

In closing, I want to thank all members of C Coy 5RAR for the service you rendered in Vietnam- it was second to none. It was an honour for me to have served with you. I hope you and your families have a happy Christmas and I wish you well for the future.

“Ghenghis”

DAVE'S DIARY: (from the diary of Captain David Wilkins, OC C Coy Dec '69 to Mar '70)

Continued from the previous edition of Half Circle.

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

22 Dec 1969

I have command of the company now as Major Ducker departs for Australia tomorrow.

My senior office bearers are:

2ic - Lt Steve Stinson

CSM - WO2 Jack Lake

CQMS - Ssgt Eddie O'Reilly

7 PI - Lt Ian Hosie (PI Comd)

- Sgt Doc Halliday (PI Sgt)

8 PI - 2Lt Peter Commerford (PI Comd)

- Sgt Tony Wass (PI Sgt, outgoing)

- Sgt Kiwi Hill (PI Sgt, incoming)

9 PI - 2Lt Roger Lambert (PI Comd)

- Sgt Ron (Tonto) Inglis (PI Sgt)

Sgt Paddy Cahill is our Sgt cook, and the new FO (Arty forward observer) is Capt Dave Bedford.

Cpl Peter McCauley was my MFC (Mortar Fire Controller), Cpl Guy Ansell the section commander of Support Section at CHQ, Cpl Kevin (Doc) Mulligan our medic and Lcpl Barry Morgan our intelligence rep. My two radio operators at CHQ were Lcpl Alan Miles (complete with Lancashire accent) and Pte Bob Reed. The company clerk, Cpl Don (Pirate) Harrod, ran the orderly room.

3 days before Xmas and C Coy has now gone bush again, this time in the pass between Nui Thi Vai and the Nui Dinhs, a particularly dangerous defile overlooked by the steep slopes with their caves and boulders and dense vegetation. There was sufficient treed cover in the pass, however, to offer us some protection from observation. We have the task of ambushing for 3 days. We will return to Nui Dat late afternoon on Xmas Eve.

At 0850 hours 22 Dec C Coy moved out in TCVs with cavalry and mortar support (mortars mounted in APCs). By afternoon we had located an extensive unoccupied enemy bunker system.

23 Dec

At 0810 hours we apprehended and checked 20 persons with 5 ox carts on a fire trail. Nothing untoward was found but they were sent south to be met by RF troops for closer checking.

Soon after noon *8 PI got into a heavy contact today (at grid reference YS326671 in the western foothills of Nui Dinh) against 30 enemy who appear to have been from D67 Engineer Battalion. The enemy counter-attacked twice, firing AK47, RPGs and M79s (rifle grenades) and caused 4 casualties from shrapnel wounds. The enemy finally withdrew uphill into a known camp area in caves, but must have received further casualties from our mortar fire, which I directed in behind them. Two enemy dead were left in the contact area and blood trails were on their withdrawal route.*

This enemy fought aggressively and definitely appeared to be Main Force troops, owing to their actions, dress (camouflage suits) and weapons. Two light fire teams ("Bushranger") provided aerial supporting fire.

Our wounded were extracted by jungle penetrator, and winched two at a time into the Dustoff chopper. There were some problems from the winch catching on vines and branches during this process. Dustoff was completed by 1615 hours.

Early in the afternoon 9 Pl, moving along the high ground parallel with a creek, heard enemy movement, set up an immediate ambush facing downhill and contacted 4 enemy dressed in camouflage uniforms moving south-west along the creek line (at grid reference YS312677), resulting in one enemy WIA (blood trail). A light fire team engaged the area before the platoon's final sweep through the contact zone.

24 Dec (Christmas Eve)

The problem arises today of extracting ourselves from this area as we have to pass through a defile which is also a suspected minefield. Clearing the high ground overlooking this pass is little problem, but the move through the pass itself will be dicey. The attached engineers will clear all the way with close cover by the following APCs. We are hoping for a local ox cart to come along so we can send him in front. That way, he'll take a safe route, as locals know where the mines are laid. In fact, the woodcutters obtain VC permission to be in these areas by paying taxes to the VC in the form of cutting bunker logs in the areas of their own larger cuttings.

Got through OK without incident using two woodcutters as planned. We moved through the pass without either being ambushed or striking any land mines.

That was our best Christmas present.

