

# Gunner of Renown



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

**Lieutenant Colonel Richmond Miller Crawford CUBIS, MVO**

**(1927-1999)**

Dick Cubis was the elder son of Horace Alfred 'Barney' Cubis, a History Teacher at The Scots College and Dorothy Edith (nee Edwards). Dick was born on 3 January 1927 and educated at Scots College for 10 years. He was equally at home in the natural philosophies and academic subjects, and achieved 1st Class honours in history at the Leaving Certificate. He was accepted for the Royal Military College in 1944 as Cadet 977 and graduated 14 out of 26 and allotted to artillery.

Instructors' comments, invariably banal, rated him as a fair, average student and instructor; fair at tactics but they noted he was a conscientious officer. Though shy, he looked magnificent in uniform, was impeccably mannered, colourful in expression and of strong views he never tried to impose on others. His demeanour made him a favourite with other officer's wives. He added to any social occasion. His love of history never left him and he was ever ready to discuss and debate it with all comers. He collected and studied the records of 'A' Field Battery, his first Regimental posting after the Royal Military College, and wrote a history of the oldest Australian regular military unit, which he had printed in 1978 at his own expense.

Cubis's first posting was to 'A' Field Battery, then part of British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan. It was the only peacetime regular field battery and Cubis, with others from his year, learned much about artillery and soldiering under the stern gaze of their commander, Major 'Tim' Rodriguez, MBE, MC. On return to Australia he served with 1st Field Regiment, where he was promoted captain, before being posted to the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, as an instructor for nearly two years. In 1955, he attended the Long Gunnery Staff Course, Larkhill, England, and thoroughly enjoyed his term there. From there he served in Korea as a staff officer at HQ 1st Commonwealth Division and with 14th Field Regiment RA.

In 1962, Cubis, now a major, was appointed the Australian Equerry for the 1963 Royal Tour. He was sent to Buckingham Palace to master the exacting and necessary punctilio demanded of the task. Cubis was in his element – decorum, protocol, never to be repeated ceremonial, and other occasions involving our Captain General and her Consort, the Duke of Edinburgh, Australia's second field marshal. Cubis was punctilious in the execution of his duties and the sole of discretion and was duly conferred with a Lieutenancy of the Royal Victorian Order.

In 1964, he was promoted lieutenant colonel and commanded 1st Field Regiment located at Holsworthy. When the Australian contingent in Vietnam was expanded to a two battalion task force (1ATF) in May 1966 the regiment became the first to serve there. It comprised one New Zealand and two Australian field batteries, and a detachment of 131 Divisional Locating Battery, and exercised control of attached US batteries. He commanded the regiment during the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August when the guns saved D Company 6RAR from annihilation.

Despite the magnificent support his gunners gave 1ATF, Cubis had failed to establish a close personal or working relationship with the Commander or his staff. Consequently, later in the year, when he overheard a discussion between the Commander and his operations officer about his countermanding a fire mission called by 5RAR without reference to the battalion or task force staffs, that indicated that he might be relieved, he resigned. The resignation was not accepted but he was relieved of command.

He returned to Army Headquarters, Canberra, thence to Bangkok, Thailand, where he was a member of the Exercise Planning Staff, South East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO). Prior to his retirement Cubis served as a staff officer at HQ Eastern Command, Victoria Barracks, the place where he had joined the army 30 years previously.

Even in his schooldays Cubis was a conservative. He loved classical music and had a profound grasp of, and respect for, the values of pre-revolutionary Europe. A colleague once remarked that Dick Cubis had been born 100 years too late. Gentlemanly conduct was his touchstone, another noting that telling a lie would have been beneath his dignity. He was to others somewhat ingenuous. This did not detract from his sense of humanity, and it is a matter of record that Dick, still a bachelor, adopted Charn, a Thai boy of Chinese extraction, of whom he was very proud. He had many other loves – his music, his Regiment, his mates and his organisations. He valued loyalty very highly.

In the Nineties, Dick's health deteriorated but, typically, he never complained. By contrast, a friend noted a common cold could make him 'impossible'. He died on 8 July 1999 and was cremated at Northern Suburbs Crematorium. He was survived by his adopted son and brother Garth. Prior to his death he selected the music for his funeral service. Dick was style writ large to the end.

Sources: RMC of Australia Archives; Army Lists; Eulogies by Colonel R. J. P. J. Lemerrier, (Retd) and J. C. Turner; Letter, Mr Garth Cubis; discussion editor and Colonel Neville Gair, BC 103 Field Battery 1966.