



nulli secundus

# 2<sup>ND</sup> BATTALION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT ASSOCIATION, INC THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION

South West Pacific, Japan, Korea, Malaya, Thai-Malay Border, South Vietnam,  
Cambodia, Rwanda, East Timor, Solomon Islands, Iraq, Timor Lesté, Afghanistan

## RINGO

Courage. Sacrifice. Mateship.

NEWSLETTER

PATRON: COLONEL JM CHURCH, DSO, (RETD)

JULY 2014

### THE BATTALION REPORT

The Battalion has spent 2014 building on the demanding training year experienced in 2013, continuing its consolidation of foundation warfighting skills and the progression of the Amphibious Ready Element Landing Force (ARE LF) capability. While much of the drive for 2014 has been to meet the needs of the ARE LF, 2RAR has continued to refine its capability as a Standard Infantry Battalion (albeit down to two rifle companies).

A Coy started the year with a mixture of live fire and field training; progressing from individual up to platoon level, before entering its first major sub-unit exercise on a Combat Training Centre led Warfighter. The Warfighter allowed A Coy to validate much of its training, and build on its framework for further Coy level training.

B Coy, while acting as the Ready Coy for the ARE LF, hit the ground running with its own manoeuvre training, with the addition of a Population Protection and Control (PPC) course. B Coy then moved complete to Puckapunyal to act as OPFOR for RMC for the better part of a month. Never one to miss an opportunity, they took it as a chance for further training, conducting a basic Signals course while they were there.

Support Coy has focused primarily on live fire and gaining and maintaining the proficiencies required to provide capability to the Battalion. This has included Helicopter Insertion and Extraction Techniques (HIET) for Recon Platoon and Snipers, and combined heavy weapons and mortars shoots for DFSW and Mortar Platoon. Small Boat Platoon returned to basics to conduct limited field engineering and develop its demolition qualifications through Light Urban Explosive Breaching practices. Small Boats has also continued to hone its skills on the water by conducting the Amphibious Operators Course supported by the Special Forces Training Centre. Through EX SEA DAWN and EX WET EAGLE Small Boats Platoon have spent a considerable amount of time in both blue and brown water; executing both long and short range insertions and tasks.

Much of the effort to support sub-unit training fell to Admin Coy, through provision of Catering, Transport, Maintenance and Supply. Amidst this, Admin Coy found the time to run a Driver's Courses and generate further capability with its personnel conducting Air Portability Team Leader courses to add flexibility to the Battalion's supply and mobility on both land and at sea.

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From April onwards, the Battalion stepped into the ARE LF unit level exercises, conducting Exercise SEA DAWN 14. This was a full spectrum activity, comprising tasks from conventional offensive operations to Humanitarian Aid and Disaster Relief (HADR). B Coy was able to conduct a live fire raid on Rattlesnake Island, before a mid-exercise port visit to Townsville. The Battalion then progressed to Mourilyan Harbour to provide assistance to a simulated civil population suffering the after effects of a cyclone and severe flooding. As the ARE steamed North toward Cowley Beach it was put on stand by to respond to Far North Queensland coastal communities in the wake of a rapidly developing Cyclone ITA. Although the ARE was ultimately not required, it served to prove that as a force, the ARE is a flexible and capable entity for both the projection of power and the provision of domestic and international assistance. Before returning to port in Townsville 5 PI, B Coy proved the ARE's raid capabilities by conducting a long-range, over-the-horizon helicopter insertion to capture a high value target.

During May the Battalion conducted its Military Skills competition, a 72 hour event contested at Section level. It was won by a Recon Platoon section, who will now go on to represent 2RAR in the Duke of Gloucester Cup. 2RAR has held the Cup since 2012, earning the privilege to compete in the British Army's Cambrian Patrol (an international event drawing competing Infantry sections from all over the world) on behalf of The Royal Australian Regiment. 2013 saw the first time an Australian section had been awarded a Gold Medal, and the Battalion aims for a repeat performance on both accounts in 2014.

The Battalion as a whole participated in Exercise HAMEL 14 as OPFOR (a role A Coy has rehearsed during the 3 Bde CATA in June which will subsequently see them detached to 1RAR for the duration of the exercise), with the additional challenge of operating as both regular and irregular forces. Ex HAMEL 14 will see 2RAR grow to nearly Regt (-) size, (Continued below)

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### **WARRIORS WHO HAVE MARCHED OUT**

- Brigadier Damian Stanley Maliphant (Dolly) ROCHE, 1RAR (Lt), 8/9RAR (Adj, Coy Comd, CO), UNAMIR 1995 (CO) Rwanda, (B Coy 2RAR). Age: 57+ years. He was a first class officer, husband, bloke and a caring citizen of this world. Rest in peace mate. Thanks Ben Morris, Gordon Hurford
- Lieutenant Colonel Peter Michael (Mike) DENNIS, MBE (Retd), 9RAR, 2RAR. Sadly Mike "The Fox" Dennis passed away peacefully 3 May 2014. Age: 67 years. A good soldier, officer, advocate, and hardworking Vice President (SA). Thanks Mal Allen
- 5715033 Private David John WESTLAKE, 2RAR Vietnam 4 PI B Coy 1967-68, HQ 1ATF 1968, 2RAR 1968. Died from a heart attack on 5 May. Age: 67+ years. 'Gone but not forgotten'. Thanks Geoff Brewer, John Knights
- 3795903 Private Grant William BURROWS, 2RAR Vietnam 1970-71. Age: 65+ years. Passed away from cancer. Ron and Grant both come from Korumburra, Vic. Thanks Garry Johnston, Ron Hutton
- 1732148 Private Peter (Jock) GOWRAN, 2RAR Vietnam 1967-68 (C Coy). Passed away 14 April 2014. Funeral held Bongaree (Bribie Island) Qld. "A nice quiet man". Age: 68+ years. Thanks Angela Gowran (Daughter), Jock Cassidy
- 2/401515 Private Kevin George TAYLOR, 3RAR Korea 1953-54, 2RAR Korea 1954. Age: 85+ years. Published in Reveille May-June 2014. Thanks Terry Dinneen
- 5714653 Private Ian Haig COOK, HQ 1ATF, 2RAR Vietnam 1967-68. 2 PI A Coy. Passed away from a muscle degenerating disease. Age: 69 years. Ian was news director with Channel 9 & 7 and B-Sky-B news England. Thanks Wally Musgrave



*Yes, you'll always march beside us,  
And when our time is through  
We'll muster on that "Last Parade"  
To march again with you.*

### **LEST WE FORGET**

#### **KOREA VETERANS' DAY**

*The 61<sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Armistice in Korea (27 July 1953) and of the HOOK 2RAR 24/25 July 1953*

The President and members of the Associations of Queensland Korea veterans (AQKV) and the Gold Coast Korean Society (GCKS) invite all Korean War Veterans to attend the RSL National Korea Veterans Day Remembrance Service to be held at the Queensland Korean War Memorial, Cascade Gardens, Gold Coast, in the presence of the President of the RSL Queensland Terry Meehan and the Consul General for the Republic of Korea LEE Whie Jin on Saturday 26th July commencing 10.00 am.

Following this RSL Commemoration Service, the Gold Coast Korean Association (GCKS) in association with the Consul General for the Republic of Korea LEE Whie Jin will be conducting a Korean War Veteran Commemoration Buffet Luncheon at the Surfers Paradise RSL Club commencing 12:00 am to 2:00 pm.

Korean War Veterans and their partners/careers attending the Memorial Service are cordially invited to attend.

*(Continued from previous page)*

incorporating the 1st Bn of 5th Marine Regiment USMC, (Marine Rotational Force Darwin), a Coy from 5 and 7RAR, and a squadron from 2nd/14th Light Horse Regiment. While everyone likes to be the bad guy on occasion, Ex HAMEL 14 also serves the serious purpose of developing and testing BHQ; exercising the alternate HQ structure the Battalion is trialling for the ARE LF, as both 0A and alternate 0B.

The arrival of the Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) HMAS Canberra has forestalled projected ARE LF domestic exercises in the near term, 2RAR continues to look for opportunities to practice sub unit littoral manoeuvre, and expand its corporate knowledge of amphibious operations on multinational exercises. In the second half of the year, the Battalion will commit a small staff to the Marine Air Ground Task Force HQ during Exercise RIMPAC, and B Coy will deploy on Exercise CROIX DU SUD with the French Armed Forces New Caledonia (FANC) to reinforce its training and build bi-lateral relationships within the amphibious community.

