

Half Circle



Number 110 - February 2016

(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.

In this edition of Half Circle, we have a couple of articles where our members are starting to tell their own stories (thanks Andy and Geoff). If we don't preserve our history and record our thoughts and experiences, who will? (see *the 5RAR website*). We look forward to more of you blokes coming out of the woodwork and giving your side of things. If you are unsure about writing, just make notes and the words will be put together for you. I am sure that this will be discussed more when we meet in Canberra in only a few weeks from now.
Ed.



AT THE RAP:

Barrie Taylor – ongoing oncology treatment
Don Frohmuller, Barry Baker, Geoff Ford, John Hellyer and Blue Schafer are managing their convalescences well after recent setbacks.



TRAVELLING ABOUT: No reports. All probably getting a grease and oil change on the old Datsun, before heading to Canberra.



Binh Ba 2015 - courtesy John Hellyer

FROM PETER (Blue) McHUGH: Below is a painting of mine. I would like to know if anyone can tell me the date of the Magpie depicted in the attached painting flew over 'C' company between Dat Do and the Long Hai Mountains in late June or early July 1969. Thanks.



ANDY MacDOUGAL - The Next Generation:

In the late 70's my father visited us in Sydney. He had arranged for the four surviving members of his WWII unit (British Military Mission 204 to China) to come over to our place.

To meet these aging Commandos who spent 18 months behind enemy with my father was a real privilege.

So I made a point of ensuring my children met and got to know my fellow diggers. Our daughter Felicity was totally impressed with "Hippy" (Alex Koppen) who she thought was the coolest dude she ever met. Likewise over the years I have had the pleasure of meeting getting to know many other diggers' children.

So I was very pleased when Digger Nevins sent a message a few weeks ago to say his daughter Samantha was in the Hunter Valley with her partner Anthony, and wanted to catch up with me and taste some of our wines. Until

recently Sam was in the Army – a Sig based in Darwin – and Anthony is a serving soldier in Darwin. It was great to spend some time with these two “contemporary diggers” – and what fine young people they are. I showed them the latest edition of “The Year of the Tigers” and particularly the photo of her Dad that she had never seen before (they only have the first edition of the book).

Sam took a photo of both of us, and sent it to her Dad. He subsequently told me that Sam was known as Kookaburra – a name bestowed after the first word she spoke - “kooka”.... and it stuck!

Both Kookaburra and her sister Sarah have been regular visitors and a great support to Jack Brad over the years, and Jack has told me numerous times how much he appreciates their visits and contact.

So a big thanks to all our children (not forgetting wives partners, friends and relatives). They get a much better understanding of their fathers by getting to know “Dad’s old mates”. They also can be better informed than many of the general public and sections of our media who hold stereotyped views of the Vietnam War and our part in it.



Andy MacDougal (third from left), with his 7PL mates John (Buddah) Martini, Ken (Legs) Leggett, and “Hard Man” Bill Hartley.

FROM GEOFF PEARSON: MY FIRST DAY IN VIETNAM:

Holsworthy : As the Battalion were readying for departure for Vietnam on board the HMAS Sydney, I discovered that I had won a ballot that I had not even entered (yet again?). Our Section Commander (Bill Evans) had put my name forward to form part of The Rear Party, preventing me from accompanying the close friends within our Section, Platoon & Company. (Thank you Bill). This also prevented me from establishing a warm friendship with my brand new GPMG- M60. (Again, thank you Bill) **NOT.**

The rear party’s responsibility was to clean up the mess left behind within the Battalion Lines, which did test one’s patience, especially when we had to return all the “rental” TV’s that you guys left behind. We did however “score” some left over food & booze from The Officers & Sergeant’s Messes, which made life a little more bearable.

After the clean up The Rear Party was secreted to Kingsford Smith Airport well after dark, where our Qantas Boeing 707 was waiting. First stop Darwin (approx. 1am) where we were allowed off the plane whilst refuelling took

place. Unfortunately, no alcohol in sight. Next Stop, Singapore for Breakfast. Again, no alcohol.

