

Half Circle



Number 149 – May 2019

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.



AT THE RAP: Peter Commerford, Barry Morgan, Barrie Taylor. We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well as they would like to be.



TRAVELLING ABOUT:

Steve and Margaret Porter – off for a 35 day cruise around Oz and New Zealand.

Jack and Susan Lake – a road trip through Central and Northern NSW, and into Queensland. Jack and Susan called in to Coonabarabran and spent some time with your editor and wife Roslyn. A lot of old memories were revisited. Thanks, Jack!

Paul and Maureen McQueen visiting Eric and Pam Hamlin in Port Macquarie (NSW). See picture below:



Eric, Pam, Maureen and Paul

MEMORIAL SERVICE – 2790020 PTE BARRY JOHN THOMPSON

We will all remember that on 1st February 1970 – one week before he was due to return to Australia, Barry (Thommo) was killed when a grenade buried at the base of a rubber tree exploded. Thommo was carrying out the simple task of raking and burning leaves in the 8PL area at our Nui Dat base.

Next year will mark the 50th anniversary of Thommo’s death, and his sister Helen would like to organize an appropriate service in his honour. At the moment, the following is planned:

- Saturday 1st February 2020;
- A graveside service at the Gunning Cemetery (between Goulburn and Yass, NSW);
- An informal time for remembrance, a get-together and refreshments in Gunning.
- Timing is to be confirmed, but probably late morning to allow travel from Sydney.
- The residents of Gunning are very supportive of the concept of a memorial service for Thommo.

Ray Seymour, a member of the Tumut RSL is assisting Helen with planning.

Anyone who has had the opportunity to visit Thommo’s grave will have seen one of the finest examples of respect of their brother – this is due to another sister, Valda, and Helen. Please put this day into your diary, and if possible, try and attend. We understand that travel is very expensive and that here is a Battalion Reunion the following month, but those who live more locally might consider attendance.

More in coming issues.

FROM THE DIARY OF CPL DENNIS (DIGGER) NEVINS, NAMIBIA 1989

1 August 89

I drove the Land Rover to CE UNTAG at Windhoek, there were a number of soldiers milling around, there was a Military Court Marshall starting today so it was a good time to get away from there. I drove the Land Rover back to Grootfontein getting in around 1600hrs. I was met by WO2 Bill Smith and told me not to unpack my bags because tomorrow as I would be taking the Backhoe up to Ondangwa to dig trenches for 8 Troop, u- beauty I’ll be out of here tomorrow.

**The court case was about a biff up between a couple of Diggers and an NCO, the names of these members have long left me. The RSM Jake Arnold was co-ordinating it all, I was in Jake’s section in 28 ANZUK Field Sqn in Singapore in 1973 , he was a Lance Corporal then, a good bloke Jake and I’m sure he wished he was still a Lance Corporal with all the big wigs around the place for this case, they even sent over legal rep’s from Australia for it, what a waste for it was only a biff up and both parties had moved on.



*Left - Cpl
Dennis (Digger)
Nevins,
Namibia, 1989*

*Right – the
camp kitchen,
Engela,
Namibia*



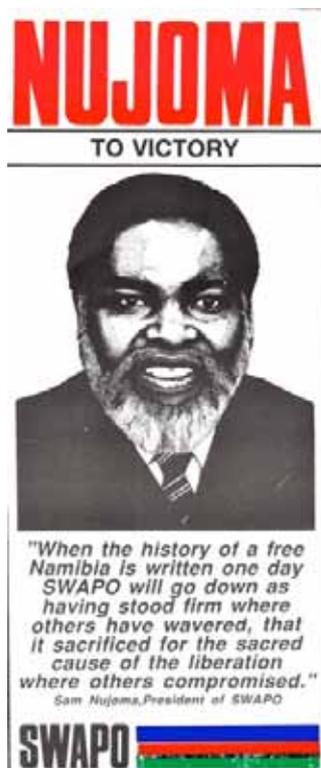
A Court Martial in Windhoek, Namibia

(Part 2- my sightseeing continued while others worked)

By Dave Wilkins

Part 1 described our marathon travel to Namibia and initial events in the capital Windhoek as well as my decision to do some sightseeing while waiting for the trial to begin.

The in-country Australian Legal Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Northwood and I drove north with an engineer driver, Sapper Ray Gilbert, towards the war-torn Angolan border area. Initially, there were more wild animals (giraffe, baboon, kudu, eland, etc) than humans in this sparsely populated country. It was election time and in the mining town of Tsumeb, electioneering posters were everywhere (as in Windhoek) promoting Sam Nujoma, leader of the South West African Peoples Organization or SWAPO, for president. He was later duly elected.



Namibia was the former German colony, previously called South West Africa.

There was increased population further north in Ovamboland with more kraals (typically a circular village of grass huts, enclosed by a solid fence of thorn-bush branches), farming cattle and cars, a sign of greater wealth. SWAPO flags flew everywhere. Turning back from the somewhat fragile Angolan border area, we entered Etosha National Park, a huge wildlife sanctuary approximately 300 x 100 km in a completely natural environment. The entrance at the old German Fort Namutoni, is one of several gateways into the reserve and was where some of the British POWs were held during World War I.

