



One Track, One People

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Wednesday, February 10, 2010

Dear SSH Wantok,

RE: Passing of Mr. Chris Diercke – SSH/LFWT Mentor/Trainer and Lark Force Historian
Memorial Service – Friday, 12th February 10:30-14:30
“Community Hall – Garden Suburb (Newcastle)”

It is with great sadness that I must announce to all SSH-Lark Force Wilderness Track wantoks, the passing of Chris Diercke (LFWT Historian and training and development coordinator) on Sunday, 31st January 2010.

Chris played a huge role during the development of the Lark Force Wilderness Track project in East New Britain. Since joining the team in December 2007, he displayed a real genuine thirst for knowledge about the battle of Rabaul and this was made evident through his ability to reconnect with Lark Force diggers and their family members. Chris made this story worth telling again and re-ignited a passion for the fallen soldiers of Rabaul, who as we now know they were the **“Forgotten soldiers of WWII.”**

In addition to the historical compilation on Lark Force that Chris engulfed himself in, he also played an enormous role in training the Lark Force Wilderness Track porters and guides. Chris took on the role of “International Porters Protection Group” in PNG, which is a NGO body that aims to protect the welfare of porters worldwide. They couldn’t have found a better person for the job. In October 2009, a 20foot container filled with medical supplies, boots, and other materials were sent up to Rabaul to assist the local communities in the Bainnings and Gazelle region. This shipment had been arranged by Chris and his son Nathan Diercke.

On top of this Chris was a person who never forgot about his roots which for those of you who got to meet him, you would know that he was a true Papua New Guinean, dressed in a white man's body. His love for PNG was clearly evident through his passion for his family history namely Queen Emma Coe (South Seas) and his great grandmother Phoebe Parkinson (Queen Emma's sister). For those who had the opportunity to sit in on one of Chris' presentations on his family, I'm sure you would share the same sentiment as me and say that this story was one that embedded not only his family's identity but PNG's identity. I truly believe that PNG has lost one of its greatest story-tellers. His boots will be hard to fill.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer my condolences to Peta, Nathan, Emma, Kurt and Ryan. During this period of loss and sadness, I would like you to know that the SSH-Lark Force Wilderness Track family are sharing with you the loss of Chris, who was an inspiration to us all.



The Diercke family will be hosting a "Sing Sing get together" for Chris on **Friday, 12th February, 2010 at The Garden Suburb (Newcastle) – Community Hall from 10:30AM-2:30PM.**

Kind Regards,

Kori Chan

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Director - South Sea Horizons & Lark Force Wilderness Track
