

MANSFORD

‘THE WARRIOR POET’

A Digger’s Tribute



BRIGADIER GEORGE LYON MANSFORD AM

From Private to Brigadier: Four Decades of Service, Leadership and Legacy

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Author
Peter Adamis

DEDICATION



George on the veranda of 'Wundurra' overlooking the Bay - Cairns

This book is dedicated to the memory of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford, AM (1934–2026), whose lifelong service embodied the warrior's creed.

It is also dedicated to his wives, Maureen and later Helen, who stood beside him through triumph and hardship; to Peter, the lost son whose memory remained forever cherished in his father's heart; and to Sharon, Vicki, Tracey and Georgina, whose strength, devotion and care sustained their father through loss, grief and unwavering service. To the countless men and women who served alongside 'Warrie' George; the soldiers he trained at the Tully and Canungra jungle warfare camps, the mates who fought beside him in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, the officers he mentored in the field and through inspiring speeches at Officer Training Schools across the nation; your sacrifices and shared bonds are honoured here.

To the Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders of the Northern Surveillance Force, whose unique contributions and partnership with George helped safeguard Australia's borders and whose service has too often gone unrecognised; this book acknowledges your vital role in his legacy. To the widows and families supported through his decades of tireless advocacy with Legacy, to the Vietnam veterans for whom he fought with passion and principle and to the Defence families who knew him as a steadfast advocate, mentor and friend; this book preserves the voice, values and enduring legacy of a man who never forgot his where he came from or his obligations to those who served.

George Mansford was more than a soldier; he was a poet, a philosopher, a leader who understood that true strength lies not only in courage under fire, but in compassion, integrity and the unwavering commitment to lift others. His legacy lives on in every life he touched, every family he supported and every principle he defended.

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MANSFORD ‘THE WARRIOR POET’: A Digger’s Tribute. Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM (1934-2026)

This is a personal tribute and memorial written by a soldier who served under Brigadier Mansford's command and maintained a friendship with him for over four decades. While extensively researched using multiple verified sources, this work prioritises the preservation of memory and honour of service over strict academic standards. The author welcomes corrections and feedback, assumes no liability for unintentional errors and intends no harm to any individual mentioned herein.

Nature of this work. This is a personal tribute and memorial, not an official biography, authoritative military history, or academically rigorous scholarly work. The author, Peter Adamis, served under Brigadier Mansford's command at 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment and maintained a personal friendship with him for over four decades until his death in 2026. This relationship profoundly influences the work's perspective, tone and content, reflecting genuine respect, admiration, loyalty and gratitude. While extensive research and verification efforts have been undertaken using multiple sources, this work prioritises the preservation of memory, honour of service and continuation of legacy over strict academic standards of verification and critical distance.

Primary Sources. This work draws upon verified historical sources, official military records, oral histories, published works and personal testimonies including Australian War Memorial Collection Records (S02869, C1266772), UNSW Australians at War Film Archive interviews, The Royal Australian Regiment Association archives, National Library of Australia catalogue records, Queensland Legislative Assembly Hansard records, Brigadier Mansford's published works, personal interviews conducted 2003-2011, military service records and operational documentation, publicly delivered funeral eulogies and tributes (10th March 2026), voluntary testimonies from family, soldiers’, officers and veterans, social media tributes from the military community and oral military tradition and storytelling.

Voluntary contributors and public materials. Named individuals voluntarily provided personal testimonies, stories, photographs and information specifically to honour Brigadier Mansford's memory. All contributors understood their information would be published for this memorial purpose. These include:

Public Funeral Materials: Eulogies and tributes delivered at Brigadier Mansford's funeral (10th March 2026, St Monica's Cathedral, Cairns) were presented at a public service attended by hundreds and broadcast online to a public audience. These tributes have been transcribed from publicly available recordings using voice to text technology and are preserved here to honour both the speakers and the subject.

Social Media Tributes: Public commemorations posted on military association pages, veteran forums and social media platforms following Mansford's death represent the authentic voice of the military community's response to his passing and are included for this memorial purpose.

Mansford's Documented Views and Fair Comment. Criticisms of bureaucracy, ‘Canberra Suits’ and institutional failures attributed to Brigadier Mansford are drawn from his published poetry (*The Spirit of Australia, Duty and Consequence, The Mad Galahs*), public speeches at The Royal Military College and Staff College, oral history interviews (Australian War Memorial and UNSW Australians at War Film Archive), personal conversations with the author over four decades and testimony from those who knew him. References to ‘careerist officers’ and bureaucratic ‘arrogance and indifference’ reflect Mansford's personal opinions; not the author's inventions; and constitute fair comment on matters of public interest. These criticisms address institutional practices and policy failures, not individual character, reflecting Mansford's passionate advocacy for soldiers based on 50 years of service.

Personal Information and Privacy. Personal information about named individuals (including medical conditions, family situations, career experiences and service records) is included only where voluntarily provided to honour Mansford's memory, already publicly available, necessary for understanding his character and impact or where disclosure honours rather than harms the individual.

No Malicious Intent: Personal information is NOT included to embarrass, harm, exploit or invade privacy maliciously. All such information serves the legitimate purpose of illustrating Mansford's profound impact on the lives of those he served with, commanded and supported throughout his career and beyond.

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Indigenous Acknowledgement. The author respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which Brigadier Mansford served, trained and lived, including the Turrbal, Yidinji and Kaurareg peoples. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the deep connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. George Mansford's childhood among Aboriginal communities, shaped his lifelong respect for Indigenous Australians and advocacy for Indigenous soldiers' recognition and welfare. This aspect of his life is treated with cultural sensitivity and respect. Information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been handled respectfully according to cultural protocols. Any offence inadvertently caused is sincerely regretted. Concerns regarding portrayal or cultural sensitivity should be directed to the author.

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Deceased Persons and Families. Information about deceased individuals, including George's wives (Maureen and Helen), his son Peter, mates and family members, is included with deep respect to honour their memories and contributions, acknowledge their importance in his life, preserve family history as part of his legacy and recognise the sacrifices of military service on families. No exploitation of grief or loss is intended. Personal family information provides necessary context for understanding his character and relationships. Families may have different recollections and the author respects that memory is personal and varied.

No Defamation, Harm, or Malicious Intent. This work honours Brigadier Mansford's memory and documents his contributions to Australian military history and culture. No defamation, embarrassment, harm, or malicious invasion of privacy is intended toward any individual, living or deceased. Critical assessments of institutions, policies, or practices reflect his documented views and passionate advocacy, historical analysis and honest opinion on matters of public interest, fair comment on institutional accountability and veteran welfare and the author's genuine beliefs based on stated facts and experiences; not personal attacks or attempts to harm reputations. This work presents an authentic portrayal acknowledging the complexity of military service, leadership and the human experience of war and its aftermath.

Accuracy and Corrections. While this work has been diligently researched using multiple verified sources, the author acknowledges that not all facts have been independently verified against official records, historical accounts may vary based on perspective and available evidence, oral histories and personal memories may contain inaccuracies, some records are incomplete or inaccessible and errors may exist despite best efforts.

The author welcomes corrections, additional documentation, clarifications, photographs, or supplementary information from readers with authoritative knowledge. Future editions will incorporate verified corrections with appropriate acknowledgement.

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Constructive feedback welcome. The author invites constructive criticism, additional information, corrections and feedback to improve the accuracy and quality of this tribute. This work is intended to honour all those mentioned and to preserve an important legacy of Australian military service.

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FOREWORD

On the 19th February 2026, Australia lost one of her greatest sons, a family lost a beloved patriarch and The Royal Australian Regiment lost an icon. Brigadier ‘Warrie’ George Mansford, AM rose from the ranks. His early career saw him embark on active service as a Private soldier in 1 RAR during the latter stages of the Korean War and he progressed through service in Malayan Emergency, Vietnam with the 6 RAR and the AATTV and many other postings that culminated with his retirement as a Brigadier, as Commander 11 Brigade in 1990.

His military achievements were the stuff of legend and the Battle School he founded in the jungles of Tully in 1980 still to this day instils a degree of nervous trepidation on soldiers when they hear that they are earmarked to undertake a training rotation at the notoriously tough Battle School.

But beyond his martial achievements, George Mansford continued to be a man of the people and a man of the community to the very end. An author, a poet; Cairns Citizen of the Year in 1996. A staunch conservationist; the driving force behind myriad community events and developmental programmes. An eloquent orator; a gifted story teller. A veteran advocate; a historian. A proud Australian, a force of nature, a true character. He was a man of the people whose friendships and influence transcended social class, politics, race and religion.

I am indebted to the author of this work for offering me the opportunity to write the foreword to this impressively researched work. Despite his fame and universal popularity, George was always somewhat of an enigma – and his humble, modest nature was such that piecing together such a detailed chronology of ‘Warrie’ George’s life is testament to the author’s perseverance and investigative abilities.

I was fortunate to be a small part of the history of a friendship between two families that originated nearly 70 years ago. I am assured that I was first introduced to George shortly after my birth, as he and my father were great friends and had served alongside each other in several Battalions. But I was too young to remember being ‘*baby sat by the Mansford kids*’ and have only fragmented recollections of the raucous celebrations of the grownups in the 6 RAR Officers’ Mess following the Queen’s Birthday family day that the Battalion delivered in 1974. I consider myself privileged that we reconnected in 1989 and remained in close communications for nearly four decades thereafter.

This book, *Mansford the ‘Warrior Poet’* is a wonderful testament to a wonderful Australian. It captures both George’s life story and his character. The world is a lesser place without George Mansford. Yet his memory is cherished and his inspiration endures. I consider myself honoured to have known him and I am all the better for it. Vale ‘Warrie’ George.

Jim Hammett
Colonel (Retired)
25 April 2026

PREFACE

In the frozen hills of Korea and steaming jungles of Malaya, George Mansford learned that survival depended on bonds forged in hardship. Years later, he would write: *'The oath to serve your country did not include a contract for normal luxury and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary it implied hardships, loyalty and devotion to duty, regardless of your rank. The battle school is here to remind you of that oath'*. This philosophy defined his military career and shaped countless lives, making him both leader and mentor; the warrior poet who inspired generations.

George Mansford was born on 19th August 1934 in an Aboriginal community in Guildford, Western Australia. His early years unfolded against the backdrop of impending global conflict. At just five, he experienced the emotional turmoil of war. The image of his mother's tears as headlines screamed 'WAR' would resonate throughout his life. From these humble beginnings, his journey took him from the Australian bush to becoming one of Australia's most esteemed military leaders.

Mansford was not only a warrior; he was a poet, author, teacher and philosopher of leadership. His combat experiences infused his writing with authenticity. His influential works, including *'Junior Leadership on the Battlefield'*, became essential reading for generations of officers. His novel *'The Mad Galahs'* offered a candid look at advisory warfare, while his poetry collection *'The Spirit of Australia'* captured the soldier's experience with emotional depth. Even at Eighty-Eight, he published *'Duty and Consequence'*, addressing contemporary challenges facing the Defence Force.

This book chronicles Brigadier Mansford's forty-year military journey through Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, highlighting his evolution from soldier to visionary leader. Known throughout the Defence Force as a soldier's soldier, George Mansford remained connected to his origins. His leadership philosophy centred on three core principles: *'knowing your people, understanding people and valuing people'*. This philosophy informed his approach to military training, mentorship and advocacy for soldiers and their families.

His establishment of Jungle Training at Tully revolutionised military training in Australia, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and preparedness. His methods instilled resilience and mental toughness, equipping soldiers for the brutal realities of jungle warfare. His legacy extends beyond tangible achievements. It lives in the lives saved by the standards he established, in the leaders he mentored and in the culture of honesty and excellence he fostered.

From an Aboriginal mission community to the pinnacle of the Australian Army, this narrative captures the essence of a life dedicated to service, leadership and the enduring legacy of the warrior-poet.

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INTRODUCTION

This is a personal tribute, not a critical biography. I served under Brigadier George Mansford in two Infantry Battalions (1 RAR and 6 RAR) and knew him for over forty years. I confess, not as well as many others; yet I have attempted in this work to preserve his memory as his soldiers, friends and family remember him—through their own voices, stories and testimonies.

George Mansford was many things to many people. To his family, he was a devoted father and grandfather who carried profound grief with quiet dignity. To the soldiers he served with in his early years he was called 'Snow'; to the many soldiers he commanded, he was 'Warrie' George—the officer who slept in the rain rather than accept comfort his troops couldn't share. A man who pushed them to their limits because he understood that realistic training saved lives in combat. To the veterans and widows he advocated for throughout his retirement, he was 'Mr. Fix It'—the man who fought bureaucracy with the same determination he had once brought to the battlefield. To the Australian Army, he was a legend whose influence extended far beyond his many years of service.