2RAR has also played a significant part in 3 Bde's enduring commitment to regional engagement in Papua New Guinea, mentoring the PNGDF Infantry Battalions on Exercise Olgetta Warrior 2014. The Battalion has committed two Mentoring Training Teams (MTTs), for six and twelve week tours respectively, tasked with furthering the development of the two infantry battalions of PNGDF.

2RAR remains committed to forming the core of the ARE LF, without losing focus on the principles of an Infantry Battalion. The remainder of the year promises to deliver sound training and the opportunity to exercise that training both in Australia and abroad. As these commitments wind up toward the end of the year, and 2RAR begins its specialist courses period where it will be running not only SIOS but also the full suite of courses from basic reconnaissance, basic mortar, basic Direct Fire Support Weapons, basic signaller, Amphibious Operator of small boats course and a suite of driver training on the new fleet of Mercedes Vehicles.

It is certain that the soldiers and officers of the Battalion will deserve a well earned rest over the Christmas break, before leaning into what will be a busy and amphibious 2015.

Second to None.

CO: LTCOL Michael Bassingthwaighte, DSM  
RSM: WO1 Brian Buskell, CSM

#### **COMMEMORATING THE BATTLE OF THE HOOK**

A Memorial Service to commemorate the Battle of the HOOK Korea 24/25 July 1953 will be conducted at the Royal Australian Regiment Memorial, Regimental Square [Wynyard Street] Sydney at 11.00am Friday 25 July 2014.

A Cordial invitation is extended to former members of 2RAR/3RAR, their wives/partners, widows, next of kin, families and friends to attend.

Please wear medals.

Lunch is available after the Service at the Combined Services Club 5 Barrack Street, Sydney at nominal cost.

Contact: Gus BREEN by Monday 21 July 2014.  
(02) 9428 4683 E. gusbreen@yahoo.com.au

#### **REUNION: 5 PLATOON B COY 2014**

5 Platoon B Coy 2RAR Vietnam 1967-68 will be holding their bi-annual reunion at Twin Towns coinciding with the 2RAR Association Reunion on 24-25 October 2014.

Contact: Steve Way (rachelway2@gmail.com)  
Mob: 0884 259 881

## MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE



L-R: Kevin Dean (VP), Arthur MacDonald, Rod Newham, Gordon Hurford (Sec.), Leo Van De Kamp (Pres.), Norm Devereux (Treas.), Paul King, & Rick Hollingdrake. Absent: Matt Rennie (IPP), Terry Dinneen, & David Huntley

In 2014 committee meetings will be held as follows:

- Wed 5 Feb 14 ✓
- Wed 4 Jun 14 ✓
- Wed 1 Oct 14
- Wed 2 Apr 14 ✓
- Wed 6 Aug 14
- Wed 3 Dec 14

The AGM will be held on Sat 25 Oct 14 in the ANZAC Room Tweed Heads & Coolangatta RSL, the Commemoration Service at Chris Cunningham Park (under shade), and the Reunion at the 'River' Room and Bar on Level 3 at Twin Towns Services Club.



2RAR veterans march in Adelaide. The banner was carried by Bob Carrison & William Rawiri V5 (truly ANZAC)

## MEMBERS' DRAW

The winner of the financial Members' Draw held on 4 June, received a copy of 'Duty First' by David Horner & Jean Bou, 1990. Congratulations to Michael Gay, Beerburum, Qld.

## 2RAR ASSOCIATION WEBSITE

The DVA approved a grant for \$6,930 for the construction and hosting of a new website. Work has now commenced in earnest and all is progressing well.

It is planned that there be an Ecommerce program and, with a link with PayPal, it will provide secure online payment for merchandise as well as a simple method for the payment of membership fees online. There will be a requirement for members to login. In this secure section we will have information that will not be available to anyone who is not a member.

The rest of the site will be open and available to all.

We will also cater for limited social media connections. We are aware that not everyone wants to communicate in this way but it will be there for those who do prefer it. The website will be formatted so that it will be suitable for both computers and mobile devices.

All this sounds exciting and we are trying to get the new site launched as quickly as possible however understand that there is a lot of work to be done to get to launch date. We will let you know when it is ready but we are aiming for early July.

## THE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

It has been a busy few months and a large effort of the 2RAR Association was focussed on the Adelaide reunion and commemorative services in April. The reunion primarily honoured six South Australian members of 2RAR who were KIA or died of illness whilst serving with the battalion in South Vietnam during the two operational tours 1967/68 and 1970/71. Sadly, Tom Young, the organiser of the reunion passed away suddenly on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March. A number of 2RAR Association members attended his funeral held in Adelaide on 27 March. I would like to pay tribute to Tom who had worked so hard during the previous 12 months to ensure that all aspects of the reunion would run smoothly.

Following Tom's funeral, Gordon Hurford, the Association Secretary, immediately took over the responsibility for the coordination of all reunion activities with excellent support from Mrs Tiffany Young and the Association's SA representative, Malcolm Allen. Their contribution ensured the overall success of the 4 day event and I would like to register a vote of thanks for their outstanding efforts.

CO 2RAR, LTCOL Michael Bassingthwaight attended both the Commemorative Service on 23 April and the Unveiling and Dedication Service of the 2RAR Memorial on 24 April. We took the opportunity to present to the CO the new style battalion tie.

The reunion culminated in some 140 ex-2RAR members marching through Adelaide on ANZAC Day under the 2RAR Association banner carried by Bob Carrison and William Rawiri (truly ANZAC), followed by a lunch at the British Hotel. It was a fitting finale to an outstanding reunion.

The Secretary has been busy liaising with the contractor to get the website up and running and we are optimistic that the new website will be on-line sometime this month (July).

CO 2RAR has advised that he is looking for support to refurbish the battalion museum at Lavarack Barracks, Townsville. The 2RAR Association committee is looking at how we can assist in this project. It is planned for the refurbished museum to be formally opened during the battalion birthday celebrations in October this year.

The committee has started Planning for the 2RAR Association reunion at Tweed Heads on 24/25 October. Please put those dates in your diary and see if you can make it.

I am pleased to announce that as a result of the Adelaide reunion, we have signed up quite a number of new members.

Membership continues to be in excess of 500, however, it seems that we lose some because of a lapse in their subscription. I am sure that in most cases it is just an oversight as I don't think that the \$20 annual subscription is too onerous. If you are in arrears, please forward your subscription to the treasurer to ensure that you continue your membership and that you will continue to receive the quarterly RINGO newsletter.

"Second to none"

Leo Van De Kamp  
President

## MEMBERSHIP STATUS

Check the newsletter mailing label for the status of your membership. If '2013' or prior, you have lapsed; if '2014' or beyond, you are current. Financial Year: 1 October to 30 September. 1 - 5 years (\$20 - \$100)

Pay by postal: Fill out the form on back page, attach payment & mail to PO Box 1097 Toombul Qld 4012

Pay on-line:

2RAR Association, Inc.

BSB: 484-799. Account: 063 350 355

Include your Name: e.g. T.M. Smithe. Membership

## THE SECRETARY

Report from Meeting 4th June 2014

### Funeral Sashes

The Association provides a sash for draping over the casket of a deceased member. The sash we have been using is the RAR sash. The Management Committee has decided to have our own 2RAR Association sash manufactured. The Committee has authorised the purchase of 50 sashes.

### Battalion Flag

The new flag was received and was used for the first time in Adelaide. It flew on the flagpole at the Commemorative Service and was used draped over the 2RAR Memorial for the unveiling.

### Commercial Use of Association Network

Discussion on the use of the 2RAR Association emails for the distribution of commercial material. The Committee has decided to offer a Business/Enterprise partnership, which will be similar to sponsorship. Details will be advised.

### Membership Workshop

The Management Committee plus other invited participants will participate in a membership workshop in July. Membership is an always evolving aspect and as times change so does our membership. Results will be advised.

### Merchandise

Arthur McDonald is presently sourcing some ideas for merchandise suitable for our ladies to buy and wear. Yes we will seek the ladies' advice and try to get a range of attractive and appropriate merchandise so they will really feel part of the team.

