretty near future. Meanwhile the e-mails are working well. She may even come back down to NZ for a stay. OK folks that will be it from me until next time.

Cheers & kind regards to all *Norm/Spike*

P.S. Son-in-law Greg is now **Number One** on the heart transplant list. Could happen any day/night. *N.*

### **10<sup>th</sup> November 2011 – From Spike**

Hi folks,

For the uninitiated Douglas Bader was a WW2 RAF pilot and got shot up badly enough to lose both legs!! The legend (excuse pun as leg-end) goes that his mates on the squadron knocked up some legs for him from whatever was available – lots of metal apparently. At the end of the day Bader continued his flying duties (Spitfires / Hurricanes) and became known as “Tin Legs”. The truly indomitable British spirit especially when they get their hackles up!!

Been there, seen that!! I did serve with the RAF for four years, I did do some crazy things in aircraft but, since Kraut was eating real bitter sauerkraut at that time, we did not receive the attention that Douglas Bader did. I am grateful. However, come Sunday 13th. I am heading south, courtesy of my intrepid home-help lady, ready for a Monday morning appointment with the Limb Centre in Mt. Eden. It will be a general assessment, cast of stump, etc.

Following week we will be there for three days for final crafting, fitting & adjusting of my new lower right leg – “Pogo” will be the name. The end to three years continuous pain, doctors, practice nurses, specialists doing their utmost to get all the problems fixed up – unfortunately it was a case of “flogging the dead horse” or more correctly, the dead foot. Finally, amongst other problems “dry, black, gangrene” was obvious and the “vascular blokes”, as the vascular surgeons are affectionately known, decided amputation was the only option. The rest is history and so be it!

Greg is at present in the renal unit at AK Hospital with a problem that I am not familiar with. Lost a lot of weight and very “high readings” on some medical scale. This does not exclude him from a heart transplant when the right donor turns up.

That's it for now, Cheers **Norm**

### **25<sup>th</sup> November 2011 – From Spike**

Hi everybody,

Home to a dead computer – I think a certain router will be going fishing. No incoming mail, computer doctor on his way.

Very lucky to have Beryl as my driver/caregiver – excellent + in both departments. Managed 60 metres on “Pogo” this morning. Fitted in an extra period in the gym yesterday p.m. as a “do-it-myself” exercise. All is well.

The pain is becoming less severe as each day goes by. An ugly sod is “Pogo” being that he is a steel tube into a plastic foot and the remains of an old wet suit leg that pulls up into my groin and holds all in place. Very clever and I am forever grateful.

I still have to have solid support whilst I am undertaking basic small steps. No rush as I have to be very careful not to damage any of the surgical process by being too smart. Whangarei Hospital was expecting me to come and stay there for a weeks’ rehab. I was adamant that KTA had the same facilities and well qualified staff. By accepting their request (WRE) I would have been effectively downgrading KTA Hospital. Say no more, I was angry.

Cheers for now **Norm**

### **23<sup>rd</sup> December 2011 – From Spike**

Hi folks,

Beautiful day here – sun, some cloud and a gentle breeze. I should be thankful but my “day at the office” got off to a bad start. What’s news when I’m around?

Yesterday nurse was not happy with my left foot which has got four open “wounds” all of which are possibly the result of infection. Anyway I went, or Beryl took me to the Doctor this morning. I am now on antibiotics which are pretty much part of staple diet for me!!

My foot is decorated with marker pen lines; if inflammation passes these lines I am to ambulance to hospital and hand over letter the doctor has given me. All quite dramatic. I certainly don’t need matching pair of legs, or rather short legs!!

I am now brainwashing myself into a state of denial as to the worst scenario. I am quite sure I can beat it with a little TLC from District Nurse, lots of help from “on High” and the knowledge that my “things to do and see” list is obscenely long. I also have my lady friend from Manila coming to stay with me for a month – separate bedrooms please as this will be touring (NZ) to extend our friendship, bonding and who knows what may come of it. She is also postponing her 64<sup>th</sup> birthday until I can take her out to dinner.

Definitely a much more positive catalyst. I have also pretty much mastered 150 + Tagalog (Philippines dialect) words and see no great merit in my effort being wasted !!

