

## 51811 Norman Herbert Goldspink MBE

The towering figure of the RSM of the Royal Military College is probably the most enduring memory of the first day for many of us. Norm – ‘Sir’ to his face – became an icon to us, and to this day represents to us the epitome of the professional soldier: firm, fair, honest, consistent and intelligent.<sup>1</sup>

### Early Life

Norman Herbert Goldspink was born in December 1927. His parents had moved from the UK and settled in WA and the family lived on a vineyard in the Upper Swan in the Swan Valley near Perth. Their 60 acres vineyard, of which 20 acres were vines, was for fresh fruit and dried fruit.

It was a tough life, and they were a poor family of six kids, growing their own vegetables and having a couple of cows. In fact, he used to deliver milk on his bike to local houses. Norm went to primary school at Upper Swan and then to high school in Midland, a journey of six miles each way on his bike. After Midland High School closed, he went to Guilford, which was a further five miles.

At 13 years old Norm left school and worked on his uncle’s vineyard full time as his father’s vineyard was not capable of supporting paid workers. Eventually (well after Norm joined the Army) his father sold the vineyard and worked at Hale College as the Head Groundsman, a role he enjoyed as it was more stable than the vineyard.

Norm intended to join the Army, following two of his elder brothers who had been deployed overseas during World War II. His interest also came from his father, who was a member of the Volunteer Defence Corps (VDC). Norm attended some training with the VDC and then at 15 years old joined the Air Training Corps which trained two nights per week and a half day on Saturdays. He really enjoyed it and stayed with it until he was 18. These were the influences that had him thinking about the Services although that interest was in the Navy: his brothers talked him out of that. However, by the time he turned 18 the war was over.

As it turned out, he didn’t pursue his Army interest until he was 24 years old. In the meantime, he worked on a wheat and sheep property for 18 months and then did shift work in a fertiliser factory for about 15 months. During this time, he considered buying a vineyard, having saved a reasonable amount from shift work, but the bank wouldn’t lend him the rest.

### The Army – Korea

Norm joined up in April 1951 and undertook recruit training at Guilford being paid ‘7 bob’ a day (seven shillings, worth about \$16 in today’s terms.)<sup>2</sup> He wanted to join the Engineers with the intention of becoming a plant operator, doing six years, and then using that skill outside. But instead, he was allocated to Infantry and did his infantry corps training at Puckapunyal and Seymour with 2 RAR. Then in April 1952, twelve months after entering the Army, he was posted to Japan as a reinforcement with 1 RAR, where he undertook some specialised training leading to deployment to Korea. Initially the Battalion was deployed into the reserve area and then into the defensive line in June 1952. Norm was in 10 Platoon HQ in D Coy as a mortarman. During

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<sup>1</sup> This biography is based largely on an interview conducted by Bill Fogarty of the AWM on 25 July 2002, at <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/S02650>, and an informal interview with Norm by Steve Jones and David Cran on 30 June 2022 and a follow up interview by Steve Jones for verification. Other sources are listed at the end.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.rba.gov.au/calculator/annualPreDecimal.html>

his time in Korea, he was promoted to Corporal and became a section commander in 11 Platoon in D Company and at the end of the tour was a temporary Sergeant.

Norm noted that Korea was hard going, with close proximity to the enemy (300-500 metres), trench and bunker living, trying climatic conditions and intense patrolling. He was happy to leave it behind, but rather than come home he had an opportunity to go to Japan for 12 months in a role as a Sergeant with the Reinforcement Holding Unit and then the Commonwealth Division Battle School.



Hiro, Japan. 1953-09-06. Members of the winning HQ Australian Army Component cricket team entertained 1 Reinforcement Holding Unit's team in the Sergeants Mess. Major J. Gerke congratulates Sergeant Roy Finlay on the teams win.

Left to right: Sergeant Roy Finlay; Sergeant Norm Goldspink; Major J. Gerke and Sergeant Tom Waters. (<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C279206>)

The Australians were well accepted in Japan at that time, and Norm made some very good friends there. Altogether he was overseas for two years.