### Sponsorship

The Committee considered a proposal from Buderim Tavern (Buderim Qld) for members to get a 10% discount on all food, beverages and functions they have in the tavern as well as 10% rebate to the Association on the 2RAR members total spend through the tavern. Although the scheme is only local to begin with, it is expected to be eventually rolled out in other major centres (e.g. Townsville) and capital cities. Details of the scheme will be displayed on the website when launched.

### Succession Planning

The Committee is concerned at the lack of succession planning. Those who are serving on the Committee will need to step aside at some stage in the future and it is imperative that replacements be identified now and positioned on the Committee, possibly in an assistant role to be prepared to assume full duties when required. The Secretary would like to hear from any member who is prepared to serve on the Committee in the future.

### 50th Anniversary of the Departure for Vietnam

Friday 19 May 2017 will be the 50th anniversary of the battalion's main body departure from Brisbane on HMAS SYDNEY on its way to Vietnam. The Committee has begun to start organising the biggest reunion the Association has ever planned.

We realise it is still 3 years away however, much will need to be done and we all know that time will slip by very quickly. Much will be circulated about this event in coming months and over the next two years so please make sure you are in a position to come along and celebrate this unbelievable milestone.

## THE BATTALION TIE

The newly designed battalion tie reflects our Regimental heritage. Different than the all-black tie, the new tie incorporates traditional colours in diagonal stripes of Battalion Black, Scarlet (Corps), & Rifle Green (Regiment). To get one, see merchandise form on back page.

## CALENDAR 2014

31 Jan to 2 May 1971	Operation 'PHOI HOP' (Co-operation) (1PI A Coy 31 Mar)	Binh Gia, Phuoc Tuy South Vietnam
1 Feb 1995	2/4RAR delink to form 2RAR and 4RAR	Townsville, Qld Holsworthy, NSW
24 Jan to 14 Feb 1968	Operation 'COBURG'. (D Coy to 16 Feb; V Coy to 24 Feb.)	Bien Hoa/Long Khanh South Vietnam
Wed-Fri 23-25 Apr	2RAR (SA) National Reunion, Commemoration Service, Dinner, Memorial Unveiling, ANZAC Day	Adelaide. Contact: Mal Allen: 0451 374 133 mal@aladdco.com.au
Fri 25 Apr	ANZAC Day	Adelaide, SA Local arrangements
Fri 25 Jul	Samichon Day commemorating the Battle of the HOOK 24/25 July 1953. At 11am. Gus Breen Ph: (02) 9428 683 E-mail: gusbreen@yahoo.com.au	The RAR Memorial, Regimental Square, Wynyard Street, Sydney, NSW
Sun 27 Jul	Korea Veterans' Day 61 <sup>st</sup> Anniversary of the Armistice in Korea 27 July 1953	Korean War Memorial, Broadbeach, Qld Local arrangements
15 Aug 1973	2RAR and 4 RAR link to form 2/4RAR	Townsville, Qld
Mon 18 Aug	Vietnam Veterans' Day	Local arrangements
Sun 31 Aug	National Malaya & Borneo Veterans' Day. Merdeka (Independence or Freedom) Day	Enoggera, Qld. Kings Park, Perth WA Local arrangements
Thu 16 Oct	2RAR Birthday 1945 (69 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary)	Labuan, North Borneo
Fri 24 Oct	2RAR National Reunion: Meet & Greet (4.00pm Harbour Lounge)	AGM: ANZAC Room Tweed Heads & Coolangatta RSL
Sat 25 Oct	2RAR National Reunion: AGM, Commemoration Service, Annual Reunion & Buffet Lunch	Reunion: 'River Room', Level 3, Twin Towns Services Club, Tweed Heads, NSW
Tue 11 Nov	Remembrance Day	Enoggera, Qld. Local arrangements
Sun 23 Nov	RAR Birthday 1948 (66 <sup>th</sup> Anniversary)	Hiro, Japan

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Vacant (NT)	VACANT
'Jock' Cassidy (Townsville)	0431 355 579 johncassidy65@hotmail.com
Bill Martin (NZ)	(0011649) 267 7545 bwmartin@xtra.co.nz

## MEMBERSHIP

Membership of the Association is open to any person who has served in 2RAR after 16th October 1945: past members of 66 Bn AMF; 2RAR; 2/4RAR; 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC); 2RAR MTF-3; and all ranks currently serving in 2RAR.

Classes of Members: Ordinary, Associate, Honorary, & Life.



### COMMEMORATING THE FALLEN

The Commemorative Service was held at the Vietnam War Memorial, and Torrens Parade Ground, Adelaide; the families of the 6 whom we were commemorating joined us:

- Stan RADOMI represented by his sister Mrs Lorna Cross and brother Trevor Radomi. Hosted by Gordon Stevens
- Dennis NELSON represented by Hedley & Jan Pohl. Hosted by Terry Dinneen
- Ray BINNING represented by his brother Mervyn and his daughter Jane. Hosted by Peter Langford.
- Graham NORLEY represented by his brother Darrell and his sister Mrs Jan Whitehorn. Hosted by Barry Corse
- John ROGERS represented by his brothers Ken and Dougald. Hosted by Vic Anderson
- Rodney CHAPMAN represented by his brothers Bruce and Doug. Hosted by John Church

### DVA CLAIMS: MISSING EVIDENCE

It is still possible to put in a claim to DVA without the physical evidence of an After Action Report.

"Any case where a person who has served with the Battalion is denied entitlements because of a lack of evidence, whether that person is an Association member or otherwise, our Association will take all steps available to help that person obtain evidence, from any and all sources we can identify.

Section 14 of the Veterans entitlement Act Part II sub-para 3 and 4 refer.

As the system has lost the 1967-68 After Action Reports, sub-para 4 allows for the claimant to produce whatever evidence that may be available including statements from others who may have witnessed or have immediate knowledge of the event or injury which caused the disability being claimed".

### "OFFICER IN THE LINES!"

'Sitrep: Nan Tare Roger' (Nothing to report)  
By Pte Frenchy Ray (Dec.) (Sniper Sect) 1953

17 JULY. A depressing day. No one seems to know what is going on. It is not due to a breakdown in communication, we have little communication in the first place. We have regular visits from officers from various headquarters. It is obvious that some are visiting the front to be able to brag about it during their military career.

They walk in the bunker, two at the time, never introducing themselves. They carry a map which they shove under our noses with a "show us where this hill is." To save a lot of explanation we quote a 6 numbers map reference without really knowing if they know or not how to read a map.

"Can you see the Chinese?" they ask next; eager to spot some enemy.

We lend them our long telescope and show them the direction of the communication trench behind Hill 111. There are always a lot of Chinese soldiers walking either up or down.

The officer looking says " Oh! Ah! Very interesting". Leaving the bunker one of them would say." If we turn left (or right) in the tunnel, where do I finish?"

We love to answer" In the middle of no-man's land. Sir."

### BOOK: 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) BN 1967-68

The Association has purchased a quantity of the 2RAR/NZ ANZAC Battalion 1967-68 book (Vol 1) (Reprint) from the publisher.

See page 12 for details.

### ABOUT: 'SPARROW'S DOG'

12854 Pte Andrew ('Sparrow') ROSS was a member of the 2RAR Assault Pioneer Platoon in Korea. He was a small man and I presume his nickname came from his small stature. I never heard him called by any other name other than Sparrow.



L - R: Col Gordon Hurford AM (Retd), Secretary 2RARA / Brig Laurie Lewis AM (Retd), Patron RARA (SA) / Lt Col Michael Bassingthwaite DSM, CO 2RAR holding the 61 years old 'Sparrow' / Lt Col Patrick Forbes MC (Retd), donor of 'Sparrow' / Maj Leo Van De Kamp (Retd), President 2RARA

At some stage during the year in Korea, Sparrow got hold of the brown cloth dog and I presume added the various items including the well-made slouch hat. The first time I saw the dog was when its head was poking out of the top of Sparrow's pack. Although I didn't see it very often it became Sparrow's mascot and an integral part of his equipment.

I left the Platoon a month before the battalion sailed for Australia as I was posted as an instructor at the Commonwealth Division Battle School in Japan. The last time I would have seen Sparrow and his dog would have been in early 1954.

