

RAAF VETERAN BILL SKANDALAKIS

Vasilious “Bill” Skandalakis, 55, was born in Sydney in 1969 and is of proud Greek heritage.

Like many of his generation, Bill is always busy, and it isn't just work. He is deeply involved in the Greek community and charitable organisations, such as the Australian Hellenic Education Progressive Association and is on the board of the Macquarie University Greek Studies Foundation. His children also share his passion for all things Greek.

Growing up in Bexley, money was tight after Bill's dad, a welder, died as the result of a factory accident when Bill was 13, leaving his mother and her two sons to make ends meet whilst on a widow's pension.

Even though Bill was offered a place to study engineering at Wollongong University, he opted to join the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) in 1988 so he could learn new skills.

“The Greek community is very accepting of people like me who serve in Defence, and hold the military in high regard,” Bill says.

“I chose the RAAF because I liked to work on the aircraft.”

After joining up, Bill did basic and technical training, then moved back to the RAAF's Richmond base in Sydney. He served for 10 years, being promoted to Corporal and acquiring many skills.

His roles included engine fitter for the C130 Hercules aircraft, maintenance scheduling, recovery of crashed aircraft, data control for computer systems, relief manning for squadron maintenance and business analyst for process re-engineering.

Among the highlights were preparing the Hercules aircraft when 486 squadron was tasked with rescuing people from serious flooding, and the time the Hawke Government mobilised the Air Force to provide a limited domestic service to passengers affected by the commercial pilots' industrial dispute.

“There was a deep sense of pride that we were contributing to and supporting the Australian community,” Bill recalls.

Long working hours and living on a base far from his community eventually took their toll and Bill left the Air Force in 1998.

“Air Force training gives potential employees a competitive advantage because they have the confidence to “get the job done”, as well as a strong work ethic, attention to detail and pride in ensuring a quality outcome,” Bill says.

A few years ago, Bill did end up going to university to study an MBA, spurred on by his son and daughter who were studying for their HSC.

“Study helped expand my horizons and gave me a different perspective on business lifecycles, from intellectual property to project management.”

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