(To be continued)

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was in a restaurant and got hit on the back of the head by a prawn cocktail.
I looked round and this bloke shouts, 'That's just for starters!'

A WARNING FROM COLIN SUMMERFIELD: I did not know this.....When you drink Vodka over ice, it can give you kidney failure, when you drink Rum over ice, it can give you liver failure, when you drink whiskey over ice, it can give you heart problems, when you drink Gin over ice, it can give you brain problems. Apparently, ice is really bad for you. Warn all your friends.



Apologies for the quality of the picture on the left - newspapers don't copy very well. The picture shows a priest delivering the Dedication at the Remembrance Day ceremony at Tamworth NSW on 11th November 2011. The priest - none other than our own Father Tom Shanahan, the 5RAR Padre during our tour of Vietnam.

MY PAGE, MY WORDS

3411359 SGT PETER KNIGHT

A MISTAKEN IDENTITY

Sometime between ops back in the lines, Officers and SNCOs had to perform as Company Duty Officer.

I think I say this without any fear of contradiction; this was not a favourite activity??

On this occasion I commenced duty at the required time (1630 hrs?) from memory.

During the uneventful evening I did a check of the Coy lines which in itself could be daunting (I always felt that the Coy Duty Officer should have a bell to ring to announce his approach, as this would save a lot of misunderstandings?? Don't know if Jack Lake would have agreed.

I noticed that there seemed a bit of noise coming from my tent which I shared with our Pl Comd (Roger Lambert)

On entering the tent I found that the Boss was holding an unscheduled O Group.

There seemed to be a bit of hurried activity just before I entered the tent but I was pleased to find that all inside were consuming Goffers or sipping on empty mugs (didn't notice any cockatoos).

After some short time??? I left them to the in depth discussion of (????) and continued with the lines check.

The part of being Duty Officer that no one looked forward to was sleeping in the Coy CP (humid and stale air)

In the morning I was in the Cook House having a nice cool orange juice and listening to Paddy, whose catch phrase was if it was for the diggers, then it was ok.

I noticed Bill Titley (Coy 2 i/c) making a bee line for my tent and I thought something is up.

Obviously it didn't take long for him to say his piece as he reappeared within minutes.

Not being concerned, I dismounted duty at the required time and went back to my tent, where I found Roger and Bluey Schafer; Blue sitting on the edge of my bed.

I asked what the 2 i/c wanted and was told by Roger that Bill came in said "Get out of bed and get your Pl Sgt out of bed as well" or words to that affect.

Bill must have taken some notice of the after hours O Group that had been conducted the previous evening.

My obvious question was "did anyone say that it wasn't me in my bed"?; no cigars for guessing the answer.

AT THE RAP: Ian Cooper (ongoing oncology treatment).

A MESSAGE FROM IAN COOPER TO ALL HIS C COMPANY MATES: A couple of weeks ago I had a CT scan prior to doing a holiday trip to WA and it was found that the cancer had metasised into the brain. Having now arrived back from WA, I have to go back down to the Townsville General Hospital for further management of the tumour. Seems that full skull radiation is the order of the day and how ever successful that may be will be in the lap of the gods. Treatment is in 5 day lots so I am told and it is simply palliative treatment. All it does is reduce the swelling within the brain. I take each day as it comes along and I am happy to continue the status quo!

Now, the main part of this diatribe is to bring to the attention of members of C Company, some info about a long time friendship with Geoff Ford.....my ever illustrious stretcher bearer!

Forty one years give or take and I guess it has been powering on ever since.

I could rabbit on forever here about him but I loves him like a brother....and he still has to be shown how to catch fish by "his daddy"

Congratulations to Geoff on becoming grandpa many times over.

One thing I must remind Geoff of is that the deal is off if he does not take every skerrick of lead, line, knots, hooks, rods, reels etc outta the shed on my eventual demise.

Coops.

Ed's notes: (1) Coops is showing all of us what "attitude" is all about, and (2) take note Fordy - get your stuff organized - you have been told!

A farmer went on a packaged tour to Darwin.

The tour guide asked, "Would you like to see an aboriginal carving?"

The farmer replied, "No thanks, I've seen a cow calving and that was enough for me".

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - 02 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, donharrod@bigpond.com with help from Brig Colin Khan, Dave Wilkins, Ian Cooper, Col Summerfield, Peter Knight, Bob Hooper and the Tamworth City News.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!!