

Half Circle

Number 54 - June 2011



(Please increase picture size to 150% for a better read!)

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.

VALE - 2789641 Barry Raymond WILLIAMS. Barry, a member of 7PL, died on 28th April 2011, after a long battle with cancer. We will all remember him as the larrikin he was - the bloke who could find trouble without even trying - the bloke with the most infectious and cheeky grin - the solid, dependable Digger who didn't know how to complain. In later years he was known as "Bungy", the ex-Digger with the motor bike bearing the Qld number plate: 5RAR. He was a dedicated family man, and we offer our condolences to his wife, children and grand children. Lest We Forget.

FROM AFGHANISTAN: Major Dave French has provided a series of articles from Combat Team Charlie (we would know them as C Coy 5RAR). These articles are exceptional, written by the Diggers, and I urge you all to get onto the 5RAR website, and have a really good read. These blokes are a credit to C Coy, 5RAR, The Regiment and Australia. We should be very proud to have been their predecessors. The 5RAR website is www.5rar.asn.au .



From Roger Lambert:

Here is a photo of some Tigers having a bit of a break before heading into a more serious situation (a bit like Shoalwater Bay before we headed to Vietnam)

IAN LEIS REMEMBERS: 2788000 Private Geoff Pearson



Nicknames: Pearso, Jethro (from TV show Beverly Hillbillies), and also Motormouth by most NCOs.

"Pearso" already had a promising career in the banking industry, having had employment there since leaving school. Being part of the 18th intake 1967 to 1969 he went to Kapooka for basic training and then to Singleton for infantry corps training – on completion he was posted to 5RAR.

He remembers all too well doing his basic training, sharing a room with "Rouster" (Wayne Stephens) and "Barney"(Neil Simpson). It was a case of the "city" meets the "bush" with these three. Pearso was very capable of looking after himself, having had to fend for himself from a very young age. He always achieved a spotless personal presentation- "Spick & Span" on parade. Always on time with the right gear etc. He quite often made a number of us in 8 Platoon look rather ordinary.

"Jethro" was another nickname that Pearso wore, one that I relate to him (the similarity to "Jethro" in the TV show The Beverley Hillbillies was evident). I believe Jethro topped the M-60 course we did together on the Holsworthy Range in cold and wet conditions. He also did a scout-tracking-sniper course at BULLI. Pearso was deployed to SVN as an M-60 gunner and no one was able to take the job from him during his tour.

Being single and growing up in Sydney Pearso was soon sharing his knowledge of the night spots with "Freddie"(Peter McCarthy), "Skippy"(John Yabsley), "Rowdy"(Rod Heinze) and "Poxy"(Billy Ross) and many a good night out was had. Many lifelong friendships were made during his military life by "Pearso" but these mentioned are very close to his heart. For Pearso losing Rowdy, Poxy and Rouster among others has left a big gap in his life.

Geoff's wife Lyn (married in 1971), their daughter Lauren and son David plus in-laws and 3 grandchildren support and play the major part in his life today. Geoff is proud of his physical fitness. He enjoys a healthy diet (under Lyn's direction), running each day and a bit of sailing occasionally. He is also very hands on with his business activities "R B Imports and R B Racing Australia". We all know and appreciate the time, effort, determination and personal expense that Pearso has put into our Battalion Association.

Pearso has also been involved(once again on his own initiative) in supporting the current serving troops in 5RAR, organising comfort/care packages to be sent ensuring the troops know they are supported and not forgotten.

I don't think Pearso will ever be able to fully retire as he thrives on activity. However retirement (more time for the Pearson family) and a slower lifestyle must not be too far away. His health is good although some 10 years back he had a heart scare- most probably from work pressure.

Very few who served with Pearso would have believed that he would have become so involved - committed to the military and the military family that exists today. I for one have been taken under his care on a number of occasions. Both Geoff and Lynn have shared their family home to many of us, their hospitality is second to none.

There would not be a more fitting person than Geoff Pearson to have received "Life Membership" of the 5th Battalion Association. I feel very proud just to be able to say "Yes, I know Geoff Pearson" and to be considered a mate and friend to Geoff and his family is held close to my heart.

Pearso -Jethro- Motor Mouth - Geoff you have excelled in all walks of your life. Your dedication and commitment to those who have travelled those paths with and around you will always be indebted to you. Thank you for having allowed me to be part of your life. You have my respect and gratitude.

DOES ANYONE have any photos of "Yarralumla", the OC's office and accommodation at our Nui Dat base? You will remember it was above the C Company CP, and in the middle of the rubber plantation. If so, please forward any information to your editor. Thanks.



John Hellyer with his son Dennis, at the Long Tan Memorial, Vietnam, ANZAC Day 2011.

DAVE'S DIARY

Continued from last edition of Half Circle.

My diary entries are in *italics* whilst additional explanatory or descriptive commentary is in plain text:

15 Nov 1969

In a night ambush position, 2nd Lieutenant Roger Lambert's 9 Platoon heard chopping and sawing of timber to their east and planned to check it out at first light the next day.

