

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

### 167766 Warrant Officer Class One Ashley Spann

9 June 1938 – 12 June 2016

By Colonel A R Burke, OAM (Retd)



Ashley Spann passed away suddenly but peacefully from a heart attack at his Brisbane home on 12 June 2016, just after his 78<sup>th</sup> birthday.

Born in the country town of Beaudesert, Queensland on 9 June 1938, Ash grew up with the family in the western suburbs of Brisbane where his father had a milk run and a milk bar at Oxley. He attended the Corinda State School till age 14 then worked in his father's business.

Ash was inoculated by the Army during his compulsory 18 year olds' national service in the 1950s, so when he did not see much of a future delivering milk and working in the cafe, he was driven to join the Regular Army at the relatively mature age of nearly 24 years.

After completing his recruit and Artillery specialist training, Gunner Spann was posted to the fledgling 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment RAA at Wacol, Brisbane. When 105<sup>th</sup> Battery was being brought up to a war establishment for Vietnam, he became the driver/operator (radio) of the H1 command post vehicle of the gun position officer, Lieutenant John Jansen.

Ash was fiercely proud of this position and lovingly looked after his vehicle. There was also a period during the 105<sup>th</sup>'s 1965–66 tour of Vietnam that he became liaison officer Lieutenant John Long's driver/op for several months. He served initially with the 1 RAR Group as part of the US 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade, and then with 1<sup>st</sup> Field Regiment RAA after it arrived in country in June 1966. Ash returned to Australia as a lance bombardier.

Over the next 24 years, Ashley Spann served with each of the three Regular Artillery gun units (1, 4 and 8) and the School of Artillery. Training was a forte of Ash's as evidenced by his twice serving with the 1<sup>st</sup> Recruit Training Battalion, twice at the School, with 123<sup>rd</sup> Training Battery and finally the 1<sup>st</sup> Training Group in Brisbane. He also passed on his expertise to part-time soldiers as a sergeant major instructor gunnery (SMIG) with the 7<sup>th</sup> and as RSM of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Field Regiment RAA.

WO1 Spann finally hung up his Sam Brown and pace stick on the eve of the 24<sup>th</sup> anniversary of his enlistment, 4 April 1986 at almost 48 years of age.

Ash remained a bachelor all his life. He owned his home at Moorooka, Brisbane and in retirement pottered around his garden and was always willing to help people and lend a sympathetic ear to any tortured soul. He gave much of his free time to The Apostolic Church and veterans' organisations. He was a life subscriber and loyal supporter of the 105<sup>th</sup> Battery Association, had been the treasurer, for and was active in the 173<sup>rd</sup> Airborne Brigade Association (Down Under Chapter), and worked hard with the veterans' support groups at the Goodna RSL Sub Branch.

Above all, however, Ash was a loving family man, actively supporting his four siblings and their children. For many years, the family had gathered at the Moorooka house to celebrate Ash's birthday each June. Sadly, their brother and uncle had passed away just before they arrived in 2016.

Vale Warrant Officer Class One Ashley Spann—Regular soldier, trainer, strong family man and always a Gunner. Gone to join so many of his old mates in the Great Gun Park up above.

