

# Half Circle

Number 21 - August 2008

This informal publication is for the members of C Coy 5 RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> tour), South Vietnam, 1969/70, and especially for the families of those who are no longer with us.

## Jack Bradd said.....TIGERS TOO

It was in the deep dark dripping hell of the jungle on the Malay/Thai border where we set up our Platoon patrol base close to a creek so we had all the comforts of home. The creek provided a water point where we could fill our water bottles and have a bit of a dhoby (wash). I was tasked with filling the Section water bottles so set off with the bottles slung over my shoulder and my SLR, full bullet box of live ammo but none up the spout. We had received reports about animals around the area, like tigers and elephants but put it down to shit stirring. As I walked down the track I heard some shouting from the area of the water point and soon spotted a rampaging CPL Jack Lake coming up the track towards me. He stopped in front of me mumbling about tigers, thrust his Owen Gun at me and took my SLR, he put a round up the spout, said 'Bloody Owen Guns no use against a tiger' and took off. I stood on the track knees shaking holding Jack's Owen Gun wondering what the hell I was going to do with the bloody thing against a tiger so I hit the toe back to the Platoon. That night something was prowling around the Platoon perimeter, we were all shitting our selves thinking tigers but the PLCOMD ordered one of the guns to give a few bursts and what ever it was took off. I got my SLR back and was forever wary around CPL Lake keeping a tight grip on my SLR.

A few years later after a stint in ARU the bastards tried to keep me there so I went to see CSM Lake and he got me into his Company in 5 RAR. I was relieved to see that he was carrying an M16 so my trusty SLR was safe. Out of the weeds and with the slightest whiff of grog I was a bit of a mischief maker but the eagle eye and heavy boot of the CSM soon put me on the right track. Some diggers may have been paranoid with a CSM watching over his every move but I looked at it another way, I had a great soldier looking after me.

## Andy MacDougal said.....my mate, Bill Hartley:

Whilst on our trek to Coober Pedy for Anzac Day we had the opportunity to exchange many, many experiences .... nearly all of which were very, very funny. This one from Bill Hartley:

Bill felt he often got a bum deal with duties. The first one was when we initially arrived in Vietnam - Bill was told to fall out and report for special duty. He found himself in Saigon guarding the Australian Ambassador for 3 months (probably something to do with Bill's distinguished boxing career). Whilst in Saigon, he only got into deep trouble once - for discovering and then consuming the Ambassadors supply of Arnotts biscuits.

But it was on the HMAS Sydney that Bill really copped a couple of related beauties. The first was carrying bags of spuds up from deep in the hold to the galleys (kitchens). They were the size of wheat bags, so the bag was balanced on the shoulder before commencing the long and arduous ascent up steep and narrow gangways to the galley. After a few trips Bill thought someone else should have a go, so he retreated to our secluded sleeping spot in the forward anchor port.

Bill was pretty pleased that no one seemed to notice his absence ... until we were about to dock in Fremantle. For reasons that still baffle Bill, he scored galley duty, and, was told he would have no shore leave. He was ordered to the galley (along with another spud bag bludger) where they would spend the day washing dishes. We didn't feel too bad about this - it wasn't as if we left him on piquet duty whilst the rest of the platoon broke harbour! Bill could look after himself, and anyway, we would tell him what a fantastic time we had on our return - even if we didn't. Bill wasn't pleased, particularly when he saw the mountain of washing up to be done. But a quick recce of the galley yielded a

plan. Using his considerable diplomatic skills gleaned whilst looking after the Ambassador, Bill convinced the Duty Officer to allow them to go ashore with us if they had indeed completed all their duties to his satisfaction. The Officer agreed and left them to it. This is where the creative ingenuity of the digger from Tamworth came to the fore. He had noticed that the galley portholes could be opened without too much difficulty. **Execution Phase:** The door to the galley was securely locked, portholes opened, and every cup, saucer, plate, mug, dish ... each item of crockery resplendent with the crest of the HMAS Sydney, went out the porthole. Even baking trays and pans were persuaded to take the plunge after being bent and jumped on!! The remaining pots and pans were cleaned, put away, benches wiped down and floor cleaned. The Duty Officer was asked to inspect the galley. He was really impressed with the diggers' performance under stress, and promptly told them the buses were leaving in 5 minutes. They made the lunch!

Bill ponders the excitement generated in 200 years time when a diver carefully lifts the precious HMAS Sydney crockery from the murky and muddy bottom of Fremantle Harbour.