I left the regular army in 1955 and returned to the CMF. In late 1962 I attended the School of Tactics and Administration at Canungra to be examined for promotion to Lieutenant Colonel – known as the 21A requirement.

At the end of the two weeks in Canungra we received our results on the Friday evening and prepared to leave early on Saturday after breakfast. When I returned to my room after breakfast the dog was sitting on my bed with a note saying something like 'I thought you might like to have the dog. Sparrow.' Nothing else. As we had virtually no time before leaving I was unable to contact Sparrow who seemed to have gone into thin air.

The net result was that I took the dog with me and although I tried to contact Sparrow by letter I never managed to make contact with him before I left with my family to work overseas for nearly 20 years. The dog was packed in a box and left in storage. It was not until many years after our return to Australia that we actually unpacked the box containing the dog and released the poor animal from his many years of darkness.

Since his release he has been sitting gathering dust on top of a cupboard in my study casting a beady eye over my various activities. He deserves better and perhaps the 2RAR Museum could provide a better home for him.

Sparrow Ross died many years ago and it is sad that I was never able to make contact with him and find out why he decided to hand the dog over to me at that particular time.

Patrick Forbes  
PI Comd Aslt Pnr Platoon  
2RAR Korea

## **POSTTRAUMATIC STRESS DISORDER (PTSD)<sup>1</sup>**

### **A person with PTSD has four main types of problems:**

Reliving the traumatic event – through unwanted and recurring memories or vivid nightmares. You might get really upset when you're reminded of what happened, or have intense physical reactions like sweating, pounding or racing heart, or rapid or irregular breathing.

Being overly alert or wound-up – you might have trouble sleeping or concentrating, feel irritable or short-tempered, become easily startled, or feel like you're always on the lookout for signs of danger.

Avoiding reminders of the event – such as activities, places, people, thoughts or feelings associated with the traumatic event.

Negative thoughts or feelings – you might feel flat, numb, afraid, or angry a lot of the time, have unrealistic expectations of yourself or other people, lose interest in day to day activities like work or playing with your kids, or feel cut off from your family and friends.

### **You are not alone**

Traumatic experiences are common; about two thirds of Australians will experience at least one traumatic event in their lives. In addition to traumas commonly faced by the general community such as car accidents and assaults, veterans can be exposed to a number of traumatic events during the course of their service. This places them at greater risk of developing PTSD than the general population. Between five and ten percent of the general community are likely to develop PTSD at some point in their lives, compared to between 5 and 20 percent of veterans (depending on the nature of their work and deployment history). Among current serving members, about 8 percent will suffer from PTSD in a given year, compared to 5 percent of the general community.

### **The impact of PTSD on family relationships**

Living with or loving someone who has PTSD can be difficult. People with PTSD often avoid social situations, feel detached, and have trouble expressing their emotions. As a result, they might be less affectionate or withdrawn and refuse to go on social outings or to family get togethers. They may also show less interest in intimacy or parenting children.

People with PTSD can also be more irritable and jumpy. Family members often talk about 'walking on eggshells' and being afraid of an outburst. Family violence can be a problem for families of veterans with PTSD.

Research has shown that a veteran's PTSD can also affect their family members' mental health. Partners can experience anxiety, depression, social isolation and feelings of hopelessness, while younger children can develop behaviour problems such as acting out at school and adult children are more likely to suffer from mental health problems than the general population. It is therefore important to seek support and get your PTSD treated as early as possible to minimise its impact on the whole family.

### **PTSD and getting older**

Many veterans first develop PTSD years after their traumatic experience, while others might find their existing PTSD gets worse as they age. There are a number of reasons for this happening.

For one thing, work and raising children can help distract from thoughts and feelings associated with the trauma. With more free time after retirement and once the kids have left home, it can be harder to avoid memories and easier to get into bad habits, like drinking too much. You might also find

that strategies that used to help you cope with stress and push memories away aren't working any more or are taking their toll. For example, you might not be able to drink enough to block out feelings.

The interaction between physical and mental health can also lead to PTSD getting worse with age. Over time, PTSD can have a negative effect on our physical health, and in turn, having to deal with more and more physical health issues as we get older can make us feel less able to cope. A small proportion of veterans will develop dementia as they age, which can result in unwanted memories of traumatic events becoming more frequent.

It is important to remember that PTSD can be treated, even if you've had it for a very long time.

### **What treatments can help me?**

Effective treatments for PTSD are available. These include both psychological treatment and medication. It is generally best to start with psychological treatment rather than use medication as the first and only solution to the problem, although your doctor may prescribe antidepressant medication to help you manage some of the feelings associated with your PTSD.

The most effective treatment for PTSD is trauma focused cognitive behavioural therapy. This approach recognises that the way we think and act affects the way we feel.

### **Where do I get help?**

A GP is always a good place to start when trying to overcome PTSD, as he or she can make referrals for specialists, and support your efforts with medications if necessary. This website has information on a range of professional care that is available to current and former serving members.

DVA provides group treatment programs for PTSD in ten hospitals across Australia. These programs treat current as well as former serving members and veterans. To find out more information about these programs you can contact the hospitals directly and speak to the PTSD program coordinators.

A list of the programs and relevant contact details are available here: <http://goo.gl/5yVTrq>

### **Veterans & Veterans Families Counselling Service**

*The Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line can be reached 24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling. Phone 1800 011 046*

### **PTSD INITIATIVE**

Tony Dell<sup>2</sup> has just taken part in the most intensive, practical PTSD research being undertaken with the Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation at Greenslopes Hospital, Brisbane.

Over the next year they want to work with 300 Vietnam Veterans, 150 with PTSD and 150 without. Part of the results can shed some light on why "I got it and my mate didn't".

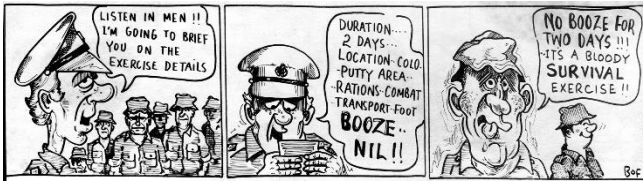
They aren't having much trouble finding volunteers with PTSD but they need to see a lot more who haven't been diagnosed with PTSD. The good thing is that every volunteer undergoes the most extensive physical and psychological testing you could imagine. This is very important research and I would hope that you can help.

Contact: Miriam Dwyer  
(07) 3394 7995  
Gallipoli Medical Research Foundation  
Greenslopes Pte Hospital

<sup>1</sup> <http://goo.gl/YUJmcS>

<sup>2</sup> Pte AR Dell (Sig PI) served with C Coy 2RAR 1967-68. The former Australian fast bowler was diagnosed with PTSD in 2008, 40 years after coming home after the Tet Offensive.

### WAKKA AND COMPANY 1985



### SNIPPETS

- We welcome all our new members including Brigadier John Frewen, AM, ADC a former CO of 2RAR 2003-04 (Solomon Islands). Welcome John.
- Hieu Van Le, the current deputy governor, has been named as South Australia's next governor. Mr Le arrived in Australia from Vietnam as a refugee 36 years ago. His inspirational address at the Commemoration Service was felt by many to one of the very best they had heard.
- We packed out the Meet and Greet at the Walkerville RSL and had a wonderful night. President Leo welcomed everyone and Secretary Gordon gave details of the days to come. Arthur made some significant sales of our merchandise, particularly the ties. The new ties of which we had about 70 to sell, sold out in minutes. A great start and a great night was had by all and after the RSL bash, we left for local restaurants for dinner.
- Colonel Vic Adams, our PI Comd 1 PI A Coy 1967-68, has been asked to lead the Battalion in Sydney's 2015 ANZAC Day March. He is not enjoying good health but is getting fit to lead his "boys" once more. Thanks Phill Evenden (Banner holder) 0413 715 622
- Friday 19 May 1967<sup>3</sup> was LCpl Vic Anderson's 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday, and he had snuck Pte Bob Dowse aboard HMAS Sydney departing Brisbane for Vung Tau. CSM 'Lofty' May happened upon Bob and he got a chopper ride back to land and a slap on the wrist. Bob re-joined us later as an M-60 gunner. *Pte Wally J Musgrave (Retd)*

### ABOUT: WO2 GEORGE TAYLOR, MID

George Taylor received his MID as Radio Sgt of Sig PI 2RAR for the second tour of SVN 1970/71. George had also served on the first tour.

