

Half Circle



Number 80 - August 2013

(If this is hard to read, try increasing the picture size to 150%!!)

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.



A MEETING AFTER 43 YEARS

Pictured at left, meeting again after more than 43 years, are Don and Carolin Frohmuller with Beth and Bill Titley. Bill reports that a long reunion was held recently, and many old memories revived.

FROM ROGER LAMBERT - any thoughts, boys? -

Since our training and operational days, I've always taken the acronym DUSTOFF for granted without ever bothering to find out its derivation.

I have a vague recollection of reading somewhere that the term that became synonymous with casualty evacuation in Vietnam was an American acronym for "***Dedicated Unhesitating Services To Our Fighting Forces***".

While this sounds plausible, perhaps our "Half Circle" fraternity can come up with the definitive answer?

DAVE'S DIARY:

Continued from the previous edition of Half Circle.

My diary entries are in *italics* whilst additional data from after action reports, Battalion and Task Force logs, as well as explanatory or descriptive commentary, are in plain text:

12 Feb 1970 (continued)

I concentrated the company into one location for our resupply (lots of ammo required) and at the same time had to fly out from the operation all members of the Advance Party for Australia (ETD 18th).

What with this, LOBs (left-out-of-battle back at base), casualties, persons being reposted to other units in SVN, my company fighting strength is down to 55 plus an FO party and 2 engineers. Fifty-five! (that is, less than 50% of Coy strength).

As a result, what with Ian Hosie wounded and in hospital, I have formed two composite platoons from the original three, disbanding 7 Pl for the remaining few days of this operation; and still both the platoons are only 23 strong each. I realised this reorganisation was unpopular with 7 Platoon members as it split them up. However we didn't want casualties caused by being numerically weak so I concluded it was necessary to have security from greater platoon strength.

Keeping us in the bush on the final operations for such a long period (from 28 December 1969 to 16 February 1970, a period of 7 weeks) was partly a consequence of an alcohol-related fragging murder in 9RAR at Nui Dat, some months earlier, during the wind-down phase of that battalion. "Fragging" derived its name from the fragmentation or shrapnel of an exploding grenade, in that case, lobbed into an officer's tent.

One consequence of the battalion policy was the reduction of the fighting strengths of our rifle companies during this final operation. This reduced fighting strength was of some concern, as all platoons and CHQ with Support Section of C Company had been engaged in battles with squad and platoon-sized enemy on about a dozen occasions in our last 2 weeks.

13 Feb

Just before noon CHQ and 8 Pl located a camp of 5 bunkers and two huts that appeared about 3 years old but not used for 6 months. There was also a barbed wire cage measuring 12 ft x 8 ft with a 5 ft wall and a roof of closely strung barbed wire. Task Force intelligence considered the cage was possibly used as a VC prison or for holding captured civilians to be employed as a labour force. We destroyed the camp.

14 Feb

Another contact today, this time with CHQ and 8 Platoon in ambush at 0944 hours. Our ambush position was just to the west of the "cauliflower ear", covering a main track to our front and a smaller foot pad to our rear. The rear machine gunner spotted 3 to 4 enemy approaching along the foot pad from about 20 metres away. He waited, holding his

fire until the nearest was just 5 metres from him before opening up with a burst from his machine gun. This displayed very good fire discipline. The result was *1 enemy KIA plus weapons and 2 packs* and webbing with food, documents and clothing recovered. Unfortunately when the enemy returned fire we also had one of our own diggers wounded. He was dusted off shortly after the action finished.

This soldier was the last man in 5RAR to be wounded in action in the Vietnam War but I regret I am unable to recall his name.

Can anyone assist?

(To be continued)



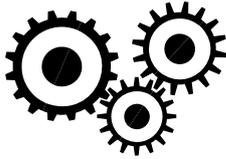
AT THE RAP: Bob Cunningham - oncology treatment

FOR DISCUSSION – THE 5RAR TIGER MASCOT

Dennis Nevins has come up with a subject for discussion – Why does 5RAR have a mascot that depicts a non-Australian animal? Our battalion history likens our fighting spirit to that of a tiger, and our history also shows our first mascot was a Sumatran Tiger, later replaced by a Bengal Tiger. Dennis poses the question – why doesn't the battalion adopt the Tasmanian tiger as its mascot? Reasons for/against are:

- The Australian Coat of Arms has two Australian animals on it;
- The current tiger mascot is not Australian;
- Would the Tasmanian tiger give us more home grown pride?
- Tasmanians are fiercely proud of the Tassie tiger. Could this entice new enlistments into 5RAR? Could Tasmania adopt 5RAR?
- Could we adopt the Tassie tiger, but keep our traditional mascot as well?
- It could be argued that many of the Army battalions' mascots are originally from foreign animals – e.g. – Septimus and Macarthur, but should that prevent us taking up the debate, and becoming an all-Australian battalion?
- Americans pride themselves on being all American. Why can't we be all Australian? We've lost a lot of our National symbols already – look at Rugby League – Knights, Titans, Cowboys, Tigers, etc.
- Our battalion history depicts a “jungle” tiger. Could we accept such a change?
- The Tasmanian tiger is extinct; would the above proposal still have impact?
- What would happen on military parades? Accompanying a stuffed extinct animal may draw criticism or ridicule.

You may be horrified by, or all for this discussion topic, but let's hear from you – YES or NO, and your reasons why. Your responses will be forwarded to Dennis for review, and perhaps further discussion.



