



Vale Harry Brodie

If one looks back to the 1950s when 18 year old boys were turned into men in three months, one must recognise that the Regular Army soldier platoon commanders who trained these lads were as much an advisor, coach, confidant, father and sometime mother, as they were the role model towards which everyone in a National Service training platoon aspired. 1733 Sergeant Harold 'Harry' Brodie was an outstanding role model and will be remembered fondly for evermore by all who passed through his command.

Brought up in the Mackay area of north Queensland, Harry joined his local Citizen Military Force (CMF) unit, 31st Infantry Battalion, The Kennedy Regiment, just after his 18th birthday in January—a month after the Japanese entered the Second World War. Called up for full time service in the defence of Townsville, Private Brodie also served with York Force at Jacky Jacky on Cape York then moved to Cairns.

He elected to join the Australian Imperial Force (AIF) when the 31st and 51st Battalions merged in April 1943, underwent amphibious training with his new unit then deployed to Merauke in Dutch New Guinea via Horn Island in the Torres Straits. The 31st/51st Battalion finished its fighting in the northern sectors of Bougainville then became part of the occupation force in the Ocean Islands, Nauru and Rabaul. Private Harry Brodie was discharged on 24 April 1946.

After two years in civvy street, Harry yearned for the camaraderie of the Army and when the Post War Army was formed in 1948, he re-enlisted, was allocated to the Royal Australian Artillery and posted to 53rd Battery at North Head, Sydney. He later joined the re-raised 1st Field Regiment at Middle Head in 1949.

When the National Service Scheme of the 1950s became a reality, now Sergeant Harry was posted as the platoon commander of 23 Platoon, D (Don) Company, 11th National Service Training Battalion at Wacol, Brisbane. In August 1951, 23 Platoon received 47 recruits and for the next 14 weeks he trained, cajoled and nurtured his young Nashos, spending many additional after hours training them to create a winning combination. His platoon won the first 'Cock of the Walk' trophy on graduation. Harry went on to train five more platoons to win similar trophies.

Harry's 23 Platoon members were all posted as Gunner signallers to Brisbane CMF artillery units to complete their obligation of a further three years part time training. Many of the original 47 members of the platoon signed on with the CMF on completion of this period with one becoming a major general, five captains, one warrant officer and ten sergeants. 'Harry's Boys' certainly did well.

When the National Service Scheme ceased in 1959, Sergeant Brodie was posted to 5th Field Regiment (CMF) at Kelvin Grove as an assistant instructor in gunnery (AIG). There he renewed old friendships with his 'Boys' and won the admiration and respect of many of the other CMF Gunners through his dedication, conscientiousness and helpfulness. In 1962, he was promoted warrant officer class two and posted as Battery Sergeant Major of Headquarters Battery of the fledgling Regular Army 4th Field Regiment at Wacol. These were tough times growing a new unit, but Harry's application to his job earned him promotion to warrant officer class one in 1964 and the appointment of Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM) of 11th Field Regiment (CMF) at Annerley on Brisbane's south side.

In his military eulogy at Harry's last parade, Colonel (Retired) Gerry Keates observed that WO1 Brodie perfectly fulfilled all aspects as 'Father of the Regiment', a benevolent title bestowed on many RSMs. Besides helping many a CMF soldier with all parts of promotion examinations, he was an unobtrusive confidant and advisor to many new commanding officers. His comments, wisdom and understanding provided many a needed crutch for sensitive situations. His high personal attributes of honesty, loyalty and dedication won him a place in the hearts of subordinates, superiors and peers alike. In short (and no pun intended with regard to his height), Harry became a legend in the Brisbane Artillery area.

Warrant Officer Class One Harold Brodie retired on 15 April 1972 and was granted the honorary rank and title of Lieutenant.

At a very fit and mature 48 years of age, Mr Brodie spent the next 11 years in civvy street as an assistant manager at Tickles Wholesalers, and then as the Purchasing and Despatch Manager with Elite Furnishers before completely retiring.

In 1990, the original 1951 members of 23 Platoon formed The Gunner Signallers' Club. Harry was instrumental in its success, awarded Life Membership and appointed Patron of the Club. This body became a hub of camaraderie not only for the originals, but for all National Servicemen as well as a few fellows and one honorary member. They held formal annual dinners on the anniversary of their August intake as well as lunches and family gatherings at members' homes. Harry gave his usual 'all' towards the Club's endeavours and only the ill health of his wife Vera, and then himself prevented his continuing attendance. The Gunner Signallers' Club ceased to function on 8 August 2011, sixty years after the members' initial introduction to the Army.

Harry Brodie was not only a grand soldier, but also a great cricketer. Gerry Keates observed that, 'his prowess with both bat and ball was legendry throughout the Services Cricket circle and he furthered that ball control into his enjoyment of both golf and lawn bowls.'

Vera predeceased Harry, but he is survived by children Paul, Ross and Allison, eight grand children, one great grand child and to many as a favourite Uncle Harry. My sincere thanks to Gerry Keates and Rob Collins for their contributions and Nigel Stevens for the photograph in this tribute.

Vale Harold 'Harry' Brodie, wartime rifleman, peacetime Gunner, RSM extraordinaire, a well liked, respected and loved man who has been summoned to the Great Gun Park up above at 88 years of age.

Arthur Burke OAM
Colonel (Retired)
RAA History Sub Committee

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