I'm personally aware of how it became awarded to him as we worked very closely, myself being a corporal in charge of the Bn CP comms for 2RAR. George oversaw the whole of operations. Lt Ian Smalley was PI Comd and "Tassie" Cocker, the PI Sgt. George was great at his job and between us there was a wealth of experience. At times comms were extremely difficult to get as the battalion went into some remote areas and, with George's powers of persuasion, we had to resort to measures which were not quite inside our area within Nui Dat, but we got there.

Talking about persuasion, one day a US sergeant turned up and during his visit asked George if there was anything he wanted. "Bloody oath" says George, "walkie talkies". Two weeks later the yank returned and told George he had them in a 3 ton truck, outside. George "Good, bring them around the back of the store and we'll unload them for you". "No" says the yank "Don't worry about the God-dam truck, you can have it too!"

It was about that time I got busted for "starting a fight" in the boozier...which was really a King hit on ME! So I went off to A Coy on the gun. Quite happy and, being "substantive" rank before being busted, I got my hooks back soon after we returned to OZ.

Jimmy Huet,  
via Tony Dell (C Coy)

### VALE: BRIGADIER DAMIAN ROCHE, CSC

Damian Stanley Maliphant Roche was born in Sydney to Jim Roche and his wife Mary (nee Maliphant). He entered Duntroon in 1974 and was immediately given the nickname "Dolly". Following graduation in 1977 his initial appointment was as a PI Comd in 1RAR Townsville. He later served as adjutant and Coy Comd of 8/9RAR from 1985 to 1987 and CO 8/9RAR in 1993 and 1994.

He had postings in the Directorate of Infantry, the Directorate of Officer Career Management and the Office of National Assessments, and was an instructor at the Royal Military College and at the Army Command and Staff College. He was the last full-time director of infantry and the founding commandant of the Combat Arms Training Centre.

In 1995 Lt Col Roche commanded the second Australian medical support force Rwanda as part of the United Nations Assistance Mission (UNAMIR) which included B Coy 2RAR, engineers from 3CER, and APCs from B Sqn 3/4 Cav Regt.

In April 1995, 32 Australian soldiers and medical personnel were sent to the Kibeho refugee camp to assist refugees and UNAMIR activities. The situation within the camp was desperate. There was little food or water and the refugees, mostly Hutu who may have taken part in the earlier genocide, were being harassed by the RPF. The already tense situation then descended into a violent massacre, with the RPF killing about 4000 people and injuring 600. The medical team struggled to cope with the sheer volume of wounded, many of whom were evacuated to Kigali hospital.

Roche was awarded the Conspicuous Service Cross for his efforts during the contingent's six-month deployment. On returning to Australia he was promoted to brigadier and commanded the 1st Brigade from 2001 to 2002.

In 2005 he was appointed Chief of Defence Force Liaison Officer to the US Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff in Washington DC and from 2006 to 2007 was the military attache to the US Army.

In 2008 he commanded the Australian forces in Iraq during Operation Iraqi Freedom. Roche was awarded the Legion of Merit by the United States for his service.

He retired to Canberra in 2011.

### VALE: LT COL PETER (MIKE) DENNIS, MBE

Mike "The Fox" Dennis was raised near Rabaul where his father, Peter, was a well-known identity, plantation manager and RSL stalwart. He joined the regular Army in 1967 after two years in the Papua New Guinea Volunteer Rifles. After serving as a Sect Comd in 9RAR he was selected to attend OCS Portsea, graduating to the Infantry Corps in 1969. He served with 2RAR in 1971-74 as PI Comd Aslt Pnr PI.

In 1982 he was promoted to Major and OPSO 1PIR PNG and was awarded an MBE primarily for the planning and conduct of operations on the PNG/Indonesian border. This was followed by a posting as OC 3 Bde HQ (ODF).

A major change of direction occurred when he was posted to the Defence Intelligence Organisation as the senior desk officer PNG/SWP. Following involvement in the 1987 Fiji Coup and Op Morris Dance he was promoted to Lt Col and posted as a Defence Adviser PNG and Solomon Islands.

In 1995 Lt Col Dennis resigned from the ADF on completion of a posting in Fiji and took up a position of general manager Suncorp Stadium in Brisbane. This was followed by a senior position in sports management in the planning and conducts of the Sydney Olympics and other Olympics and Commonwealth games.

He retired to Adelaide and was the Honorary Consul for Fiji in South Australia at the time of his death.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Friday 19 May 2017. 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of departure Brisbane - Vietnam.

<sup>4</sup> <http://goo.gl/yhhHLI>

### **SPEECH AT ADELAIDE: MR HIEU VAN LE A.O.<sup>5</sup>**

Today we gather to honour the memory of six South Australian members of the Second Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment who did not return home from Vietnam.



The Second Battalion's motto is "Second to None". That sums up perfectly my feelings about all the Australian diggers who involved in the Vietnam War.

In my eyes, and heart, Vietnam veterans are truly second to none and always will be. And there are never enough words to express my gratitude.

Today's ceremony is of profound personal significance to me. I am so grateful that this occasion gives me the opportunity to give voice to feelings that I have felt bubbling beneath the surface for the last 40 years.

Whenever the Vietnam War is mentioned, it takes me back there. I was there, I lived through it and somehow I survived. Then miraculously I am here now. It's almost impossible to put into words, how that feels. Emotional, sentimental, sad, sorrowful! But most of all – incredibly grateful and humbled.

I am here because of the six soldiers we are commemorating today, and 515 other Australian diggers and many other soldiers who gave their lives for me and millions of South Vietnamese.

My deepest, my most sincere, thanks to those men still seem inadequate. I ask that you, the families of those soldiers, whose sacrifice is still on-going, forgive the inadequacy of these thanks.

Please be assured – my gratitude comes from deep in my heart, and my heart goes out every day, not just today, to all those who lost loved-ones in the conflict.

My birthplace happened to be just a few miles south of the division line between the North and South Vietnam. It's the place where some of the fiercest battles of the war were fought: the Battle of Khe Sanh, the Highway of Horrors, the Summer of Fire, the Battle of the old Fort ... at the end, the entire city was completely wiped out.

My earliest memories as a child are of bombs, rockets, gunfire, land mines, the horror of death and destruction. I lost many close friends and relatives during the war; even the classroom was no sanctuary. I remember each morning, before starting the class, the teacher would do roll call and after calling out certain names, there was just silence, and an empty desk!

Decades of brutal war ultimately claimed the lives of millions of Vietnamese on both sides of the conflict. Yet, somehow, I managed to survive the fighting that raged around me every day, claiming many of my close relatives and childhood friends. Miraculously my wife and I managed to flee our motherland and make it all the way here to Adelaide.

Almost 4 decades have gone by since then and every success and joy that we've experienced as proud

Australians throughout the last 36 years has been due to the efforts and sacrifice of many courageous soldiers. I owe my life and everything that I've achieved to those brave soldiers who were there in the front line.

Among those soldiers were six South Australian members of the Second Battalion whom we are commemorating today. These Australian diggers and many other soldiers who put themselves between me, my family, and certain death.

Among the many vivid memories I have of the kindness of Australian soldiers is the time I was walking past a school partially destroyed by rocket attacks the night before. Australian soldiers, covered in dirt and sweat, were resting in the rubble, having spent hours laboriously clearing debris, so local children would not miss any lessons. Other diggers were nursing and evacuating the wounded children and people from the village.

By putting themselves in harm's way to protect us, those soldiers gave us the greatest gift of all – to live and the chance to grow up and be useful members of society.

I was just a young little Vietnamese boy in a small village, and our soldiers' courage and sacrifice gave me everything. I have carried with me throughout my life an unresolved debt of deep gratitude.

Each day when I wake up and breathe the fresh air of freedom, I have a vision of those soldiers who placed their lives in the most precarious circumstances, so that people like me could live.

No language can describe the gratitude that I feel towards those men - our saviours, our protectors. And no words can adequately express the sorrow I feel for these Australian heroes who never returned home.

