

OBITUARIES

Tom Hanson, DSO and Bar

Gunner, stockbroker
1911 - 1999

He was a man with respect for people and institutions. He had a fine sense of fair play and was proud both to be an Australian and to serve his country. Above all, Brigadier Tom Hanson, who has died in Sydney at the age of 87, was proud of his origins and devoted to his family.

His association with the Australian Army spanned 40 years, including the six years of World War II, much of which was spent overseas with the 2/1st Field Regiment.

Stockbroking became his career for a quarter of a century after the war. His quiet but generous support of people less fortunate was evident in his work with Legacy and St Martin's Anglican Church, Killara.

Arthur George Hanson (Tom to all) was born at Hunters Hill, the eldest of three boys; one brother, Geoffrey, died in 1976 after a successful career with David Jones, while the other,

Kenneth, perished in 1945 when his Liberator bomber was lost over the Celebes (Sulawesi).

Young Tom spent his holidays at his father's shack at Avalon; he was present at the first meeting of the Avalon Surf Life Saving Club and a member of the first Avalon team to attain their bronze medallion. Although he was educated at Shore, the hard lessons of the Great Depression were not lost on him and formed a lifelong thrift and concern for others.

Hanson enlisted in the Army in 1929 to become a gunner in the 7th Field Artillery. Ten years later when the world went to war, he was a captain and joined the 2/1st Field Regiment.

In January 1940, the regiment sailed from Sydney on the Orford for the Middle East, where its first actions were at Bardia and Tobruk, Derna and Benghazi.

By March 1941, the regiment was stationed in the interior of Greece. But a month later the German forces had pushed it out, and the men were forced to leave behind their spiked guns and

other gear. Hanson was mentioned in dispatches for his efforts in the campaign.

After returning to Australia and re-formed in preparation for the New Guinea campaigns, the regiment arrived in Port Moresby at a time when the Japanese had been pushed back along the Kokoda Track and from Milne Bay.

In November 1942, two contingents were flown to Popondetta by USAF Dakotas, believed to be the first time that Australian artillery was flown into battle. F Troop was under the command of Major Hanson, nicknamed Black Tom, while the battery's codename was Blackforce.

Their guns gave strong support for the infantry in decisive defeats of the Japanese at Buna and Gona, and Hanson was awarded the DSO.

After home leave, the regiment left Australia for the third time, bound for Wewak and the last actions of the war with Lieutenant-Colonel Hanson as commander of the 2/1st Field



Regiment. He is described in the regimental history as being "of medium height and build [with] a slight stoop of the shoulders [giving] emphasis to the serious attitude that made thoroughness in thought and deed his main characteristic.

"Although he laughed but seldom, his slow smile could show adequate appreciation, just as its absence could put his disapproval beyond doubt. All ranks of the regiment knew, trusted and respected him and they relished, rather than regretted his undemonstrative manner."

Success at Aitape coincided with the Japanese surrender in August 1945, and Hanson was

awarded the Bar to his DSO for devotion to duty, planning and the handling of his regiment.

After the war he joined the CMF, reaching brigadier in 1957 when he was commander of the artillery's 2nd Division.

From 1970 to 1972 he was colonel commandant of the Royal Australian Artillery (NSW). Proud of his army life, he attended Anzac Day ceremonies until last year.

For several postwar years he worked with the Perpetual Trustee, but in 1951 became a member of the Sydney Stock Exchange, the career in which he spent the rest of his working life.

Hanson was a partner in G. H. Partridge & Co, Niel & Partridge, and Ralph W. King & Yuill and a consultant with Bains. Hanson retired in 1987 when he was 76, but kept a keen eye on business life, particularly mining.

He is survived by Betty, his wife of 51 years, his sons, Peter and Rodney, and a daughter, Janelle.

Rod Hanson