*Thank you all for your support with  
e-mails & cards which were much appreciated.*

*To you & yours may you all have a*

*Wonderful Christmas in the true spirit of  
Christmas,*

*Rest up large & then begin a  
Happy & Prosperous New Year.*

*Norm.*

**13<sup>th</sup> January 2012 – From Spike**

Hi everybody,

Surprise, surprise!! Back home! Hopefully this is for a long time apart from trip to Limb Centre to have my “socket” rebuilt as stump shrinkage is improving.

Another eight days in hospital began when GP’s were at a loss as to best method of treatment to my left leg which was “giving me grief”. A fine crop of small ulcers which were not responding to various medications. OK, hospital doctors decide on a pretty massive attack with antibiotics per drip every 6 hours!! Very slow progress but at least there is some improvement visible and confirmed by blood tests.

Ah Ha, the dreaded infection homes in on my big toe (under the nail!). Doctors decide on an ambulance ride to WRE Hospital for review and (worst case scenario amputation of left leg!).

At least I get to ride up front with Katrina (ambo) Amazing what extras one sees when seated so much higher off the ground. At WRE Hospital I get reviewed by specialist who thankfully advises me “that surgical intervention is not necessary as the wounds are showing SLOW signs of healing”.

What a relief as I had become quite emotional at the thought of more surgery. I do not need a matched pair of lowered suspension items!! Katrina had offered to wait until review was completed which was great as next “truck”, as the ambos call their Mercedes vehicles, would not be available for a couple of hours. I was busting to get out of the place before they had a change of mind.

Spent my birthday in KTA hospital. The two nurses caring for me scavenged a beautiful purple gladioli from the hospital gardens and some fancy chocolates from A & E, gave a sweet rendition of “Happy Birthday”, a couple of hugs, several phone calls, numerous e-mails.

My apologies to the wine industry for an unscheduled drop in turnover and I shall resolve to “catch up” asap.

Numerous visits from friends, church, RSA were all appreciated.

It makes one feel very humble with the treatment, care and personal “cheer-ups” I received in all three hospitals.

In all hospitals I was able to “do the rounds” each day visiting other patients, some unknown to me, having a chat, a joke or two. This was good therapy for them as well as me. Doctors and nurses were

appreciative, as in a small way, it took some of the pressure off them as the patients were diverted from the constant "button pushing" that, in many cases, is just a result of boredom.

"Act good - feel good" a twist on the Cancer Society's "Look good - feel good" policy. Special thanks to my "home help" Beryl who was there, at any time, to do this, do that please. Fold my wheel chair, pack it in back of her car, deliver me wherever, wash clothes, iron clothes, take me shopping, someone to have a "cuppa" and a chat – nothing a problem!! An amazing lady. How many folk have made that very same statement?? Next week she will earn her stripes as a brewer having performed the exacting task of "putting down" a brew three times!!

E-mails from ex-Halton buddies (Brats) and wives very important in friendships and brotherhood that began 56 years ago on that place we called "Poverty Rock", in those days.

My next step will be to re-establish contact with Dina, my friend in Manila. I am truly grateful to all,

Cheers & kind regards, **Norm/Spike**

#### **4<sup>th</sup> February 2012 – From Helen, Spikes Daughter**

**Subject:** Greg & Norm/Dad update

Hi everyone,

Looks like I'm back on e-mail duty for a few days! I seriously thought the updates would be ending soon as everything is good with Greg!! At this stage everything is going fantastically with Greg and he has been given a leave pass for the weekend so we are at home and returning to Hearty Towers on Monday afternoon!

Not so good with Dad! Beryl (Dad's good friend and home help) phoned this morning to tell me that Dad has been admitted to Kaitaia Hospital.

I know he hasn't been coping so well lately with the pain in his foot and he also pulled a muscle in his neck which has made things even worse. He is at the stage where it is taking an hour and a half to get himself out of bed! With that and the cocktail of pain medication he is currently on, he isn't coping so well! His doctor spent some time with him last night and again this morning.

When I spoke to him this afternoon he sounded reasonably cheerful and at this stage will be in hospital until at least Tuesday when I am guessing they will ambulance him to Whangarei Hospital for his vascular appointment. I think it is a good thing and doctors seemed pleased with the progress his foot is making – hopefully some forced rest and supervised pain medication will have him back home much happier!!