Roger was a Nasho who had been called up on 20 April 1966 and had initially gone to 3TB Singleton, but then successfully applied to enter the Officer Training Unit (OTU) at Scheyville. He graduated as a baggy-arse 2nd Lieutenant, chose infantry as his Corps and was posted to 1RTB Wagga Wagga as a Platoon Commander. From there he was posted to 5RAR in 1968 to be near his place of discharge, Newcastle. Wanting to test himself on active service however, he applied for and gained a Short Service Commission, enabling him to remain with the battalion and go to Vietnam as Sunray call-sign 33. A strong, quiet type of leader, he ran a tight, well-trained platoon, and despite his youth was well-respected by his diggers.

16 Nov

Don Frohmuller and I are now *back in the scrub*. Since I was out here last (5 days ago), C Coy has moved to an area further south, in fact nearer to the real Hat Dich zone, and about 4 clicks north of the Nui Thai Vai Mountains. This area is the stamping ground of the companies of D67 Engineer Battalion, which is a very well-trained NVA unit. D67 and regular units of SR4 and HQ MR7 are the most tenacious fighters we have yet encountered.

9 Pl had a nasty bunker engagement in dense primary forest today. They had only moved 800 metres from their overnight position when they discovered a brand new bunker system, which they initially believed was occupied by about 10-20 enemy. The enemy appeared to have received early warning of 9 Platoon's approach as they were in fire positions, including a sniper in a tree, and silently waiting. This early warning could have been given by civilian woodcutters, who appeared to be moving as a screen over the past couple of days. They are obviously VC sympathisers but you can't shoot them as they do not physically carry weapons and are not openly hostile. [This was a constant test for our fire discipline and the rules of engagement.] It is also impossible to prevent the civilians from entering the jungled areas to "collect their firewood." I'm sure these people with their ox carts transport food to the enemy camps and also assist in cutting timber for the bunkers and help in their construction.

It was clear to the section commander of 7 Section that the enemy was well entrenched, so he relayed the situation to his platoon commander who had immediately moved up behind his lead section. The contact demanded that Roger deploy his sections to the flanks under covering fire from 7 Section. The rule of thumb is that a platoon can usually attack a force of about 10-15 men but it is dictated also by the disposition of the enemy. Roger deployed Cpl Ted Suttor's 9 Section to the right flank.

During the platoon's deployment using fire and movement, it attempted to assault the enemy, but discovered superior numbers opposing them. The fighting was ferocious and intense. 9 Platoon became pinned down by the enemy fire, particularly by the sniper, with the result that Cpl Ted Suttor was killed, and Sgt Peter Knight and Pte John Hunter were wounded. Peter was shot in the leg by the sniper as he rolled over to reload a magazine, and John, the platoon medic, received gunshot wounds as he treated the sergeant's wounds.

Ted, known as 'Eyes' because he wore glasses, was killed acting most courageously. Through withering enemy fire, he crawled to within a couple of feet of an occupied bunker, pulled the pin from his hand grenade, and when raising himself to drop the grenade into the bunker was shot through the heart by the sniper. Ted fell back clutching his chest with the grenade still in his hand. The grenade exploded. He died instantly.

A chopper light fire team gave close fire support until the situation was relieved by the arrival of Centurion tanks with C Company HQ and 8 Platoon, at which time we assaulted and the enemy was flushed out. The enemy withdrew without known casualties after about 2 hours' fighting but unfortunately avoided our ambushes.



Ted Suttor – one of the best NCOs in our Company – a professional, and truly brave.

A tribute to Ted and a comprehensive description of this battle is on the 5RAR website at <http://www.5rar.asn.au/tributes/eyes.htm>



2LT Roger Lambert and SGT Peter Knight, 9PL C Company, 1969.

(to be continued)

AT THE RAP: Our C Coy medic (early in our tour) Ian Cooper has been doing it tough, battling a serious illness. He regularly communicates with your editor, and the courage and determination of this bloke could teach us all a lesson. Good on you Coops, we are all with you.

NOTICE: The Annual General Meeting of the Psychics Group has been cancelled, due to unforeseen circumstances.

BOB HOOPER says he once had a job in an orange juice factory. They canned him - apparently he couldn't concentrate.

A REMINDER: Have a look at the 5RAR website - www.5rar.asn.au - if this isn't the best site on the Internet, I'll eat my bush hat.

NEXT ISSUE - SOME PREVIOUSLY UNPUBLISHED PHOTOS FROM ROGER LAMBERT, DAVE'S DIARY, AND OTHER ITEMS I DON'T KNOW ABOUT YET.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod, donharrod@bigpond.com, (02) 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, with thanks to Major David French, Roger Lambert, John Hellyer, Ian Cooper, Dave Wilkins and Ian Leis. The crook humour was courtesy of Bob Hooper.