

# Half Circle



Number 115 - July 2016

This informal publication is for the members of C Coy 5 RAR (2<sup>nd</sup> 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.



**AT THE RAP:** From **Barrie Taylor**. As we know, Barrie has been battling a rare form of cancer for some years. Barrie writes "I am just back out of hospital again after another inflammation attack along with the NHL Waldenstroms. Waldenstroms is an incurable cancer I am the first to be granted a DVA acceptance for the cancer after a 3-year battle.

Also you may pass onto to those who may suffer the disease or Diverticulitis of the bowel, again 1st to be accepted by DVA for this disease.

Anybody need help in building cases send them onto me". *Your editor has Barrie's contact details.*

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**JACK LAKE:** Jack is recovering well from major ankle surgery, and is almost ready to dispatch the wheelchair for two feet on solid ground.

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**ALEX (HIPPIE) KOPPEN:** Alan McNulty has sent the latest on Hippie for the information of all his colleagues: Alex has been hospitalised in Perth for the last five weeks, with a form of delirium or perhaps even dementia. He spoke with Alan for some time, then started asking who he was. Alan picked Hippie up from hospital on June 4<sup>th</sup> and took him to Rockingham, south of Fremantle. In typical Hippie style, he told hospital staff his sergeant was picking him up, then had them standing at attention. Hippie's wife Fran will keep Alan posted, and hopes that he can meet his old mates for a beer before long.

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## A MEMBER PROFILE – 2784009 2LT ROGER ANTHONY LAMBERT:

In 1963, after High School at Hamilton, Newcastle, NSW, I joined the then Walton's Stores and was employed at their Department Store in Hunter Street, Newcastle as part of their Management Trainee Scheme. Once a month, we were required to travel to the Head Office in Sydney for formal training. Walton's flagship store was on the corner of George and Park Streets, Sydney, NSW; that site is now the Citibank office tower.

Life in Newcastle at the time was a 'beach' (literally). As much time as could be possibly spent before and after work hours (in those days, it must be remembered that the working week was not only Monday to Friday but Saturday mornings as well) was spent surfing at any one of Newcastle's numerous beaches, attending the regular Town Hall dance on Saturday nights (the Rhythm Devils were the resident band) and testing the available ales at any number of Newcastle and suburban hotels. And there was the odd parachute jump with the Newcastle Sport Parachute Club which I believe is still active to this day.

1965 however saw life change dramatically when I was required to register for National Service and the dreaded Call-Up Notice arrived. My enlistment was officially 20 April 1966. During recruit training at Singleton, NSW, prospective candidates were being interviewed for officer training at Scheyville (near Windsor, NSW). I was successful with my application and after six months arduous training, I was commissioned as a Second Lieutenant in the Royal Australian Infantry Corps.

But rather than a posting to one of the Infantry Battalions (we were all cracking our necks to go to Vietnam), I was posted to 1 RTB at Kapooka, NSW to train recruits. Although disappointed with this outcome, in hindsight, my time at Kapooka stood me in good stead for what was to come later.

1968 saw my two-year National Service commitment drawing to a close. In order to put me close to my place of 'enlistment', I was posted to 5 RAR at Holsworthy to serve out my remaining time in the Army. The Battalion had just returned from its first tour of duty. That piqued my desire to get to Vietnam and to put my training into practice as an Infantry Platoon Commander.

With the Battalion warned for a second tour of duty, my opportunity to serve overseas came with that news. I applied for and was successful in obtaining a Short Service Commission which enabled me to stay on in the Army and, importantly, to fulfil my desire to lead men in combat.

I was given command of 9 Platoon, C Company, a position I'm proud to say I retained throughout 5 RAR's second tour of Vietnam. Someone once pointed out to me that the CSM, Jake Lake, and I were the only members of C Company to continuously hold our respective positions throughout pre-embarkation training, in country and RTA.

9 Platoon was a very tight unit even though we had our share of rogues and larrikins (no names, no pack drill). Without exception, 'my boys' proved themselves time and time again on operations which made my leadership task so much easier. We had our share of casualties and replacements throughout the tour but morale remained high and any reinforcements settled in quickly and contributed to the ongoing success of the platoon.

To this day I have never regretted my decision to take out that Short Service Commission to get to Vietnam and to put my Scheyville training into practice. Similarly, I've never regretted my decision to apply for a Permanent Commission following RTA. I guess 26 years' continuous military service says it all, retiring as I did as a Lieutenant Colonel in 1992. However, the highlight of my career will always be my time in 5 RAR and my command of 9 Platoon in both training and on operations.

It speaks volumes of the calibre of 'my boys' when after 46 years they still call me "Skip". To this day, I'm extremely proud of each and every one of them and thank them for being such terrific bush soldiers and at times, just to test my leadership skills, recalcitrant barracks soldiers. Typical Aussie diggers – I wouldn't have had it any other way.



2Lt Roger Lambert

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***Ed's note: YOUR article can occupy this space in the next "Half Circle" please contact your editor! Half Circle is designed for us to keep in touch with each other – you can write about any subject you like!***

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**FROM DENNIS (DIGGER) NEVINS – BUSH BASHING AGAIN!**

I returned from my scrub bashing through the Territory ranges on Friday. The last story was about the rangy dingo - well it gets better on this journey. I had spent 7 and a half hours' scrub bashing and climbing around tabletops, it was time to get back to the ute over an hour away. At the time I was down on lower ground, to get to the upper plateau I had rock scramble up a cliff face, it was difficult but not too dangerous. Once on top the legs powered on (I'm much better these days after getting over 15 years of chronic fatigue). I came to a slight drop which had dead spinifex and bush on the lower drop, as my left boot went down into the bush I saw a movement. King Brown registered in my head, then it rose up past my knee near my left hand, it was arched and flared. Two words came out of me - the second word was Jesus. The first

word I'm sure you can imagine. The titanium knee joint kicked me in a direction I didn't think possible. I looked back to see, it wasn't a King Brown but a powerful looking Taipan, he was totally dead stick grey the same as the scrub he was in. He was now trying to get away; they don't wish to be aggressive by nature but I guess when a Blundstone boot with nearly 100kg behind it comes down on you then you're going to get stirred up. I always wear moleskin trousers for protection and I don't know if he struck the moleskins or missed or didn't strike at all, I was doing the leap of faith. I'm starting to think I may take up golf.

*Ed's note: Surely Digger doesn't see ALL the action – if you have any stories to tell, please submit them. Thanks.*

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### **TRAVELLING ABOUT:**

Neville Hayne, travelling from his home in Moree NSW, to Portland Victoria to see his old mate Frank Moore. Neville and Frank served in 7PL in Jack Bradd's section.

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9PL – In August, a group of 9PL diggers, under the control and care of their Tour Guide/Transport Officer/Baggage Handler/and general roustabout Blue Schafer are off to Vietnam. This trip will also include attendance at the very solemn occasion of the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. Well done, boys, have a safe trip.

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Claude and Judith Ducker have opted to leave the Winter chills of Canberra and head to Queensland for a few weeks.

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