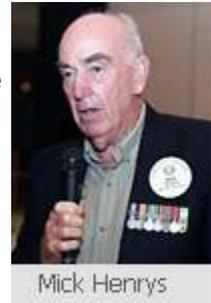


**CHARLESTOWN ROTARY CLUB  
BULLETIN**

Guest Speaker: Dr Tony White.

Mick Henrys shared his personal reflections on Anzac day in his lead up to introducing Dr Tony White our guest speaker. His observation was that whilst there may have been a small fall off in attendances at the major events for Anzac Day, there has been a groundswell growth in community and neighbourhood remembrances ceremonies. His attendance at the Dudley ceremony yesterday he said was a moving one and one he will continue to attend.



Mick Henrys



Tony White

Mick met Tony in a sweaty, wet and enemy infested jungle in Vietnam in 1966 so their friendship is nearly as old as Charlestown Rotary. We watched a video during dinner of life in Vietnam in the 1960's. It was the everyday life of children, families and people going about their lives amidst a war. Whatever the personal remembrances each one of the audience held of that period in history the presentation that Tony gave added a new dimension, everyday 20 year olds, mainly conscripts doing the job they were sent to do and undergoing a year of life and death experiences.

The 5th Battalion entered Vietnam in 1966. Approx. 800 infantry soldiers and support along with helicopter and fixed wing aircraft were deployed for twelve months during which time they patrolled the allocated province area around Nui Dat. Unlike their American colleagues who tended to concentrate on body counts, the Australian contingent using the experience gained in the Malaya insurgency to engaged the village populations and used that to attempt to isolate the Viet Cong who at that time virtually controlled all of the Australian area of responsibility.

Tony was fresh out of medical school and a year of internship at a Sydney Hospital. With no specific trauma medical experience or training by the army he was in charge of half a dozen army medics and was the last resort of medical care in the unit. Whilst it was not all bullets and bombs he shared the horror of a fatal improvised explosive device attack and anti-personnel mine explosion as well as the sick parade and village medical visits all the way down to the number of attendances and conditions that were treated. Not surprisingly skin conditions far out numbered all others and with all that experience acquired at the army's expense it was no wonder he resumed his civilian career in medicine after returning from Vietnam as a dermatologist.



The Doc's Presentation

He has returned to Vietnam on a number of occasions both professionally at a conference and with other veterans. Difficult he admitted but, as he put it, facing your fears and experiences adds to the acceptance and conquering of them. His presentation included numerous photos of army life and the conditions that surrounded them but perhaps his most striking was the panorama of the Long Hai Hills in the region they were posted in 1966 taken on one of his return trips with expansive fields of rice stretching into the beauty of the hills signifying a community once again at peace and everyday life going on once more.

The return of the 5th Battalion saw an enthusiastic welcome home from the population and the acceptance of the Australian involvement in Vietnam peaked at around 66% at that time. Sadly this

support dwindled and the returning combatants in later years met with a support level half of that level and it was many years before a community came to accept and focus on the efforts of the troops and not the war itself. As Tony quite emphatically made the point the troops were doing what they were told to do, much like he was as a medical officer and following the 300 year old advice of John Wesley:

*Do all the good that you can  
By all the means that you can  
In all the ways that you can  
In all the places you can  
To all the people you can  
As long as you can*

Tony has given numerous talks to various groups, including people involved in handling mass casualties such as the Long Hai mine incident where 6 soldiers were killed and 27 wounded. Carers often express their feelings of gross inadequacy in the face of such overwhelming situations. In these settings the words of John Wesley can be a source of great comfort to those who still feel guilty that they "didn't do enough".

A wonderful presentation listened to intently by the large audience who attended. Chris Lancaster did one of his usual polished vote of thanks to Tony and left him laden with goodies from the Rotary cupboard.



Chris Lancaster thanking Tony White with some 'goodies'.



Tony and Mick at the end of the Rotary meeting