

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Neville Stanley (Splinter) Galbraith

22 April 1944 – 6 March 2023

By Peter J Bruce, OAM

Neville Stanley Galbraith, known by all as 'Splinter' was indeed a character of the RAA. Born and bred in Brisbane, Splinter served just over 20 years in the Australian Regular Army (ARA) mainly with Artillery units. He first joined the Citizens Military Force (CMF) in January 1962 and spent several months with 5th Field Regiment. In June that year he transferred to the ARA. After initial recruit training at Kapooka, he was posted to the School of Artillery at North Head to undertake initial employment training as a gun number on 25 Pounder Guns.

His first unit posting was to 4th Field Regiment, then barracked at Wacol in Brisbane. He remained with the Regiment until August 1965 undertaking several courses at North Head including Artillery Signaller and Operator Command Post (Field). The Regiment also converted from using 25 Pounders to the new Italian L5 Pack Howitzers. Members of the Regiment also took part in airmobile operations and deploying by sea aboard HMAS Sydney.

Vietnam was at this stage a hot issue for the military. In April 1965, then Prime Minister Menzies that an Australian infantry battalion and supporting troops would be deployed to Vietnam. Splinter was posted to 105th Field Battery which had been warned out for operational service in South Vietnam. Splinter deployed to Vietnam with 105th Field Battery in September 1965 on board HMAS Sydney. The voyage took just on 14 days and the Battery arrived of Vung Tau on 28 September. The Battery was ferried ashore by United States landing craft and then flown to Bien Hoa airbase to set up their first battery position.

Splinter returned to Australia with the rest of 105th Field Battery towards the end of September 1966. The Battery, and Splinter, became part of 4th Field Regiment who had taken over the lines in Wacol. Splinter reverted to 1st Field Regiment at Wacol on their return from Vietnam and 4th Field Regiment had replaced them. Splinter stayed with 1st Field Regiment when they moved to Enoggera Barracks in November 1967.

In January 1969 Splinter returned to Vietnam with 105th Field Battery on their second tour of duty in Vietnam. In this deployment, Splinter had been promoted to Sergeant and was the Battery Signals Sergeant. On his return to Australia in February 1970, Splinter was posted to 16th Light Anti-Aircraft Regiment at Woodside in South Australia. He remained there until July 1971 when he accepted a posting back to the School of Artillery at North Head. Splinter worked on Regimental Training Wing and instructed on gun courses and Artillery signaller courses.

In November 1972, Splinter was on the move again, this time with a posting to 4th Field Regiment in Townsville. He stayed with 4th Regiment until July 1968 and filled several appointments including Signals Sergeant and Command Post Sergeant.

Splinter returned to Brisbane in July 1978 with a posting back to 1st Field Regiment at Enoggera. In March/April of 1979 Splinter was part of a contingent that went to Hawaii as part of an exchange program called 'Pacific Bond'. In March 1980 he returned to the School of Artillery this time as a Sergeant Major Instructor Gunner (SMIG). His final posting was back to Townsville where he worked in the housing section of District Support Unit

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Townsville. Splinter discharged from the Army on 9 September 1982 after 20 years' service.

Splinter's Honours and Awards include:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasp Vietnam
- Vietnam Medal
- Defence Force Service Medal with First Clasp
- National Medal
- Australian Defence Medal
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal
- Unit Citation of the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Palm, and
- Returned from Active Service Badge.

Splinter was very strong swimmer and represented various units in swimming and water polo competitions. In later life he became very involved in lawn bowls and became a committee member of the Deception Bay Bowls Club. He was also a life member of the 105 Battery Association, held many positions on the Association's executive committee, and was actively involved in all its activities.

A service for Splinter was held on 22 March 2023 at the Great Northern Garden of Remembrance, Deception Bay. Paul Stevens who was a Section Commander with 105th Field Battery in Vietnam with Splinter gave a eulogy at the service.

Acknowledgements:

- Major General J Paul Stevens, AO (Retd)
- Lieutenant Colonel Jim Box (Retd)
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