George touched many people throughout his life and left an indelible mark on those he encountered. As I have stated above, I do not claim to have known him as well as those closer to him, yet whenever I sought his support or opinion, he never responded in the negative.

This manuscript documents the remarkable journey of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM (1934-2026), whose forty-year military career saw him rise from private soldier to one of Australia's most influential military leaders and educators. His service spanned three wars—Korea, Malaya and Vietnam—and pivotal periods in Australian military history: the Korean War's static phase, the Malayan Emergency's counter-insurgency operations, and Vietnam War advisory and combat roles.

Mansford's military career was distinguished by any measure. He rose from Private to Brigadier through merit alone, established a Jungle Training at Tully in Queensland, commanded the 11th Brigade and was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia. As Commandant of Jungle Training at Tully, he revolutionised Australian military training, forging an institution that prepared thousands of soldiers for the realities of jungle warfare. His creation of the Northern Surveillance Force demonstrated innovative thinking by integrating the unique skills of Indigenous Australians into National Defence.

Yet Mansford not only embodied the Australian warrior tradition but also gave it a voice. He authored five significant works that educated generations of leaders and articulated the soldier's experience, including 'Junior Leadership on the Battlefield'. His poetry and writings continue to educate and inspire, ensuring that lessons learned through sacrifice are preserved.

At the heart of his leadership was a simple principle: 'know your people, understand your people, value your people'. This wasn't abstract theory but lived practice, demonstrated through four decades of service and thirty-six years of advocacy. His philosophy shaped Australian military culture and saved countless lives. Three enduring principles defined his life:

- that people are paramount to military effectiveness,
- that realistic training is essential for combat survival and
- that the fundamental duty of a leader is to serve those under their command.

Mansford's legacy extends beyond his distinguished military career into a lifetime of advocacy for veterans and their families. His post-retirement service included environmental conservation, mentorship of young officers and practical assistance to military widows through Legacy. He exemplified the warrior-poet: a combat veteran who understood that military effectiveness requires both physical courage and intellectual depth, both tactical competence and genuine care for his soldiers' welfare.

I have drawn upon his own published works, official military records, oral histories from the Australian War Memorial and UNSW archives, personal correspondence, funeral eulogies and recollections of soldiers who served under his command. Where sources conflict or cannot be verified, I have noted this. Where the same stories or themes recur, this reflects how soldiers remember—through repetition, through shared telling, through the oral tradition that keeps our mates alive.

Readers will encounter George Mansford's essential complexity: a hard-bitten warrior who wept for fallen mates, a demanding leader who demonstrated genuine compassion, a father figure to countless soldiers while privately grieving the loss of two his dear wives and his son and a legend whose stories remained grounded in truth.

This is not the complete story of George Mansford. It is the story his diggers tell—imperfect, deeply personal and true to the man we knew. It is the story of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM: soldier, leader, mentor, advocate, poet and above all, a 'digger's digger' who happened to wear stars. It is offered in the spirit he lived: with honesty, respect for those who served and understanding that the true measure of a life is found in lives touched, standards upheld and values preserved for those who follow. *'His blood was worth bottling'*

Peter Adamis

CHAPTER 1

BORN IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

1934-1951 CHILDHOOD, COMMUNITY AND THE POST OFFICE YEARS



Birth and early years. George Lyon Mansford was born on 19th August 1934, Western Australia into a world reeling from the Great Depression. His earliest memories began at [Beechboro](#), an [Aboriginal mission in Guildford](#), where his father served as administrator and cook to the Aboriginal community. This work profoundly shaped the values George would carry throughout his life. As far as he could recall, they were the only white people there and most of his playmates were little black fellows.' *I simply used to play with them and there was no difference. We made our own rules, like all children; we made our own laws and I got on well with them; still do to this day.'*

Living in the bush, far from the towns and suburbs, had its advantages. There are rich memories of George's very early days playing with his black fella mates. He can still hear the laughter as they played, skinny dipped and recalls the primitive Gunyas in which they lived, each with a small smoking fire. They were wonderful and carefree days where young George learned the landscape and developed a profound connection to the land that would serve him well in his future military career.

This unique upbringing provided formative experiences that later informed Mansford's understanding that, in the Australian military context, differences of race and religion held no significance. The mission community instilled in him the belief that character mattered more than background, that competence transcended origin and that shared hardships forged bonds stronger than any superficial differences. In the military, there was no such thing as differences. It was the great educator in ridding one of bigotry; be you black, white, brown, or brindle; Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or whatever. You were a soldier and that's what the military cared about. It was a wonderful institution. These lessons, absorbed during childhood, remained with him throughout his military career.

The first memories. George remembers spotting a left-over crust on a table and no matter how much he stretched his arms to grasp it, it remained a left-over crust. Another memory of that time was his mother sitting at the table reading an old newspaper which some rare visitor or passerby had left. He walked in and his mother was crying. He can still see the word in big black letters, 'WAR'. Later, when he had mastered the 'ABC', he came to realise why she had been so sad and what 'WAR' meant. [It was 1939 and he had just turned five.](#)

His mother's tears were testament to the fear and anguish gripping families across Australia as men departed for distant battlefields. Newspaper headlines spelling 'WAR' became an indelible image; a stark proclamation that childhood innocence had ended and a new era of fear had just begun. George soon learned an understanding of the cost of war; not only for soldiers but for the families they left behind. His father had served in World War 1, like many of his generation, he answered the call. The war affected many of George's uncles who also donned uniforms. His father, despite his age, was one of them. He was very much a nomad, rarely home and even before George was born, had been wandering far and wide during the [Great Depression](#) seeking work. Because of such travels followed by military service and then his death shortly after, George never really got to know him.

The Jam Tin incident. Apart from being wonderful and much loved, George's mother was a true-blue Aussie, tough, devoted, caring and capable of very colourful language. There was a time George slashed his hand and it seemed the blood kept flowing, so they walked over a long and seemingly endless journey via a hot sandy track in the blazing sun to seek medical help in a distant outskirt suburb of Perth. En-route they passed a group of their neighbours sitting around a smouldering fire roasting some bush tucker and from where came the shout 'What happened to Georgie, Missus?' The answer was immediate and very clear. 'The little bastard has buggered his hand on an old jam tin.' The term 'bastard' was an introduction to George's limited vocabulary and he was so proud. He was a 'bastard'. In his very first year at school, he discovered, with some pain inflicted by a teacher that 'bastard' was not a badge of honour.



Bassendean

The move to [Bassendean](#). Soon after the war began, the Mansford family relocated from the mission to Guildford and subsequently to Bassendean, a suburb of Perth, where they moved into what to them was a mansion. There were two bedrooms, kitchen with wooden stove, laundry, copper and even electricity instead of hurricane lamps.

The copper had two roles, boiling clothes and then warm water for bathing. They used a kerosene tin as a tub. The copper and stove were fuelled by wood. A far cry from the bush and in a short time they bought a second-hand radio and for the very first time listened to the magic air waves and what was to become their favourite programme, the search for the 'Golden Boomerang'. Their fortunes had changed.

George's mother established a fish and chip shop called The Fair Dinkum Aussie next to the railway line. This shop became a community fixture, providing income and a gathering place in a neighbourhood soon transformed by war. The street where they lived was predominantly populated by women, a demographic reality that became even more pronounced as virtually all the men departed for war. Their home was surrounded by air-raid shelters, silent reminders of the looming global conflict. These shelters, dug into the earth and reinforced against potential bombing raids, stood as sentinels warning of the threat.

The men had gone to war, leaving mothers, wives and children to manage households and maintain family life in their absence. Young George grew up in this environment, surrounded by women who demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in the face of hardship and uncertainty. He witnessed his mother and the other women of Bassendean managing households, supporting their families and maintaining community bonds despite the absence of their husbands and the constant fear for their safety.



Mansford Clan late 1940

Wartime childhood. George's childhood was surrounded by evidence of war. Sandbagged air raid shelters, blackouts, sirens and suddenly in the town there was to be seen many familiar faces in uniform with kitbags over shoulders waving good bye.

It was a time when mothers also became fathers and there were added responsibilities shared within each family.

Meanwhile he was gaining a disrupted style education caused through having to move schools at Eden Hills, Guilford, Bassendean Primaries and then Midland Junction High School. His education difficulties were made worse after being placed in the wrong year level and when receiving Corporal punishment. The war affected continuity of schooling for most students.

At George's school, children dug zigzag trenches for air-raid shelters, their small hands wielding shovels to create protection against a threat they could barely comprehend. George can recall at school, how on order of a whistle blast, they practiced air raid drills. That is, leaving the classroom and crouching in the zigzag trenches with mouths open and wearing ear protectors. Sometimes, the drill was conducted in the classroom and being taught how to crouch beneath the school desks. Such exercises were conducted with the seriousness the times demanded. Teachers and students alike understood that these preparations might mean the difference between life and death.

War Bonds and 'Georgie Jap'. There were war bonds to be bought, urging all to dig deep reinforced by a poster with a goggled pilot with protruding teeth in a biplane about to drop a bomb from the cockpit. Beneath was a poem which George hated with a vengeance. 'Georgie Jap' is flying high, dropping bombs to make us cry. Buy a war bond today and make 'Georgie Jap fly away.' For a while there were many fisticuffs and wrestling with school mates after George was christened with the nickname 'Georgie Jap'. Most of his opponents were older and thus bigger so he didn't win many bouts, however in time they all became weary of the brawls and he became Georgie once more.

Ration cards and community bonds. Ration cards to buy certain foods and essential clothing became the norm. George can still recall visiting the local shop for a packet of tea and watching as the purchase was confirmed with a hole punctured in the appropriate square of the ration card. More often than not, purchases were on 'tick' (Australian term for credit) and placed in the debit column of a shopkeeper's book and to be paid at a later date when the family could pay.

It was one of many signs of a close-knit community, sharing, trusting and caring and where neighbours in the street and beyond were quick to unite in times of need and celebrate as one in times of joy, or share grief when bad news arrived. Such unity was a powerful weapon which the nation could be wise never to discard. The community experienced collective grief when news arrived of casualties from battles like [El Alamein](#), where Western Australian Battalions suffered terrible losses. George recalled the weeping that swept through his neighbourhood, the sound of women crying for husbands, sons and brothers who never returned.

Even distant wars can reach out to peaceful towns. There was no different. A sad young widow here and there, someone's dad missing, another taken prisoner and George recalling his teacher crying in the class room. Later they were told that her fiancé had been killed in a place called [New Guinea](#), wherever that was. There was another time when they had been given a project to draw something which had happened recently. With few exceptions, their Grade Two class of 1942 drew sketches of tanks, planes, bombs and searchlights. Their teacher was crying again. The war was not an abstract concept; it was an immediate tragedy that touched every family, every street and every community across Australia.

Community resilience and social order. Despite the hardships imposed by war, there was no breakdown in social order. The [generation that survived World War I and the Great Depression](#) maintained discipline and dignity in the face of adversity. This resilience was not passive acceptance but an active determination to preserve normalcy and humanity in abnormal circumstances. Saturday night sing-songs became an escape ritual that helped maintain community solidarity. Families gathered and sang *'It is a Lovely Day Tomorrow,* ' even though disasters mounted and the world grew scarier. [London was bombed](#), [Singapore](#) fell, [Darwin](#) was attacked and HMAS *Sydney* was lost with all hands, yet the community continued to function.

The school system, police, shopkeepers and milkmen provided stability and discipline that helped children cope with their father's absence. These small acts of normalcy reassured children that despite the war, despite the fear and despite the uncertainty, the fundamental structures of society remained intact. The milkman still delivered milk each morning. The shopkeeper still opened his store. The police still patrolled the streets. The teacher still conducted lessons.

School days - discipline and learning. George attended school at a time when there was a parade each morning which included the raising of the [National Flag](#) and then marched to the classroom. There was always an air of authority and the development of personal and collective discipline reinforced at times with the use of the cane and regular daily rituals which became the norm, such as standing and greeting the teacher early in the morning at the beginning of class. Chalk board, ink wells and copy books were constant companions and being kept behind after school was a familiar form of punishment for misbehaviour. The teacher was God, no matter where, at school, at home and within the general community. Woe beheld any student who received the cane and if Mother heard such shameful news there would be a further round of punishment plus a grim warning, *'just wait until your father hears about this.'*

One of the most effective deterrents to both poor scholarship and bad behaviour was to fail the yearly exams and be compelled to remain in the same class for the following year. Consequently, as each year's final exams approached, there was more interest in home work and increased efforts to succeed. In sport, there were only three prizes, first, second and third and a pat on the shoulder for all competitors; trees were to be climbed; rivers and creeks to be swam and if you fell over, be it physically or in some other effort to achieve, you were told to get up and try again.

