

Half Circle



Number 124 - April 2017

This informal publication is for the members of C Coy 5 RAR (2nd tour), South Vietnam, 1969/70, and for the families of those who are no longer with us. It is non-political, and is designed for us to have a laugh at ourselves, re-live our memories, and maintain camaraderie. Formal advice, when needed, should be sourced from Veterans' Organisations.

VALE – CAPTAIN TOM MUGGLETON MBE, QM 5RAR VIETNAM, 1969/70

It is with regret that we advise that Tom Muggleton passed away in January of this year. We will remember him with great respect for his commitment to the provision of stores and equipment during our Vietnam tour. Tom had a lot of other strings to his bow, including:

- Joined the AIF in May 1943;
- Served Aitabe/Wewak 1944/45 as a member of 2nd/5th Battalion;
- Joined 3RAR in 1948;
- Active service on Korea as MFC and CSM C Coy;
- Member of the UN offensive to North Korea 1950;
- Battle of Chongju, North Korea 1950;
- Battle of Kapyong – 3RAR – unit awarded a US Presidential citation;
- 1st Australian Reinforcement Holding Unit, Japan;
- Long Range Weapons Establishment, Maralinga, SA;
- RSM School of Infantry, Seymour Vic;
- RSM RMC Duntroon 1961-67;
- Awarded the MBE 1965;
- QM 5RAR in Vietnam 1969/70;
- OC HQ Coy, RMC, Duntroon;
- The only soldier to have served with the 2nd/5th Battalion and 5RAR.

Tom's funeral was attended by the Governor General Sir Peter Gosgrove, and his tributes were prepared by another RMC graduate, Colonel Roger Wainwright, OC 8PL in Vietnam 1966/67, and president of our 5RAR Association.

May Captain Tom Muggleton rest in Peace. We salute his service.



AT THE RAP:

Colin Summerfield – medical
Barry Taylor – ongoing oncology treatment
John Hellyer – broken leg



TRAVELLING ABOUT:

Tony Samuel – currently in Dunedoo (NSW) after volunteering his services to assist BlazeAid in restoring fencing to farms following the recent bushfires. Thanks Tony.

DENNIS NEVINS ALSO ADDS AN EXTRACT FROM HIS 1969 DIARY:

“We have completed Kings Cross, 14th Dec B Coy has changed over tent lines with D Coy. Battalion Parade at 1530hrs, the CO gave B Coy all the honours as they had a number of heavy contacts. Operation KC was the last operation for Aussie troops in that area as it was now being taken over by Thai Forces [so we were the last Battalion there] also the area has been the hottest killing zone in South Vietnam and has been for the last 12 months.”



Jack Bradd's medals – Re-mounted and framed by the man Jack mentored – WO2 Aaron Barnett. A great memory of a great soldier.

PETER MARSHALL – 8PL: Dennis Nevins (with support from Barry Baker) has alerted us to a “Landline” program, where a truffle farmer by the name of Peter Marshall was interviewed. Is this the Peter Marshall who served with us? Any advice or clues to tracking Peter down and getting him back into the fold will be most appreciated. Thanks.



From Bob Hooper – this is the turn-off to the Long Tan Cross, Vietnam. Note the method used to raise the power lines. Ingenious!

FROM David Wilkins (reprinted from Half Circle Number 11 – December 2007):

Below is a picture of a typical Vietnamese woodcutter. These peasants were simple, hardworking villagers, with only the most basic hand tools. They were heavily targeted by the Viet Cong and NVA, and on the threat of death, had to pay exorbitant taxes to enter the timbered areas, including contribution of their logs for the building of enemy bunker systems.

Because of their enforced assistance to the VC the timber cutters knew where the mines and panji pits were located, and at times when the Australians encountered woodcutters near enemy positions they were sometimes used to travel with their bullock cart ahead of our troops in areas suspected of being mined, such as in the defile on the western side of the Warbies between it and the Nui Thi Vai features. We then slavishly followed that safe path. 8 platoon C Company, commanded by Second Lieutenant Peter Commerford, did just this in that area the day before Christmas in 1969.



ANZAC DAY 2017: ANZAC Day is to be observed later this month. Wherever you are, if you catch up with any of our old mates, please forward a picture and one paragraph, for publication in the May edition of Half Circle.

FROM PETER KNIGHT, PL SGT 9PL, 1969 – “MY ONGOING STORY”:

After being Casevaced to Australia in Dec 69 I eventually got out of the Heidelberg Repat Hospital just before Christmas.

My wife Wanda had been staying in Melbourne and visiting each day.

On the day of my release with my leg in full plaster, Wanda drove from Heidelberg to the centre of Melbourne in peak hour traffic. Now Wanda had been driving this track for a while and she knew what lane to be in and when to be in it.

My thoughts were “I’m home, I’ve got a leg in plaster and now I am going to die.

Wanda drove as I thought at the time; like all the other maniacs on the road.

Not being of any use; I was on convalescent leave in Ballarat Victoria, with physio etc.

After recuperation, I was placed on the unallotted list of the then Southern Command (Watsonia). At Watsonia, I ran into Tony Wass (Pl Sgt of 8 Pl) and him knowing of my dislike for any higher headquarters (unlike Tony, who didn’t mind them) he suggested that I follow him to 2 RTB (Puckapunyal) which I did.

