

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Alexander Richard (Rick) Main

1946 – 2020

By Peter Bruce

Rick was a Port Kembla boy born in 1946 and in his own words "a true baby boomer". His early education included completing his secondary education at Wollongong High School. On leaving school, Rick was employed as a clerk until his call up for National Service in 1967. His talents were recognised early. When he arrived at Kapooka, he was selected to attend Officer Training at 1st Officer Training Unit at Scheyville in the Hawksbury region of Sydney. This unit was established in 1965 specifically to train young officers for duty in regimental postings including service in Vietnam. Rick arrived at the unit in late July 1967 and joined the 3/67 class. He was appointed Sergeant in his senior term and finally graduated on 22 December 1967. His class did not have a graduation ball that year as it was the time of the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt and the Nation was not sure what had happened to him or the consequences of his disappearance.

On graduation, Rick was allocated to Artillery and posted to the School of Artillery for initial training. In April 1968 Rick took up his first appointment as a Platoon Commander at 1st Recruit Training Battalion, Kapooka. In November of that year he moved to Headquarters 4th Cadet Unit to fill a Staff Officer position. By this stage, Rick had decided to stay in the Army and transferred to the Regular Army. He remained with the Cadet Headquarters until June of 1969 where he transferred to Army Staff College for three months. In September 1969 Rick was posted to 12th Field Regiment at Holsworthy in Sydney. This Regiment had been warned out for service in Vietnam and was scheduled to replace 4th Field Regiment in February/March the following year.

Rick deployed to South Vietnam with the Regiment in February 1971 and was initially employed as a Duty Officer in the Artillery Tactical Headquarters (Arty Tac). He would occasionally join a patrol from Defence and Employment Platoon (D and E Platoon) operate as their Forward Observer (FO). On 7 June 1971 during Operation Overlord, Second Lieutenant Ian Mathers was KIA while a FO with B Company, 3rd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (3RAR). Rick was deployed to replace him and stayed as an FO with the Company until his return to Australia in November 1971. He had been promoted to Temporary Captain in July of that year and after his return to Australia he stayed with 12th Field Regiment which had returned to their home barracks at Holsworthy.

In March 1973, Rick was appointed Adjutant of 6th Field Regiment based in Hobart Tasmania. He was there at the time of the infamous Hobart Bridge disaster and was involved in the military cooperation in assisting civilian authorities during the replacement phase. Rick remained in Tasmania until March 1975 when he was posted to Canberra and took up a position as the Staff Officer Grade 3 at the Directorate of Artillery. The following year he moved to the Royal Military College (RMC) Duntroon as an instructor. Obviously, his performance at RMC was noted and the following year he was posted as an Exchange Instructor to the Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in the UK.

Returning to Australia in early 1979, Rick was appointed Battery Commander (BC) of 107th Field Battery in Townsville. During his time with the Battery, 4th Regiment had

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become part of the Operational Deployment Force (ODF) which required light scales. The Battery changed guns from the M2A2 back to the lighter and more mobile L5 Pack Howitzer. Following a successful two years with 107th, Rick move to Canungra in South East Queensland and became the Artillery Instructor at Land Warfare Centre (LWC). He stayed at Canungra for four years before moving to the School of Artillery at North Head in Sydney. Here, his posting was Training Major where he stayed until the end of the year. The following year he moved on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel as Staff Officer Grade One (SO1) with Training Systems at Headquarters Training Command at Middle Head.

Rick's final posting was as Commanding Officer of the Army Reserve's 7th Field Regiment at Willoughby in Sydney. He assumed command of the Regiment in May 1988 and remained there until November 1990.

Rick discharged from the Army on 28 November 1990. His National Service and subsequent transfer to the Regular Army saw him accrue 23 years of service.

Rick took on a position with Residential Property Management but maintained his ties with the military and became involved in the RSL with Pension and Welfare claims for Veterans. He eventually became an Advocate for the Queensland State Branch of the RSL in 1999 and continued until 2006. He then became the Services Member on the Veterans' Review Board (VRB) in Brisbane and was able to assist many veterans with their claims for compensation from DVA.

Rick died on 12 June 2020 after a long battle with cancer. He will be remembered as a thoroughly professional officer and a gentleman. He will also be remembered for his advocacy work for the Veteran community.

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