Learning to fight. An uncle taught George to box, leading to a formative schoolyard fight in 1946. *I just went in on the attack. I can always remember my uncle saying, it is an Army maxim: the best form of defence is attack. I beat him like a dinner and became the school hero because I was much smaller.* This incident taught George truths about conflict that remained with him throughout his military career; that aggression and initiative could overcome physical disadvantage, that courage was action despite fear and that decisive action often determined outcomes more than size or strength.

The tide turns. As the war progressed, there was more good news than bad. Their fourth-grade teacher had chalked a map on the blackboard with a huge arrow pointing from the waves to the land. It was June 6th 1944 and they were told that the [Allied Forces had landed in France](#). However, each night, their radio told them that V2 Buzz Bombs launched from across the English Channel were destroying London and its surrounds. It was, George thinks, the first time he became scared of the war. However, the bad news was short lived.

The following year, World War 2 ended when [two Atomic Bombs were dropped over Japan](#). It was the first time they had ever heard of Atomic Bombs. The nuclear age had arrived and George will never forget the subsequent celebrations which seemed to go on and on. Bands playing, National Flags flying, hooting factory sirens, dancing in the main street and it seemed a magician had waved a wand and created magic sunshine where everyone but everyone was laughing, smiling and singing.

Soon after, the first troop trains covered in streamers rattled by from the Eastern States on the way to Perth with constant blasts of cock-a-doodle-doo from the train's Puffing-Billy. Peace had arrived and normality was just around the corner. It also signalled the beginning of the end for ration cards which had been used during the war to control consumption of essential items such as meat, butter, tea, sugar and clothing.

Post-war consequences. The consequences of war became more evident within the community. George's sister, now 18 was for a while being courted by an ex-prisoner of war with one leg. One ex-soldier working at the local Post Office had constant tremors and suddenly was no longer there. There were whispers of [shell shock](#) which became an increasingly used term within the community; however, their generation did not comprehend the causes. In reflection, it was all around them.

The aged cleaner (well to George he was old) a [World War One veteran](#) taught George the skills of bayonet fighting as they parried and thrust with two broom sticks. George's father was more fortunate than most, however his long absence from home seeking work in the last years of the depression followed by military service had made him a stranger to George and his younger siblings and before they really got to know him again, he passed on.

[New Australians.](#) Soon after the war they became familiar with the term '[New Australians](#)' which was used to describe migrants from war ravaged Europe seeking a new life Down Under. George can still see his mother and other ladies waiting at the local railway station to welcome three migrant families. Part of the welcome was to introduce them to their shopping locations, then off to meet their new neighbours. One such couple camped behind their home and in a short time began building. George was a regular visitor and helped the husband to make cement bricks for the house. In return he learnt some of the German language which today is limited to several words.

It was a very effective form of integration. In today's Space Age society, it seems government with much expensive huffing and puffing has been ambushed by political correctness, thus in George's view, producing social fragmentation with destructive hype in mothering minority groups which indirectly creates an attitude of 'them and us.' It seems we never did really learn the lessons of successful integration of 'New Australians' from the late Forties and early Fifties.

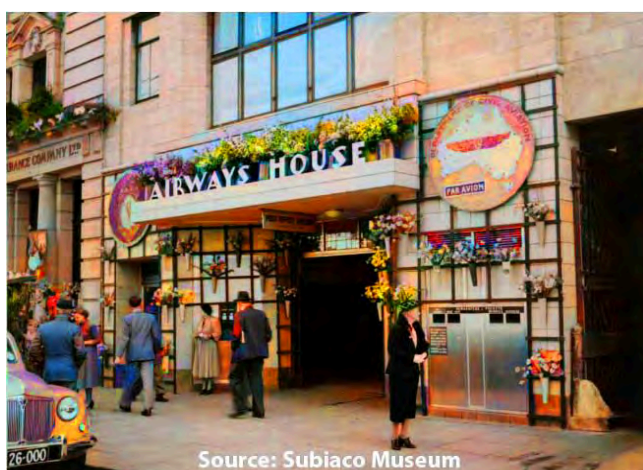
The dual identity and the evolving Australian Nation. Young George was exposed to both British imperial identity and emerging [Australian Nationalism](#) during these formative years. He identified as Australian first, though his father, a British immigrant, maintained strong ties to the old country. This dual identity, simultaneously Australian and British, reflected the transitional nature of Australian national consciousness during the war years. The conflict forced Australians to define themselves not merely as loyal subjects of the British Empire but as citizens of a nation with its own character, values and destiny.

The war brought the world to Bassendean in ways that peacetime never could. News from distant battlefields, reports of Australian troops fighting in North Africa and the Pacific, stories of heroism and sacrifice; all filtered into the consciousness of a young boy growing up in a working-class neighbourhood. The war began shaping George's understanding of duty, service and sacrifice long before he donned a uniform himself.

Preparation for working life. In preparation for High School, George was given his first pair of shoes which he wore, only to and from school. High school was the next challenge for three years and then for a fortunate few, matriculation followed by University if a family could afford the expenses. For most of them, further studies past Year Nine was out of the question and by the age of 15 or even younger, they had joined the work force.

The Post Office years. The end of World War II brought profound changes to Australia. For a fifteen-year-old boy who had grown up in the shadow of war, the path forward was not immediately clear. Yet the years between leaving school and enlisting in the Army proved formative, teaching discipline, technical skill and the value of dedication; qualities that defined his military career. In 1949, at age fifteen George left school.

This was not unusual for working-class Australian boys of his generation. The decision reflected both practical necessity and the norms of the era. George's father had returned home from the war but carried the scars of conflict. His mother had managed the family's fish and chip shop throughout the war years, working long hours to keep the family fed and housed. Now, with the war over and George approaching working age, it was time for him to contribute.



Thus at 15, George began working in the local Post Office training to be a telegraphist, mastering Morse code by night and delivering telegrams by day. On weekends he sold football programmes by day and ice creams at the Tivoli Theatre in Perth at night.

Sundays after church he helped the local woodman chop and deliver the end product to the households as a major source of energy for stoves, coppers and fireplaces used to warm homes in winter.

The opportunity that presented itself was employment with the Post Office as a Junior Postal Officer. Postmaster-General's Department was one of Australia's largest employers, offering stable, respectable work with clear paths for advancement. More importantly, it provided training in technical skills increasingly valuable in the modern world.

The most significant aspect of George's Post Office training was learning Morse code and wireless operation. In an era before widespread telephone service, Morse code remained the primary method for rapid long-distance communication. George proved to have a natural aptitude for this demanding work, travelling regularly to Perth for training. The discipline required; hours of practice, absolute accuracy; speed through repetition; prepared him for military training. He achieved proficiency at twenty to twenty-three words per minute, demonstrating both technical competence and dedication.

A Post Office scholarship validated his skills and demonstrated qualities that would serve him well in the military: disciplined practice, reliability and intelligence. He learned to follow procedures precisely, maintain equipment and accept responsibility. The technical competence and reliability gained through consistent performance proved directly applicable to his future military service. *'Mum was very proud of all of this and her eldest was about to become somebody in the Post Office. So, what did I do, I shattered all of that on my seventeenth birthday by joining the Army'.*

Citizens Military Forces. Shortly after, in 1950, the Korean War began and now just 16, George was suddenly transformed to 18 by a simple alteration on his birth certificate and became a raw recruit in the Citizens Military Forces, now known today as the Army Reserve. It was a time when there were Reds under every bed and a general fear that communism was on the march to conquer all. Thus, a very naïve and ill-disciplined adolescent who had been seeking a white horse and armour was issued with an oversized khaki uniform, an already used slouch hat, large red Army boots which he was told he would grow into and a bolt action 303 rifle made during WW1 in 1916 as was clearly seen on the metal.

Enlistment - Regular Army. The following year on his 17th birthday and after having successfully passed telegraphy examinations, George handed in his equipment and World War One rifle, swore another oath along with five other school mates and enlisted in the Regular Army. At [Karrakatta Army depot,](#) he was issued with a similar aged rifle and equipment which he swears was created and stored at the same time as his previous military issue. The white horse and shiny armour were soon forgotten.

Reflections on childhood. George is of the view his childhood taught him respect, particularly for women, personal discipline, resilience and a set of social rules which in the following years could be slowly mastered and understood. Punished with the cane, sometimes hungry, patched clothes, bare footed and yet like most of their generation, they readily accepted such rigors as part of life. It unquestionably helped to prepare him for many unexpected challenges ahead. Above all, he had been given a free gift of personal pride, acceptance of responsibility, a base for self-confidence and a dawning of love of country and flag. Then the time came for him to shoulder his kitbag, wave hooray to a tearful mother and begin another phase of his very young life and always will be the fond reflections of his childhood.

A house of fond memories. It was a tiny house, rusting roof and need of paint. In a luckless street perhaps forgotten by a busy saint, but for me as time went by it became a treasure chest, bursting with rich and precious lessons of life never to be forgotten in good times or terrible strife. We all had chores and they never seemed to stop. Chop tomorrow's wood, errands to the local shop. Light the copper to boil clothes or for a hot bath.

Weed the widow's garden and carry her shopping bags. Wash and clean windows with those very special rags. Mother with frayed apron and her many duties too. The familiar smell of simmering, tasty rabbit stew and sometimes, fresh baked bread soon to be cut. The youngest setting the plates and other tableware under a watchful eye ensuring detail and care. *'We always said grace and thankful for what we had.'* There was much talk and laughter; no reason to be sad. Mother's stern look if table manners went astray.

Questions on life; the war and why was our dad there? Soon he would be home with us and many gifts to share. The crowded bedroom where all four kids slept at night. Being allowed to read for a while by a dim flickering light. Behind the thin wall, hearing her softly cry late into the night. Dad's leave had been cancelled and we would have to wait again. Falling asleep to drum beats on the roof from the summer rain. Some say we had it tough and yes, I would agree; but today as I study the world of 'what's in it for me', TV dinners, lies, violence, 'not my fault, ' drugs and greed, flashing TV screens, mobile phones and electronic mouse I was surely lucky to learn life's values in that little house.

CHAPTER 2

THE FORGING OF A SOLDIER

1951-1952 CITIZENS MILITARY FORCES



In 1950, at age sixteen, George joined the Citizens Military Forces (CMF); the part-time reserve component of the Australian Army. This was not full-time military service, but it represented significant commitment and a clear indication of his intentions for the future. The outbreak of the Korean War, which began that year, intensified his considerations, making military service immediate and real rather than an abstract thought.

The CMF provided part-time military training for young Australians who maintained civilian employment while developing military skills. Training sessions were held on weekends and during annual camps, offering basic infantry training and introducing soldiers to military discipline, weapons handling and field operations. For George, the CMF provided his first direct experience of military life and his first opportunity to determine whether military service suited him.

The training was demanding yet part-time. Soldiers learned basic drill, weapons handling, fieldcraft and tactics. They practised marching, learned to maintain and fire rifles, conducted field exercises and absorbed the fundamentals of military discipline. This rigorous training instilled not only technical skills but also the values of teamwork and camaraderie among the young recruits. For George, these early lessons in discipline and combat prepared him for the challenges he would face in Malaya, where the complexities of jungle warfare demanded not only skill but also the adaptability honed during his formative years. The CMF experience allowed George to test his interest in military service without fully committing to enlisting in the Regular Army.

The Korean War, which erupted in June of 1950, created a palpable urgency around military service. Australian Forces were deployed to Korea as part of the United Nations response to North Korean aggression and news of their experiences reached home through newspapers and radio broadcasts. Young men across Australia watched as soldiers departed for a war that was real, immediate and dangerous.

The news from Korea; reports of fierce fighting, casualty lists and accounts of Australian soldiers in combat; transformed military service from an abstract notion into a pressing reality. George's year in the CMF allowed him to seriously consider this possibility. He observed military life, experienced military training and determined whether he was suited to the demands and challenges of service. The CMF provided a testing ground, a way to explore military service before making the irrevocable commitment of enlisting in the Regular Army.

The decision to enlist. In 1951, at age seventeen; having just celebrated his birthday on 19th August; George made the decision to enlist in the Australian Regular Army. This was not an impulsive choice but the culmination of a year's consideration and preparation through the CMF. The Korean War had escalated and six school friends decided to enlist together.' *We made the local headlines in the West Australian.*'

On 17th September 1951, George and five schoolmates from Bassendean enlisted together; less than one month after he turned seventeen. This decision devastated his mother. She had watched her son develop valuable Post Office skills, win a scholarship and secure stable employment with advancement prospects.' *Mum was very proud of all of this and her eldest was about to become somebody in the Post Office. So, what did I do, I shattered all of that on my seventeenth birthday by joining the Army*'.

