

# Half Circle



Number 172 - April 2021

This informal publication is for the members of C Coy 5 RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> 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 – 55695 LANCE CORPORAL ALAN GLORIEUX GEERNAERT**

We regret to advise that we have had a message from Bill Geernaert in Canada, notifying us that our old mate Al died on 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021, after suffering cancer. We will all remember Al as being the wild, red-headed Canadian of 8 Platoon. Al was posted to Vietnam in November 1968 to 1ARU, to 1RAR in December 1968, and joined 5RAR in February 1969, where he served until his tour of duty completed in November 1969. We pass on our condolences to Bill and all Al's family. We have lost a great mate.

Please refer to Half Circle number 83 for a story on Al's return to Australia.

*Ed's note: As usual, if anyone has a photo of Al in Vietnam, please forward it to me for inclusion in Tiger Tales. Don*



**AT THE RAP:**

We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well

as they would like to be.

## **MEMBER PROFILE – 5411654 PTE WILLIAM THOMAS (Blue) DOUGLAS – 9PL**

It all started for me after PTSD arrived. Before that I had been gainfully employed as a Meat and Health inspector. I had then to reassess my life and came to Thailand to live and have been here for the last 40 years. My first years were spent teaching English as a second language to Thais.

I was awarded the TPI pension and then gave up teaching and started to work as a volunteer for the Thai police force, aided by my experience as a digger and the ability to speak Thai as I knew the Northern dialect which was essential in doing undercover work for the drug squad. For the next 25 years. My job was to buy drugs – heroin – mostly posing as a drug dealer as I was not suspected, being a Westerner. This work included entrapment

procedures which are legal in Thailand. A lot of travel was involved as well as time setting up the deals. We were highly successful on many occasions which sometimes resulted in deaths. My training as a digger helped immensely in this line of work. I worked all over the 7 northern provinces as well as in Bangkok.

It was at times both exciting and dangerous, but I enjoyed it as a follow-on from Vietnam. drinking heavily at that time and in a moment of rage I murdered a yank and ended up doing time in a Thai prison, after which I had to leave the country but was able to return later and live legally. During my time here I managed to get married 5 times but have no kids (I must fire blanks). Now I have retired and lead a peaceful life with my 5th wife and enjoy playing golf and going to the gym.

Regards to all, Blue.

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**FROM ROGER LAMBERT:** In putting the finishing touches to the booklet for my grandson, I have included an "In Memorium" page which lists those 9 Platoon diggers who have attended their last parade since our return to Australia. I don't have nor can I find a photograph of Mick Appleby. You'd recall that we lost Mick early in the tour when he was spiked in the eye by a piece of bamboo branch while on a TAOR patrol. We know Mick returned to become a member of the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit but there are no images to be found on FB, AWM etc sites. It just dawned on me that I also don't have 'in country' images of PTE Bob Young nor PTE Wally Magalas either.

***Ed's note: If anyone can assist with photos or other information on Mick, Bob or Wally, please send these to me for onforwarding to Roger. Thanks, Don***

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### **Remembering the M72 66mm Light Anti-Tank Weapon (LAW) (or more appropriately, Never Forget Your Weapon Drills)**

Operation Esso, conducted during July 1969, will be remembered by members of Charlie Company, due to the use of mines by the enemy throughout the Area of Operations. Prior to the commencement of the operation, we underwent special training conducted by the Engineers. We were also issued with flak jackets and helmets as a precaution against the mine threat; it was the first and only time that I recall that we wore such encumbrances during our tour of duty.

Fire Support Base (FSB) "Thrust" was set up as a base of operations. As was our usual custom, two Rifle Platoons were allocated patrolling and ambush tasks while the third Rifle Platoon remained with the FSB for the protection of the Land Clearing Teams as well as local protection of the base during the evening.