"COGS IN THE WHEEL" - THE COOK

The Company Cook

Call him 'Bait layer', 'Ration Assassin', 'Babbler' (from rhyming slang ;babbling brook) 'Fitter and Turner' (Fitter in the oven and Turner into something else) the Company Cooks always had the meals hot and on time.

History

With the formation of the Australian Imperial Expeditionary Force in the 1st World War cooks were not on the establishment of units so men were volunteered for the cook house in the manner of 'You, you and you are now cooks'. This way COs got rid of unwanted soldiers and hence the cry has echoed from that war 'Who called the cook a bastard?' answered by 'Who called the bastard a cook? American troops attached to the Aussies for battle training were amazed to see the lift in morale when hot meals were delivered to the diggers prior to an attack; thanks to GEN Sir John Monash who planned this procedure the Company cooks were learning their trade. In the 2nd World War the Australian Army Catering Corps (AACC) was established, their Corps song 'Roast beef of old England' is a mixture with the tune 'There is a tavern in the town' which is very fitting for most of the cooks I knew. But this was the birth of the Company cooks and they have progressed over the years to those wonderful men led By SGT Paddy Cahill who looked after us in Vietnam.

Duties

The Company Cooks were awake before the birds with Paddy yelling out commands in Irish to the other cooks and duties, the cooks would interpret Paddy's Irish commands to the duties as they got breakfast ready. The chuffers would start up, this sounded like a mortar attack as the cooks used their own procedures and swear words to light them, sometimes the diggers moving past the serving point would stare with wonder at the cook with a new sun tan and no eyebrows. Again Paddy's Irish would be heard at lunch and tea time until the whole Company had been fed. Diggers silly enough to criticize any of the cooks work would be confronted by an angry Irishman, handed a 24 ration pack and booted up the bum, the message clear; come back in three meals time. Who can forget Paddy's Buns at each re-sup in the weeds, fresh tucker, even a bun, was a break from the 24 hour ration pack. Of course the story was invented? of how after a re-sup a Platoon of C Coy was in contact when a digger yelled out 'What do we do now ?' he was answered by 'Throw Paddy's Buns' the story goes that there was that much laughter that the nogs took off in fright. Company cooks did piquet duties and TAOR patrols while we were in the weeds on Ops.

Chuffers , (or Choofers)

Thought to be a heating device issued by the Australian Army Catering Corps (AACC) and used by Company Cooks in the preparation of food though this may be a fabrication. The item has been described as a cross between a napalm canister and a flame thrower renowned for removing arm and facial hair it was shunned by Infantrymen appointed as mess duties, it was operated by the Company Cooks only. The operating procedure was carried out with litres of petrol, heaps of Cooks prayers, swear words and matches, a loud explosion meant that the machine had either disappeared or was working while the Cook responsible made his way to the RAP. There was much talk among the diggers in the ORs Boozer about how the Chuffer could be used against the nogs in the weeds but it was pointed out that the casualty

radius of the Chuffer was the closet Cook. It is not known if the present day AACC use Chuffers of this type but if they do; good luck to them.

Ed's note: Thanks to Jack Bradd for this insight into the role of the cook, and his very accurate description of what Chuffers REALLY did. Despite all of the remarks that were made by all of us, we would have been pretty hungry without them.

YOUR SERVICE IS APPRECIATED:

Greg (Hickory) Dick phoned your editor a couple of weeks ago to say that Marie and he got talking to a visitor to their café at their “Hickory’s Run” Olive Grove in the Southern Flinders Ranges, SA. As they spoke, Greg mentioned to the visitor that he had served in Vietnam. The lady stood up, reached out, shook his hand and said “**Thank you**”. Need we say any more?



Inaugural Evening Service to Commemorate
Vietnam Veterans Day 2013
to be held at the
**Vietnam  Veterans
Commemorative Walk**
on Sunday 18th August at 6.00pm,
High St, Seymour, Victoria

Please join us for a memorable evening to commemorate
Vietnam Veterans Day.

Visitors will have the opportunity to view The Wall at night,
when it is softly lit from within,
and to enjoy the participation of the local school children
in the very first evening service to be held at The Walk.

Everyone is welcome
and please remember to dress warmly for the occasion.

Refreshments are available
upstairs at The Seymour Club after the service.

Please refer any enquiries to Mr Ross Stewart,
President, VVAA Mitchell Sub-Branch,
on 0407 646 988 or rossvva@hotmail.com

*Please would you pass on this information to
friends, colleagues, families & Associations?*

www.vietnamvetwalk.org.au supported by
Burgess SIGNS



In Sydney and want to hit the little white ball? Then head for the Georges River Golf Course, Henry Lawson Drive Georges Hall. Geoff Grimish and his team will make you most welcome. Geoff is a Vietnam vet (RAA), and is a great supporter of this newsletter. Phone (02) 9724 1615.

When I told my doctor I had ringing in the ears, he said “Don’t answer it”.

If flying is so safe, why do they call the airport the terminal?

IN THE NEXT EDITION OF HALF CIRCLE:

A special article by Dennis (Digger) Nevins, recalling the 7PL ambushes of February 1970. These recollections are from Dennis' personal diary.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - donharrod@bigpond.com
(02) 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, with help from Jack Bradd, Roger Lambert, Bill Titley,
Wally Magalas, Dennis Nevins, Bob Hooper and Greg Dick.