Pictured: Bill Hartley, carrying his M60. His message - "Don't mess with me or Charlie Coy!"

#### Barry Baker said.....

Jack Bradd had recently arrived at C Company and it was obvious that he was fond of a little liquid refreshment, he also had the contacts and means of acquiring a drink when none was available at the boozer. I had only just met Jack and was discussing world affairs as one does at the boozer, during this discussion we were informed that the boozer was closing and no more drinks would be available until opening time the next day. I was a little peeved, I felt I needed quite a few more drinks, however Jack said don't worry "come with me", I followed him out of the boozer. Jack led me out of the Coy area down a track past other company lines until we came to a tin shed, which I believe was the Support Coy boozer, we had a couple of drinks and Jack bought a carton to accompany us back to our lines.

During one of our many stoppages on the way back we were approached by the Military Police, who in a very polite manner inquired as to who we were, what unit did we belong to, and what were we doing, (it was obvious what we were doing maybe the MP's were a little slow). Taking down our particulars, confiscating our cargo they then graciously gave us a lift back to the C Coy area and sent us on our way. Parade, next day: Cpl Bradd and LCPL Baker report to the CSM after the parade, We duly presented ourselves outside Jack Lake's tent and were invited to explain what was going on. Jack B being the leader, simply stated, "this stupid dickhead, gave the screws his correct name, which left me no alternative to also give them my correct name". Jack Lake obviously agreed with Jack Bradd, as they walked a distance from me and although faint I could hear them speaking about, "what's the army coming to", "stupid inexperienced NCO's", "don't know S... from Clay", "Go and sort him out" "a good clip,,,,," etc. Jack Lake then went back into his tent. Jack Bradd began yelling at me and strongly advised that, I never again give my correct name to the screws, whilst in his presence, "ouch that hurt". No more was said.

We soon went out on another operation and after about 4-5 weeks we returned back to Nui Dat. There must have been a shortage of beer, the boozier closing early, or simply some soldiers who felt they wanted more drinks. I deduced this from the parade the next day, when it was mentioned that two soldiers were caught drunk with a large quantity of alcohol, (it was only one carton-less) outside the Coy area by the MP's. This pair gave false names to the screws when spoken to. They were then transported back to the Coy Area. Next day, it was as if the sky had fallen in, I had never seen such a tantrum, it was then announced that this unknown duo had used the aliases of Lake and Ducker. We were assured that the culprits would be caught and punished severely; the CSM was to personally handle the investigation. To this day I wonder were the culprits ever caught. If anyone is aware who this dastardly pair was it would be appreciated if they let me know!!

**Ben Oram said..... My CV:**

I left the Army in 1970 after completing my 3 year contract & returned with my wife Pat & daughter Kelly to my home town of Rockhampton. In 1972 we added a son, Colin to our family.

I worked at various jobs in Rocky, Security guard, Surveyors chainman & a Plant operator. In 1975 we moved to Moura, a small coal mining town in Central Qld where I worked as a Driller, Shot Firer & Open Cut Examiner for 30 years. In 2004 we had a 'sea change' & retired to Hervey Bay Qld, (3 hours north of Brisbane) which was the venue for our first 9Platoon Reunion in 2002.

My Army career highlights were meeting a great bunch of mates with whom I am in regular contact with to this day, having 3 haircuts in 1 week( see below) & filling sandbags while" resting" between operations at Nui Dat!!

Other life highlights are the arrival of our 3 beautiful grandchildren (Michaela 16, Ayden 5 & Regan 2.) & attending Battalion & Platoon Reunions.

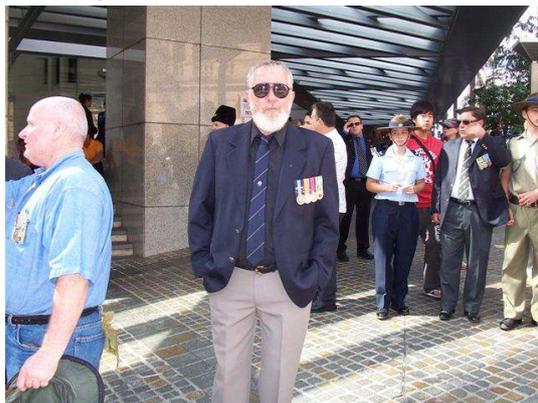
If any members of C Coy are passing through this way, I'd love to catch up with you.

**Ben Oram also said.....:**

One of the things I really remember at Holsworthy is when the CSM, I cannot mention his name but his initials were Jack Lake. He told me to get a haircut, so I did.