Now he was abandoning that promising career to join the Army while Australian soldiers fought and died in Korea. Yet she signed the required authorisation papers, heartbroken but understanding. At seventeen, George needed parental consent to enlist. Despite her fear, his mother recognised this was his decision to make. She had raised him to be independent and responsible. If he believed military service was his duty, she would not stand in his way.



Being sworn into the Regular Army

The decision reflected values instilled during George's wartime childhood. He had watched his father serve in two world wars, experienced the community's grief, sacrifices and absorbed the understanding that service to country transcended personal comfort. George chose service over peacetime prosperity, reflecting the culture of duty and mateship that defined his generation.

The Post Office had taught him discipline and technical skill. The CMF had given him a taste of military life. Now, in 1951, he was ready to commit fully. He was assigned enlisted Service Number 52028 and commenced his journey from Private soldier to Brigadier; a journey spanning four decades and three wars. Upon commissioning in 1964, he received officer service number 2/3593. George was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, [The Royal Australian Regiment](#).

This assignment to 2 RAR was significant, as The Royal Australian Regiment had been created in 1948 to provide a permanent, professional infantry force. Before the Regiment's formation, Australia's infantry had primarily consisted of part-time militia supplemented by temporary wartime formations. The Battalions of The Royal Australian Regiment represented Australia's commitment to maintaining professional, deployable infantry forces capable of sustained operations.

1951 - A RECRUIT REPORTS FOR DUTY

Arrival at 6 Recruit Training Centre. George was transported to what had once been a WW1 Military depot for the Light Horse and now reactivated as 6 Recruit Training Centre where all recruits enlisted in WA were trained before moving inter-state to be part of regular units. The recruits were both Regular Army and K Force. The latter being those who had enlisted for just two years, specifically to serve in Korea. In the main they were much older than the regular Army recruits and among them was a sprinkling of WW2 veterans who knew all the tricks of the soldiering trade and had volunteered for war again.

The Old Veteran's Advice. The very first and never to be forgotten inhabitant in the camp George met on arrival was an old WW1 Veteran from the Light Horse and as he recalls was employed as the local gardener. In a very short conversation, he gave George such rich and precious advice never to be forgotten as a soldier. It was a message George was still passing on as a visiting lecturer to Officer Cadets at [The Royal Military College](#) in Canberra, some 65 years later. *'Look after your mates, never dob, watch out for Sergeants and always duty, honour and love of country.'*

The Sergeant Said. The Sergeant said *'So you are off to war my son, be warned there's much learning to be done Never forget the sacred oath you did swear Duty and Honour to nation no matter when or where, there are standards you must meet to help survive any war. When the bugle calls there is no second chance to ask what for? Always take care of your mates in thick and thin To let the team down will always be a terrible sin. No matter who, how or why, any error and its pack drill for all You do as you're told whenever your leader calls Now get ready for hell, grit your teeth and follow me You miserable lot, if I am lucky, proud tough soldiers you will soon be'*

Barracks Life. The new sleeping quarters in barracks were long metal clad buildings, each holding some thirty recruits, sleeping inches apart on rickety camp stretchers. Kit bags were the main source of storage for clothing. Uniform was the only source of dress in the barracks and on leave. [Mufti was a dress of the past.](#) Each building had one small room at the entrance. It was where the junior instructor slept. As a Corporal, he wielded immense power, which included dispensing minor and lingering punishment.

It was he who ordered lights out each night, a split second after the bugle call. Forever a sadist, he woke them with constant bellows minutes before the official bugle call of reveille. He was a tyrant with sound attention to detail and could find specks of dust they could never see and wrinkles in their uniforms they never knew existed. He was God in their living quarters and each and every morning handed his flock over to even more senior and harsher, very stern unforgiving Gods with three stripes who were to be obeyed without question.

Learning to be Soldiers. With strong guidance from the NCO Corp, they learnt very quickly and in a short time began operating as a team, helping those who were slower or could not master attention to detail. George was one of those requiring constant assistance. In time they were as one; disciplined, eager, confident and proud of whom they were. They did not know it but they had been conned into becoming a team and they just loved being part of it. They learnt the rules of the tribe, sometimes painfully.

The Soldiers' Code. In the Platoon there was no room for slackers and smart alecks, because there were occasions when all paid the penalty for one man's idleness or neglect. One of the most sacred commandments was that despite threats of mass punishment, never to inform on any one, no matter whom. The soldiers used the term *dobbing* and, on many occasions, there would be a parade as the hierarchy attempted to find the culprit or culprits.

There was a sense of justice within the ranks that if the crime neither was of a serious nature nor necessarily related to military regulations, the offender and/or offenders found themselves shortly after the parade, stepping forward to authorities and confessing. Stealing from mates was an unforgiveable sin. George has seen naked thieves late at night run a gauntlet of soldiers, armed with thick military belts and at the end of the journey were often seeking sanctuary in the guard house. Organised fist fights to resolve personal differences at the back of the latrines were common and the rules were simple. They included no head butting, eye gouging or using the boot when the opponent was down.

At the end of the fight, both were required to shake hands. All the above was part of the soldiers' code and respected by all who sought a safe and comfortable tomorrow. It was their bible forever and a day. This arena was also used on payday for illegal gambling with the favourite game of [Two Up](#), where two pennies were spun into the air and good fortune or otherwise depended on which side of the coins landed face up. More often than not, because of his youth George was tasked as the cockatoo and positioned to provide warning if any Duty Officer or Sergeant approached.

[Sergeant Wally Ogilvie](#). Perhaps George's survival in training was due to the efforts of a Sergeant by the name of Wally Ogilvie. He was a veteran of the Middle East and South West Pacific campaigns during WW2 and had recently returned from Korea. He decided there was no way George would survive in war, thus extra bayonet fighting drills each afternoon outside the hut was arranged. He was demanding and persistent. After a few days George began to enjoy the challenge. Now and then additional bayonet skills were added. George can still remember the final lesson, much more advanced than the recruit training objectives, where Sergeant Ogilvie charged at him with rifle and bayonet and George disarmed him. For George it was the beginning of confidence in him never to be reluctant to have a go; thanks to a magnificent warrior, Sergeant Wally Ogilvie.

Passing Out. Then came the final day of recruit training. Most had survived the yelling, screaming and bastardry. They had tasted the edges of battle discipline, mastered the basic infantry skills with much emphasis on weapon handling, bayonet fighting and how to dig and camouflage a trench.

They were very fit, confident and proud of who they were and all as one. As the trucks carried them past the barrack gate, the aged light horse veteran waved and George waved back. His short message on day one was still very clear in George's mind. A message he would never forget and indeed passed onto the subsequent generations. For George, it was like a torch passing on the spirit of [ANZAC](#).

Do You Remember? Marching in terrible stifling heat or drenching icy rain Sergeants screaming '*Pathetic*' and Corporals barking 'Do it again' The need to cope with tasks, thirst, hunger and little sleep; to never question orders or the system's wrath you would reap. How we learnt that time was always short and never to be wasted. When we succeeded, so sweet was the success to be tasted. Very quickly we found the value of '*all for one and one for all*' A powerful bonding that made all of us so proud and tall How mentally and physically tough we became Battle inoculations of shell and blast was part of the training game Many times was the cry '*the way you train is the way you will fight*' There is no doubt those who yelled it as a battle cry were right.

PUCKAPUNYAL 1952 - ADVANCED TRAINING



Arrival at Puckapunyal.

Following enlistment, George underwent recruit training at Puckapunyal, the Army's primary training base in Victoria, located approximately 120 kilometres north of Melbourne. Puckapunyal served as the 'Depot Battalion' for training soldiers destined for Korea, providing both basic recruit training and specialist preparation before deployment.

A five-day train from Perth to Melbourne then finally by truck to Puckapunyal, an old Army base near the sleepy town of Seymour. George was posted to 11 Platoon, D Company Second Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. The Company was housed in lines of old battered WW2 tin huts, each containing a number of very small four-man rooms.

There were many broken windows stuffed with old newspapers in what proved to be futile efforts to keep out the icy cold winds, which George swears came direct from Siberia. He was the youngest in the Platoon and indeed the Company of which a significant number were veterans from WW2 who had enlisted specifically to serve in Korea (K Force). Given they were already battle tested, the un-initiated listened and watched.

His prior service in the CMF and his Post Office training in Morse code and wireless operation gave him advantages over recruits with no military or technical background. He already understood basic military structure, drill and procedures. The CMF had introduced him to weapons handling, field operations and military discipline. This foundation allowed him to progress more rapidly through recruit training than soldiers starting from zero military knowledge.

George's existing technical skills led to his selection for signals training. His proficiency in Morse code and wireless operation made him a natural fit for communications specialisation. Recognising his existing skills, the Army developed his signals specialisation, which proved significant throughout his military career. His technical competence provided opportunities for advancement and shaped his early service.

In a short time, George found the parade ground the hard way, armed with yet another WW1 rifle and with a pack on his back and a Duty Sergeant screaming and shouting at him and others found guilty of military sin. The tormentor never seemed to make up his mind. One second it was left turn and then right turn, halt, quick march then double march and so it went, on and on.

George was horrified as it dawned on him that Sergeants, Warrant Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors in the Army were all cloned, brainwashed with the same vocabulary of verbs, nouns and adjectives and issued with ever spotless ironed uniforms with shiny boots like mirrors while poor mortals slept on their clothes to press them and convert dull WW2 red boots into polished mirror like black boots. It was with brave heart George decided to find out what made them tick, until nearly forty years later, he gave up.

The training at Puckapunyal was demanding, building the physical fitness and mental toughness required for operations. Recruits learned essential infantry skills like weapons handling, fieldcraft, tactics and navigation, practicing drill until movements became automatic. They qualified with their weapons and learned to function as part of a military unit, gaining the fundamental skills required for infantry operations.

RISKS WHILE TRAINING FOR WAR

The Mortar Incident. They watched from a distance as the mortar crew went through their drills as they continued to engage a distant target which could be seen from time-to-time mid red flashes and mushrooming smoke and dust. Suddenly and without warning, there was a loud explosion at the mortar position followed by a thick screen of smoke masking the scene. There came a short crackling message over the Platoon radio and they were told the demonstration was ended and then marched significant mileage back to what was now familiar sleeping quarters.

There always seemed to be a consistent acute shortage of vehicular transport in Puckapunyal, despite the presence of a Transport Squadron. The rumours started immediately on the incident and possible casualty number. It was not until following morning roll call parade when they were told that two of the mortar crew had been killed; then they were dismissed for breakfast. It was as simple as that and then business as usual.

Machine Gun Fire Fatality. Several days later they were advised a soldier had been accidentally killed by overhead machine gun fire while negotiating the battle inoculation course. Yet again, it was a reminder that they were soon to revisit the course and to keep their bloody heads down. The advice heartened George's soul, for it seemed that somewhere in the military heart was a microbe of tissue for caring. On hearing the news, he was already planning on which old WW2 soldier he should stay close to.

Grenade Training Incident. Another event which was not to be forgotten was a practice of throwing grenades from open ground without any protection. As two soldiers with an NCO as a supervisor advanced, they came under fire from a trench to their front and immediately go to ground then each throw a grenade into the trench or if not accurate, at least near the target. As soon as the grenade detonated, the pair would charge the trench with fixed bayonets. They had experienced this practice several times during advanced training. It was rather exciting to hear the shrapnel and base plug whir above and immediately gave confidence in throwing grenades from open ground.

On this particular day, one of the grenades detonated and threw the other one with burning fuse out of the trench back into the immediate vicinity of the prone soldiers and supervisor where it exploded. The supervisor and one student were wounded. A short time later, George was given a grenade. He pointed out that he had already just been on the course but to no avail. In reflection he must have shown signs of fear and the NCO decided the best way to restore confidence was to do it again. Both casualties recovered, although the digger whom George knew well, lost a leg.

All of the above occurred in a matter of weeks and there were other casualties; events which would be unacceptable in today's society. However, such events were still very much alive and accepted by a nation which a short time before had been at war. Nor should it be forgotten that the Battalion was responsible for feeding reinforcements to Korea and time was of the essence. As for George, such training made him more confident and besides, as a very naïve 17-year-old, it made him feel he was immortal and bullet proof.