Those young men will remain in our memories forever – full of energy, with the greatest joys of life ahead of them, yet ready to make the ultimate sacrifice to protect those they did not even know.

There is little I can say that can ease the pain of loss felt by those left behind. Except that, by giving us the profound gift of life, and a future, those soldiers made a humble request of us. And that request was to go on and make something of ourselves, to become the best we could be, in their honour.

Many Vietnam veterans and their relatives are still suffering – I know!

I sincerely hope that you can take some solace from the fact that their sacrifice – your sacrifice – were not in vain. That sacrifice has produced generations of people determined to make the most of their opportunities to reach their full potential.

Happiness is not a life without pain, but rather a life in which the pain is traded for that which is worthy. We can only seek the redemption brought by making ourselves worthy.

The injustice, the unfairness, the heartbreak of having your father, your brother, your husband taken from you or seeing your best mate gunned down beside you leave deep scars that never heal.

As a supremely grateful survivor, I hope the few words I can offer, at least help to allay some of the pain.

To every Vietnam veteran and their families I want to say: Thank you! Thank you for everything you did for our beloved Vietnam.

We are the beneficiaries of what you did. And to every family member here I want to say that the legacy of the courage of your loved ones will live on in us forever.

May God bless the souls of those departed, and ease the suffering of those that remain.

Lest we forget.

<sup>5</sup> Mr Hieu Van Le AO Lieutenant Governor of South Australia



## **PENTROPIC REORG BY BRIAN PANNELL**

In mid-1960, the Army reorganized into the "Pentropic" theme which meant that there would be five Rifle Companies instead of four and each Company would have five Platoons instead of three. On paper, the battalion strength went from about 800 men to about 1200 men and its firepower was almost doubled. Of course there was no way the Army could fill all these positions so there were many "phantom" companies and Platoons. This structure was straight out of a US Army doctrinal document and with it came brand new US Army field equipment; webbing, weapons and the GI steel helmet which we were obliged to wear during field training.

Naturally, because of the increase in numbers, instead of a Lieutenant Colonel as CO, we now had a Colonel plus numerous Staff Officers at BHQ. The two main gripes we had was having to wear the steel helmet and the replacement of our faithful .303in Bren gun with a less than satisfactory US Army General Purpose Machine Gun which was belt fed with 7.62mm rounds, the same as our rifles.

In B Coy, there were a few more changes. We got a new OC straight from the School of Tactics and Administration and a couple of new Platoon Commanders. Our CSM, a World War II, Korea and Malaya veteran was considered too old and he was replaced by a younger Korean veteran known to the new OC, WO2 "Curley" Lamb. He turned out to be a good bloke and saved my bacon later in Malaya.

The significance of this re-organization was that we started field training exercises in earnest and they culminated in a march where one of our Platoon Commanders (Greg Smith) died of Heat Stroke.

We would be put through our paces on a five day route march from Windsor to Singleton via the Colo Putty Road. We were due to commence the march on a Tuesday after having been trucked from Holsworthy to Windsor on the Monday and camped overnight; however the Governor General, Lord Dunrossel, had died on the weekend and he was entitled to Battalion strength Guard of Honour for his funeral. We sat around our barracks for two days waiting for news before finally being sent off on our route march.

We were trucked halfway along the Putty Rd to Howes Valley, where we set off on the march next morning. On the afternoon of the second day's march, Lt Greg Smith of our Company, succumbed to Heat Stroke and was rushed to Singleton Base Hospital where he later died. That put an end to our march and to our wearing GI helmets.

After much more of the same type of training, the Battalion was warned for service in Malaya to replace 1RAR as part of the 28th British Commonwealth Brigade. It had been assisting the Malayan Government Forces to destroy the remnants of the Malay Communist Party's terrorist organization (CT's). This meant that we would have to reorganize back to our old establishment of four Rifle Companies of three Platoons etc., Thank God for that!

With a new role, the unit really got down to tropical warfare training, patrolling, ambushing, aid to the civil power, all operations that were ideal for a Platoon sized force. Now this was something I had been looking forward to and it was great to be able to train your own team

I remained in B Coy and my Platoon reverted to number 5. Lt Ray Harring had 4 PI and 2 Lt Doug Fussell had 6 PI. The Coy 2ic was Capt Owen O'Brien, the CSM was WO II Curley Lamb and the CQMS was SSgt Peter Elkins. The OC remained as Maj Arthur Rofe.

Our new CO was Lt Col A.B. Stretton of "Cyclone Tracy" fame who later became a Major General.

*(More anecdotes from Brian in Oct. Ed.)*

## **DROPSHORTS <sup>6</sup>**

### **MILITARY CROSS**

**4/7538 Lieutenant Patrick Oliver Giles FORBES MC**

1 Jul - 27 Jul 1953

Korea

During the period that the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment has been in the Korean theatre Lt FORBES has commanded the Assault Pioneer Platoon. His work involved the checking and maintenance of minefield wire on the Battalion front each night, and the guiding of patrols through the minefields. He performed these dangerous tasks regularly and unflinchingly despite the fact he was frequently under hostile fire. Lt FORBES also supervised the construction of all defensive works in the unit. The main effort of defensive work construction was carried on in the forward company area of the HOOK proper. This area had continually been the subject of the enemy's attacks, and was subject to much enemy fire. Lt FORBES moved around the area each night supervising work. The fact that the defences of the HOOK were maintained and improved was largely due to Lt FORBES' personal courage and efficiency. Throughout the entire period Lt FORBES has carried out his duties with more than normal zeal and efficiency. His duties constantly exposed him to enemy fire or the dangers of unallocated minefields or unfenced minefields. Whenever an Assault Pioneer was required to carry out a dangerous or difficult task Lt FORBES was always present to carry it out. On two separate occasions, he was involved in recovering our casualties from within a minefield. At all times his personal courage, zeal and efficiency were a constant inspiration to those who worked under him, and a great example to all members of the unit.

### **"SECOND TO NONE"**

The Torrens parade ground fell silent, sombre and still, Four hundred soldiers shuffled forward, one wish to fulfil. They gathered at the Shrine to remember those lost In a war they fought so long ago, at great personal cost.

Six families who lost loved ones, in a war long past They experienced the love and mateship that will forever last

The Lieutenant Governor of South Australia Mr Hieu van Le Finally, finally gave substance and voice from a refugee; As strapping young men they fought so he could be free His thanks, so moving, so heartfelt, not a dry eye could you see.

For all these men gathered had suffered the backlash of an ungrateful nation,

And here for the first time, they heard the true situation We had soldiers of all ranks, Captains, Majors, Colonels, with fine words to say

Summoned, some say, commanded, not by a General, but by a Private, to be here today

A pall was cast over proceedings by the loss of a favoured son

We gave our final tribute to Thomas Fairbairn Young

A digger of Second Battalion our Tom was truly second to none.

Max Ingles  
Belmont, Vic

### **LETTERS TO THE EDITOR**

#### **Correction: April edition**

A minor hiccup in the April edition. 2RAR were in Lavarack Barracks in 1969-70. They were in Terendak from 1961-63. *Of course that was 1RAR (1969-71) of which I was a member. Ed.*

John Church  
Deakin, ACT

<sup>6</sup> Honours and Awards presented to members serving with 2RAR 1945- 1995. Compiled by John Baker and Bob Downey.

## **MACHINE GUNNERS B COY 2RAR/135AHC 'EMUS'**

*"The Machine Gunners of B Coy 2RAR and the 135AHC 'EMUs" by Lt Ray (Beachball) Godfrey, RAN (MID); a junior pilot in RANHFV Det 1; 1st PI 135AHC during Oct 67 - Oct 68.*

### **PART 1 OF 2**



In late November 1967 the first two of seven Machine Gunners from Bravo Company, 2RAR were unofficially seconded to the US Army's 135 Assault Helicopter Company. This unit, known as 'The EMUs', was the home of the RAN Helicopter Flight Vietnam. The RANHFV was a detachment of Australian naval aircrew, helicopter maintainers and support personnel which was integrated with the US Army. The B Coy secondment was the result of collaboration between Lieutenant Commander Pat Vickers RAN (KIA 22 Feb 68) 2i/c of the HFV and Platoon Leader 1st Platoon 135AHC and Major Carter CO (OC) B Coy 2RAR. The aim of the secondment was to assist the 135th maintain the normally high degree of combat readiness that was currently being affected by a temporary shortage of door gunners.



