

COMMANDER: 13 SA ARMoured BRIGADE and WITS RIFLES/DE LA REY REGT

BRIGADIER: BESTER, Jan Bosman, DSO and Bar. (P61150V)

He was born in 1911 in the Paarl and educated at the Paarl Boys High School in the Cape.

He joined the part-time forces and rose to the rank of Major by 1939. He was in the government service (customs and excise) until 1940 when he was mobilised for WW2. He was rapidly promoted until he became the officer commanding the Field Force Battalion who saw service in East Africa and the Western Desert.



He served in 1 Field Force Battalion from 16/10/40 to 12/11/41 (East Africa) then in ½ Field Force Battalion from 12/11/41 to 19/2/43 (North Africa).

In North Africa he was the officer commanding De La Rey Regt from 19/2/43 to 5/2/43 for his part in the Battle of El Alamein he was awarded the DSO on 20/10/43.

In Italy he commanded the Wit Rifles/ De La Rey Regt - from 5/7/43 to 9/1/45 and earned a bar to his DSO at the Battle of Monte Stanco. On 9 Jan 45, he was promoted to brigadier and appointed officer commanding 13 SA Motorised Brigade from 9/1/45 to 25/8/45. He was then appointed the OC of the R & T Depot at Helwan in Egypt from 25/8/45 to 19/9/45 after which he had to return to Italy and take over command of the 6 SA Arm'd Division from 17/9/45 to 13/1/46.

After the war he returned to the RSA and was appointed the Chief Superintendent of the Railway Police and then became the deputy commercial director for the SAAirways until his retirement in 1974.

He was popular and seemed to be a very jovial character and was nicknamed "Happy Jack". He was married to Helen on 27/2/43 and they had four children.

He was awarded the following medals:

DSO - 20/10/43.

Bar to DSO - 19/4/46.

1939/45 Star.

39/45 Star

Africa Star.

Italy Star.

Defence Medal (British).

The War Medal

Africa Service Medal.

He lived in Fishhoek in the Cape until his death in 1985.

