

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Stanley David (Jesse) James

1942 - 1977

By Peter Bruce

Stanley David (Old Jesse) James was working on the property "Tabooba", between Beaudesert and Rathdowney. when he enlisted in the Australian Army on 9 January 1942 at Beaudesert in South East Queensland. He listed his occupation as "Farm Hand". His father, Mark Alfred James, was living at Cordalba which is about 50 kilometres south west of Bundaberg. Jesse was just shy of 20 years of age when he enlisted and still single at that stage.

Not one to stray far from home, Jesse's initial Army training was all completed at Enoggera in Brisbane. He qualified as a Heavy Transport (HT) Driver in August 1942 and was transferred to 2nd Australian Pack Transport Company, also at Enoggera. In May 1943, Jesse was detached for duty with Land Headquarters Training School at Canungra where he was much closer to his pre-Army place of employment and perhaps friends.

By August 1943, Jesse found himself with the 126th Australian General Transport Company, also stationed in the Canungra area. He was then taken on strength of 2nd Australian Pack Transport Company. It seems that by the end of 1943, Jesse had had enough of the Army and transport postings and elected discharge on 29 November 1943.

After nearly seven years in "Civie Street", Jesse decided to get back in the Army and enlisted for a six-year stint on 3 August 1950. He was allotted to the RAA and posted to 1st Field Regiment stationed at Georges Heights in Sydney. By the end of 1951, Jesse was transferred to 1st Battalion the Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) who were at that stage barracked at Ingleburn. Many Gunners were transferred to Infantry Battalions in anticipation of deployment to Japan and Korea and Jesse was no exception. On 3 March 1952 Jesse sailed on HMT "Devonshire" heading for Japan where they arrived on 6 April 1952. Three days later, on 9 April, Jesse landed in Korea. After being accidentally injured in Korea on 25 September, he was transferred to the Indian Field Ambulance in October 1952. After several trips between Japan and Korea during 1952, Jesse final left Korea on 24 March 1953 and arrived back in Brisbane on 6 April 1953 to be posted to 1st Field Regiment. Jesse must have shown considerable promise as a soldier while working with 1RAR as he was promoted Corporal in November 1952.

Promotion to Sergeant came in August 1953 as a gun sergeant but by May 1954, Jesse was back in the Infantry with a posting to 4th Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (4RAR). This Battalion was a training force for battalions deploying to Korea. Jesse was taken on strength with the Reinforcement Special Force in September 1954.

On 1 September 1954, Jesse departed Sydney en route to Japan. His last port of call in Australia was Darwin before arriving in Manila on 9 September. From Manila they sailed for Japan where Jesse was taken on strength with 1RAR on 28 January 1955. Over the next 12 months, Jesse rotated between Japan and Korea and gained qualifications in Subjects A, B and C for Sergeant. Further promotion came on 25 October 1955 when Jesse was promoted to Temporary Warrant Officer Class 2 (T/WO2). On 24 March 1956, Jesse left Inchon in Korea for the last time and sailed for Australia on the SS 'New Australian'. The ship arrived in Sydney on 5 April 1956 and after some leave, Jesse was back in the RAA with a posting back to 1st Field Regiment at Georges Heights. Here, Jesse was

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employed as a TARA Sergeant in Alpha (A) Troop of 'S' Light Battery (Later redesignated 102nd Field Battery). He had been required to drop back a rank from WO2 to Sergeant. In August 1956, Jesse signed on for a further six years and on 19 October 1956 he was posted to 105th Field Battery which had been raised from members of 'M' Battery ('M' for Malaya) on 1 July 1955. 105th Field Battery had deployed to Malaya in October 1955 and as a reinforcement, Jesse joined the Battery in October 1956. With the main body of 105th Battery now having completed their two-year tenure, Jesse was transferred to the newly arrived 100(A) Field Battery which arrived in Malaya on 18 October 1956. During his posting with 105th Battery, Jesse had qualified in Subjects A and C for Warrant Rank as well as Subject B for Sergeant (RAA).

Jesse returned to Australia in October 1958 and was initially posted to the Unallotted List at Northern Command in Brisbane. By 9 December 1958, Jesse was back in 1st Field Regiment and employed as Troop Sergeant Major (TSM). During 1959 he completed several courses at the School of Artillery at North Head including the 15/59 ARA Warrant Officers Gunnery (Field) Course.

In June 1960, Jesse was posted to 4th Field Regiment which had recently been raised at Wacol in Brisbane. The unit had taken over the old 11th National Service Training Battalion barracks and initially consisted of a Regimental Headquarters (RHQ), Headquarters Battery (HQ Bty) and 103rd Field Battery. 105th Field Battery became the second gun battery in July 1960 when they drove up from Sydney. Jesse was employed on regimental duties and in October 1961 was detached for duty with the Army's first annual Pentropic exercise – Exercise 'Icebreaker' in the Putty training area. Jesse was slightly injured in an accident on this exercise but no serious injury to body or career was recorded.

In July 1962, members of 1st Field Regiment attended L5 Conversion training at the School of Artillery. The 25 Pounders and 4.2-inch mortars previously used by the Regiment were retired in June 1963 and training commenced with the L5s. In September 1962 Jesse married Bernice and the family settled at Corinda in Brisbane. During late 1964, Jesse and other members of the Regiment did a short training exercise in New Zealand with the Royal New Zealand Artillery (RNZA).

Jesse's next appointment was to 105th Field Battery. On 29 April 1965, Prime Minister Menzies announce an Australian Infantry Battalion with supporting troops would be sent to Vietnam. 105th Field Battery was to be that Battery and they commenced training in all aspects of the anticipated deployment to South Vietnam. Jesse joined the Battery as Battery Guide and they boarded HMAS Sydney on 14 September 1965 on their way to Vietnam. After arriving off Vung Tau on 28 September and after offloading and a flight to Bien Hoa base, the Battery set up its first fire support base. The Battery fired some 30,000 rounds during its 12-month tour of duty and was one of the first units to establish the new Australian Task Force base at Nui Dat. Jesse was credited with building a three tier concertina fence around one fire support base which became a show piece for defence works at the time.

Jesse returned to Australia with the majority of the Battery on 24 September and arrived in Brisbane on 25 September 1966. The Battery returned to their lines at 4th Field Regiment in Wacol. 4th Field Regiment deployed to Vietnam in March 1967 and 105th Battery became part of 1st Field Regiment. Jesse took over as Battery Sergeant Major (BSM) of the Battery. In November 1967, the Regiment including 105th moved across to Gallipoli Lines, Enoggera.

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In February 1968, Jesse was posted to 5th Field Regiment at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane. This Regiment was a Citizens Military Force (CMF – later Army Reserve) unit with RHQ and one, gun battery at Kelvin Grove and another gun battery at Ipswich. Jesse was posted as a Cadre Staff WO2 and on occasions was performing the duties of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). During May/June 1970, Jesse flew to Butterworth to assist with a Joint Force Exercise. His promotion to Warrant Officer Class One was confirmed on 11 February 1974 when he formally took over the position of RSM. He remained with 5th Field Regiment until the unit amalgamated with 11th Field Regiment in June 1975. Jesse spent his remaining Army time with Headquarters 7th Brigade before electing discharge on 14 April 1977. Jesse's second Army stint came to a close, after 24 years including service in Korea, Japan, Malaya, Butterworth, New Zealand and Vietnam.

Jesse died in December 1977, the same year he discharged from the Army. No information has come to hand for this later period of Old Jesse's life. He had not been well for some time and finally found relief.

Acknowledgements:

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