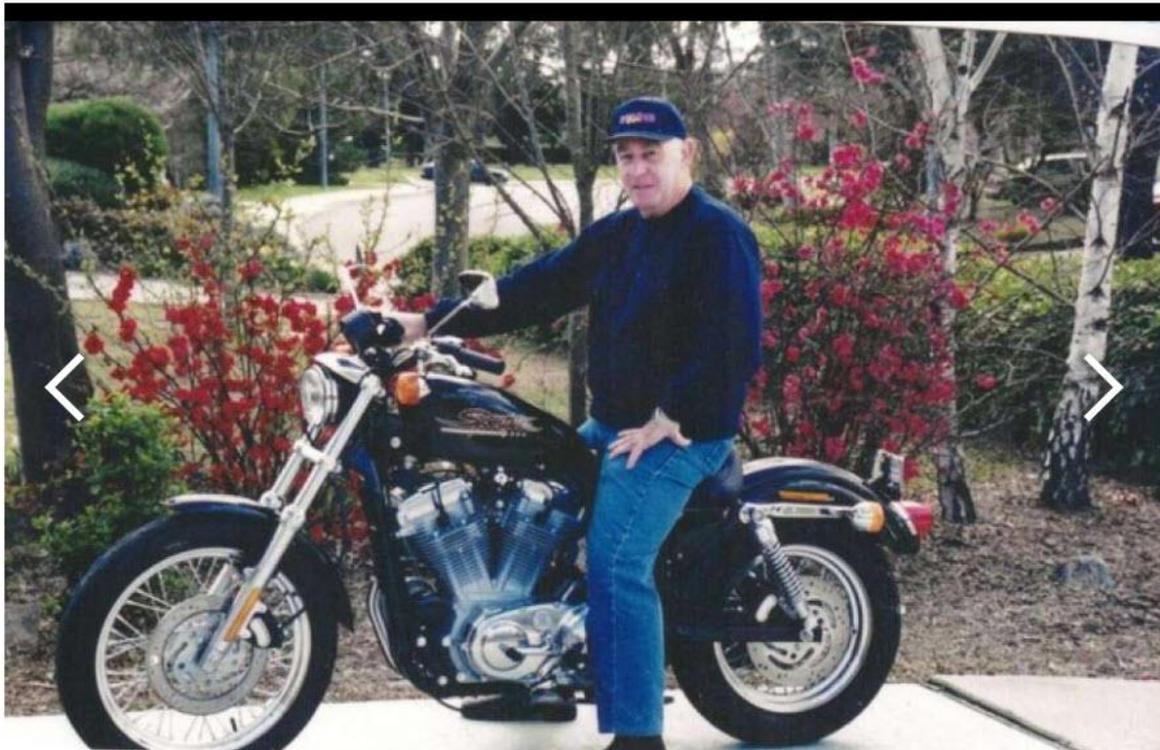


The loss of a ‘brother’: Former APD officer Ringering remembered for duty, fairness

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ALTON — A former Alton police officer who went on to an adventurous life in Australia protecting the prime minister died in October, leaving fond memories among his American friends and kin.

“He exemplified all that it meant to be a protector and a servant of the people, regardless of where he was,” said Fred Richardson of Protem, Missouri, a 58-year friend of the late Lary Ringering, 76. “His time with the Alton Police Department earned him many citations and commendations for service above and beyond the call of duty. He taught me that brotherhood extends past blood lines.”

Ringering, who was born in Alton in 1940, grew up in East Alton and graduated from East Alton-Wood River Community High School in 1958. He died of cancer under hospice care on Oct. 11 in the Canberra, Australia area.

As a teenager, Ringering worked for the former, East Alton Tri-City grocery store, then got on at the Alton Police Department in 1960. He worked at APD until 1973, including as a motorcycle officer. “He was a motorcycle rider, and loved motorcycles,” said former co-officer Larry Parks, 75, of Godfrey. Parks said he met Ringering when the men were Alton Auxiliary Police and unpaid, special deputies for the Madison County Sheriff’s Department.

Lary William RINGERING – AFP 2316

Parks became closer friends with Ringering after Parks joined APD in 1968. Besides both having the first name, albeit different spellings, Parks said they resembled each other and people would mistake them for each other.

“It happened quite a bit, so we started calling each other ‘brother,’” Parks said.

Despite Ringering resigning from APD in 1973 and moving to Australia, he kept in touch with Parks, Richardson and George “Bud” Leone of Godfrey, who retired from the Madison County Sheriff’s Department, via webcams, emails and occasional visits.

