

Vale Ian "Chalky" Thomas
16 August 1960 – 22 March 2015

It is with great sadness that we inform you of the passing of one of our VRA members Ian "Chalky" Thomas.

Chalky has been a long time Rogainer and an Orienteer since being introduced to that sport at Broadford High School by one of the teachers. A member of the VRA and several other State Rogaining Associations, he competed in many Rogaining events, including the first WRC at Beechworth and numerous Australian and State Championships. I was often his Rogaining partner and I could never fault Chalky's navigation, we would regularly "spike" checkpoints in the worst places. When the weather turned bad, he went faster! He was usually in the top ten, sometimes winning.

He also volunteered whenever time permitted, course setting, water drops, checkpoint pick up, and as an instructor on our training days and nights. He was also a member of Bayside Kangaroos Orienteering Club and the Victorian ARDF Group.

Chalky was involved in pretty much every outdoor activity you can think of, all at a high level, and some professionally as a qualified instructor. Those I can think of include Rogaining, Orienteering (Bush, MTBO, Street-O, ARDF-O, Inter Service Orienteering), Bush walking, rock climbing, mountaineering, cross country skiing, caving, canyoning and white water kayaking to name a few.

Professionally Chalky worked for the RAAF, initially in the electroplating trade at Richmond and Amberley bases. He later transferred to the RAAF's Officer's Training School (OTS) at Point Cook then East Sale, working as an adventurous training instructor. He was a highly regarded educator in that field. He also seconded to the Army at times in this role. Later he worked in the mining industry, but remained in the active reserves continuing the work at OTS until his illness.

He was involved in the local community and was one of the long term RAAF members who put considerable effort into Operation Newstart, a Police and Education Department program for youth at risk.

We also knew him to be highly innovative, contributing to design improvements of the ARDF club's fox hunting yagis, and low power transmitters. When Chalky lost the ability to ride conventional mountain bikes he obtained a Greenspeed recumbent, altering the design to enable him to use it for as long as practicable, including an excellent electric brake system activated by a sip/puff switch. As a member of the Victorian Speleological Association he designed impressive high power LED flood lights to illuminate large caverns for photographic purposes.

Chalky lost his battle with Motor Neurone Disease and passed away peacefully on Sunday 22nd March. He faced this disease with remarkable bravery. An inspirational bloke. Our hearts go out to his wife Carolyn, daughters Jacinta and Renee and son Nathan, his sister Robyn and family and his mother. It was great to see members of the VRA, Bayside Kangaroos Orienteering Club and the ARDF Group Orienteering Club attend his funeral along with the many others who were touched by Chalky's generosity.

Carolyn has asked for assistance to carry out Chalky's wishes regarding the scattering of his ashes, one being to scatter some at half time on an 8+ hour Rogaine. The full list follows and is typical Chalky, no walk in the park, good fun and get everyone involved! --- Ocean, 5 KM offshore by sea kayak; River, at a grade 3 rapid by kayak (not park and play); Cave, bottom of vertical cave requiring SRT; Mountain in summer, summit, hopefully a wet, cold & windy day; Canyon, middle of canyon requiring abseiling; Mountain in winter, top of mountain by XC skis; Cliff, half way up grade 12+ multi pitch rock climb; Rogaine, half time of 8+ hour Rogaine; RAAF EXCON Officer Training School, Elk River; Electroplaters, at Kangaroo Point. A couple of extras were added; Elk River Cave and Blackwood area along a 4WD track. Ashes Locations

We are responsible for the Rogaine location and propose to form a group to scatter the ashes at midnight on the Victorian Championships. This will be a most appropriate thing for us to do for Chalky and his family. If anyone wishes to be involved please contact me.

Regards, Grant Jeffrey, VRA Competition Manager. Mob 0427777633

1. Ocean, 5 km offshore by sea kayak
2. River, at a grade 3 rapid by kayak (not park & play)
3. Cave, Bottom of vertical cave requiring SRT.
4. Mountain in Summer, Summit, hopefully a wet, cold & windy day.
5. Canyon, Middle of a canyon requiring abseiling.
6. Mountain in Winter, Top of mountain by XC skis.
7. Cliff, Half way up grade 12+ multi pitch rock climb.
8. Rogaine, Half time of 8+ hour rogaine.
9. EXCON OTS, Elk river.
10. Electroplaters, at Kangaroo Point.