Next day he told me again, when I went to the barber he said "are you twins?" and then proceeded to give me a trim. Next day CSM (J.L.) said "Private Oram get a haircut! " (3 times in one week) I went to the barber again & he said "to get any more hair off I will have to scalp you! " I asked him to give me a note to that effect which I took to the CSM (J.L.) after reading it he screwed it up saying sheeeeeet !! I now blame CSM (J.L.) for my curly hair.

Thanks Jack.



Ben Oram at Hervey Bay, Qld, ANZAC Day 2008

~~~~~

**At the RAP:**

|                                   |   |                                          |
|-----------------------------------|---|------------------------------------------|
| Geoff Ford - ankle reconstruction | ) |                                          |
| Kiwi Hill - pneumonia             | ) | Best wishes to all for speedy recoveries |
| Eddie Moon - knee reconstruction  | ) |                                          |

**Andy MacDougal also said.....The last Op .... and the last opportunity for Jack Bradd to get his prize!!**

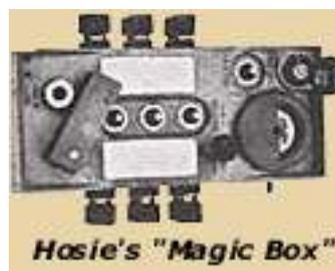
The opportunity of using (Lt Ian) Hosie's "magic box" (a device whereby up to 12 claymore mines could be detonated simultaneously) came in the final stages of Operation Bondi 2. Whilst 8Plt was to check out a known bunker system, 7 and 9 Platoons were positioned on possible enemy withdrawal routes. With a lot of sign and previous contacts in the area Hosie felt there was a good chance of to test the magic box in a live ambush. We found a well worn track with fresh sign in relatively open scrub and bamboo country. There was good visibility, enabling observation in both directions. There was little in the way of cover for the killer group, but we were on slightly higher ground than the track and the sun was behind us. The killer group comprised Ian Hosie, Jack Bradd, Tex Nivens and I.

We wasted no time in setting up our position, concealing the claymores, establishing fire lanes and arcs of fire, setting trip wires with flares attached, ensuring communications between our other groups, checking weapons etc, etc. Of course with such a device, we had to carry quite a few additional claymores and associated detonators, control wires, and of course the magic box itself. As these were quite heavy, we suggested to the skipper that we might have to detonate even if there wasn't any enemy. He agreed - so he could give the thumbs up to the armourers who put the thing together, and we wouldn't have to lug the stuff back to the Dat.

The first night was uneventful. Early afternoon on the next day we could hear a distant contact, including the unmistakable sound of RPG's and machine gun fire (8 Pl found the bunker system occupied- for a full description of this part of the action, see Dave Wilkins "5RAR's Final Battle" on the Bn web site). The prospects of testing the system rose dramatically, as did all our senses.

In the killer group, we were ready. Tex was on the right looking up the track, I was next to him, then Jack, then Hosie with his magic box. After an hour or so Jack turned to me and whispered "Andy, I am going to take my watch off (it was an Army issue plastic "Micky Mouse" watch) and put it on top of a log - our flimsy cover. When the firing starts I want you to shoot it!" I almost couldn't contain myself, and had to stifle a laugh. Why would I do that I asked. "Well" - said jack - "I don't really want you to shoot it, I just want you to say you shot it in the after action report .... but don't tell the skipper" He then explained that these watches were very sought after, and he really needed one. I agreed, and suggested he take it off there and then and put it on the log - where Hosie could see it, and I could exclaim later that I had shot the s..t out of it! In return, Jack agreed to "sell me cheap" a camera tripod that he had bought from Bernie Cannons. So the deal was done.

Soon after this we saw a number well armed enemy with heavy packs, spaced about 10 m apart moving in single file from right to left across our front - toward the trip wire. It was late afternoon with the sun beginning to set. Only a meter before the first enemy hit the trip wire, Hosie "pushed the tit". There was a huge explosion, followed immediately by our own fire - M60, auto SLR, M79 and M16. There was an exchange of fire, but not for long. The result was 6 enemy KIA plus significant blood trails - unfortunately Ian Hosie was wounded in the leg and was evacuated by Dustoff using jungle penetrator. After the sweep through we returned to our positions. The next thing I heard was .... "where's my f.....g watch!!!" Eventually we found it a few meters in front. So Jack, have you still got it?



-----  
**LOYALTY????????????????????** What's the difference between Sonny Bill Williams and my home? - my home has fans.  
-----

**Bill Titley said.....**