Will keep you all up to date. Cheers, H

#### **7<sup>th</sup> February 2012 – From Ivor / Tony Gassner**

Dear Members, Tony Gassner sent the email below as Spikes daughter had his email address and not mine, so Tony sent it to me. Not good news for Spike despite his brave efforts. Let's hope he can come through this OK. He obviously has our thoughts and good wishes.

Hi Tony,

Not such great news about Dad and I only have your e-mail address and David Smith's with me. I will try and get others tomorrow but if you could inform the troops that Dad has been transferred to Auckland hospital for surgery to remove his other leg tomorrow. I am not sure what time but will keep you up to date with progress! He seems to be coping OK but a little tearful - to be expected I guess!!

I am sure that once he is through surgery he will be pain free and finally be able to concentrate on becoming mobile again!!

Talk soon, Helen

**13 February 2012 – From Helen**

Hi All,

Sorry about not getting back to everyone sooner – as you know my life is pretty chaotic at the moment. I have just spoken to Dad and will pop in this afternoon to see him.

He is doing better and I believe they have scheduled surgery for tomorrow. There is evidently a vascular blockage in his stomach area that they believe is the problem and are hoping to fix that with angioplasty. He has had more scans today and the doctor has said that if angio doesn't work they will remove a vein from his arm and bypass the blockage.

If all goes to plan, they are reasonably confident that this will mean he gets to keep his leg!! Fingers crossed!! Will let you all know what happens tomorrow!

Thanks, H

**14<sup>th</sup> February 2012 – From Helen**

**Subject:** Good News!!

Dad just phoned and he is out of surgery and in HDU (probably overnight). They took veins from his arm and bypassed the blocked area and the surgeon told Dad that they were delighted with how well the surgery went and no further surgery should be required!! Hopefully he will be up and about in no time.

Cheers, Helen

**15 February 2012 – From Helen**

**Subject:** Wee setback

Hi All,

Dad is still doing great and the doctors are happy with how things are progressing but they have decided that the two remaining toes on his foot are too far gone to save. He will have them removed tomorrow morning and is quite happy with this – he will still have his foot and once that heals he will be able to concentrate on learning to use his prosthetic!

They have said that if they don't remove them then he will more than likely be back in hospital in a couple of months having his leg removed. He doesn't really have a choice but is happy with what they are suggesting.

Cheers, Helen

**The following card was organised by John Cheesbrough and sent by Ivor on 15<sup>th</sup> February with a message:**

Dear Helen, Please ensure Spike gets a copy of the attachment. It is sent with a lot of love and good wishes from the 83rd Entry. All the best, Ivor John

# To Norman (Spike!) Armiger

from

## The 83<sup>rd</sup>



Spike - here's hoping that you make a speedy recovery from your current woes and that gorgeous nurses find 83 ways of pandering to your every need. Get well soon. **Dave (aka Bill) Green**

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We're all thinking of you Spike so if it's Prayer that does it for you we're praying for you. If it's beer that does it for you then have a pint on us. Whatever it is, we're with you all the way. All the very best **Angela and Dave Taylor**

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Spike. All Good wishes, you are very much in my thoughts and prayers. **David Stone**

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Hope all goes well Spike and you are back to your cheerful self very soon. Regards **Derek de Kock**

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Dear Spike, So sorry to hear of your troubles. Thinking of you and wishing you a speedy recovery. All the very best to you and your family. **Gerry Biddiscombe**

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Good Luck Spike, Kind Regards, **Gerry Hunt**

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Here's hoping for a successful outcome to the latest problems. All the best, **Jack Knoops**

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Losing one leg is bad; Spike, but two would be sheer bloody carelessness. We're praying for better news. All the best **John and Angela Cheesbrough**

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Hi Spike. Keep taking the tablets! You're not alone - I swallow 7 different ones each day - no wonder the National Health Scheme budget is broke! **John Dainty (681957, Engines)**

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Hello Spike. Rose and I are thinking of you and especially when you came to stay with us in Bath and you were overcome with emotion at fulfilling your fantasy of being locked in a pub. Keep smiling. Lots of Love. **John and Rose**

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Spike. My very best wishes for a speedy recovery. **John Moon**