On a March Out Parade, there was a politician who had a very attractive wife.

When they visited the Sergeant’s Mess Tony Wass and I were immersed in watching the lady meeting the ladies of the Mess.

Now this attractive lady sported a very good suntan and a remark was made “I wonder if the suntan is all over, to which a voice behind us replied “I can assure you gentleman, it does”.

In late 1972 when I (we) were posted to 1RAR at Townsville.

On marching in I found that the Battalion was on its final exercise in the series of “Burn”, “Bash” and “Bury”. The Chief Clerk remarked that the Battalion had just been notified that morning to stand down from readiness for deployment for South Vietnam!!!!

NOBODY HAD TOLD ME – TWO TRIPS WAS ENOUGH!!!

Jack Bradd and I again meet in Townsville I think Jack was in 2/4 RAR.

We did the same Bren course as someone had decided because of the type of warfare being practised at the time we did not need the M60 anymore, so they opted for an adaption of the Bren Gun. Now not having used the Bren before I believe that it did an excellent job in its time. However, the powers to be decided to modernise it with new parts and bring it up from .303 to .308 (7.62 mm).

Anyway, we did the Bren course and Jack said that he would bet me a carton that he could strip the Bren in 5 seconds (Jack had left out the words “in the correct manner and sequence”). Knowing Jack, I said no, but Jack proceeded to demonstrate the 5 second strip – never take Jack on in a bet?

I (we) left 1RAR in 1976 and moved to ORANGE NSW on a then CMF posting (17RNSWR). Staying there one year (long enough) I (we) were posted to Officer Cadet School Portsea. On arrival, I was pleased to see that “Jack Bradd” had also been posted in.

I was in Field Wing and much to Jack’s disgust (don’t know why) he had been posted as an instructor to the Drill Wing.

Col Lee (5RAR) was also at Portsea as a drill instructor and I had occasion to hear an excellent discourse between Col and the Boss of Field Wing. Col was never short of words either on or off the Parade ground and obviously, the ambush was very well rehearsed. It went something like this “Sgt Lee as you know a drill round is a facsimile for a proper round” to which Col said in his best “you’re an officer” voice “yes sir” to which the officer said “well the same could be said about a Drill Sgt” The one and only occasion that I had ever seen Col Lee caught short of words.

In 1980, I (we) were posted to 5/7RAR at Holsworthy and then to JTC now Land Warfare Centre (LWC).

After about 18 months I (we) had had enough and (we) I said that the priority had to be given to the kids' reference education in regard to Secondary School.

So, that was the end of the Army, ending up as a WO1 instructor and 21 years.

**“The Best Forward Scout in the Business, hey skipper!”
(Remembering LCPL Reginald Smith)**

It is hard to believe that it is over 7 years ago that the night time telephone calls stopped coming to the Lambert household. Answering the telephone, one immediately knew it was Reg Smith as his salutation was always the same – ‘The best forward scout in the business, hey skipper!’

And who was I to argue?

Reg was the typical Aussie knock about larrikin in barracks or in the lines at Nui Dat. If there was mischief to be had, Reg was up to his armpits in it but it was in the bush that he came into his own.

The task of the Forward Scout was and remains one of the toughest jobs an Infantryman can undertake. As the eyes and ears of the Platoon, the Forward Scout had to have the eyes of an eagle, the hearing of a bat in the night, the sense of smell of a tiger on the prowl and the ability to concentrate for extended periods of time, regardless of the weather, terrain or enemy threat. Reg had those attributes and abilities in spades.

With Reg, and all my Scouts, I always felt comfortable on operations that we would hear, see or pick up the signs of the enemy well before that they knew we were there. Reg, along with his peers, proved time and time again to be that vital early warning for the Platoon.

My wife and I sorely miss his night time calls. Even my youngest daughter, Amanda, had a soft spot for this jovial rogue of an Infantryman. Few would know that he even proposed marriage to her at a Platoon Reunion in Newcastle but that's another story

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Many thanks, Reg. It was a privilege to be your Platoon Commander.

Roger Lambert
(aka Sunray 33)



Reg Smith (l), with his skipper Roger Lambert on the right, and Greg Blair at centre rear.

Ed's note: In the last Half Circle, we featured a picture in which readers were invited to detect the number of tigers hidden therein. Roger Lambert stated that there were at least fourteen, your editor found sixteen, but the clear winners were David Wilkins and his grandson Jack, who discovered seventeen. Only one slight problem here – Jack is **seven** years old. Jack will soon take over editorial duties for this newsletter!

WORLD'S GREATEST EXCUSE WHEN COMING HOME LATE FROM THE PUB: “Sorry love, I couldn't get home any earlier. They had a competition to see who had the best wife, and you made it into the finals”.



Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – donharrod@bigpond.com, 0418 423 313, with help from Bob Hooper, WO2 Aaron Barnett, Dave Wilkins and grandson Jack, Dennis Nevins, Peter Knight, Roger Lambert, John Humphries (Trackers), useless information ***and powered by the Lambs Valley Wine Company, Hunter Valley, NSW.***