

AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

Ivars Carl Valuks

29 May 1938 – 21 October 2018

By Colonel Arthur Burke OAM (Retd)



Ivars Carl Valuks passed away on Sunday morning 21 October 2018 from liver failure. Though he was experiencing the effects of dementia when he attended Binh Ba Day in June this year, his 105th Battery mates did not appreciate that his health was so fragile.

Born on 29 May 1938, Ivars served as in the Citizen Military Forces as a gun number and signaller with Sydney's 114th Coast Battery and then 18th Light Anti-aircraft Regiment. Australia's commitment to the Vietnam War began and at the mature age of 28 years, Ivars enlisted in the Regular Army on 26 October 1966. Posted to 105th Field Battery which was reforming at Wacol then Enoggera, Brisbane following its return from Vietnam, he became a forward observation assistant and went to Vietnam with this unit in February 1969. Ivars was a little older than the average digger and, as a bombardier in Vietnam, he fell naturally into the job as 2IC of an artillery forward observation (FO) party attached to an infantry battalion. He was as keen and enthusiastic as the youngest digger but with a thoroughly mature, professional approach to his job and an attitude that transferred itself to the rest of the FO party.

It was highly unfortunate that, on 9 March 1969 during his very first active service operation after arriving in Vietnam, Ivars followed his infantry platoon commander, the platoon sergeant and a corporal section commander into an unknown minefield and was quite literally blown up. The three leading infantrymen were killed but Ivars survived in the minefield for about three hours, severely incapacitated by 36 individual wounds.

Initially conscious and fully aware of the situation while his strength ebbed with his blood, Ivars lay completely motionless with occasional calls and messages for his loved ones. He eventually succumbed to loss of blood and was unconscious when eventually extracted. As he was airlifted out of the minefield there were doubts whether he would survive.

Ivars's wounds required his immediate return to Australia ... but not for long. Recuperating in a Gold Coast rehabilitation centre he wrote to his FO officer, who was still in Vietnam, proclaiming his desire to return to the battery and to resume operations as soon as possible. He always was an enthusiastic soldier. And return to the war, and to his artillery battery, is exactly what Ivars did as soon as he possibly could after several months' recuperation in Australia ... only again to land in the middle of an unknown minefield; again, on the very first operation after his return! By this stage Ivars realised he could not make a habit of this sort of thing with the infantry and he completed his tour as an FO assistant with the armoured personnel carriers and in the Long Dien liaison party.

After Vietnam, Ivars served at the School of Artillery, 1st Field Regiment, Headquarters 1st Division Artillery and finally with 5th/11th Field Regiment (Reserve) in Brisbane. He discharged on 27 October 1986 in the rank of warrant officer class two after completing 20 years' service.

In civvy street, Ivars was a partner in a toll gate business within south-east Asia. He married Maggie and also fell in love with the peace and seclusion of Russell Island in Brisbane's Moreton Bay. He moved a house across to Russell and became part of a rather significant Vietnam veteran community. He was an active member of the local RSL, rising to be its president and overseeing an

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expansion of the original community hall club house. He was a generous host to old 105th Battery mates whether they visited for a lunch-time meal or stayed over for a bit of fishing.

Ivars Valuks enjoyed a relaxed, easy going life. His dry sense of humour often led to the Mickey being taken out of him, but he accepted this good naturedly as part of life and let it wash over him. He was a dutiful and loyal professional soldier who always tried hard to please people.

Sadly, Maggie predeceased Ivars and, though dementia slowed his mobility as he aged, he still made the effort to attend the occasional Army function. His 105th Battery mates last saw him on Binh Ba Day 6 June 2018 when an RSL welfare officer brought him over to Brisbane city for the luncheon.

Ivars' last parade was held on Monday 29 October at George Hartnett Metropolitan Funerals 127 Russell Street Cleveland in Queensland.

Vale Ivars Carl Valuks – loyal Regular soldier, business man, active veteran community worker. Gone to the Great Gun Park up above at 80 years of age.