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Spike, You have a lot of good friends in this country who are hoping and praying for a quick and painless recovery. You are in our thoughts. **Chips Wood**

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*Hey Spike, so what about this ferret that you always need to take for a walk? Must be some special Kiwi critter. We're all thinking of you - all the best. Patrick (Tess) O'Shea*  
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Good luck Spike. Best wishes, Ray (Taff) Jones  
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**Hi Spike, Our prayers for your speedy recovery and for saving of the other leg. My daughter had her right hip and leg amputated due to bone cancer and I know how you feel. All the best. Swami**  
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Hi Spike, Thinking of you today hope it will get better for you soon Tony & Pam Miles  
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**17 February 2012 – From Maurice and Pauline Raven – currently in NZ visiting their son Ivor,**

Pauline and I have today visited Spike in Auckland hospital, he is still in a lot of pain, but the prognosis is still positive. There is a good chance that the op to remove remaining toes will lessen the chances of further requirements. Hopefully this will save his remaining undercarriage.

He is extremely grateful for the epistle and took great comfort from knowing that real friends remain good friends and the 83rd brotherhood is alive and well. So thanks to all who responded and let us hope that he continues to make good progress.

Maurice and Pauline

**20 February 2012 – From Helen**

Saw Dad this afternoon and he's doing great! Doctor's are happy so I guess it's just a waiting game now! Much love, H

**29 February 2012 – From Helen**

Hi All,

Sorry I haven't been in touch for a few days! Dad has not been back to theatre yet for debriding and general tidy up of his wound as his blood level is not where the doctors want it to be! Something to do with the warfarin he is on – his blood level today was 3.2 and they want it to be under 3 before they will operate again!

He had a bad Sunday and Monday – generally feeling pretty down in the dumps and pain still not under control but he has improved as the week has gone by. He has pretty much been in hospital for the last 2 months so can't really blame him for having moments!!

Greg went to see him after his physio appointment today and they spent a bit of time comparing notes on the effects that drugs have (lack of taste, hallucinating, highs and lows etc) and Dad was in great spirits when I saw him this afternoon! I think he gets a real boost when he sees Greg – he has been through so much and is doing so well!!

At this stage it will be surgery tomorrow morning if his blood levels are OK! I think Dad has resigned himself to the fact that he will probably be in hospital for at least another couple of weeks – hopefully once they have cleaned his foot up a bit, the healing will kick in! When he can see an improvement and the pain is sorted I am sure he will move forward in leaps and bounds!!

Thanks everyone for messages, phone calls, hospital visits. They really do help.

Will e-mail again after he has surgery!! Cheers, Helen

**14<sup>th</sup> March 2012 – From Greg, Spike son-in-law and Helen's Husband**

Hi everyone!

Am a bit confused about what is going on with Dad and have been unable to speak to his doctors - the latest (as of yesterday) is that while his toe removal is looking great his heel is not and the doctors have advised that the best step from here is to have his left leg removed so that it matches his right!

Not the outcome that we had hoped for but the pain is pretty intense – so much so that he is having to have gas to reapply dressings! They have said that they can patch him up and send him home but if they do he will be back within a few months to have the leg removed and in the meantime he would have to deal with the pain!!

Poor bugger – he has been in hospital for over 5 weeks and is at his wits end – I think the decision has been made and he will be having further amputation within the next few days!!

Will update when I know for sure what is happening!! Cheers, Greg OLeary

**19<sup>th</sup> March 2012 – From Helen**

Hi All,

Dad just phoned and he has undergone surgery to remove his left lower leg today. He left for surgery around 2.30 p.m. and was back in the ward about 6.30 p.m. He has been a bit emotional (understandably) over the last couple of days but he sounded good this evening and the doctors are pleased with how the surgery went!

Hopefully this is the beginning of him getting well and heading home (wherever that may be – Helensville or Kaitaia) in the next few weeks!

Will try to pop in and see him tomorrow before I head away for a couple of days for work! Cheers, H

**2<sup>nd</sup> April 2012 – from Helen**

Hi All,

Dad phoned me this afternoon to say that he has been transferred from Auckland Hospital to Whangarei Hospital (Ward 15, Room 9). This is the rehabilitation ward and I am not sure how long he will be there before being transferred to Kaitaia Hospital.