In our open-sided Landrover we were able to drive straight through the gateway into the sanctuary and observe animals in their natural habitat: masses of zebra, springbok, gemsbok, giraffe, elephant, did-dik (tiny shy deer), eland, ostrich, wart hog, wildebeest and some lioness (but no male lions or cheetahs were seen). The most startling sight occurred when rounding a bend on a bush track, to be confronted by a herd of elephants just 30 metres ahead. The enormous bull elephant did not welcome our presence and started towards us so we eased back to watch the huge beasts tearing down and pushing over the trees to obtain sustenance. We three had been

previously unaware of elephants' destructive nature.

Dominating the park is the Etosha Pan, an inhospitable flat expanse of a dried-up inland lake, caked with salt, measuring 130 x 50 km, the largest salt pan in Africa. Etosha means 'big white place'.

On our trip back, just north of Tsumeb, is Otjikoto Meer, a 75-metre deep disused mine filled with water. During World War I the defeated Germans abandoned rifles, machine guns, artillery guns, ammunition, weapon boxes and equipment into the water. Some were later recovered and are now displayed in the museum at Tsumeb - magnificently preserved, apparently because of the limestone mineralization of the water. You can still read the words engraved in the woodwork of the weapon boxes.



Recovered from Otjikoto Meer

Further south towards Grootfontein we noticed a road sign saying '*Trespassers (sic) will be shot; survivors will be shot again*', a bit unnerving as we ran out of petrol soon after this but fortunately didn't have to seek assistance from that particular property. We arrived back in Windhoek just after midnight on Sunday/Monday after travelling over a thousand kilometres.



The court martial was about to begin.

END PART 2

ANZAC DAY 2019 – WHERE WE SPENT IT:



BRISBANE – Vince Feenstra reports: Our numbers were down to 26 this year, but as you can see in the photo, John Hunter and I did our best! Off to the Railway Hotel after the march.

COONABARABRAN NSW – Don Harrod reports: A very small attendance of veterans this year, as the population is aging, however the support from the town was exceptional. I had the honour of delivering the Commemoration Address, which coincided with it being 50 years since we served in Vietnam.



FROM JOHN HELLYER – Southern Highlands, NSW – My small ANZAC display.



HERVEY BAY, QLD – Bill Titley reports: Anzac Day here was overcast but quite pleasant, with magnificent turnouts to both the Dawn Service and the Public Commemoration Service later in the morning.

Once again, the C Coy 5RAR faithful turned out and later met under “The Fig Tree” – our usual rallying place.

Present were: Barry Baker, Eric Hamlin, Ben Oram and Bill Titley. MIA: Russell “Kiwi” Hill (Not good on the day!) and Max Postle (Sunshine Coast - Caring for his ill wife.)

Support Section: Pat Oram, Pam Hamlin and Kelly Oram.

Pte Hamlin was charged with being improperly dressed, however the charge was later dismissed on the word of witnesses, that his medals had slipped off his coat while he was negotiating his exit from the Personnel Carrier on his way to the Forming Up Place (FUP). I was somewhat doubtful of the initial witness he called, being one Pte Ben Oram, as I was sure that they had colluded on some occasion in the past, however, the Support Section agreed to carry out a search and found the missing medals in the APC. “Charge dismissed; CSM, march out!”

We patrolled to the Hervey Bay RSL Club, where we received our lunch rations, which were, quite unusually, accompanied by an amber fluid to wash them down.

An “O Group” was held, courtesy of the Support Section and it was generally agreed that the patrol members would be free to taste more amber fluid and tell lies for the remainder of the day.

Transport remained “on call” until the objective was captured, consolidated and any counter attacks were repulsed. I’m not sure what time that was!

On a broader note, I had contacted Warren Nesbitt, who is a young 5RAR veteran living in Maryborough, to see if he would be attending the Hervey Bay Commemoration Service, as he did last year, but he attended in Maryborough and was unable to make it here. He is keen to maintain a link with the local 5RAR veterans.



SYDNEY – Paul McQueen reports: ANZAC Day in Sydney had a smaller than usual roll-up, due to a number of our personnel being away. However, as usual we met at the Crown Hotel after the march and remembered old friends.



Brian Herrmann – (location not identified) reports: I spent ANZAC Day with two younger generations at the little fellow’s school.



FROM DENNIS (Digger) NEVINS, Qld: ANZAC Day with two of my grandchildren.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – donharrod@bigpond.com, 0418 423 313, with help from Eric and Pam Hamlin, Digger Nevins, David Wilkins, Paul McQueen, John Hellyer, Bill Titley, Pat and Ben Oram, Vince Feenstra, Brian Herrmann, behind-the-scenes assistance from Gary Townsend (the Tiger Tales Editor), Ted Harrison (the 5RAR Association Webmaster), ***supported by The RB Co, and powered by the Lambs Valley Wine Company, Hunter Valley, NSW.***

IN THE NEXT ISSUE OF HALF CIRCLE: Part 1 of a series written by **Ian Leis**. As we know, Ian has previously written articles on his mates, but this story is different. Leisy bares all about himself - his upbringing, his past, his military career and the tremendous support he has received from his devoted wife Glenys and his family.