

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Frank Pellatt, OAM

1919 – 2002

By Arthur Burke

An old mate and Tiger, Frank Pellatt passed away peacefully on Thursday 20 June 2002, having finally succumbed to prostate cancer. He is survived by his two daughter, Jeaneen and Suzanne and their families.

Back in 1962 when I first met Frank as a young Gunner in the Citizens Military Forces (CMF), he personified all the qualities of that very old and venerable school of professional soldiers – seasoned by experience, technically sound, thoroughly loyal and trustworthy, forthright without being disrespectful, and with a very wry sense of humour which would often only be detected if one dared to peer into those steely blue eyes.



WO2 Frank Pellatt wore World War 2 ribbons which gave him a very credible air. His GSM with clasp Malaya recognised active service as a Troop Sergeant Major (TSM) when the Tigers became the first Australian artillery unit to see active service since World War 2.

As the cadre battery Sergeant Major (BSM) of P (later 13th Field) Battery of 5th Field Regiment, RAA, he opened my eyes to the technical side of field gunnery. Frank encouraged and moulded me through 25 Pounders, and into the command post, where I eventually became the Sergeant Technical Assistant Royal Artillery (TARA – the title was adopted for use of the RAA) of 13th Battery. He taught me the protocols of the Sergeants' Mess

and introduced me to the finer side of dining and military balls. It was with some regret that I left the Mess for my commissioning course.

Twelve months later, I returned to the 5th Regiment where Frank had become the Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM). Again, I found myself looking into those steely blue eyes every so often as I was informed that 'young officer, Sir, just do not behave like that'. And again, he enthused my technical side, moulding me into a very proficient gun position officer (GPO). Then, when I had the offer to transfer to the Regular Army to go to Vietnam as the GPO of 105th Field Battery, it was Frank Pellatt who was one of two people who convinced me that this would be a good career move. As usual he was correct, and I have always thanked him for directing me towards a most satisfying and rewarding profession.

Frank retired as the RSM of 1st Field Regiment in January 1971. However, this only meant leaving the Army, not stopping work. His veteran welfare work, office bearer in the RSL and local community leadership would fill most retiree's cups. Yet his cup runneth over with maintaining Gunner links through his restoration and guide duties at Fort Lytton and his support to the 105th Field Battery Association. He richly deserved the award of the Medal of the Order of Australia (OAM) in the 2000 Queen's Birthday Honours List.

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I will never forget Frank Pellatt for what he taught me and the friendship and good advice he gave me. 105th Battery members from Malaya will not forget his regular attendance at 105th Association Reunions and his font of stories from those time. The 105th Association will not forget his meticulous assistance with captioning photos of the Malaya era in the Bade Collection. He is now at peace with his beloved Beryl who predeceased him two years earlier.

Acknowledgements:

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