

THE STANDARD

LOST IN WAR, WARBURTON BOYS LIVE ON IN NEW STREET – WARBURTON WAY

By JARROD WOOLLEY

February 10, 2015



Judith McKenzie (nee Warburton) holds photographs of her brother Graham 5RAR AMF, and uncle Ossie 2/21ST Battalion AIF. The new street Warburton Way was named in their honour. In the picture above, Judith is accompanied by Graham's school friend and fellow Vietnam Veteran Peter Stapleton 7RAR AMF whose brother David developed the estate.

Warburton Way is located in the Riverside Estate off Wollaston Road, and was named after Oswald (Ossie) Warburton who died as a prisoner of war on 10th March 1945 at the Japanese Tan Tui Prisoner Of War Camp on Ambon Island, Indonesia, which was then part of the Dutch East Indies, and Ossie's nephew Graham who was killed in action in Phuc Tuy Province, South Vietnam on 1st October 1966.

Estate developer David Stapleton said the Warburton's lived a block away from his family in Koroit Street and that he remembers the tough time a lot of people in the area went through when Graham was killed at age 21.

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David said that his brother Peter was a school friend and good mate of Graham's, so our family knew him very well. The Warburton family were very well known in the area as for many years they operated the grocery store on the corner of Raglan Parade and Japan Street (currently the dive store). Therefore, by naming the street after them was something we could do to commemorate the memories of both Ossie and Graham.

David said that Peter went to Vietnam a few months after Graham, and that during his tour it was a scary time for his family knowing what had happened to his good mate.

Graham's sister Judith said her brother loved the army life and relished the mateship and camaraderie. Graham was in the first conscription intake in 1965 and that after basic training they embarked for South Vietnam in May 1966.

Graham was a forward scout with 5RAR's, D Company, 10 Platoon and as such, he would lead the platoon out on manoeuvres, he was a good marks man. Graham had been offered a promotion but he refused it because he just wanted to be one of the boys. Judith said that Graham celebrated his 21st birthday with family and friends in Warrnambool prior to his birthdate of the 29th June and his departure for South Vietnam in May 1966.

Prior to their departure to South Vietnam a familiarisation session was held using a mud map of the area, on this mud map were a range of hills and during the night a flag was placed on them declaring them to be the Warburton Mountains, this name then entered into folklore for the remainder of the Australian Forces involvement in this area.

Graham's platoon took part in the sweep through on the day after the Battle of Long Tan on the 18th August 1966. Graham was killed by a sniper's shot on October 1 1966 whilst forward scout out on patrol near Nui Dat. Graham's tour in South Vietnam was due to finish in early 1967 and for a return home by April 1967.

It took 3 weeks for Graham's body to be returned from South Vietnam to Warrnambool, I remember an Army Major coming to our parents house in Koroit Street and saying that the Army should not bring his body home and that it would be best if it was buried in South Vietnam, and the Major was very adamant about this.

However, our mother said to him, **you took him away you can bring him back**. Judith said it was a great shame that her parents had passed away, and were therefore unable to witness such a great honour that had been bestowed upon Ossie, Graham, and the Warburton family.