The secondment originally began at the 135AHC base at Vung Tau Airfield but in January 68 the Unit moved to Camp Blackhorse, to the north of Nui Dat, the home of the 11th Armoured Cavalry. The attachment was usually for two to four weeks and lasted until late February 1968. During which time the soldiers were airborne on a daily basis flying both combat and resupply missions into known and suspected Viet Cong locations. The missions usually lasted from dawn to dusk but on

a number of occasions they continued well into the night. The resupply missions were considered, by the higher echelon, to be more a rest mission than combat though this was frequently not the case with many sorties being targeted by enemy weapons.

Daily flying time i.e. airborne time, for these missions averaged about six hours but the work day was generally double that as it involved routine weapons maintenance in addition to helping the helicopter 'crew chief' with before and after flight checks and minor maintenance.

Additionally some of these soldiers were involved in night fire fights or perimeter alerts while at Camp Blackhorse.

### **B Company Machine Gunners**

The members involved flew between 40 and 90 hours during their time in the 135th. This number of combat hours ensured each soldier an entitlement to the US Army's combat flight decoration 'The Air Medal'

### **US Army Air Medal**

Some of the men were given copies of the necessary official statement of their flight hours to enable them to apply for and be granted the decoration. Unfortunately none of them applied for the medal once they returned to Nui Dat. This omission was probably due to the Australian Government's attitude to ADF members accepting foreign decorations. Only three soldiers appear to have retained their certificate now making it difficult to gain the required recognition of their entitlement. One soldier, Pte Hoger, has with great difficulty and a lapse of about 35 years, been granted the Air Medal. Action is currently underway to obtain the decorations for the other six men.

The soldiers involved were: Pte Roland Lee 5 PI, Pte Ralph Hoger 4 PI, Pte William Wearne 4 PI, Pte Geoff Kingdon 5 PI, Pte Robert Carmichael 4 PI, Pte Stanley Jaruga 4 PI, and Pte Robert Devers 5 PI.

### **Historical First**

This secondment of soldiers to act as door gunners in helicopters and the fact that the unit to which they were attached was an airmobile company of the US Army would make it unique in the history of the Australian Army.

Another apparent first for Australian military history also occurred during the soldier's time in the 135th when in February 1968 the first pilot from the Vung Tau based 9 Squadron RAAF, Flt Lt Frank Clough, arrived to commence familiarisation on the 'H' model Iroquois which were replacing the older 'B & D' models in 9 Sqn. This event was unique for in the same period and in all probability in the same aircraft members of all three Australian Services were flying as aircrew, on combat missions, in a US Army Assault Helicopter Company.

Also during this time several US Army and Australian Navy personnel spent some time with B Coy. One of the US soldiers was PFC Dexter 'Skip' Miracle while RANHFV member Petty Officer Aircrewman O'Brian 'Darky' Philips (KIA 21 Aug 68) also took part in the exchange program. Both of these men participated in operations while with B Coy with their efforts being well received by company members they patrolled with. A short story on 'Skip' written by B Coy member Rick Brittain is at (Part 2) this article.

### **The Iroquois**

The UH1H model Huey flown by the 135th carried four crew; two pilots, crew-chief /door-gunner and a second door-gunner. The aircraft could carry between 6-8 combat troops or the equivalent in stores. Armament was an M60 machine gun mounted either side of the rear cabin. Ammunition of 2000 rounds per gun was carried allowing continuous fire when needed. This was replenished as needed whenever the helo refuelled.

The M60s that were fitted to the unit's troopships (slicks) were identical to those used by B Coy, although some US gunners were known to put a 'dime' behind the recoil spring to increase the rate of fire. Therefore, little familiarisation on the weapon or on the way it was used was given to the seconded gunners. This oversight resulted in some interesting incidents. (See Stan Jaruga's story (Part 2)).

We also forgot to mention to these Infantrymen that unlike when they were in the field we had no shortage of ammo and continuous fire was the norm. So on their first combat assault approach to the LZ there was considerable screaming from their pilots to KEEP \*x#/ firing.

HFV member Keith (Squizzy) Taylor relates another story on our excessive use of ammunition.

"I well remember an incident which happened when we were returning to barracks from the Vung Tau flight line. The driver picked up a 135th gunship (Taipan) door-gunner who then started to tell us how they had shot up several 'sampans' and how much ammo they had used. A very large B Coy gunner on board, possibly Roly Lee, took exception to this guy's bragging and taking him by the shirt threatened to throw him off the truck for wasting ammo. It was the first time that I had seen a black guy turn white."

### **Operations**

During November 67 the unit suffered their first helo being shot down. It was a gunship which was hit by enemy fire and forced to crash land in the Rung Sat, a Viet Cong controlled area at the mouth of the Mekong River. The crew led by Sub-Lieutenant Tony Casadio (KIA 21 Aug 68) held off a Viet Cong attack until rescued.

The period Dec 67 to Feb 68 was the start of intense VC activity i.e. The 'Tet Offensive'. These seven soldiers soon found that their attachment to the 135th was no 'walk in the park'. Almost from their first mission the helos in which they were flying came under fire.

Shortly thereafter on the 19 Dec 68 the unit, including Lee and Hoger, was involved in their first night extraction to the north of Binh Hoa where elements of the 191st Light Infantry Brigade were under heavy enemy attack. To make matters worse it was a 'hot' extraction so all the helos showed minimal lighting and were not allowed to use suppression fire arriving and departing the LZ for fear of hitting US troops. Even so the helos transited in and out of the LZ flying beneath heavy artillery fire. Also unlike a normal extraction of troops under fire the helos were required to remain on the ground for an extended period to ensure no troops were left behind. Eventually all troops were extracted without a shot being fired by the enemy. Following a

debriefing all pilots considered that they were in more danger from a mid-air collision, through not being able to see other helos, than from enemy fire. The following is an extract from the after action report submitted by CO 2/14 Inf Batt.

"The Emu airmobile company's support was the finest ever witnessed by this unit. Under the most adverse possible conditions (darkness, with continuous protective artillery being fired overhead) every man was extracted from the LZ to include all dead and wounded and equipment. The extraction helicopters stayed on the PZ up to 30 minutes at a time until 5 ship loads were filled as men moved out of the jungle. Illumination was rather sporadic, but with complete disregard for their personal safety, the airmobile company turned on their landing lights to identify the PZ and land. When 5 ship loads were filled, the lift would take off to be immediately followed by another 5 ship lift. After completion of the extraction the airmobile company's gunships hovered over the PZ and searched the area with their landing lights to ensure that all personnel had been extracted. This unit will never forget the fantastic bravery and professional competence of Commander Ralph of the Royal Australian Navy who led the Emu Airmobile Company on their most difficult mission."

On the 08 Jan 68 Kingdon and Wearne were involved in a "hot" insertion with 9th Division troops when two company helos were shot down and six others also being hit. It was during this mission Lieutenant Bruce Crawford RAN was awarded "The Distinguished Service Cross" for his leadership and heroism whilst under intense enemy fire. (See below for further insight into this mission.)

Then on the 08 Feb 68 Carmichael and Jaruga were in action during another 'hot' insertion the 135th suffered their first fatalities when the 'B' flight leader's helo was hit by enemy fire and crashed killing all four crew. Once again eight of the ten 'slicks' were hit including two destroyed. Carmichael's helo was one of those hit with one bullet striking the M60 he was firing at the time.

Bob Devers was airborne on 22 Feb 68 when the lead helo, climbing out from an LZ, was hit by a lone bullet fatally wounding the pilot Pat Vickers. This was the HFV's first casualty.

Although not mentioned above there were many more 'hot and hairy' missions however specifics are not as well documented or remembered.

During their period with the 135th the B Coy soldiers flew many combat assaults carrying US, Australian and Republic of Vietnam troops. All seven soldiers were in helicopters hit by enemy fire but Roly Lee was the unfortunate one to have been shot down. However, both crew and helicopter were quickly recovered to Vung Tau.

### **In Their Own Words**

Following are some edited comments made by several members of 'B Coy'.