TANKS AND THE UNEXPECTED

The Order to Dig In. Towards the final phase of training which when completed successfully would then classify them ready for war, they underwent a very demanding forced march by day and night and finally arrived on some unnamed rocky hill. The Company Commander, [Captain Reg Saunders](#), (the very first indigenous to be a commissioned officer in the Australian Army), had but one order. *'Dig in. In two hours, a troop of tanks will arrive and attack this position and they will use live ammunition.'*

George started to dig in a leisurely fashion, until he noticed that the World War Two veterans were digging with a sense of urgency. Even at his young age he realised the order by Saunders was not an idle threat. He dug faster. The problem was that he had been volunteered as the Platoon Commander's orderly and the officer was busy with other tasks which meant George did all the digging for both of them. As he dug, his mathematics from recent schooling clicked in and it was easy to realise that the trench would be only half as deep as the others.

The Tank Attack. George can still hear the clanking noise as the tanks arrived on the opposite ridge, belching oil and smoke. Suddenly there was a whistle blast and an order by Saunders to take cover because in X minutes the tanks would commence firing and overrun the position.

On passing, they were then to attack them from the rear using rocks as simulated sticky bombs. In a few seconds, everyone was below ground or almost. George says almost, because in the weapon pit that he had dug, the two of them were rather cramped. The officer was lying on the floor of the trench and George had no choice but to lie on top of him, thus adopting a most undignified military position.

The war began. George could hear the crack of the machineguns just above his head with the rounds whacking into the loose soil created from his labour and the rumbling clatter of the tanks ever so close. It was then the Platoon Commander yelled at him to move because he had a terrible cramp. Now, the only way George could move was upward and that was not going to happen even for a bloody General. He told him to *'Get f... . ed.'*

Suddenly they had a new problem. A tank was on top of their trench, blotting out the sun and there was this terrible noise, smoke, dust, claustrophobia and worse still, George could feel the trench contracting and closing in on him. A miracle occurred and there was light again and now a strange shrieking noise, which didn't take long to realise it was him screaming.

Behind the tanks came three soldiers with shovels and now and then one would signal to his mates and they would quickly dig out a trench which had partially collapsed. So ended the tank inoculations and they filled in their trenches (The Army has a warped sense of humour, dig, then fill in) and wearily continued the forced march back to barracks. It had been the first time George had told an officer to get stuffed and actually get away with it. Alas it was to be the first and only time without severe consequences.

OVERNIGHT LEAVE IN MELBOURNE

The Troop Train. Leave was very rare and when it occurred, was of limited time. George can still recall with detail the train taking them down to Melbourne. Its steam whistle signalling it was a troop train as they rattled through the yawning suburbs of Melbourne. [Melbourne in the Nineteen Fifties](#) was a sprawling city that was becoming a beacon for many post WW2.



Young and Jacksons – Melbourne

Chloe's Bar. On arrival, the Platoon would head for Chloe's Bar located at Young and Jackson's, where George was allowed one beer while the rest of the team located shoulder to shoulder at the bar drank at a rapid rate.

He was far from alone as he had dearest 'young Chloe', framed on the wall and totally nude, to stare at in amazement and wonder.

Then the much older brothers would direct him to a picture theatre while they headed off to other activities well out of bounds to minors, uniform or no uniform. Hours later they would rendezvous at the [YMCA](#) and sleep on stretchers, side by side in a very crowded and noisy hall mid many whispering groups with clinking bottles. George always felt very secure in such crowds, for despite being volunteered for most chores when in the field, the entire Platoon was very protective. The following day they were back on a troop train with a significant number of empty seats and wondering when the Army would see it fit to allow another weekend in Melbourne town. Such weekends were rare and used as a powerful weapon by superiors to assist in discipline.

ROLL CALL

The Morning Ritual. In the cold bleak Victorian winter of 1952, military routine continued in the best of traditions at Puckapunyal. They were subject to the rituals of room inspections, parades, kit checks and endless tasks of barrack room duties. One consistent and seemingly religious ritual while in barracks, rain, hail or shine was the roll call, conducted in the early hours of morning. Thus, in winter, it was still dark as the troops, roused by whistle blasts assembled on parade mid much stamping of boots and repetitive orders to answer their names as called by the Platoon Sergeant, armed with torch, from the roll book.

Covering for a Mate. The night before, after weekend leave in [Melbourne](#), a very close friend, madly in love, had in the last moments before boarding the troop train suddenly decided to stay and asked George to cover for him at the morning roll call. Here it was, the morning roll call and George was about to hide his absence. The Sergeant bellowed name after name and then came the ultimate test of loyalty.

The friend's name cut through the icy darkness. George came to attention and yelled 'Present' and tensed. The Sergeant continued calling names. Soon after with the first light of dawn, the Platoon Sergeant reported all correct and present. Oh, joy of joy and such relief; George had beaten the system but only for a milli-second. He had underestimated the Company Sergeant Major (CSM), who had developed a sixth sense during many campaigns and knew every soldier's trick in the book.

Caught Out. 'Count them' ordered the CSM. In typical Army fashion, the Platoon was ordered to number from the right and it was then the Platoon Sergeant realised that there was one short from the roll call. His obscenities were loud and many. He then issued the dreaded ultimatum. 'Righto, step forward the magician with two names or the entire Platoon will be route marching all night.'

George stepped forward to another wave of abuse and was charged with a military offence. That afternoon the mate paid for his love affair with the loss of pay and fourteen days confined to barracks. Soon it was George's turn to face the Company Commander, [Captain Reg Saunders](#). He was a well-respected officer. To George's utter amazement, he tore the charge into shreds and while he was trying to maintain his composure, gave him a tongue lashing.

It went something like this. 'The Army has been calling the roll forever and a day and it is not for amusement. Not only do we check to see who has returned from leave, we check during and after a withdrawal, after an assault and after we have been attacked. We check and check and then a young smart bastard like you turns up and wants to change the whole bloody system'. 'Who do you think you are, Field Marshall Blamey??? As extra training you are going to call the roll whenever I decide over the next month and as well, Duty Runner in HQ every night, including auditing the roll books. If you make one mistake I will have your guts for gaiters.'

George wasn't even game to blink. So, it came to pass. Calling the roll and as additional punishment and duty every night for some four weeks. For every year after George was always reminded of that wonderful and wise leader whenever he heard the order 'Call the roll.' Such a magnificent mentor and it was not to be the only time he was to experience Saunderson's sense of discipline and leadership.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN WATSONIA 1952



[Deployment to the Migrant Camp.](#) With scant warning D Company was deployed to an old WW I-2 military camp located in Watsonia, a suburb of Melbourne and since the end of WW2 had been used as a migrant camp.

However, the time had arrived for the new Australians to depart the camp and regrettably some families had refused to go. Of equal concern was that there were fabricated huts disappearing at an increasing frequency.

George might add that on arrival at the camp, the assessment from him and his mates as simple Infantry Privates was that allowing the illegal removal of buildings in such a dilapidated state was perhaps the most effective means in which to solve both problems.

However, they were not gifted with the talents of senior officers or the many civilian agencies which seemed to be involved. D Company's mission was to guard the facilities and be prepared to evict the squatters.

A New Leader. Apart from a few bottles being thrown at Sentries guarding road intersections within the camp, calm was restored by a newly arrived and very impressive Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Russell Lloyd. George can clearly recall him spending time with him as he guarded a road intersection known to be used by trouble makers late at night. He showed much interest in who George was and where he came from.

In George's short military career, he had never experienced such interest by an officer. Lloyd was a strict disciplinarian, very fair, always kept them informed and showed interest in all soldiers under his command, all of which made them feel very important. Not surprisingly, he was well respected as their leader and regrettably for them, it was only for a short time as he was posted to Korea where he was awarded the Military Cross for leadership and gallantry. George will never forget the night his lone sentry post was harassed by protesters with stones and beer bottles.

Lloyd arrived on the scene and told him in a calm voice, that he and George would stand fast until help arrived. His words were of far more comfort than the empty rifle with fixed bayonet. It was, in George's view the first test of danger for him and felt all alone until Lloyd had appeared. In the years that followed Lloyd became known as an outstanding leader in both peace and war. Their paths were to cross on a number of occasions during and after military life and always the instant memory of an angry crowd on the verge of becoming very dangerous and his firm and clear command '*Stand fast.*'

The Evictions. Then came the order from distant comfortable headquarters. The patience of the government was exhausted and despite numerous discussions and warnings, the migrant families refused to budge. The Company was tasked to evict them ASAP and the plan was simple. The families would be targeted one at a time and the method of eviction was to simply remove the roof of the hut. It was not a popular task, even for soldiers, particularly for a sensitive 17-year-old with his 18th birthday ever so close.

George can still see the family sitting at the breakfast table, the parents and three children staring at them with mouths open as they removed the roof above them. To make it even more embarrassing George slipped and fell into the room, apologised and returned to the roof to help his mates complete the task. Some readers may well say that no such thing would happen, well, George is prepared to swear on a stack of Bibles that such evictions did. He would add that shortly after the first sortie of removing a roof, the family departed and within a short time, the remaining families followed without the need for further action by the Company.

A Good Ending. For George there was a good ending to the episode. Several weeks later while on leave in Watsonia, he was recognised by the mother and her teenage daughter involved in the house eviction. He was greeted in broken English with smiles and offerings of fruit. Later, when they left at short notice by truck to return to Puckapunyal, the family was near the gate with friendly waves of farewell. It seemed their intelligence of future Army activities was far better than theirs. In 2011, many years later when the author interviewed George at his home 'Wundurra', Far North Queensland said that it was one of the few times that he (George) was embarrassed to be an Australian and disagreed with the government of the day.

The foundation of a future leader. The years from 1934 to 1951 were formative for George Mansford. His birth in an Aboriginal mission community, his wartime childhood in Bassendean, his Post Office training and his CMF service all shaped the man who became one of Australia's most respected military leaders. The mission community taught him that character mattered more than background. His wartime childhood taught him about duty, sacrifice and war's cost for families. His mother's strength and the Bassendean community's resilience taught him about endurance and mutual support. The Post Office had taught him discipline and professionalism. The CMF taught him military fundamentals.

The recruit and advanced training at Puckapunyal in 1951-1952 built upon these foundations. The old Light Horse veteran's advice; *'Look after your mates, never dob, watch out for Sergeants and always duty, honour and love of country'*; became a torch passing on the spirit of ANZAC. Sergeant Wally Ogilvie's extra bayonet training gave George confidence never to be reluctant to have a go. Captain Reg Saunder's leadership and discipline showed him what an officer should be. Lieutenant Russell Lloyd's calm command under threat demonstrated leadership under pressure.

The training casualties; two dead in the mortar incident, one killed on the Battle Inoculation Course (BIC), one who lost a leg in grenade training; taught George that war preparation was deadly serious. The tank attack that left him screaming in a collapsing trench taught him the terror of armoured assault. The roll call incident taught him the purpose behind military procedures. The Watsonia evictions taught him the uncomfortable reality that soldiers sometimes face tasks that challenge their humanity.

These experiences created a foundation supporting everything Mansford subsequently accomplished. His philosophy of service, understanding of leadership, commitment to realistic training and advocacy for soldiers and veterans all had roots in these formative years. The boy who grew up in war's shadow; who watched his mother weep as his father departed for service, who dug air-raid trenches at school, who learned Morse code at the Post Office; had been forged into a soldier ready to begin the journey that defined his life.

The decision made in 1951 set in motion events that led George through Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, through the ranks from Private to Brigadier, through establishing Jungle Training at Tully and through decades of service to the Australian Army and nation. The seventeen-year-old who walked into the recruiting office with five schoolmates could not have known where that decision would lead.

CHAPTER 3

KOREA - BAPTISM BY FIRE



1951-1955 THE KOREAN WAR CONTEXT

[The Korean War](#) began in June of 1950 when North Korean Forces invaded South Korea. Australian Forces deployed as part of the British Commonwealth contribution to United Nations operations. By the time George enlisted in September of 1951, the war had been raging for over a year and Australian casualties were mounting.

The Australian Government announced on 5th October 1951 that a second Battalion would be sent to Korea. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR), stationed at Ingleburn, was warned for service in Korea in November of 1951.

The conflict had evolved from the dramatic advances and retreats of 1950–1951 into a more static war of attrition along established front lines.

Fighting remained intense, characterised by regular combat operations, patrol actions and artillery exchanges. Australian soldiers were serving in difficult terrain and extreme climate conditions, facing experienced North Korean and Chinese forces.

