

Warrant Officer Class One George Herbert Gardner

*Provided by Colonel Arthur Burke
Colonel Commandant Northern Region*

Warrant Officer Class One George Herbert Gardner was born in Newtown, Sydney on 10th December 1942 and worked in odd jobs, including glass blowing before, at barely 17 years of age, he enlisted in the Australian Regular Army on 12th April 1960. After basic and trade training he was posted to 1st Field Regiment at Holsworthy where, in 1965 he departed with 'A' Field Battery for service at Terendak in Malaysia. As a bombardier on the guns at this time, George was noticed for his reliability, solidarity, sense of humour and a tendency to really enjoy life when off duty. His professionalism was rewarded by a posting to the 1st Recruit Training Battalion (1 RTB) as an instructor on return to Australia in 1967.

Further, his good performance led to promotion to temporary sergeant in 1968 before he left 1 RTB to return to the world of gunnery. In September 1968, Sergeant Gardner joined 4th Field Regiment at its new home in Townsville as a gun sergeant in 106th Field Battery. The beginning of 1970 saw the 106th relieve the 105th Field Battery in Vietnam and George was again on overseas service. His battery commander, (now retired Brigadier) David Gilroy recalls Sergeant Gardner as a very reliable, good leader and a 'great nurturer of soldiers'. He is also remembered for being a colourful character with a dry sense of humour and one who 'liked to play when off duty'. National Service Bombardier Alan Thompson says that George was 'hard, efficient and popular'. Alan also remembers a time at the Horseshoe when one of the soldiers was being slightly out of order and George reminded him that he should watch his step, 'as the only difference between Gardner and God was that God was taller'. Forward Observer Denis Byrne states that he always ordered George's Delta Gun to adjust close targets because he had the utmost faith in the sergeant's capabilities.

At the end of 1972, George was posted to the School of Artillery as an instructor. It was there that I believe I first met this man. As the only sergeant instructor amongst a bevy of warrant officers, George held his own for professionalism and dedication. He worked with me on an Air Observer's Course. The next year with a well-earned promotion to warrant officer, George assisted me on the Warrant Officers' Gunnery Course. These students were hard nuts, but they were all taken in his stride. This was a particularly successful course, due in no small part to the time and dedication that Warrant Officer Gardner contributed.

In late 1976 George was posted to the 5th/11th Field Regiment (Army Reserve) in Brisbane as a Sergeant Major Instructor in Gunnery. He performed to the high standards that were his hallmark and 12 months later was rewarded with an appointment of Battery Sergeant Major of 101st Field Battery at 1st Field Regiment. For the next two years, BSM Gardner not only raised the standards of the junior NCOs within his battery, but also brought great compassion and understanding in his firm but fair dealings with the Diggers in the 101st.

After eleven years in the regimental stream, fate identified a warrant officer class one vacancy in the proof and experimental world and on promotion to Warrant Officer

Class One; George became the Master Gunner of P&EE, Port Wakefield. His commanding officer (now retired Colonel) Denis Byrne commended George on his smooth transition and recalls how he was well respected by both the military and civilian staff at the range. Denis states that George was a good family man and mixed as easily socially as he did technically and regimentally. In addition, the ability to sort out soldiers' problems was a high point of his service at Wakefield.

1981 saw Warrant Officer Class One Gardner back at the School of Artillery as the Master Gunner of Gunnery Wing. He was a most reliable backstop and meticulous administrator to his Senior Instructors, (now retired Major General) Paul Stevens and (now retired Brigadier) Peter Kilpatrick. Killer remembers his Master Gunner as an 'ever cheerful quiet achiever'. George separated from the Army on 29th April 1983 after 23 years of meritorious service.

In civilian life, Mr Gardner worked in a number of positions within the NSW Attorney General's Department until ill health forced him to retire. Emphysema led him on a fairly steep downhill path over the last 12 months and he has now been released from the pain, suffering and frustration of this debilitated life. George died on Friday 20th August 2004.

Vale George Herbert Gardner - true professional soldier, dedicated family man, and a Gunner who anyone could approach for help knowing that it would always be given willingly. Gone to a higher appointment in that great Gun Park up above all too early at only 61 years of age.