In the early 1990s, Parks held a party honoring Ringering and another retired officer in Alton, drawing 20 to 25 retired officers. “It was a very nice reunion, it was the last time a lot of the guys saw Lary,” Parks said. “I miss him. He was a wonderful man, very kind to everybody. He could give you a ticket and people would say ‘thank you.’ He always had a nice smile. He looked immaculate in his uniform.”

Parks said despite Ringering being a traffic control officer, during civil unrest at 9th and Belle streets, he initially was the first one to go to the scene when a supervisor asked for volunteers. “He said, ‘Well, I’ll go,’” Parks said. “He would volunteer for anything. He was very dedicated. When he made sergeant, he was very proud.”

Parks retired from APD in 1989 and became chief of Hartford and Grafton police departments, also putting in a stint in security at the former Alton Belle (Argosy) Casino.

Leone first met Ringering when he was a teenager and the Traffic Division officer gave him a speeding ticket on Washington Avenue. Leone said he told Ringering it would be his third ticket and he would lose his driver’s license. “He said, ‘Apparently you didn’t learn anything from getting the first two tickets,’” Leone said.

Ringering would set up radar near the Leone home on Elm Street to catch other speeders, with Leone often walking over to the police car and chatting with Ringering. It was the start of a long friendship.

“We just really hit it off,” he said. “We became friends that lasted from then until he died.” Leone said Ringering also was influential in his pursuing a career in law enforcement; he retired as a lieutenant in 1998.

When asked what he liked most about Ringering, Leone said, “his fairness.”

“He was very fair,” he said.

Ringering’s cousin, Kerry Pitts of Rosewood Heights, grew up with him and also said the late officer was “fair.”

“He was a good servant to Alton and to the police departments in Australia,” Pitts said. “He had a lot of good friends in the police department and in other factions. Being in Australia, I don’t know how many of them knew he died. He was an extremely honest person, caring. He cared about everybody. He is going to be dearly missed. He struggled a long time with cancer.”

Ringering married his second wife, Vera Horn, in 1972. She was an Australian working in Alton as an au pair. He resigned from APD the next year and the couple moved to Australia and had two children. He previously had two daughters from his first marriage to the former Marcella McCann.

Lary William RINGERING – AFP 2316

The first few years in Australia, Ringering worked at a series of jobs: as a ranch hand on a 20,000-acre cattle station, in a honey factory, welder, farm hand on grain and stud cattle properties, painter of aboriginal governmental housing units; he cut timber, worked in a timber mill, detailed cars and owned a fish and chip shop in Maryborough, Queensland.

“The call of the ‘blue’ did not leave him alone for long,” his widow wrote in a memorial. “He was ‘blue’ through and through.”

That pull back to law enforcement led the family in 1979 to move to Canberra, the country’s capital, where Ringering joined the Australian Commonwealth Police, then the Australian Federal Police (AFP). His career was varied, from serving on a bomb squad, teaching counter-terrorism at a federal police college to working on the AFP VIP Squad. He underwent training at the FBI National Academy in Quantico, Virginia and with Mossad, the Israeli intelligence agency.

While on the AFP’s Protection Division, Ringering was a body guard for Prime Minister Robert Hawke for duration of his eight years in office — 1983 to 1991— and Hawke’s wife, Hazel. That assignment took him away from home six months a year, traveling to Japan, China, Tahiti, Fiji, Ireland, Switzerland, India and the United States as Hawke’s security guard.

In 1988, Ringering returned to East Alton for his 30th high school class reunion. In a July 18, 1988 article in The Telegraph, Ringering said driving into “town” in Queensland involved a 300-mile round trip on unsurfaced roads. “And if you came back home after dark, you really had to slow it down because there are millions of kangaroos hopping across the road, not to mention the stock from the cattle stations,” he said. He said life in Queensland was primitive and it was not unusual for temperatures to reach 120 degrees Fahrenheit.

After Hawke’s final term in office, Richardson said Ringering became a ranking officer in Australia’s witness protection program, then rejoined the local ACT police. He retired in 2008. Besides his love of his Harley Davidson motorcycle, Richardson said Ringering shared his passion for fishing that began when their families would fish carp lakes together in Macoupin County.

Ringering was able to visit the Richardsons at their Bull Shoals Lake home twice, fishing both times.

<https://www.thetelegraph.com/news/article/The-loss-of-a-brother-Former-APD-officer-12587680.php>