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OBITUARY

Brigadier William Harold “Mac” Grant, OAM, RFD

24 June 1922 to 10 June 2013

Mac Grant, a former National President of the Royal United Services Institute of Australia and President of the Royal United Services Institute of Victoria, has died in Victoria a few days before of his 91st birthday. Mac had spent his life serving Australia diligently as a soldier and spy and will be sadly missed by many as a friend and mentor.

In 1940 aged 18 years, Mac enlisted in the Permanent Military Forces and served in the 1st Heavy Brigade which manned coastal guns around Australia. In 1941, he put his age up to 21 and enlisted in the Australian Imperial Force under his mother’s maiden name, McArthur – hence his nickname, “Mac”. When the Japanese attacked in 1941, Mac was in a training camp at Cowra and was recruited for Special Forces by Major Paul Kneen. In 1942, Mac joined the newly formed 2/5th Independent Company. With only basic infantry skills, the unit was acclimatised in Port Moresby before being air-lifted into Wau and Bulolo for constant patrolling, interspersed with raids on Japanese positions. Mac was commissioned early in 1944 and in 1945 was committed with 2/12th Commando Squadron into Borneo and to Labuan.

At the end of the war, Mac volunteered to serve in the British Commonwealth Occupation Force in Japan with the 66th Infantry Battalion. In Japan, he married Joan Brown of the Australian Army Medical Women’s Service whom he had met in Sydney during 1945.

On his return to Australia he commanded a Methods of Instruction Team before serving in the 3rd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in Korea. On 25 June 1955, Mac raised and commanded the 1st Commando Company at Georges Heights in Sydney. From October 1955 until May 1956, he trained with the Royal Marines in the United Kingdom. He qualified as a Green Beret



Commando with the 42nd Commando, Royal Marines. Further training followed at the Amphibious Warfare School, Poole, and the Amphibious Staff Course. I joined him on 26 December 1955 and completed my commando training when Mac returned to Sydney.

Mac resigned from the Australian Regular Army in 1959 to serve in the Australian Secret Intelligence Service and joined the Citizen Military Forces. In the mid-1970s,

Mac was sent to Indonesia under diplomatic cover where his military skills enabled him to foster contact with the Indonesian generals and he developed a close friendship with General Benny Murdani. Other appointments with the Department of Defence took him and his family to the United Kingdom and Hong Kong. In addition, he made extended official visits to Singapore and Vietnam.

Mac’s service in the Citizen Military Forces and its successor, the Australian Army Reserve, included appointments as Commanding Officer of the 6th Battalion, Royal Victoria Regiment, Commander of the 4th Infantry Brigade, and Commander of the 3rd Divisional Field Force Group. After his retirement in 1977, Mac maintained his interest in defence matters, including as Life Patron of the Commando Association. In 2003, he was awarded the Medal of the Order of Australia. He was a fine fly fisherman on his small property on the Goulburn River.

Mac Grant was dedicated to his county’s security. He will be missed by many, in particular members of the Royal United Services Institute and the Commando fraternity. Long may his memory live on as an inspiration for others to emulate his example.

John M. Hutcheson