Norm maintained his connection with Korea in later years, and was specifically thanked by South Korean President Moon Jae-in at a dinner with Australian Korean War Veterans on 16 December 2021: *'Even after retiring from the military, Major Norman Goldspink has been working as a member of the Korean War Memorial Committee, passing on to posterity the profound friendship between our two countries.'*<sup>3</sup>

## After Korea

Norm was offered a Sergeant position in Perth in early 1954 in an orderly room, which didn't suit him: he instead opted to take the 98 days leave that he had accrued and accept reversion to Corporal. He was young and single, so it didn't bother him too much. After leave he was posted to Woodside to train national servicemen. His good mate Tom Waters was also posted there, and they had a great time – not the last time they were posted together.<sup>4</sup> He was promoted to Sergeant after about three months and spent three years there.

<sup>3</sup> [https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/au-melbourne-en/brd/m\\_1958/view.do?seq=751296&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=&page=1](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/au-melbourne-en/brd/m_1958/view.do?seq=751296&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=1). The Korean President has inadvertently promoted Norm; he retired as a Captain.

<sup>4</sup> BT (Tom) Waters, known to cadets in the early 1970s as BTW was the chief PTI at Duntroon – more on that later.

Norm moved to the Army Apprentices School as an instructor for six months in 1957 and then to RMC as a Drill Sergeant for four years in 1958. As the most senior 'Drilly,' he filled in as Acting RSM during the three-month absence on course of the existing RSM, WO1 Tom Muggleton. At the end of that period, he was told by the DMA, Colonel P.L. Tancred (1940), that they would be looking for him to come back in due course as the RSM – "as long as I kept my nose clean."

In 1962, he moved on promotion to WO2 to Holsworthy as a CSM in 1 RAR. He spent a few months as a Platoon Commander due to a shortage of officers and then became the CSM of B Company. In 1964 he was posted to 4 RAR as a CSM but was convinced to undertake the Instructor Training Course at the US Army Infantry School at Fort Benning Georgia. Generally, he was not impressed by the way the Americans went about their training: "they worked very long hours, but they were narrow in their learning." In retrospect, he thought that he should have taken the posting to 4 RAR. The US experience was followed by a stint as a CSM and instructor at the Officer Training Unit Scheyville. "This was a very busy unit both for staff and for the cadets."

He then deployed to Vietnam in June 1967 as a reinforcement with 5RAR. At the end of the battalion rotation, he became the CSM of the Australian Reinforcement Unit but didn't complete a full twelve-month cycle as he was posted back to Australia as RSM at Duntroon in November 1967.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL COL/67/0148/VN  
Warrant Officer (WO) Norm Goldspink, CSM C Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) directing operations immediately after a mine detonated at C Company Headquarters.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Warrant Officer (WO) Norm Goldspink, CSM C Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) directing operations immediately after a mine detonated at C Company Headquarters. One of the casualties is being stretchered to a 9 Squadron Iroquois UH-1B helicopter waiting to take the casualties to Vung Tau. Between 13-14 February 1967 5RAR were conducting a cordon-and-search (Operation Beaumaris) of An Nhut, a small village between Long Dien and Dat Do, when a mine detonated at C Company's headquarters during a briefing of C Company officers and senior non-commissioned officers. Five of the group were wounded and three officers were killed; Major Donald Bourne, the Company Commander, Captain (Capt) Robert Milligan, second in command and the New Zealand artillery forward observer, Capt Peter Williams of 161 Field Battery. The explosion was thought to have been caused by an unrecorded ARVN booby trap left behind when old barbed wire barriers were removed from around the village. A remnant of the old barbed wire barrier is visible to the left.  
(<https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C312224>)

## RSM of the Corps of Staff Cadets



Norm enjoyed the RSM role, “as it was very satisfying and was not a difficult job as such because of my previous experience as a ‘Drilly’ at RMC, as well as having been involved in training of recruits, apprentices, and officer cadets at Scheyville.” His basis was “that I only expected people training under me to undertake things that I would be happy to accept myself.”





The position also involved being the PMC of the Sergeants' Mess, which was challenging initially, but once he had it sorted it was very enjoyable. He spent a fair bit of time there and appreciated that Lois understood that.<sup>6</sup> There was a good group of NCOs in the mess, including a couple of female Warrant Officers from Russell Offices (Katie Livingston and Claire Brodie) who were very impressive and "helped me out occasionally by accompanying me to functions when Lois was unable to attend."

Norm remarked that he found that all officer cadets with whom he was involved in training were very similar. They were "intelligent, challenging at times, but getting them to graduation was satisfying." He didn't see any discernible difference over the years of his involvement.

