

Half Circle



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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.

OUR C COMPANY "HALF CIRCLE" REUNION CANBERRA – 15TH – 17TH MARCH 2016



Wayne Herbert, COL David Mead, Andy MacDougal, Geoff Pearson, Jack Lake, LTCOL Roger Lambert and Peter McHugh, about to lay wreaths at the Australian War Memorial, offering tributes to the seven men of C Company 5RAR (2nd tour) who lost their lives in Vietnam

Our reunion has just ended, with everyone claiming it to have been a huge success. There will be many stories to follow, but due to the number of photographs, arrangements will hopefully be made for Ted Harrison to find us a spot on the 5RAR website.

The highlights were:

- The Meet and Greet – about 110 attended
- The luncheon cruise around Lake Burley Griffin – the maximum of eighty attended, with a first class lunch, good company and excellent commentary from the Skipper of the MV Southern Cross.
- The tour of the Australian War Memorial – absolutely moving. We were focussed on the Vietnam exhibit, and the display, graphics and sound effects deeply touched all of us. One tour guide was a RAAF Vietnam Iroquois pilot. He was genuinely as interested in hearing from old infantry ground troops as we were in hearing his stories from the skies, and said that from his perspective, looking down at the dark, mysterious, frightening jungle, he had no idea how we operated, and commended our service.
- The Last Post Ceremony at the AWM. Claude Ducker had worked on the conduct of this for over eighteen months, with the result being that the normal protocol was set aside. Director Dr Brendan Nelson addressed those present, the Vice Admiral Commander of the Australian Fleet led the ceremony, our Ted Suttor was the soldier featured in the address, and wreaths were laid – one each for the seven men of C Company who lost their lives in Vietnam. There were a lot of tears, held-back emotion, and extreme pride displayed. This was the most moving ceremony many of us had ever attended. Sincere thanks to all, especially Ted's sister Jean, and Helen and Valda, sisters of Barry Thompson.
- Our final dinner. This function was attended by 120 people, and of particular note was the presence of our CO, Brigadier (Retd) Colin (Genghis) Khan and Lt Col David French, who led C Company (Combat Team Charlie) in Afghanistan in 2010/11. Claude Ducker, Brig Khan, David Wilkins and Andy MacDougal made most impressive speeches.
- David Wilkins acknowledged the tremendous input from those who came to us as reinforcements. If we had our time again, we would have afforded them a more appropriate induction – professionally and personally.
- The organisation of the reunion by Claude and Judith Ducker, Barry and Kathleen Morgan, Geoff Pearson, Andy MacDougal, Blue Schafer, and many others in the background made it run like clockwork.

- Andy MacDougal, who donated the wines for our reunion dinner – the reds coming from the vineyard of Andy and his wife Ginny, and the whites bearing their own label. We now recommend the **Lambs Valley Wine Company, Hunter Valley, NSW.**
- Geoff Pearson for his behind-the-scenes work in commissioning and financing the labelling for Andy's wines, and the C Company placemats for the dinner.
- The accommodation was excellent, and the attention and courtesy of the staff of the Canberra Rex was commendable.
- The dedication of our men – David Mead arrived from the UK, Jock Phillips from the Philippines, Terry Fitzgerald who rode a motorbike from Perth and back again (see Fitzzy's words below), those who attended from Queensland, WA and Tasmania, outback South Australia and every other point of the compass. Our family of 1969 was back together again!
- For those members of C Coy who were unable to attend the reunion – you may be assured that everyone's name was mentioned throughout the halls of the Canberra Rex Hotel on more than one occasion!

Would everyone please accept my personal thanks for your contribution to our reunion. It was outstanding. Don

FROM LTCOL DAVID FRENCH, OC COMBAT TEAM CHARLIE (C COY) AFGHANISTAN 2010/2011:

Thanks again to the men of C Coy, 5 RAR circa '69 for inviting me to your reunion dinner. It was a memorable occasion, made more so by the fine company of the finest Company, your friends and your relatives. I enjoyed spending time and swapping 'warries' with the soldiers of old. I take great pride in being a descendant of such fine warriors and I can assure you that your Company's bravery, leadership, esprit de corps and mateship are held in high regard by the current serving soldiers who strive to emulate you.

If the reunion of 'The Jackals', C Coy 5 RAR 2010-2011, is half as successful in Tasmania in April we will be incredibly pleased.

FROM TERRY FITZGERALD, WHO RODE HIS MOTORBIKE FROM PERTH TO CANBERRA AND RETURN TO ATTEND OUR REUNION:

I was moving but not that quick as speed goes. I left Canberra at 6.20am on the Friday morning after our reunion dinner, and hit the Hume Hwy and it poured rain all the way past Gundagai and even up the Sturt Hwy to Narrandera. It was very windy, coming directly side on, and I had to drop the speed back, but after Narrandera, it fined up and I dried out. About then, the wind was coming off my rear quarter and it was great not to have to continually push away on the handle bar to offset the effect of the wind. I had wind on my right front all the way over.

Once on the road I decided to keep going as I had no problem staying awake so I kept pushing. I stopped on the Port Wakefield Road about 266 km South of Port Augusta. The 2nd night I stopped on the top of the Madura Pass. It was 3 days. I arrived home absolutely stuffed at approximately 8:35 pm Sunday evening.

It was a great get together and I enjoyed the 3 days in Canberra. Spoke to a heap of guys I hadn't seen since I left the funny country.

Ed's Note: Fitzy has always done things his way, but we were all pleased to note that he was considerate enough to fly his wife to Canberra to join us!

FROM BILL HARTLEY: When I went to school in Tamworth (NSW), I had two close mates – John Faint and Brian Konz. We played sport together, and learned to box together. When I arrived in C Coy in Vietnam as a reinforcement, I was lying on my bed in the 7PL tent lines one day and noticed the words “John Faint” written on the canvas above me. I was now occupying the bed that John used before being wounded and returned to Australia. I scrawled my name “Bill Hartley” under John's. In 1970, B Coy 7RAR took over our lines, and unbelievably, Brian Konz was allocated my bedspace. Brian's name was then inscribed. Brian told me of this when I met him over ten years after he returned to Australia. Truth is certainly stranger than fiction!

FROM KEVIN MULLIGAN: The group from CHQ had dinner at a local bar on the second night in Canberra. The menu confused some, so I took it upon myself to try and explain (even though I am from Tassie) that worldly people had porridge for breakfast and soup for dinner. I nearly fell apart laughing when I discovered that Beth and Bill Titley had chosen soup for their entree, after I had just finished explaining the virtues of porridge. The buggers all got back at me when we went to share the bill at the end of our meal – all 20 of those present claimed that they had only had soup – nobody would own up to having had the steak, prawns, lamb or any other of the items on the menu!

OVERHEARD: when we boarded the MV Southern Cross for our luncheon cruise around Lake Burley Griffin: “I don’t know that I really want to get on this boat. The last time I boarded a vessel in was in 1969, it took me thirteen months to get home!”



AT THE RAP:

Barrie Taylor

Geoff Ford. Good news here, Geoff has just received a very favourable report

There are only two things in my shed that I really use – WD40 and duct tape. If something doesn’t move and should, I use the WD40. If something moves and shouldn’t, I use the duct tape.

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