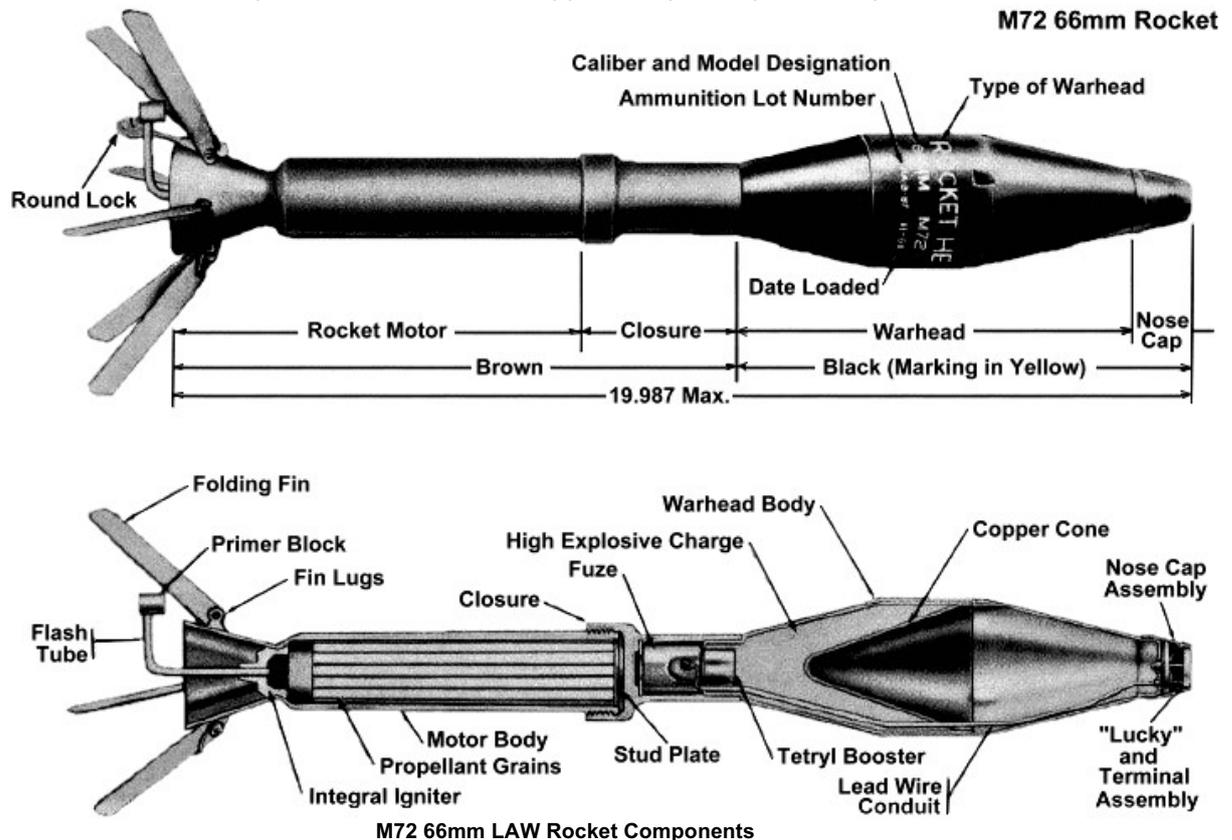
As part of my weaponry, along with three bandoliers of 5.56mm Ammunition, a Claymore mine, spare detonating cord, smoke and thermal grenades, I carried a M72 66mm Light Anti-tank Weapon (LAW) strapped down the side of my US A-frame pack.



M72 66mm Light Anti-Tank Weapon

During the course of the operation, I became aware that the rocket inside the LAW had become detached from its primer block and was sliding up and down in the launch tube. On our return to the FSB, having been relieved by 7 Platoon, we were advised that we were to receive a fresh resupply of ammunition.

In order to dispose of the old ammunition and to prevent it falling into the hands of the enemy, the Engineers had dug a pit well outside the FSB perimeter with a view to blowing up the contents with explosives. Here was the opportunity to dispose of my M72.



At the appointed time, I took the LAW out to the demolition pit. Having extended the launcher, I gently tilted the tube so that the rocket slid out. I grabbed the rocket as it started to clear the end of the tube.

At this point, I thought that my world had come to an ignominious and premature end as I had completely forgotten that the rocket had folding fins. As the projectile cleared the

launcher, the bloody fins sprang out as did a very strong expletive from me. Talk about one's life flashing before one's eyes!

I laid the rocket down with the pile of ammunition, together with its launcher, nodded to the Engineers and made my way back into the FSB. To this day I'm sure I heard muffled laughter as I made my way back to the perimeter.

Lesson learnt: Do not forget your weapon drills, especially around live ordnance.

**Roger Lambert  
aka Sunray 33**



**TRAVELLING ABOUT:**

No reports this month.

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**FROM THE EDITOR'S DESK:** Following the disastrous floods in NSW, and knowing that many of you live in the affected zones – John Yabsley, Eric Hamlin, Tony Samuel, Bill Hartley – to name just a few – we wish you all the best in your current situation and hope that you were not directly impacted. We would also like to commend Eric and Pam Hamlin for their efforts in getting stuck in and providing assistance, including catering. Thank you.

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Recently we were told of the efforts of the President of an unnamed country, who shut down his entire coastline. Apparently, he heard that COVID 19 arrived in waves so he closed all his beaches. Keep smiling.

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