



It is safe to say the way 78 year old retired Major Arthur Merryweather conducts his life now has very much been shaped by his childhood.

Born in England during World War Two, Arthur's parents wanted a better life for their five children. "My father said the best place we can go is Australia, not just for its climate but also for a bit of safety. We migrated by boat, it took five weeks, and it was the best thing my parents ever did for us."

Less than five years after immigrating to Australia, Arthur's father, who had served with the Royal Navy, died from a heart attack aged in his 40s. Arthur vividly remembers ex-service organisations stepping in to assist his family. "They were very good to my mother, they helped a lot. It got me thinking that I should do my little bit."

With that in mind at just 17 years old, Arthur enlisted in what was then called the Citizen Military Forces, now known as the Army Reserves.

Too young to even have a driver's licence at the time, Arthur remains amused that he was trained to drive five-ton trucks in the army! During his almost 30 years of service, Arthur worked his full-time job at the Commonwealth Bank. The public saw Arthur in his civilian life, working in a suit in a conservative industry in the hub of Melbourne's business district. But there was a whole different side. "I did a lot of things in Army training like jumping out of planes, traveling around Australia with army camps. If ever anything happened, we were trained to be ready. We could've been sent overseas to defend our country."

Arthur's affiliation with the RSL began when he joined the Coburg Sub-Branch. After moving around, he eventually joined Box Hill RSL, where he has been for the last 26 years, and of those, he has been Treasurer for 23. "What an insight I've had to what the RSL does, from commemorations to Appeals, welfare to education to collecting memorabilia."

"What I get from it is a great sense of helping and giving back to the community," he said. His biggest satisfaction is what he describes as being part of a big engine, namely the RSL. "Helping new people come on to the Committee and helping them learn their job in regarding to be an Appeals Officer."

And of course, the friends. "Without bragging, I've got so many friends. It's lovely to see people who know your name and come in and say how are you Arthur? Your friends are most important, especially as you get older."

Between caring for his wife and fitting in his friends, four children, 13 grandchildren and two great-grandchildren, his RSL still remains a priority. "It's great, but I'll tell you, I don't get much time for telly!"