There were some challenges in 1969 with the bastardisation scandal but Norm didn't believe that he had anything to be concerned about, as he had not done anything other than training in the way that he had done in the past. However, it was a tense time and he told Lois to be ready to move. Obviously some people moved as an outcome, but it settled down fairly quickly.<sup>7</sup>

One of the highlights for Norm, and for most cadets, was the Queen's visit and Trooping of the Colours in 1970. Other highlights were seeing successful graduations at the end of each year.

As noted earlier, one of his best mates while at RMC was Tom Waters (known to cadets as BTW). They had known each other since before Korea, and had been posted together a couple of times, most notably in Japan and at Woodside. BTW was Infantry but did the PTI course at the School of Artillery and topped it, arriving at RMC during the year before Norm.

Norm was made a Member of the Order of the British Empire on 3rd of June 1972.

### **After RMC**

Norm was posted to the Infantry Centre at Singleton in 1972 as an instructor on the WO Course, but became the RSM. This was followed by a period as the WO Ceremonial at Russell Offices, a job and environment he didn't enjoy as he felt that he did not have the staff duties background for it, particularly given that he had to rewrite the Ceremonial Manual. However, one high point was that the Queen visited during that time – the 1974 visit to Canberra.

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<sup>6</sup> Norm and Lois were married in 1958.

<sup>7</sup> At the interview over lunch on 30 June 2022, Steve Jones and David Cran made it quite clear that we never considered that he or his staff had anything to answer for.

Following that posting he returned to the AAS at Balcombe as the RSM which was a much more enjoyable posting and had the added advantage of having Lois' parents living nearby. Then in 1981 he was posted as the Ceremonial Officer at RMC. Initially this was as a WO1, but he was advised that he could be promoted to Captain in the PSO system as the position was a Captain's position. He didn't believe that he met the criteria, based on being above the maximum age (he was 53) but agreed to do it if it was possible.<sup>8</sup> "My decision was based more on mercenary reasons given that I would get a higher level of pay and that I was getting closer to retirement so it would benefit me later on." He remained in the position for 18 months and retired in mid-1982.

### **After Commissioning**

The transition to commissioned rank was pretty easy as he knew most of the other officers on the staff – they had been cadets at some stage during his postings. He became the secretary of the Officers' Mess, which needed some work when he took it over. He always intended for his commissioned time to be short, and only intended it to be at RMC which was very familiar to him. He has admitted that the anecdote, in the Class of 1971's anniversary book, that he pressured some of the young officers whom he knew to have a few beers in the mess from time to time are true. They were good company, but he used to take the blame. He was also fortunate that Lois, who was a good tennis player, played tennis with the officers' wives, so he knew all of the wives. He enjoyed the experience of that posting.

### **After the Army**

Norm had lined up a position at the Australian War Memorial as a security officer. This required him to wander the floor and keep an eye on things and patrons. He could offer advice here and there, some of it disciplinary and some of it informative. He was a fulltime public servant in the position which he held for ten years. "I enjoyed it, and it also set up a secondary pension for me in retirement, which I saw that as being important if I wanted to own a house and a good car: looking out for your retirement was important." Once he finished that job, he retired.

### **Family**

For much of his early career Norm was single, meaning he could be posted quickly, which he was happy to do.

Norm met Lois in Melbourne when he visited there from Woodside in his new Ford Zephyr. She was a neighbour of the people whom he was visiting. They corresponded for a year or so and during that time he convinced her to come with him to Perth on his Christmas break. "We drove across the Nullarbor (dirt in those days). After the first day (about Whyalla) she asked, "are we nearly there?"

Lois and Norm were married in Melbourne in 1958. His Mum and Dad came across, having never been out of WA since coming from England.

Their first married posting was to RMC, Norm's first time there as a 'Drilly.' They initially lived with another 'Drilly' and were then allocated one of the houses above the MI Block. It was a

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<sup>8</sup> Norm was given great support by DInf in the promotion, indicative of the high regard in which he was held.

basic house, unlined, with one heater in which they burned coke, but it had a good back yard in which he grew vegetables.

Other than overseas deployments to the US and Vietnam, postings were always accompanied. Lois and Norm had three children - Karen, Louise and Michael who were born with about two years between them. Norm acknowledged that it was Lois who looked after the kids while he carried out his military duties and that he was very lucky for her having done so. She was always accepting of his commitment and did a terrific job with bringing up their children. Norm was able to purchase the family home in Flynn (a Canberra suburb) and they lived there for many years.



