

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Captain Trevor Ernest Beer (Retired)

By Peter Bruce

Trevor was a 1950's National Serviceman who was called up on 14 August 1956. After three months full time training with 12th National Service Training Battalion, he completed his National Service obligation in 7th Field Regiment RAA in Sydney. The military bug etched deeply into this teenager and he transferred to full time duty on 5th January 1959 with Headquarters Eastern Command. Later that year on 25th September, Trevor decided to make the commitment of joining the Australian Regular Army and was posted to the RAA.

After air defence training the School of Artillery, the then Gunner Beer was posted to the 111th Light Anti-Aircraft (LAA) Battery and moved with them to defend Butterworth Airfield in Malaysia, arriving 25th May 1964. When the 3rd Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (serving with the 28th Commonwealth Brigade) was rotated for anti-terrorist operation on the Thai-Malay border, Trevor was part of the Gunner 'infantry company' based on 102nd Field Battery which joined the battalion. He returned to Australia on 17 December 1964 to 110 LAA Battery. When 110th Battery replaced the 111th at Butterworth, Trevor arrived in Malaysia again on 14 June 1966 and served with that unit until 5 October 1967.

Young Beer now took the full plunge into the military system, was commissioned into the Australian Staff Corp on 14 November 1967 and spent November and December in Singapore before returning to Australia and the 2nd Recruit Training Battalion (2RTB) based at Puckapunyal in Victoria. After serving a year as a platoon commander, Trevor was promoted to Temporary Captain and appointed Adjutant of 2RTB. Twelve months later, on 15th December 1969, he was appointed adjutant of 12th Field Regiment, then based at Holsworthy in NSW. As part of their preparation for operational service, the unit moved to Townsville and Trevor was instrumental in moving the entire regiment including families of married soldiers to Townsville. Trevor deployed with the unit to Vietnam on 3 March 1971. During the withdrawal phase of Australia's involvement in Vietnam, Trevor was injured accidentally in Vung Tau on 27 October. He returned to Australia with the Regimental Headquarters of 12th Field Regiment on 11 November 1971 and was posted to 4th Field Regiment in Townsville.

Peacetime soldering began to lose its gloss and two years later, Captain Beer resigned his commission. Civvy life was as varied as his life in the military – 'too honest' for real estate, a couple of years in roof and ceiling sales with Stramit (the 'holy order of St Ramit' as he called it), a health food store at Ulladulla and then a white goods store partnership. When Trevor's slip with a fridge on stairs almost killed his partner, he suffered severe mental anguish and became an invalid pensioner. Many years later this led to his being accepted as a Totally and Permanently Incapacitated pensioner.

With sons in Perth, Canberra and Sydney, Trevor and his beloved wife, Margaret always had an excuse to travel. Despite such opportunities, they resisted becoming 'grey nomads' but did manage a trip to Perth and such places with a day's drive such as the HMAS Sydney memorial in Geraldton.

In early 2006, Trevor was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer in his lungs. This had spread to his spine and led to paralysis. After two months of severe pain, he was placed on morphine and his spirits picked up. Max de Mestre Allen had been a subaltern mate

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with Trevor at 2RTB where life was never dull for these rather old and experienced 'young officers'. Max phoned him a couple of weeks before his death and reported that his old mate was in really jovial form, though sounding a little tired. His wife Margaret saw him the night before he died, and he was in good spirits. At 3 AM on the 25th May 2006 he was reported as having given cheek to the night nurse but passed away peacefully soon afterwards. Margaret said later 'he went in peace and with dignity', avoiding a future in a nursing home.

Trevor's funeral was held at the Lakeside Memorial Park Chapel in Dapto on Wednesday 31st May 2006. Gordon Rickards, who was the 2IC of 12th Field Regiment in Vietnam, in his eulogy said of Trevor, "*I remember Trevor as an outstanding officer, quick on the uptake, with an excellent capacity to cope with complicated administration, loyal, a good sense of humour, and one who upheld the high standards of the Royal Australian Artillery. He was a God-fearing man and one who dealt very fairly with soldiers*".

Trevor's medals included:

- Australian Active Service Medal 1945-75 with Clasps Malaysia and Vietnam
- General Service Medal 1962 with Clasp Malay Peninsula
- Vietnam Medal
- Anniversary of National Service 1951 – 1972 Medal
- Vietnamese Campaign Medal
- Pingat Jasa Malaysia.

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