The war had already settled into static trench warfare by late 1951, although the final major battle at the Samichon River in July of 1953; the last-ditch North Korean and Chinese attempts to influence the armistice negotiations; occurred just days before the ceasefire was signed. This armistice created the conditions under which George served when he eventually deployed to Korea; a war characterised by defensive positions along established lines, patrol actions and the constant danger of artillery fire and local attacks, in stark contrast to the mobile warfare of the wars earlier phases.

TOO YOUNG FOR WAR

Orders for Korea. Came a day of bitter disappointment. George was on duty as a runner when the Company Commander returned from a conference with the news ‘*Orders for Korea,*’ followed by a list of tasks and one of which immediately alerted George. ‘*Check the records and put all soldiers born after May 34 in the too young category.*’

George was given the task and went straight to the letter 'M' to ensure young George stayed in the right box. The very first one he saw was Billy McCutcheon; he was a close mate who was of the same age and his card went into the right box. Seconds later George was searching for Mansford when the Sergeant Major, perhaps suspicious, took over the task. Bill survived the cull, George didn't. It was a devastating blow. The military family he had become part of was about to leave him behind.

Australian military regulations required soldiers to reach eighteen years of age before they could be deployed to combat zones overseas. For George, who enlisted on 17th September 1951, just weeks after his seventeenth birthday, this statutory requirement meant he could not deploy until after August of 1952. However, his actual deployment to Korea did not occur until 31st March 1954, when he was nineteen, as Battalion rotation and training requirements determined the timing.

Attempts to Join. George wrote to [Cramer, the then Minister of Army](#) requesting to remain in the Battalion. His reply was not helpful. So, the next option was taken and George volunteered for a newly formed Parachute Platoon. The officer who interviewed him and pointed out he was too young. It seemed that despite all the intense and demanding training which had been endured, George was too young for anything other than guard and kitchen duties.

It was rebellion time and he would not accept the umpire's decisions. Little did George know it but there was a mentor who would in a very short time influence his direction of life forever and a day. Within a week he and other minors were shifted to Watsonia to maintain security of the aged camp. Captain Reg Saunders, a WW2 veteran who had already served in Greece, Crete and Korea was their Commanding Officer.

OPERATION STOW-AWAY FAILS

The Plan. When 2 RAR was warned for Korea, George was devastated to be left behind; too young at seventeen. The Battalion was about to entrain at Seymour for the first phase of the journey to Korea. Three minors in the Battalion decided to stow away with the help of Billy McCutcheon and others. Then came the time to sneak out of barracks and travel to Seymour when the Battalion would begin the first part of the journey by train and head for the embarkation point. In his eagerness to serve, he attempted to stow away.' *I shot through. I stowed away; or tried to stow away.* '

'The MPs caught us and we were put under close arrest and charged with being absent without leave.' Two of them never got past Seymour where they encountered Military Police conducting checks on military personnel and having no leave passes, were arrested and returned to Watsonia. The third of the party, Grahame Belville, avoided the net and was successful in stowing away. Once Belville got on board and once the ship was at sea, he gave himself up. The CO had no choice but to fine him five miserable pounds and put him back on the strength of the unit.' As fate happened, later in soldiering, he too was commissioned and killed in action in Vietnam. George was by then also a Captain and took his place.

Going Absent Without Leave. Even a well-respected and admired soldier such as [Reg Saunders](#) was not going to discourage George from his intended tantrums and disobedience to what to him was so unfair. So, as diggers' would say *'He shot through'* or as the military would recite *'Absent With-Out Leave (AWOL).'*

At Watsonia, George shot through again. Soon after his leave pass had expired George returned to face the wrath of the military and become a martyr for his cause. He expected to be immediately placed under arrest and charged. Nothing happened. He was confused. This is how it was NOT meant to be. By now he was supposed to be a martyr. His mates were just as puzzled. Then he was exposed to strategy he had never imagined possible.



Captain Reg Saunders

Captain Saunders Reg Saunders response was masterful. George was ordered to the CO's office and not invited to sit down. Saunders never seemed to pause in his tirade. It went something like this. George was useless; he had left his brains in WA and who was he to assess military rules. He had been marked rest in the roll book and not absent without leave and now he was going to learn about responsibility.

He was now an acting Lance Corporal and responsible for rationing. No one but no one wanted to be the official greengrocer. Worse still, it may well affect his draft priority for overseas service. Captain Reg Saunders, MBE, George's Company Commander in 1 RAR and the first Aboriginal Australian commissioned officer; was there when I got back.'

Congratulations, you have been made Lance Corporal'. He completely ignored the fact that I had been Absent Without Leave. (AWOL). I was promoted; he totally ignored it. He even covered the books, which was totally illegal. He covered for me. So, what do you do? I was humiliated. My plan had fallen apart; the military wasn't supposed to do that. But I realised this bloke was saying, I know how you feel, but this is no way to act.

For the next three weeks George was the ration clerk, weighing meat, checking vegetables and fruit and all other items that hungry soldiers eat. He was then demoted and returned to the Rifle Section a wiser and cautious soldier. Soon after, some of them were posted to the next Battalion preparing for Korea. As they left the Unit, Captain Saunders was there to wish them good luck with strong handshakes. George is sure he wanted to be with them. Many years later, George had the good fortune to meet him again and asked him why he had not been more severe in the roll call incident and the rebellion at Watsonia; his answer was profound which George would mention later in his journey as a soldier.

This incident taught George a lesson about leadership that he never forgot. Reg Saunders had not punished him through formal discipline. Instead, Saunders demonstrated trust and confidence by promoting him, making it impossible for him to continue his defiant behaviour without betraying that trust. The lesson was profound: leadership was not always about punishment and authority but sometimes about understanding motivation and redirecting it constructively.

The nineteen-month wait. During this waiting period, he was assigned to 2 RAR, where he completed his basic training and absorbed the fundamental skills and discipline of infantry soldiering. He was being transformed from a young telecommunications operator into a professional soldier, though the most significant test of that transformation still lay ahead. The period from 1951 to 1953 was spent in training and garrison duties. George developed his skills as a signaller, practised infantry tactics, participated in exercises and absorbed the culture and standards of The Royal Australian Regiment.

He learned what it meant to be a professional soldier, what standards were expected and what qualities distinguished effective soldiers from merely adequate ones. This waiting period also allowed him to mature physically and mentally. The difference between a seventeen-year-old and a nineteen-year-old is significant. The additional time gave him the opportunity to develop the physical strength, mental toughness and emotional maturity that would serve him well in combat operations.

ENOGGERA BARRACKS BRISBANE

A New Home. Brisbane was a city of trams and high houses on poles or so it seemed. The modern barracks were located at Enoggera and in the fifties, only took some 15 minutes by tram to the heart of the city. It was a far cry from the isolation and Spartan existence at Puckapunyal. The barracks were brand new. Four soldiers to a room and showers and toilets plus a laundry with washing machines and dryers. There was even a sparkling brand-new canteen.

It seemed to be heaven but a close study revealed there was a hint of hell with RSMs' in the form of not one but two huge parade grounds. A further reminder of the old Army was a two-story wooden building where the Battalion Headquarters was located and known as 'Bullshit Castle' (Battalion Head Quarters). They also noted the rifle range was very close to the barracks and suggested much less of tiring long route marches on duty tracks to practice marksmanship. It was as if there were some soft spots in their masters after all.

Company Sergeant Major Joe O'Sullivan. There was one true blue soldier always feared, highly respected, most consistent and who demanded the highest of standards. The Company Sergeant Major (CSM), Joe O'Sullivan knew all the tricks of the trade and often would hand out his own punishment to fit the crime. His wisdom and appropriate punishment in George's view would have matched the judgement of Solomon from the biblical ages. Nothing but nothing escaped the sharp eyes and ears of 'Big Joe'. In fact, George swears that he knew in advance what soldiers were thinking long before it happened. He also demonstrated his willingness to speak up if there was unfairness.

The Flare Incident. In preparation for Korea, they were involved in a defence exercise far from civilisation. George was on sentry duty at night when he heard noise directly to his front and there appeared to be the sound of movement. He gave the challenge '*Who goes there?*' knowing full well they had no troops forward and certainly would not be slithering around in aggressive fashion, but rules are rules.

The challenge was met by a loud bang followed by a bright flare whooshing past just above his head. Flares should be fired high to provide effective illumination and this one as far as George was concerned had been fired at him. His actions were immediate. He picked up a rock from the bottom of his trench and shouting '*Grenade*' lobbed it towards the source of his anger. There was a scream followed by silence which was then broken by an urgent cry of medic. Soon after, the master of Verey (Flare) pistols, a Lieutenant, was rushed to hospital by a very old ambulance left over from WW2.

He was in hospital for several days suffering from concussion and forever after wore a scar on his forehead. George was paraded before the Company Commander and ordered to visit the hospital to apologise to the junior officer. He was of course relieved there was no serious injury but refused to comply with the order, claiming the Lieutenant was the one to blame for the incident. George was marched out followed by many threats of punishment to come.

His spies told him later that 'Big Joe' had gone to his defence, pointing out that perhaps it could be resolved with a Routine Order stating no rocks were to be thrown in the field on exercises. George took great pride in this published routine order and a copy was one of his prized possessions for many a year until it went missing in the [Brisbane Floods in 1974](#).

Deployment to Bowen. The training was interrupted when the government deployed elements of the Battalion to counter a wharf strike in Bowen, North Queensland. The union had gone on strike and there were ships waiting to be loaded with frozen meat from the abattoirs.

A FLAGPOLE AND 'BIG JOE'

The Night before sailing. A week before they sailed there was a closed camp and no leave for all ranks to ensure pre-embarkation procedures had been completed. The following night they were granted leave. George went with much of the Platoon to Brisbane for a few drinks. They were to be back in barracks by midnight but they paid little attention to timings. There was always the back gate and besides, they were having a great time. It was well past midnight when they returned to barracks and all was quiet. Save for a few night bird calls. No one but no one was around. It was too tempting. George tied a naval cap one of the fellows had souvenired from a sailor on leave to the rope and hoisted their prize to the top of the flagpole.

As he secured the rope he realised even the night birds had stopped calling and there was a deathly silence, stranger still, his companions had all disappeared. It was then as he turned, came the terrifying awareness that he was in big trouble. An inch or two from him was 'Big Joe', on duty as the Orderly Officer and judging from a fiery breath in his face, he was not happy. As George said earlier, 'Big Joe' always seemed to know what they were going to do long before they had even thought of it.

The Punishment. Next morning when George reported to his torture chambers with his anger still ringing in his ear as he had roared '*My office at 0730 and do not be a second late,*' George arrived at his torture chambers 15 minutes early as he did not dare risk even the slightest unexpected delay in his short journey. He even skipped breakfast. The non-regulation punishment was unexpected. 'Big Joe' alias the biblical Solomon sentenced George to the remaining five nights in Australia to guard the flag pole dressed in full field equipment and armed with a baseball bat from the Q Store from 1700 to 2200 hours each night until they sailed.

The timings were not by chance, for they were identical with the opening and closing of the soldier's canteen. Yet there was still some heart in 'Big Joe'; on the second last night, he grunted, seemingly with reluctance, that George could proceed on leave the last night before the camp was closed for 24 hours prior to sailing.

DEPLOYMENT TO KOREA

Mansford finally arrived in Korea in early 1954, following the armistice signed 27th July 1953. When George reached the required age, he deployed to Korea with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment on 31st March 1954. His service in Korea, from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955, placed him in the static phase of the Korean War; the period following the 27th July 1953 Armistice when active combat had largely ceased but tensions remained high and the threat of renewed conflict was constant. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment moved into the line on 5th April 1954, taking positions along the Jamestown Line. The Battalion formed part of the Commonwealth Division, operating alongside British, Canadian and other Commonwealth Forces in defensive positions designed to deter North Korean and Chinese aggression and to maintain the armistice.

PUSAN – KOREA

Arrival. The old work horse for movement of migrants and troops in the fifties was the ship New Australia bringing migrants to the land down under and transporting Australian troops to war zones. In this case, it carried them to Korea where they disembarked at the port of Pusan to the sounds of several US Army Brass bands. They were then convoyed from the port to a staging camp on the periphery of the city in preparation for a further phase of the journey north.

First Impressions. Pusan (Busan) shocked him. *'It was just a hovel of humanity, filth and cardboard boxes. Koreans living in cardboard boxes. It was a hotbed of humanity; that was my first exposure overseas.'* For many on their first trip overseas, the difference to their homeland was huge. Throughout the entire area of Pusan was wall to wall small improvised family structures clad with cardboard, tin or wood from packing boxes and quite a few were a mixture of all three. Countless children waved and begged as they drove past. The nauseous smell was indescribable.

