

Half Circle

Number 14 - January 2008

A publication for the members
of C Coy 5 RAR (2nd tour) South Vietnam,
and especially for the families of those who are no longer with us.

Please take note - urgent information required.....

A short time ago, we lost another of our C Coy (2nd tour) diggers. **3794330 Pte Ian Henry Crothers**, of Geelong, Victoria, died under very sad circumstances. Ian left his wife and children - let's not waste words - DESTITUTE. His wife has had to sell the family home to cover debts. What is just as sad, are the following facts:

- Ian never disclosed to anyone that he was a Vietnam vet, despite the fact that his mates were involved in veterans' organisations;
- None of us seem to remember him. He was only with us from 7th May to 31st July 1969.

We know that Ian was a "Nasho", but not much else. Perhaps one of you can remember him, shared a hootchie, can remember why he was with us for such a short time - was he ill, had difficulty with the job, sought a transfer, etc, etc.

Colonel Roger Wainwright - 5RAR Association President, in conjunction with others including Barry Morgan and Geoff Pearson, is attempting to obtain further details on Ian. Roger has indicated that the constitution of our Association does not allow appeals for, or grants of funds in situations like this, and has suggested that if anyone is to consider any type of fundraising (raffle, etc), it would be up to the appropriate sub-unit to arrange this. We may need to consider a "fund raiser" in the future.

At this stage, I feel that we should try "first things first", and seek your input regarding any information on Ian. If you have any information, please contact Don (rosdon@bigpond.net.au), Barry (bm126489@bigpond.net.au), or Geoff (gp@rbimports.com.au).

Jack Bradd said.....

Vungers hey, Vung Tau, the rest centre for front-line troops. We got to go there about once every six weeks, and for about a day and a half each visit. Last time I was in Vietnam I was banned from the place so I intended to make up for it this time. We ended up at the yank airman's boozier looking for an armourer as our machine gunner wanted to try out one of the ring sights we had seen fixed to a door gunner's M60 on a yank chopper. We got on the grog with the yanks and soon one of the diggers went off with a yank who worked on choppers, the trading item was an SLR bayonet and scabbard. The digger came back with a brand new M60 with a ring sight fixed, it appears that the bayonet was much prized by the yanks and he had been offered every thing including a

complete door mount and gun. We knew we'd get into strife if we took the gun back so we sent the digger off and he eventually came back with the sight.

Next morning we were woken by the sound of many voices, one of them yelled 'There's a couple of dead Aussies here Sarge' myself and a digger, I think it was our Forward Scout Johnny Marine, had carked in the middle of the yanks parade ground and the Sarge wasn't very happy as he was trying to hold a Formation (Parade). We got off the parade ground looking around to see we were on the other side of a fence opposite the airman's boozier, we had no idea how we got there or what happened last night. The fence seemed to go for miles in either direction so we decided to climb over. We were half way over when a couple of yank jeeps, one with a .50 cal mounted, full of angry MP's persuaded us otherwise. We were tonguing for a beer by the time we got to the boozier.

I can't remember what happened to the ring sight for the M60, but Vungers was great. In old Saigon we Aussies were very popular with the yank pogos who infested the place. We were quartered in a pub called Bachelor Enlisted Mens Quarters (OR) and were always welcomed at the bar. Much trading of equipment took place with the most sought after item being our Kangaroo skin GP Boots and Hats KFF. The yanks wanted to know everything about Australia, and I like to think that thanks to our efforts many went on R&R to Aussie. The Negroes (as they were then called) attached themselves to us and they were great blokes. One of them was a big bloke about 6 foot 19 and three pick handles wide he approached me the first night I was there and ask me to say something in Australian, I thought he was joking so told him to piss off. I realised that I had said the wrong thing as he looked liked he was going to rearrange me so I blurted out 'Wooloomooloo' he laughed and bought me a beer.

In the peace time army the Battalion was on exercise at Singleton and we were given a few days off in the Singleton Camp. The CSM was wondering what to do with me as I was banned from the Camp, it looked like I would be left by myself guarding the Battalion area. But Wally Barnett (Trackers 5 RAR) was posted to the Dogs in the Camp and volunteered to look after me. I marched the Platoon down to the open showers set up by the Bath Unit and as we were showering Wally called out to me. He was standing near a vehicle with a civilian, I thought the civilian was drooling but put it down to imagination. I later found out from Wally that this bloke was as camp as a row of tents. I never told the Platoon just had a quiet chuckle to myself now and again and planned revenge on Wally.

We found:.....

Peter Commerford, commander of 8 Pl, based in Sydney. Great to hear from you Pete!

Remember:.....

Monsoons, picquet, clean laundry, our boozier, a game of darts, scrubbing mud off webbing, scrim, letters from home, letters to home, Paddy's buns, the practice range, ANPRC 25 sets, paludrine, dapson, dixies, Jack Bradd's bombs, Jack Lake's roaring, cold (or no water) shaves, mosquito repellent, powdered eggs, plastic potatoes, letters from Mum, letters to Mum, mateship.

Don Teichelman said.....

This plaque was found in Albury, NSW, at a Memorial to Vietnam Veterans. Rest in Peace, Jim, you were a young man who joined us as a National Serviceman, and totally committed to Australia's role in south East Asia.



Don Harrod said..... Thanks to those who sent the poem about the Veteran spending Christmas on his own It was very moving, and due to the timing, I have decided to keep it for Christmas 2008.

Jack Bradd said..... Here's a few questions to see how the memory is after almost 40 years:

1. What is the weight of an SLR pull-through?
2. Bolts for Australian weapons had their serial numbers inscribed on the side. Where was the serial number for the following US weapons inscribed?
 - M79; and
 - 81mm mortar?
2. How do you stop a runaway M60?

Answers in the next "Half Circle".

This newsletter..... was compiled and edited by Don Harrod (rosdon@bigpond.net.au), with assistance from Jack Bradd, Don Teichelman, Geoff Pearson, and the 5RAR Association.