Landing at Tan Son Nhat Airport, Saigon was interesting. All the planes on & around the tarmac were protected by sandbags & barriers. Planes & helicopters were everywhere. The heat as we disembarked was oppressive. Here we were in a war zone without a weapon. After the usual checks, we were loaded onto a waiting RAAF Caribou on our way to Nui Dat.

After being “dumped” within the C Coy Lines, we were met by our illustrious leader DD Graham (woof) who commenced with his “spiel”, advising that having been in country for the past few weeks was now indigenous (??) to the area, being very comfortable in it’s surroundings.

The “pep talk” over I was shown to my tent & bunk. Again thanks to Bill Evans, who bunked me in with Dobsy (Mick Dobbs) & Tex (Bob Cunningham). To my delight, Bill Ross was also sharing our tent which made life a little less stressful.

After familiarising myself with the usuals (showers – toilets – mess hall – boozier) I was then surprised to find myself on a TAOR Patrol that night. Reporting to CQ Mousey McLeod in the QM Store where I collected (1) American C Ration Meal (Was this to be my first, or last meal in Vietnam. Was it supposed to be dinner, or breakfast?).

Introducing myself to my new best friend (GPMG-M60) & collecting ammunition, the patrol introduced each other behind the gun pit next to the B Coy area gate to the firing range. I really cannot recall who else was in this patrol or who was in charge. I can only remember being “shit scared” going outside the wire for the first time on my first day in country.

We diligently patrolled across the “ditch”, through the bamboo, setting an ambush on what appeared to be a well used track approx. 4/5kms from The Dat. Who ever was my No2 on The Gun that night carefully sighted 2 x Claymore Mines to our RH flank & rear. During the night (approx. 3 hours in) we lost communication with The Dat & our Leader (?) decided to move closer, to re-establish communications.

Even though it was drilled into us that we didn’t move at night, I for one was happy with this decision & decided that I would bring in the Claymores. Shock/Horror, both Claymores were sighted about face. They were pointed at us, not towards the enemy. I don’t think that the nogs turned them around, so I put it down to unfamiliar surroundings & nerves. After this, at no time did I trust anyone to sight Claymores anywhere near my position.

Moving closer to & with The Dat in sight, we re-established communications, setting up a night harbour position. I chose the shelter of a rather large tree, sighting The Gun over a deep valley. Within the stillness of the night, I could hear sounds that were similar to digging/shoveling. My thoughts went back to our training films that showed these little VC were experts at tunneling, & I

was convinced that these little buggers were tunneling right under our position. This noise kept me awake all night.

The night passed slowly & uneventfully. I was never so glad to be back within the wire at The Dat.

That was my first day & night in country. I was never so grateful to tuck into Paddy's breakfast, although the "eather" eggs put me off eggs for life.

Fortunately, after settling in, I fell into line into what did become a very fine unit, one of which I was proud to be part of. The old C Coy had its share of drama's, but the esprit de corps remains with me today & will be part of me till the end.

Ed's note: 2788000 Pte Geoffrey Pearson was indeed one of the characters of C Coy. We affectionately called him "Jethro, Pearso, or The Reluctant Soldier" as he could turn any situation into a complaint! Geoff was an integral part of us, a true mate, and a good, solid soldier. Since Vietnam, Geoff has been very successful in business, and has worked tirelessly for the 5RAR Association. His efforts have been rewarded with a Life Membership. Geoff continues his work as the Secretary and Memorabilia Officer of your Association.



Apparently 1 in 5 people in the world are Chinese. There are 5 people in my family, so it must be one of them. It's either my mum or dad...or my older brother Colin.....or my younger brother Ho-Cha-Chu.....but I think its Colin.

I went to a Chinese restaurant last week and ordered duck. When they told me it was \$40, I said "Just give me the bill".

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – donharrod@bigpond.com, 0418 423 313, with help from Peter McHugh, John Hellyer, Andy MacDougal and Geoff Pearson.