He has had a rough couple of days – He knocked his wound on Saturday night so has been in a bit of pain and the ambulance trip today didn't help matters! Hopefully onward and upward from here.

I and Dad's brother Stan have spoken to Dad about the possibility of him selling up and moving to Helensville – I think he has accepted that this is probably the best option for him so he has some serious thinking to do!

Hope you are all well! Cheers, Helen

**16<sup>th</sup> April 2012 – From Helen**

Hi all,

Sorry I haven't been in touch! Dad was transferred to Whangarei Hosp about 2 weeks ago so I am only able to see him once a week! Rae and Jac (Mum's sister and her husband) have been amazing - visiting, doing washing etc!! Thanks!! Greg & I have been doing the trek to Whangarei at weekends but only for an hour or so!

Dad seems to be coming along fine although when I spoke to him tonight he had a bit of a meltdown!! Pain seemed under control yesterday when we saw him and he seemed really good! Not so good today but evidently he has group doctor session tomorrow!! Will see what happens... Cheers, H  
Dear Member

**Friday, 11 May 2012 – From Ivor**

Please see the email received from Helen, Spike's daughter.

I will leave it a day or two before I contact Helen to see what the arrangements are for any contributions. Spike had some pretty awful cards dealt him during his life but most of us will remember him as being one of the NZ "Band of Brothers" that joined and enhanced our Entry.

----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:** Dad (9-1-1940 to 11-5-2012)

Hi All,

Sorry to be the bearer of sad news but Dad, (Norm, Spike) passed away in the early hours of this morning!!!

He had been continuing to have pain and healing problems with his left leg and was sent to theatre yesterday to have further debriding (clean & scrape). Evidently he came through this well and was awake and alert during the afternoon.

I'm not 100% sure when things took a turn for the worse but we got a call at 2.30 this morning to say that he was deteriorating rapidly and to go to the hospital. Unfortunately we didn't get there in time and he had already passed when we arrived. I believe that he was having serious pain issues and he suffered a heart attack around 3 this morning.

I am still arranging funeral details so will let you know of those when they are confirmed!

Thank you all for your continued kind messages and thoughts – Dad had some pretty amazing friends and some serious history with most of you!

With love, Helen

**11<sup>th</sup> May 2012 – From Dave Taylor**

Ivor and all,

Terrible news of poor old Spike he certainly did have his share of the rough edge of life especially in these latter years. Please convey our sincere condolences to Helen from all of us that don't have her e-mail address and our sincere thanks for the manner in which she has kept us informed on the progress of her Dad.

Perhaps we can remember Spike with a tile at the Apprentice Wheel at the National Arboretum or a similar form of remembrance? We have all prayed for him over recent times and as you say he was one of the NZ band of brothers that was part of what made the 83rd Entry so unique to us all.

With sorrow, Dave Taylor.

**17<sup>th</sup> May 2013 – From Ivor**

Please see short note from Maurice Raven, one of his son's attended the funeral. I think it says it all, Halton Bear!

I have emailed Helen, Spike's daughter to ask if there are any donations or other requests that may be appropriate from 83rd members. I will keep you posted

----- Forwarded Message -----

**Subject:** Spike funeral

Hi Ivor,

Just a quickie, funeral went well, no reference to donations etc. "Shorty" Gray provided a wreath on behalf of the 83rd. Athol Kitchingman also attended and gave regards to all. As per his final request, Spike was marched off accompanied by the Halton Bear.

Maurice

*POSTSCRIPT*

*As you have seen, compiling Spike's service and civilian history for the website has brought forth many contributions. Although not covered so far, it appears that following his service, Spike was deeply involved with the NZ Air Training Corp and other ex. service related activities. Additionally, details about Spike's interesting civilian career as a Surveyor are emerging.*

*Also, Helen tells us that she has boxes of Spike's service memorabilia, including his 'Halton uniform' and the 'draft' for a second book Spike was writing titled "Halton". This mass of memories is currently being sorted through by Greg, Helen's husband, but it will probably take some time to do.*

*In the meantime there is a lot of 'e' mail correspondence which is filling-in some of the blanks.*

*Will update you again as more information comes to light.*