

Vale A. A. (Alf) Argent (26.3.1927 - 23.9.2014)



Alf Argent was the Australian Antarctic Division's Aviation Officer from 1976 to 1982, joining the Division after a distinguished career in the Australian Army.

He graduated from RMC Duntroon in 1948 and was posted to Infantry, serving with the Third Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (3 RAR) in Korea in 1951, where he was the Battalion's Intelligence Officer and was Mentioned in Despatches. A contemporary of mine joined the Battalion in 1964, by which time Alf was a Major and the second-in-command, and described him as "a very capable yet quietly spoken man and a great role model". This was certainly my impression of him.

Alf later transferred to the Army Aviation Corps and trained on a variety of aircraft, both fixed and rotary winged, and subsequently served in Viet-Nam at the Headquarters, Australian Forces in 1967-8 (where I first met him, very briefly, as I was 'passing through'). On return from Viet-Nam he was posted to the United States for two years flying duties with the US Army. He had quite a sense of humour and was occasionally ragged (by his contemporaries – we junior officers wouldn't have dared) for the fact his regimental number ended in '007'. He retired from the Army in 1975 in the rank of Lieutenant-Colonel, having earlier been awarded the Queen's Commendation for Valuable Services in the Air.

On joining the Division (where he replaced the late Bob Dalton) he maintained his flying skills and organised the summer flying operations programmes as well as undertaking several voyages. When I joined the Division in Melbourne in 1980 his office was adjacent to the 'Expeditioners' Common Room' and he could get quite annoyed by the noise this generated and from time to time would throw open his door and tell us all to calm down as he was trying to work. He instructed us in stellar and solar navigation, taking us out on to the nature strip beside the building to practice us with an astro-compass – never at solar noon, as that would have been too easy!

I got to know him quite well as he was closely involved with my operations at the Lanyon Junction Ski-way in 1981-2 when I was OiC Casey. He was a very precise man, instructing me to ensure that the runway markers I erected were "frangible". (According to the Oxford Dictionary, this means 'brittle' – he didn't want an aircraft

to be damaged by one in the case of a collision.) I recall him at Casey, having come down during one of the voyages, dressed in a flying suit with a Morse key strapped to his thigh, moving at a very smart pace clutching a neatly-folded map – still every inch the soldier.

Alf left the AAD at the end of the 1981-2 summer season as he wished to remain in Melbourne. In his retirement he worked tirelessly for Legacy and for the Royal Humane Society of Australasia (in which he served as a Director for 25 years) and was highly regarded in both of those areas.

He is survived by his wife of 55 years, Dawn, two children and eight grandchildren.

(Joe Johnson)



Alf (on the right, in slouch hat) briefing his CO, Lt-Col C H Green, in Korea in 1951.

The photo appears in the official history: *Australia in the Korean War*, Volume 2, page 24.