

# Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## Brigadier Thomas Gregory TRAINOR, MBE

(1917-2004)

Greg Trainor was born on Anzac Day, 1917, in Melbourne, the eldest son and third of five children of Thomas Trainor, railway employee and Anne (nee Oliver). Trainor had a number of part-time time jobs to help the family budget, and had educated himself to matriculation level at night school while working in a timber yard.

Reared during the Depression, his first exposure to the services was at age 17 when he was one of half a dozen Commonwealth Public Service recruits to the Department of Defence. It was dry and unexciting work, so he joined the Melbourne University Regiment in December 1935 rising to corporal and was smitten.

He entered the Royal Military College, Duntroon, on 1 July 1938, graduating in December 1939 and was allotted to the 2/4th Field Regiment, 7th Division. In the Middle East, some months later, he moved to 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment. He was seconded to HQ 9th Division as a captain to undertake the organisation and supervision of some deceptive measures created prior to the Battle of El Alamein in October 1942 to mislead Field Marshal Rommel's Panzer Armee Afrika. He said that, *'I was dealing with Montgomery's Staff. I used a 'hands on' approach. Rather than send signals, I used to go and see them. Everything was done at night. We dug holes and made hessian constructions and put tanks, guns and trucks under them... we staged a false battle using the 8<sup>th</sup> Army in the South.'* He received a commendation for gallant conduct and was mentioned in dispatches for his efforts.

Trainor's organising abilities had been noticed, and back in Australia he was thrown into amphibious operations planning in the SWPA. As a Liaison Officer and later brigade major (5<sup>th</sup> Brigade) [where??] he rounded out his active service. At the end of the war he was awarded an MBE, and General Blamey wrote that, *'your unfailing loyalty and keen sense of duty are well deserving of the high honour conferred upon you. You have set a fine example to those serving with you and been a source of great encouragement to all'*.

Aged 30 and now a major, Trainor was the first Australian post-war to be accepted for the two year course at the Military College of Science at Shrivenham, UK. After qualifying he served as Technical Liaison Officer on the High Commissioner's staff in London. In all, the Trainors had two years in Britain at the height of its austerity. On return to Australia he was seconded to the Department of Supply's Army Component for two years based at the Proof and Experimental Establishment at Port Wakefield.

From 1955-1957, he was Commanding Officer, 12th National Service Training Battalion at Holsworthy, where his subordinates regarded him as 'a good man with great depth of character'. His talent for training had not gone unnoticed and a posting to Far East Land Forces Headquarters to ready troops for service in Malaya, Singapore and Borneo from 1960 for two years followed. Back in Australia at AHQ he was appointed DRA and Aide-de-Camp

to Governors General Lords de Lisle and Casey, as well as masterminding, as project manager, the inception of the National Service Scheme in 1965.

In 1966, he was posted to London as Australian Army Representative on the staff of the High Commissioner in London. While in London he was promoted to brigadier, and served as the Inter Services Technical Representative, for the Department of Defence and was also the Australian Representative on the Ordnance Board and the Commonwealth Defence Science Committee.

In 1969, Trainor returned to Sydney where he served as CRA 1st Division until his retirement from the Army in 1972.

After leaving the Army he took a succession of jobs in civilian life, all but one of which held little appeal. He was Chairman of the Mobilisation Committee, the interface between industry and defence. He was always stretching the boundaries and striving for the best results. He was a passionate sportsman – as a young man he was a gymnast, a cricketer and an Australian Rules footballer. He was only slightly built but he was fit and well-coordinated.

In September 1944, he returned briefly to Australia for medical treatment and married Betty, an AWAS corporal (nee Schmid) in Melbourne, who pre-deceased him in 1990. Trainor died in Sydney on 24 October 2004 at the home of his daughter Sally. Following a service at the Eastern Suburbs Crematorium on 1 November, his ashes were scattered with those of his wife at his daughter Carol's rural property near Canberra.

Trainor was a member of the RSL, the Naval and Military Club (Melbourne), the Royal Australian Artillery Association (NSW) and 2/3rd Anti-Tank Regiment AIF Association.

Sources: Army Lists; documents and eulogies by his daughters; Alan H. Smith.