#### **Pte Ralph Hoger**

I've one small thing to clear up after I was sent to Vung Tau I remember each day clearly even asking for a day off after 21 days straight. Each day was made up of waking at 03:30 wash and dress, mess at 04:00 walk to chopper 04:45 board and await lift off 05:00. We only returned 24:00 that evening 1 hour clean and check 2 machine guns--mess--bed 01:30. I fail to calculate average 6 hours flying daily. Sounds like a milk run you did! (As mentioned above flying time was often a lot less than work time especially for the crew chief and gunner.)

After 1 hour into my first flight a 105 artillery shell exploded metres in front of us. The chopper banked 90' left and dropped down quickly, then levelled out and we kept on flying.

The next quiet event was on a peaceful afternoon quite high up I noticed a change in the rhythm of the engine noise. I spoke to my crew chief who relayed this to the pilot and we landed quickly in a rice paddy. Very quickly a crane chopper appeared and took our machine away. Later on we were told we were lucky we landed as the helo had only 5 more minutes of flying before she would have stopped.

Late one afternoon close to Saigon our slick had landed with USA troops when we were all called together. The officer in charge asked for volunteers to step forward as they required 2 helicopters to go in late in the evening and extract infantrymen who had been in a heavy fire fight and at dusk couldn't walk out. Having stepped forward he came up to me and asked again do you want to volunteer? I said YES! He then explained the mission also stating that no light was to be shown anywhere on the choppers. About 20:30 hrs. we took off and 30 minutes later came into a small clearing, the undergrowth, grass was 2 metres tall. I saw 1 infantryman come up to us and I helped him in and as we took off, I returned fire into the tree line. We all returned safely. 48 years later I'm still awaiting the military award he said we would all be mentioned for.

One day we flew down across the Delta transporting a group who were going to deploy an ambush along one of the larger bund (paddy dyke). As we approached a lone V.C. in a small canoe was paddling along when all of a sudden from his oar he fired an RPG at a chopper. He missed! Then from behind the row of choppers came a gun ship which sent a rocket back at him. It didn't miss! Everything above the water just disappeared.

We set the US infantrymen down along the bund from my side of our chopper 3 chaps got off the last one, the machine gunner, heavily loaded & quite small went down off the bund into the water we never saw him surface. So many things happened each day. (It was not unusual in the wet season for troops to step into a hidden bomb crater and possibly drown due to the weight of back packs.)

While I was on my 29 day secondment to the 135 AHC EMUs at Vung Tau I had only 2 days break. During this time I visited Vung Tau and meet my good friend Pte Noel Heard who was my number 2 on the machine gun, we chatted and during the conversation I asked if he would like to take my place and see Vietnam from the air. He jumped at it. We went back to the lines/base that evening and I spoke to the crew chief who was always smiling when we got back late of an evening drinking his can of orange and having a puff. He took 'Hardy' under his wing. Nothing serious happened during the mission. Until this day 48 years later I've disclosed one of those little things that "just happened".

While with the 135th at Vung Tau as a machine gunner, I was informed that they had a problem with the machine guns jamming after a few rounds were fired. I soon found the problem. It was in the ammo boxes attached to the gun mounting, the belt of rounds wouldn't flow freely. The solution to pull them out from the boxes and relay them which loosened them allowing more freedom and flexibility to be pulled up into firing position.

The other surprise I found was when landing with the first lot of US Infantrymen we would fire into the jungle overhead of the troops to keep any enemy down allowing the troops to disembark and move forward. The reverse happened when picking up the last lot of troops we would fire back into the jungle that they came from as the V.C. loved coming in close to the departing troops.

In a lot of the general comments regarding the USA military, one must not forget the logistics of their military nearly 500,000 troops on the ground. However whenever we came across them they always opened their hearts and gave freely. I noticed their faces were all very young and I'm sure they didn't know what challenges lay ahead.

In recollecting my thoughts when I was a door gunner with the 135 Assault Helicopter unit at Vung Tau, I am going back 48 years it's still vivid in my memory an unforgettable experience.

We all look back on it all as an experience and ask often what would have happened had we gone down with a chopper?

We surely were blessed!!

PART 2 'In Their Own Words' continues in the October edition.

**DISCLAIMER: We have in preparing this newsletter used our best endeavours to ensure that the information contained in this newsletter is true and accurate, but accept no responsibility and disclaim all liability in respect of any errors, omissions, inaccuracies or misstatements contained in this newsletter**

**2ND BATTALION  
ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT  
ASSOCIATION, INC.**



**NEW  
MEMBERSHIP**

**RENEW  
MEMBERSHIP**

**NEW  
ADDRESS**

**II**

**FULL NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Tele:** \_\_\_\_\_

**ADDRESS:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Mob:** \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ **Post Code** \_\_\_\_\_ **Email:** \_\_\_\_\_ @ \_\_\_\_\_

**Regimental No:** \_\_\_\_\_ **DOB:** \_\_\_\_\_

**RAR Service**

RAR Battalions	1 RAR	2RAR	3 RAR	4 RAR	5 RAR	6 RAR	7 RAR	8 RAR	9 RAR	2/4 RAR	5/7 RAR	8/9 RAR
Years e.g. 1970-71												

**Theatres Served/Years:**

Japan	Korea	Malaya	Malaysia	Vietnam	Cambodia	Rwanda	East Timor	Solomon Is	Iraq	Timor Lesté	Afghanistan	Other
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**Post-Nominals:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Wife/Partner's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**SUBSCRIPTIONS**

*(Financial Year: 1 October to 30 September)*

**ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP**

\$20

**MULTIPLATOONE-YEAR MEMBERSHIP**

\$40 - \$60 - \$80 - \$100

**Applicant:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Date:** \_\_\_\_\_ 2014

**Receipt Required? YES/NO**

**MERCHANDISE PRICE LIST**

ITEM	PRICE	QTY	ITEM	PRICE	QTY
Cap: Black - "2nd Battalion"	\$25.00		Pewter Drink Coaster - RAR Badge	\$22.00	
Cap: Black/Gold - "Second To None"	\$25.00		Pewter Drink Coaster - ICB Badge	\$22.00	
Cap: Black/Silver - "ICB Badge"	\$25.00		Pewter Belt Buckle - ICB Badge	\$25.00	
Polo Shirt: Black/Gold - "2nd Battalion" M(97)L(I02)XL(I07)2XL(I12)3XL(I17)	\$38.00		Iron On Badge - 2RAR	\$10.00 *	
Sport Shirt: Black/White - "Second To None" L(I02) XL(I07) 2XL(112) 3XL(117)	\$38.00		Car Sticker - 2RAR Association	\$2.00 *	
Tee Shirt: Black/White - "Second To None" L( 102) XL( 107) 2XL( 112) 3XL( 117)	\$22.00		Bumper Sticker - Vietnam Veteran	\$8.00 *	
Tie : Black - "2RAR" Out of Stock Tie: 2RAR Tie (New style) <u>ORDER NOW</u>	\$25.00		Bumper Sticker - 2nd Battalion	\$8.00 *	
Stubby Cooler - "2RAR"	\$7.00		Car Registration Plate Frames - 2nd Battalion	\$10.00	
Stubby Cooler - "Second To No Bastard"	\$9.00		Note Pad - Leather - ICB Badge	\$20.00	
Lapel Badge - "2RAR"	\$10.00 *		Name Tag - Black Preferred name: _____	\$20.00	
Key Ring - Black/Gold	\$10.00		ICB Badge Metal/Bronze	\$10.00 *	
Wall Plaque : 2RAR - Pewter	\$38.00		Peel-Off Labels - RAR Badge (Roll of 30)	\$5.00 *	
Book: 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion 1967-68 Vol 1. Reprint 1985	\$80.00		Packing & Postage - Except items marked * (Within Australia Only)	\$8.00	
			<b>TOTAL \$</b>	<b>+ P&amp;P</b>	
<b>ONLINE PAYMENTS:</b> You can pay your membership fees and your merchandise purchases online. Account details: 2RAR Association, Inc. Suncorp Bank. BSB: 484-799. Account no: 063 350 355.			When ordering merchandise email/post the merchandise form to: PO Box 1097 Toombul Qld 4012. Include your initials, name and description: ('1 - 5 year membership', &/or 'Merchandise') to allow your payment to be identified.		