Lois was a skilled dressmaker and ran a private business from home. She had a very good eye for fabric and design suitability for her customers. When Norm was posted to RMC as the RSM they lived in one of the houses just to the right of the Chapel and across the road from the golf course.

Lois passed away in 2021, and in her final years Norm was her full-time carer due to her illness.

Norm had five grandchildren (Teagan and Bill, Troy, Ryan and Bethany) and two great-grandchildren (Oliver and Lando). He lived in a retirement village townhouse in Canberra, well supported by his family. Norm died on 9 January 2024.

## Awards and Medals



Norm was a Member in the Order of the British Empire (MBE), earned the Australian Active Service Medal 1945-1975 (Korea and Vietnam Clasps), both the Korean and Vietnam War set of Campaign Medals, the Australian Service Medal 1945 – 1975 (Vietnam Clasp), was awarded the Queens Silver Jubilee Medal (1977) as well as the Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, Meritorious Service Medal and The National Medal, Defence Force Service Medal and the Australian Defence Medal.

## Personal Interests

Norm had at several times had boats: in Japan he had a small sailing boat in which he used to race every weekend. When he was at Balcombe, he had a small fishing boat.

When the kids came along, Lois and Norm had a caravan and used to go off on holiday trips. One of their favourite places was Kiama.

In the interview about his time in Korea, Norm remarked that he was kept back at the Headquarters of the Reinforcement Holding Unit because he was a cricketer, as seen in the photo on page 2. He was also a useful goalie in soccer as shown in the photo below. The team were very successful and during that time Norm was the number two goalie in WA.



Kathy Syrette for Remember Midland

Swan Athletic Soccer Club in 1950

Back Row: Mr Savage, Andy Blitvich, Mick Mateljan, Tosh Perich, Mick Illich, George Nicholls, Jack Mateljan & George Bebich  
Middle Row: Tonci Rakich, Steve Illich, Tom Illich, Jeff Illich & John Barbarich  
Front Row: Matt Rakich, Norm Goldspink & Mike Mateljan



He was a keen gardener and given that he had always expressed the desire to own a vineyard, his interest there is not surprising. Norm noted that he has always enjoyed mess life and of course he liked a beer or two.

### Postscript

On Friday 15 July, Steve Jones took Norm for a drive through RMC and ADFA – Norm hadn't been there for years. Norm was surprised by a meeting with the current RSMs set up by Steve and altogether they spent about 4 hours looking and talking.



On the left is RSM-D, WO1 Carl Hemberg and on the right RSM-A, WO1 Craig Batty OAM.

## Sources:

This biography of Norm Goldspink is largely based on the first two sources:

- *Norman H Goldspink MBE as a corporal section commander 11 Platoon D Company 1st Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR), Korea 1952-1953*, interviewed by Bill Fogarty at <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/S02650>
- Informal Interview of Norm Goldspink by Steve Jones and David Cran on 30 June 2022.

Consulate General of the Republic of Korea, Bilateral Relations, *Remarks by President Moon Jae-in at Dinner with Australian Korean War Veterans*, Dated 2021-12-16 at [https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/au-melbourne-en/brd/m\\_1958/view.do?seq=751296&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi\\_itm\\_seq=0&itm\\_seq\\_1=0&itm\\_seq\\_2=0&company\\_cd=&company\\_nm=&page=1](https://overseas.mofa.go.kr/au-melbourne-en/brd/m_1958/view.do?seq=751296&srchFr=&srchTo=&srchWord=&srchTp=&multi_itm_seq=0&itm_seq_1=0&itm_seq_2=0&company_cd=&company_nm=&page=1)

Remember Midland: Swan Athletic Soccer Clun in 1950 at <https://m.facebook.com/remembermidland/photos/a.448733285222606.1073741828.448335958595672/1457457294350195/?type=3&source=54>

London Gazette, 3 June 1972 on page 6288 at position 18.

## AWM Images:

Hiro, Japan. 1953-09-06. Members of the winning HQ Australian Army Component cricket team entertained 1 Reinforcement Holding Unit's team in the Sergeants Mess. Major J. Gerke congratulates Sergeant Roy Finlay on the teams win. Left to right: Sergeant Roy Finlay; Sergeant Norm Goldspink; Major J. Gerke and Sergeant Tom Waters. At <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C279206>

Warrant Officer (WO) Norm Goldspink, CSM C Company, 5th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (5RAR) directing operations immediately after a mine detonated at C Company Headquarters at <https://www.awm.gov.au/collection/C312224>