

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

2152200 Lieutenant Kerry Gillis

13 March 1936 – 1 May 2019

By Phil Easton



Kerry was born in the Sunshine State on 13 March 1936 but had quite a continental childhood. He initially attended the Mowbray House Prep School in Chatswood NSW but moved with his mother to Europe in 1945 to join his step-father who, following his resignation from the RAAF, had accepted a position with the UN resettling displaced persons. Kerry attended a boarding school in England for a couple of years and completed his education at the International School in Geneva, Switzerland. Interestingly, one of the more celebrated students at the Swiss School who was several years ahead of Kerry was "Stormin' Norman" Schwarzkopf of Gulf War fame.

Returning to Australia, Kerry commenced employment with a shipping company and after a few years, joined S H Ervin, a wool buying company that allowed him time off for his army service. Kerry's first introduction to the army was with 12 National Service Training Battalion on 26 April 1955. On completion of his National Service obligation he was posted to R Battery, 9 HAA Regiment on 2 August 1955 and was quickly promoted to Bombardier in a 3.7-inch gun detachment. He was promoted Sergeant on 1 Aug 1956 and transferred to the Predictor. After completing his examinations for first appointment, he was commissioned on 22 January 1959 and posted temporarily to 16 HAA Regiment at Dee Why.

He returned to 9 HAA in March and was posted to Q Battery. He undertook the conversion to light anti-aircraft in March 1962 and remained with 9 LAA Regiment until he transferred to the Reserve of Officers list on 10 May 1963. During that time, he undertook several training courses including the Junior Infantry Minor Tactics Course (1961) and a Specialist Radar Course (1962). Unfortunately, Kerry did not get much of an opportunity to display his knowledge about radar as the 3.7-inch guns and ancillary equipment were declared to be obsolete soon after.

Kerry named Major Alistair Scobie as the person in the regiment who had the greatest influence on him. As Battery Commander Q Battery Major Scobie was always ready to help and encourage all who came in contact with him. Kerry vividly remembered some of the courses he attended that "Scobe" ran where he went out of his way to motivate his students by making the subjects more interesting. Major Scobie went on to become the Second in Command of 9 LAA Regiment and Kerry was saddened by his passing. Kerry lived at Lindfield, not far away from "Scobe" who visited Kerry's home regularly for lunch. Kerry was overseas when "Scobe" passed away and was represented at "Scobe's" funeral by his wife Joan. Kerry also remembered Captain John Cramm and Lieutenant Trevor Dunshea as being people who gave him great assistance and encouragement during his early days at 9 HAA Regiment.

When recalling anecdotal tales about his service with the Regiment, Kerry told the story of when in his early days, he took part in a Military Tattoo at the Sydney Showground. One event involved the defence of the ground from an attacking enemy who turned out to be invading "Martians". He was pleased to say that the attackers were driven off. He attended several annual camps at Shellharbour and North Head. He also recalled several instances where the Fire Control Radar locked onto the towing cable of the drogue that

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caused the exploding rounds to creep up the wire towards the aircraft. That situation naturally caused some panic in the pilot who transmitted some unrepeatabe messages to the regimental safety staff.

In civilian life, Kerry joined CIL - another wool company - in 1963. Unfortunately, that company would not allow him time off to fulfil his army reserve responsibilities and so he transferred to the Reserve of Officers. He remained with CIL for 32 years. He retired in April 2011 to enjoy a life of leisure with his wife Joan.

Kerry kept in touch with the RAA through membership of the RAA Association (NSW) and the 9 HAA/LAA Association and supports the various activities including the Gunner Dinner and the ANZAC Day march and reunion.

Kerry passed away on 1 May 2019 at Brisbane Waters Private Hospital. He had been ill for some time.