

An Obituary of Brigadier Christopher John (Kit) Miles OAM

by Prue Stodart



Christopher Miles was born on 17th February, 1920 in Penang, Malaya. The son of Tom, a Gallipoli veteran, and Marjorie Miles. Tom was the son of Edward T. Miles who was the pioneer of tin dredging in Thailand. In 1919 Tom was offered the job as secretary of a tin mining company in Southern Thailand, he was later to become mine manager. During those years in SE Asia, Kit's brother Richard, and sisters Joy, Libby and Pat were to be born. Kit spent the first 8 years of his life in Thailand and from all accounts he was a very happy and fearless child, brought up by his parents with the help of a devoted amah.

In 1927 it was decided to send Kit back to Australia, with his older brother Tom, to attend boarding school. He first attended Shore School until 1930 and was later sent to Knox G.S as a dayboy where he recalled being very happy and where, also, he began to excel at sport. The 1930's were his "sporting golden years". In his usual modest manner he was known to say "I did achieve somewhat of a reputation as a sprinter", in fact, for most of his years at the Senior School he was to win the sprinting and hurdling events at both, Knox and Combined Association School level. He was, also a very keen cricketer and rugby player and made the 1st eleven cricket team and 1st fifteen rugby team for two years in a row. In his last year at school he was to become prefect, house captain, captain of cricket and athletics. He was also a Cadet Lieutenant.

ARMY CAREER

In 1938 Kit joined the Army and attended RMC Duntroon which was the beginning of a long and distinguished military career. His time at Duntroon was somewhat cut short by the outbreak of WW II. He graduated as an infantryman in 1940 and was subsequently posted to the 2nd Battalion in Newcastle, where he was mainly involved in the training of men in infantry tactics.

It was during his time in Newcastle that he had more time to pursue his relationship with Gwen Harding of Cleveland Street, Wahroonga. Kit and Gwen were, eventually, to be married on 19th May, 1942.

WWII

It was during the year 1942 that Kit was posted as adjutant to a number of posts, mainly in Victoria. In 1943 he was placed on attachment to the British Army in the Middle East. He was to obtain experience in armoured warfare with the famous Desert Rats of the Seventh Armoured Division – spending most of his time in Egypt, Libya and Tunisia. The division was then sent off for the Invasion of Italy. He recalled that he had always dreamt about going to Europe but did not expect such a hostile reception on his first trip.

After fighting in Italy Kit returned home in 1944 and spent the remainder of the war years instructing at RMC.

Kit would serve in post-war Japan as the personal assistant to Lieutenant General Horace Robertson or "Red Robbie" as he was affectionately known. One of his jobs in Japan was to take VIP visitors to visit the city of Horoshima.

POST WAR – RETIREMENT

Kit's elder daughter Susan was born in 1945 followed 2 years 9 months later by a second daughter Prue. The post war period was to be a nomadic time for Kit and his family. He was posted initially to the School Of Tactics and Administration in Seymour to run courses for the promotion of regular and senior CMF officers and was heard to remark that it was one of the most interesting and stimulating jobs of his army career.

The Seymour job was followed by a posting as GSO 2 Tasmania Command and during this time he was appointed honorary ADC to the Governor Sir Ronald Cross. From Tasmania he went as CO 1st Armoured Regiment, Puckapunyal with the rank of Lt. Colonel.

In 1956 Kit was posted to Army H.Q. Melbourne as GSO and Army member of the Joint Planning Staff alongside Navy and Airforce colleagues, drafting papers on all matters of strategic interest to Australia.

Towards the middle of 1957 he learned he was to be posted to the UK where he would attend a 6 month course at the Joint Services Staff College, Latimer and afterwards, would take up

a job at Australia House as Deputy Army Representative.

The time spent in the UK was a very happy and interesting interlude both for Kit and his family, they enjoyed some wonderful holidays in Europe, England and Scotland.

Upon his return to Australia in 1960 he took up the post of CO of the 1st Armoured Regiment and Director of the Royal Australian Armoured Corps, later to be relocated to Canberra.

In 1964 -1965 he was Services Attache in Burma and spent an interesting, but somewhat challenging two years in that exotic but strife torn country. Kit was accompanied to Rangoon by his wife Gwen and their two daughters which proved to be quite an education for them all.

In 1965, on his return to Australia there were to be postings as Chief of Staff, 1 Div, Victoria Barracks, Sydney followed by CO of Scheyville where he greatly enjoyed the job of training young conscripts to become officers during the Vietnam War.

His penultimate posting would be as Commandant at Puckapunyal and the final job of Kit's long and distinguished career was commanding Central Command Adelaide where he and Gwen spent a very enjoyable few years prior to his retirement in May 1972.

RETIREMENT

Kit continued to be extremely active throughout his retirement. He and Gwen started the ball rolling by having an extended stay with their daughter Prue in the UK before taking up residence in the family home at Cherry Street,

Warrawee where Kit became Secretary of the Gowrie Scholarship Trust, a post he continued to hold for 15 years. He was also to become President of the Australian Croquet Association and did much to raise the profile and the funds for that sport, for which he was rewarded with an OAM by the Australian Government.

Kit with his wife Gwen enjoyed many happy years of retirement. They travelled extensively both, within Australia and abroad. Both were devoted to the sport of croquet and Kit to his golf and was an active member of the Elanora Golf Club for many years.

Kit's wife Gwen sadly died quite suddenly in September 2000 and was much missed by him and his daughters. He is survived by his two daughters: Sue Canham and Prue Stodart, four grandchildren and four great grandchildren.



OTU graduates at the funeral of Brig. Kit Miles.