These people were refugees who had fled their homes from North Korea then swelled by those of the South as the war drew closer and closer to what then became an enclave in the area and countryside approaching Pusan. It was impossible to imagine the enormity of misery and suffering when the population would have been even larger at the peak of the war when Communist Forces were knocking on the door and so close to victory.

The poverty and devastation of post-war Korea contrasted sharply with the relative prosperity of Australia. George witnessed first-hand the human cost of war; not just the military casualties but the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the displacement of populations and the suffering of ordinary people caught in the conflict. This experience shaped his understanding that war affected entire societies, not just the soldiers who fought.

A VISIT TO THE UNITED NATIONS WAR CEMETERY

Confronting Reality. His first stop was the [United Nations War Cemetery](#). *'Johnny Russell, the Aboriginal I told you about, he was there. Keith Foran. Yeah, a few of them.'* There was time the following morning when some of them visited the War Cemetery where many of the fallen from countries of the Free World were interred. There was a sea of markers indicating the various religions.

There was some irony in that the Turkish Graves were not far from their own fallen. Their grandfathers or even fathers had perhaps fought each other during World War 1. George will never forget the emotions that suddenly surged within him as he stood by the graves of several fellow Australians who he had served with, who had only a short time before were laughing, joking, breathing life and not a worry in the world. He could still see them.

Snowy Gordon during Recruit training. Corporal Smith (Smithy) who had been his Section Commander and taught him so much. Keith Foran, Wells and others he had stood beside on roll call and sang with on many a route march. How could he ever forget Johnny Russell, a smiling young indigenous mate with whom he had often shared the same poncho and wet overcoat, huddled together to try and keep warm in the icy rains in the Tallarook Ranges.

Visit to Cemetery. The visit to the cemetery brought home the reality of war in a way that training never could. These were not abstract casualties or statistics in a report. These were men he had known, men who had enlisted with the same hopes and expectations; men who had not returned. The rows of white crosses represented the ultimate cost of military service; a cost that George now understood could be demanded of him. The visit brought to George the sense of reality in regards the consequences of war. It was, he firmly believes, his major leap towards maturity. Equally was the feeling of guilt that he had not been there as part of the team.

THE TROOP TRAIN NORTH

Journey through Destruction. As the troop train's steam engine hissed and groaned in preparation for the journey north George was to witness yet another ploy by some in their fight for survival. The railway station was cluttered with Koreans of all ages begging and bartering. As they watched, two young urchins approached their carriage trying to sell cheap wooden mementos. One of their members, a not so popular individual and a bit of a bully on occasions beckoned the two children to his open window and began bartering. Finally, there was agreement and the deal was made much to his delight and in his words, '*had conned the little bastards.*'

The Watch Theft. As the travelling companion reached out to receive his memento, the young grim lass did likewise to receive the pitiful sum of money being offered. Her male companion appeared to be resigned to the hard bargain as he stared somewhat sadly at the concrete platform. Then in a blur it happened. As the hands made contact, the girl without any warning, seized the extended hand and knelt forward thus her body weight immediately stretching the victim's wrist down toward the platform.

There was a shout of protest from the window as the buyer leaned forward to try and ease the sudden pain of having his arm stretched downwards. At the same time the male companion sprang forward, slamming the window down on the victim's wrist and then calmly removed a watch from the trapped wrist. As the victim screamed in agony, both culprits grinned, gave the traditional fingered salute and were gone.

In the 'land of the morning calm' it seemed that the younger generation had learned very quickly in how to survive in such desperate measures and for them, it had been a lesson not to forget and certainly a story to tell at subsequent camp fires with great delight at the expense of a somewhat unpopular soldier who nursed a damaged wrist for several weeks.

The Scars of War. Throughout the entire journey the countryside was a stark reminder of the destructiveness of war. Twisted and rusting steel bridges; crumpled and deserted ruins which not so long ago were the home of peaceful, happy and hardworking families. Now and then, were seen the skeletons of burnt and scarred tanks, perhaps with the ashes of their crews inside the tortured steel shell. Such scenes were yet another reminder of the horror of war and its cruel consequences.

Reunion and Farewell. The Battalion George knew well from Puckapunyal days was cheering when they debussed in the small valley where it was located. He met many old friends and for them it was both a very special day and the beginning of a long journey back to their land down under to unite with their beloved families. His old mate, Billy McCutcheon gave him a bear hug before admitting he had cursed George on many occasions in both winter and summer for removing his card from the too young category.

Now he was going home. Billy and George were to spend many years of soldiering here and there and thus, in a time no longer known as young pups by those before them, they became old bastards to those who followed. A final wave and they were gone and now it was their turn for duty in Korea.

THE KANSAS LINE



The Defensive Position. They moved into a defensive position located a short distance south of the Imjin River. Their new home was part of the Kansas Line which had been established very early in the war and had become a bloody arena in the early phases of the conflict when the line was subject to a massive enemy attack by 30 divisions with the main thrust directed to capture Seoul, further to the south.

En-route to their defence position via back-breaking spur lines and re-entrants they had followed a long line of old American defence positions consisting of old bleached sandbags obviously constructed to provide some protection from small arms fire and shrapnel for the defenders, now long gone.

Mansford in Korea

Puzzling Defences. There was little sign of weapon pits and it was to them, quite puzzling. As young soldiers and although inexperienced in warfare, they had been taught the need for mutual support, interlocking fire and positions in depth and yet saw none of this in this apparent defence of the area from early days of the war. No doubt it had been a hasty desperate defence against an overwhelming force.

At their new home, it was a far different situation. The Platoon area dominated all forward approaches with clear field of fire and views of the shimmering Imjin River to the north. The bunker system would clearly provide mutual support within the Platoon and flanking subunits while there was depth provided by a sister Platoon. The bunkers had been dug and constructed with strong overhead beams covered by several rows of sandbags. In the front of each bunker were small slits from where any assault could be engaged with small arm and machine gun fire. The new accommodation was gloomy and musty but clearly would be most welcome if ever under attack.

Dreams of Home. No matter the circumstances, soldiers devoted time to dreaming of home. Be it loved ones, Melbourne Cups', Football Finals, a very special way of life, there was often time to snatch a glimpse of home or when drifting into exhausted sleep, a faint but comforting glimpse of what was and in time would be again.

THE KOREAN ENVIRONMENT

Two Seasons. The Korean Peninsula presented environmental challenges as severe as any combat threat. The terrain was mountainous, with steep hills, narrow valleys and limited roads. Movement was difficult, requiring soldiers to climb steep slopes while carrying heavy loads. Defensive positions had to be dug into rocky hillsides. Supply lines stretched over difficult terrain, making resupply challenging.

There were two seasons in Korea; winter with its freezing cold winds and heavy snow followed by summer, sweating gasping for air in smothering heat with parched throat and mouth. Both frost bite and heat stroke were not uncommon. On the Kansas Line, conditions were extreme. *'In summer, it was a hundred degrees plus climbing those mountains and in winter, it was below zero. I was at a place called Tejong guarding the railway and the cold was pain. Total pain.'*

The climate proved as challenging as the terrain. Temperatures during Mansford's service period ranged from extreme cold in winter to oppressive heat in summer. In November of 1952, when 1 RAR had previously served on Kowang-san (Hill 355), temperatures had fallen to minus 16 degrees Celsius, with howling north winds bringing even lower readings. Soldiers learned to cope under extremely adverse conditions, managing cold-weather injuries, maintaining equipment in freezing temperatures and sustaining operations despite weather that would have halted civilian activities.

In winter the bunkers and tents were warmed by a dripping fuel line of diesel into a hot metal stove, they called them 'Choofas' because of the constant but small noise made when each drip of fuel hit the stove. The residue from the fuel created a film of soot onto soldiers' faces and clung to their uniforms. The 'Choofa' was often cherry red and which spread warmth in the immediate area and 'Choofa' faces were a common sight.

The cold George experienced was not merely uncomfortable; it was physically painful and potentially lethal. Soldiers had to maintain constant vigilance against frostbite, had to ensure weapons and equipment remained functional in freezing temperatures and had to perform their duties despite the numbing effects of extreme cold. The experience taught him that environmental conditions could be as dangerous as enemy action and that soldiers had to be trained and equipped to function in the most extreme conditions.

During the warmer months, heat and humidity created different challenges. Soldiers worked in oppressive conditions, sweating through their uniforms, managing heat exhaustion and maintaining alertness despite physical discomfort. Water discipline became critical, as dehydration could incapacitate soldiers as effectively as enemy action.

The living conditions in defensive positions were austere. Soldiers lived in bunkers dug into hillsides, reinforced with sandbags and timber. These positions provided protection from artillery fire and small arms but offered minimal comfort. Soldiers slept on the ground, ate rations and endured whatever weather conditions prevailed. Personal hygiene was difficult, with limited water available for washing. Soldiers learned to function effectively despite discomfort, fatigue and the constant low-level stress of living in a combat zone.

Daily Routine. There was always work to be done. Digging, wiring and work parties carrying loads of water and supplies were common rituals while sentry duty was part of a set routine and clearly a test of discipline in the middle of winter when exposed to the elements. The face, hands and feet were the most vulnerable. Gloves and balaclavas were part of the dress but they still wore WW2 military boots which were still being issued and wore extra pairs of socks in an effort to avoid the painful icy cold invading the feet with numbing effect.

Patrols in the DMZ. Regardless of weather, there were observation tasks by day; wiring and patrolling by night in the area now defined as the Demilitarized Zone which separated both armies. It was so eerie in an area which a short time before had been a constant din of war.

The hill 355 which had been manned by old mates from D Company and with flanking forces had defied the constant infantry assaults. During daylight was the distant blurred shape of Maryang san which the Third Battalion of the Regiment had captured in a brilliant and daring assault. Such recent and stirring history could not be ignored despite the snow and bone freezing cold, experienced on patrol.

The silent but ever sensitive deadly minefields either side of the track just waiting for a touch of pressure to leap groin high before exploding into small steel shards of shrapnel, stabbing, slicing flesh, artery, muscle and smashing bone. To add to the scene were rusting skeletons of tanks and other litter of war surrounded by dominating ridges and hills where old mates had stood fast against what seemed impossible odds.

COMBAT OPERATIONS IN KOREA

Combat operations during the static phase of the Korean War consisted primarily of patrol actions, defensive operations and artillery exchanges. Unlike the mobile warfare of 1950–1951, the static phase involved holding defensive positions along established lines while conducting patrols into no-man's land to gather intelligence, demonstrate control of disputed areas and prevent enemy infiltration. On the 2nd July 1954, Major Thomson led A Company in a well-planned raid against a fortified enemy strong point on Hill 227.

The raid demonstrated the continuing operational tempo despite the armistice. Australian Forces conducted offensive operations designed to keep enemy forces off balance, gather intelligence and maintain combat readiness. Major [Thomson](#) was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership in these actions. He later achieved the rank of Brigadier, served as a Federal Member of Parliament and founded the Reef Hotel Resort at Palm Cove, north of Cairns.

On 25th and 26th November 1954, A Company launched a diversionary attack against well-entrenched Chinese positions on Hill 227 in support of the British Royal Fusiliers during Operation Beat Up. These operations required careful planning, coordination between units and the courage to assault fortified positions knowing that casualties were likely.

For soldiers like George, these operations represented the reality of infantry warfare; the constant danger, the physical demands, the reliance on unit cohesion and the competence of officers and non-commissioned officers. Success in these operations depended on training, discipline, leadership and the mutual trust between soldiers who depended on each other for survival.

The twelve-month period of 1 RARs service represented the continuation of Australia's commitment to the United Nations effort in Korea. The fighting consisted primarily of patrol actions, raids, artillery exchanges and the constant work of maintaining defensive positions in harsh conditions. This static warfare created particular challenges. Soldiers faced danger without the sense of progress that came from advancing or defending against major attacks.

The threat was constant but often indirect; artillery fire, sniper attacks, patrol clashes and the ever-present danger of mines and booby traps. The psychological strain of this environment, combined with extreme weather and difficult living conditions, tested soldiers endurance and resilience. Maintaining alertness and discipline over extended periods, when danger was constant but combat was episodic, required mental toughness and strong unit cohesion.

MEMORABLE INCIDENTS

The Railway Terminal at Tuckchon. There were many memorable incidents. Now and then, there were periods of travelling to the rear for various tasks which meant a break in the routine and where there were real hot showers. On one occasion, the Platoon without Lieutenant and Sergeant was sent south to guard the railway terminal at Tuckchon which was the end of the line so to speak and from where supplies were distributed forward. They arrived by truck just before last light, weary, unwashed and hungry to be met by a bellowing British Major and his helpers.

