

# *Gunner of Renown*



Royal Australian Artillery Historical Company

## **Major General Rodney Graham FAY, AO, RFD, ED (1933-1998)**

Rodney Fay was born in Brisbane on 18 May 1933 the oldest child of Joe and Bessie Fay (nee Newman). Joe was a stockbroker with JB Frank Charleton. Rod was educated to year 10 at the 'Church of England Grammar School, Brisbane. He was then employed by Provincial Traders in Industrial Chemicals and studied Industrial Organic Chemistry at night at the Queensland Technical College passing with Credit in 1955.

He was inducted as a National Service (NS) Trainee at Wacol, Queensland, with 11th National Service (NS) Training Battalion in late 1951. After initial training he was allotted to 11th Field Regiment, RAA (CMF). On completion of his NS obligation he continued to serve with his unit, being commissioned in 1955 and then held a number of regimental postings until 1965. In February 1965, he was promoted lieutenant colonel to command 5th Field Regiment, RAA (CMF). He was the youngest Commanding Officer in the Army and the first former NS Trainee to command a regiment.

From 1968, Fay held staff and instructional appointments in Northern Command. In 1976 he transferred to Sydney in his civilian employment with Goodman, Fielders Ltd and joined Headquarters Training Command as the Project Officer in charge of the Officer Cadet Training Unit Course Design Team. His civilian career reached another dimension when he transferred from research to the marketing/product management function.

He married Christine Skarrat at St Mark's Church, Darling Point, Sydney, in June 1972. They had no offspring.

In 1978, he was appointed a temporary colonel with 2nd Division Field Force Group. He was promoted brigadier on 1 July 1981 and raised 8th Brigade. An appointment as Commander 2nd Training Group followed in 1983 and in 1985 he was promoted major general and appointed General Officer Commanding 2nd Division and Senior Army Reserve Officer, NSW.

Fay's military service included visits to Malaya and Vietnam. From February 1983 to January 1985 he held the appointment of Honorary ADC to Her Majesty the Queen. He served as Assistant Chief of Staff - Army Reserve from April 1988 to March 1990 and was appointed an Officer of the Order of Australia, receiving his award from Air Marshal Sir James Rowland, Governor of New South Wales.

Fay was appointed Colonel Commandant Eastern Region on 31 March 1990 and Representative Colonel Commandant Royal Australian Artillery on 14 March 1992. He retired from these appointments on 14 March 1996 after 45 years service to the Regiment and the Army. Rodney Fay was awarded the Efficiency Decoration and Reserve Forces Decoration.

On 2 August 1993, Major General Fay and his wife Christine represented Australian Gunners at a parade to commemorate the 200th Anniversary of the Royal Horse Artillery at Woolwich Barracks. Fay said it was the high point of his career to have an audience with our Captain General of the Royal Regiment at Buckingham Palace.

He was involved in the State Executive of the Defence Reserves Support Committee and as a Director of the Vasey Housing Association.

Rodney Fay died from motor neurone disease on 22 January 1998. His military funeral was held at the Garrison Church, Millers Point with six major generals as pallbearers, and an honour guard from 8<sup>th</sup>/12th Medium Regiment, before cremation at Northern Suburbs Crematorium on 30 January.

Rodney Fay's outstanding qualities of courtesy, associated with his willingness to apply tough decisions attracted a rare combination of respect and affection. Fay was one of those rare individuals who made a positive and lasting impression on all those who met and came to know him. He was survived by his wife and his siblings Barry and Wendy.

Sources: Alan H. Smith, 'Cannonball', *Journal of the RAA Historical Company*, No. 31, December 1997, pp.18-19 and No. 32, April 1998, p.28-29 (Order of Service, Eulogies by Fay Family) and Arthur Burke. Also see, Rex S. Kirkham, collator, *From Nasho to Major General – The Remarkable Life of Maj-Gen Rodney Fay*, Yeronga, Queensland, 2005.