

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Major General Rodney Fay, AO, RFD, ED

(1933 – 1998)

First Published in
Cannonball Number 32 April 1998



Major General Rod Fay died on 22 January 1998 after a long battle with motor neurone disease, aged 64 years. He contributed hugely to the Royal Regiment of Australian Artillery, both prior to and after his formal 'retirement' from the Army. His outstanding qualities and courtesy, associated with a willingness to make and apply tough decision attracted a rare combination of respect and affection.

He was a great friend to the RAA Association (NSW) and served as one of its Honorary Vice Presidents. He supported the RAA Historical Society, especially in its projects in the mid 1990s; the launches of books by Brigadier Ken Fulford ('We Stood and Waited') and by Dr David Horner ('The Gunners'), and in the

construction in 1995 of the Monument to the Defence of Sydney (as part of the 'Australia Remembers' celebrations) at North Head.

Born in Brisbane in 1933, schooled at 'Churchie', he was a capable student with a scientific bent. He graduated in Food Science and Technology from the Queensland Institute of Technology. His career with Goodman, Fielder took on a new dimension when he transferred from Research and Development to marketing and in 1976 to product management based in Sydney. In 1984 he was appointed a Divisional General Manager in Australia's largest food manufacturing company, which had extensive interests in flour milling and baking in Europe, South East Asia and New Zealand.

He commenced his military service as a National Serviceman in late 1951. He was commissioned in 1955 and in February 1965 was appointed Commanding Officer of 5th Field Regiment RAA, the youngest CO in the Australian Army and the first National serviceman to command a CMF unit. In 1976 he transferred to Sydney in his civil employment and became Project Officer in charge of the OCTU Course Design Team. He was promoted Colonel (Artillery) 2nd Division Field Force Group in 1978, to Brigadier as Commander 8th Brigade in 1981, appointed commander 2nd Training Group in 1983 and promoted to Major General as Commander 2nd Division in 1985. He served for periods in Malaya and South Vietnam and as Honorary ADC to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second. He was ACGS – Army Reserve from April 1988 to March 1990. Between March 1990 and March 1996, he served as Colonel Commandant RAA Eastern Region and as Representative Colonel Commandant RAA. He retired from the latter appointment on 14 March 1996, after almost 45 years service to the RAA and the wider Army.

Rod Fay was conscious of the close association between the Royal Australian Artillery and the Royal Artillery. In late 1996, he nominated his audience with our Captain General, Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth the Second at Buckingham Palace in 1913 as 'one of the most memorable times in his distinguished life. Also in late 1996 he wrote to Cannonball saying 'During this time of great change in the Army I know the Regiment has the flexibility, resilience and capabilities to be able to grow even stronger in the years ahead.'

His funeral was held in a packed Garrison Church, Millers Point on Friday 30 January 1998 with full Military Honours. The service was conducted by the Reverend Joe

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Burrows, and included three Eulogies. The first, on behalf of the Army was given by Major General RJ Sharp, AO, RFD, ED, the second – with a business focus – was offered by Mr Phillip Stanton, Managing Director of Steggles Ltd (a Division of Goodman Fielders Ltd). The third, for the family, was delivered by Lieutenant Commander Robert Sinclair RFD, RD, RANR. Six Major Generals acted as Pallbearers. A 200 strong Guard of Honour was provided by 8th/12th Medium Regiment RAA, outside the Church and Northern Suburbs Crematorium.

He is sadly missed by his wife Christine who provided wonderful support for him in the good times and the difficult, siblings Barry Fay, and Wendy Graham, his lifelong friend Robert Sinclair and by all those who knew and served with him.

He was one of the rare human beings who went from one success to another, and who made a positive and lasting impression on all those who met and came to know him.