In a short time, they were formed up in three ranks and inspected by the Major. He was angry and horrified at their state of attire and told them in no quiet terms they were a disgrace and after all, what could be expected from Colonial rabble. There were murmurs within the ranks which encouraged George to step forward and point out that they might be rabble but they were Australians and had rid themselves of 'Pommy' Colonialism some 50 years before. There was laughter in the ranks.

His reaction was instant. This wretched soldier, being George, was to be sent back to their unit immediately and if anyone wanted to join him then step forward. The entire Platoon stepped forward. Within seconds, someone had hummed one of their favourite songs [*'The wild colonial boy'*](#). He was speechless. He disappeared into the fading light. In the biting cold, their voices grew louder and stronger.

A Sergeant appeared and dismissed them from the parade. Then soon they were in a warm mess hall eating a warm stew with heaps of Irish potatoes, well, perhaps they were Irish. After all, someone even Colonials could guard the depot and this they did for the next few days until they were relieved.

They never saw Major 'Bastard' again and to their knowledge, nor were their insubordination officially reported to their Battalion. However, such talk does travel and soon after, their RSM visited the Platoon position in the Kansas Line, complimented their work on the defences and with a suspect smile departed with the comment *'I best leave you F... EN Irish Colonial convicts to get on with your tasks'*. Such a nice way of telling them the word had reached him in Bullshit Castle.

The Refugees and the Fire. On another occasion, they were manning a check point well to the rear and were using discarded wooden railway sleepers for a fire. Just on last light suddenly appeared a small group of South Korean women, children and an old man. George assumes by their belongings they were heading south, seen the glow of the fire and had arrived to seek its warmth. Within a few minutes, they had all of them surrounding the fire while the soldiers moved to the rear with an icy wind straight from Mongolia, it seemed, piercing their backs.

It is an incident that surfaced in George's reflections when in recent times, a very senior General unjustifiably, in his view, made public remarks which were critical of male behaviour in the military in regards respect to women. His edict was clear to all ranks. *'Conform or get out.'* George guesses that even Generals will smoke whatever they can get at times.



George's Korean War service provided him with a unique perspective on military leadership. He experienced leadership as a recipient rather than as someone in command. He was led by officers and non-commissioned officers, both competent and incompetent and he observed first-hand the difference between theoretical leadership and the practical demands of keeping soldiers alive and effective in combat. This experience of learning leadership from the bottom of the military hierarchy proved invaluable throughout his subsequent career.

He understood what soldiers needed from their leaders not from textbooks or theoretical instruction but from his own direct experience of being a Private soldier under operational conditions. He observed which leadership approaches worked and which failed. He saw how competent leaders-maintained morale, enforced discipline and kept soldiers focused on their duties despite hardship and danger. He also saw how incompetent leaders created unnecessary hardship, failed to maintain standards and endangered their soldiers through poor decisions or inadequate preparation.

The lessons learned as a Private soldier in Korea informed his entire approach to leadership throughout his career. He learned that soldiers respected leaders who shared their hardships, demonstrated competence under pressure and showed genuine concern for their welfare. He learned that leadership was earned through example rather than granted by rank and that soldiers would follow leaders they trusted even into situations of extreme danger.

The Signaller's role. George's role as a Signaller placed him in a position of significant responsibility. Communications were critical to military operations, linking units with headquarters, allowing commanders to coordinate operations and enabling the rapid transmission of intelligence and orders. Signallers operated and maintained radio equipment, encoded and decoded messages and ensured that communications remained functional under all conditions.

The Signaller's role required technical competence, reliability and the ability to function under pressure. Radio equipment had to be maintained in working order despite harsh environmental conditions. Messages had to be transmitted accurately, as errors could have serious operational consequences.

Communications had to be maintained even when positions were under fire or when equipment was damaged. George's Post Office training in Morse code and wireless operation proved directly applicable to his role as a military Signaller. The skills he had developed as a civilian telegraph operator transferred seamlessly to military communications work.

His proficiency at sending and receiving Morse code, his understanding of radio equipment and his disciplined approach to technical work made him an effective Signaller. The Signaller's position also provided him with broader awareness of operations than many Private soldiers possessed.

Because communications flowed through the signals section, Signallers' are aware of operational plans, intelligence reports and command decisions that ordinary infantrymen might not know until orders were issued. This broader awareness contributed to George developing understanding of how military operations were planned and conducted.

Return from Korea. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment departed Korea on 19th February 1955 aboard the transport ship *'New Australia'*. The Battalion's deployment had lasted nearly eleven months, from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955. The soldiers had maintained defensive positions through a Korean winter, conducted offensive operations against fortified enemy positions and performed the demanding work of static warfare under extremely adverse conditions.

The *'New Australia'* arrived in Sydney on 8th April 1955, bringing 1 RAR home after its tour in Korea. The return to Australia represented a significant transition for soldiers who had spent nearly a year in a combat zone. They moved from an environment of constant alertness and danger to the relative safety and comfort of Australia. They reunited with families and friends. They resumed lives that had been suspended during their deployment.



For George Mansford, his service with 1 RAR in Korea provided the foundation for his subsequent military career.

The experience of serving in a combat zone, operating communications equipment under difficult conditions and functioning as part of a professional Infantry Battalion shaped his understanding of military service and informed his development as a soldier.

He had proven himself under operational conditions and he had demonstrated technical competence as a Signaller.

He had endured the hardships of Korean service and maintained his effectiveness despite challenging conditions. He had learned what combat felt like, what soldiers needed from their leaders and what standards were required for effective military operations.

Reflections on Korea. When George reflects on Korea, there are reflections that often spring to mind, the extremes of both summer and winter, the rugged terrain with such towering steep mountains which dominated both sides of the main arterial route and what seemed to be a small and narrow road from Pusan to the Imjin River. Thirdly, in his view, was a clear surge in his maturity, personal discipline, camaraderie, more respect for most of the rules of authority and immense pride in wearing his nation's uniform. The unforgettable memory of mates, laughter and the welcome delight in military mischief and returning to their precious and most fortunate land of 'OZ' and their loved ones and above all, the ghosts they left behind without fond farewells.

Lessons from Korea. George's Korean War service provided lessons that informed his entire military career. He learned that combat was fundamentally about people; about soldiers' courage, endurance and mutual dependence.

- He learned that technical competence mattered, that equipment had to be maintained properly and that small failures in maintenance or procedure could have serious consequences.
- He learned that [leadership](#) was tested under pressure that soldiers judged their leaders by their actions rather than their words and that respect had to be earned through demonstrated competence and genuine concern for soldiers' welfare.
- He learned that unit cohesion was essential, that soldiers fought for their mates as much as for abstract causes and that the bonds formed under operational conditions created obligations that extended beyond the period of service.
- He learned that environmental conditions could be as challenging as enemy action that soldiers had to be trained to function effectively in extreme heat and cold and that physical toughness and mental resilience were as important as tactical skills.
- He learned that static warfare created psychological challenges different from mobile operations and that maintaining alertness and discipline over extended periods required strong leadership and unit culture.
- Most importantly, he learned that military service was serious business with life-and-death consequences. The decisions made by commanders, the standards maintained by units and the competence of individual soldiers all affected whether people lived or died. This understanding drove George's later insistence on realistic training, uncompromising standards and thorough preparation for combat operations.

The foundation for a military career. His service in Korea from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955 represented the first chapter of his military career. He had enlisted as a seventeen-year-old with Post Office training and Citizens Military Forces experience. He returned from Korea as a combat veteran who had proven himself under operational conditions and who understood what military service truly meant.

The progression from Private soldier to combat veteran provided him with credibility that served him throughout his career. He had not merely trained for combat; he had experienced it. He had not merely studied military operations; he had participated in them. He had not merely learned about leadership from books; he had observed it under conditions where leadership quality directly affected soldiers' survival.

The technical skills he developed as a Signaller, the leadership lessons he absorbed as a Private soldier and the operational experience he gained during his Korean deployment all contributed to his development as a professional soldier. These experiences created a foundation that supported everything he subsequently accomplished. Korea also taught George about the broader strategic context of military service. Australia was committed to collective security through alliances and international organisations. Australian soldiers served alongside forces from other [Commonwealth Nations](#) and the United States, operating under United Nations authority. This international dimension of Australian military service remained a constant throughout his career, from Korea through Malaya to Vietnam.

The significance of Korean service. George's Korean War service, though relatively brief in the context of his forty-year military career, held lasting significance. It was his introduction to combat, his first experience of operational service and his first opportunity to test himself under conditions where the stakes were life and death.

The Korean War was Australia's first significant military commitment following World War II. It demonstrated Australia's commitment to collective security through the [United Nations](#) and to supporting allies in conflicts where communist aggression threatened regional stability. For soldiers like George, Korea represented the reality that Australia's strategic interests extended beyond its immediate region and that Australian Forces might be called upon to serve in distant theatres.

The static phase of the Korean War, during which George served, was characterised by frustration and difficulty. Soldiers maintained defensive positions and conducted operations without the sense of progress that came from advancing toward victory. The armistice had halted major combat operations, but the war had not ended. Soldiers faced danger and hardship without the clarity of purpose that came from fighting toward a decisive conclusion.

This experience taught him that military service often involved enduring difficult conditions without immediate gratification or clear progress toward resolution. Soldiers had to maintain discipline, alertness and effectiveness even when the strategic situation was unclear and when their service seemed to produce no visible results. This lesson; that soldiers must continue to perform their duties regardless of broader strategic uncertainties; remained relevant throughout his career.

The bonds of service. The soldiers who served together in Korea formed bonds that lasted throughout their lives. They had shared hardship, danger and the unique experience of serving in a combat zone. These shared experiences created connections that transcended the specific period of service and fostered lifelong obligations of mutual support and remembrance. George maintained connections with his Korean veterans throughout his life. He attended reunions, commemorated significant anniversaries and supported fellow veterans who faced difficulties in civilian life. The bonds formed during his Korean service were among the earliest of many such connections he developed throughout his military career.

The Korean War veterans represented a distinct generation within the Australian military. They had served in the first significant conflict following World War II, had operated as part of a United Nations Force and had experienced a type of warfare; the static phase following an armistice; that was unique in Australian military history. For George, the Korean War veterans represented a community of shared experience and mutual understanding. They understood what he had experienced because they had experienced it themselves. They shared memories of the cold, the hardship, the danger and the bonds formed under operational conditions.

This community provided support, validation and a sense of belonging that extended far beyond the period of active service. It was a brotherhood forged not through ceremony or declaration, but through the elemental reality of having faced death together on frozen ridgelines half a world away. These men spoke a language that civilians could never fully comprehend; a vocabulary of shared sacrifice, dark humour and unspoken recognition. In the decades that followed, this network of Korean veterans would remain a constant throughout his life, providing both social connection and a touchstone to the formative experiences that had shaped him as a young soldier.

Reflection on early service. The period from George's enlistment on 17th September 1951 to his return from Korea on 8th April 1955 represented the foundation of his military career. He progressed from a seventeen-year-old recruit with Post Office training and CMF experience to a combat veteran. The nineteen-month waiting period allowed him to mature, develop his signaller skills and absorb The Royal Australian Regiment's culture and standards. His 1952 attempt to stow away to Korea demonstrated eagerness to serve but also illustrated the Army's commitment to protecting young soldiers through age requirements.

His Korea deployment from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955 provided his first combat experience and opportunity to observe leadership under pressure. The harsh environment, static warfare and constant danger shaped his understanding of military service. The technical competence, discipline and reliability he demonstrated established his reputation as a capable, professional soldier; the foundation for his subsequent advancement through the ranks.

Following his return from Korea in April 1955, George's military service continued without interruption, reflecting the high operational tempo of the Australian Army during this period of heightened Cold War tensions and regional commitments. He carried with him the essential lessons from his deployment: that combat was fundamentally about people, that leadership was earned through example and never simply bestowed by rank.

That soldiers depended on each other for survival in ways that transcended formal military structures. These were not abstract principles learned from doctrine or instruction; they were truths burned into his consciousness through direct experience.

He had proven himself capable of enduring extraordinary hardship and performing reliably under the most severe pressure. Having observed both competent and incompetent leaders in conditions where the consequences of leadership failures were measured in lives lost, he had formed a clear and uncompromising understanding of what made leaders effective. The lessons learned as a Private soldier under operational conditions; watching, evaluating, surviving; became the foundation for his entire approach to leadership throughout his career.

The credibility earned through combat and the bonds formed with fellow veterans would remain with him throughout his life, informing every decision he made as he rose through the ranks. His next posting would take him to the counter-insurgency operations of the Malayan Emergency where these hard-won lessons would be tested in an entirely different environment.



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