

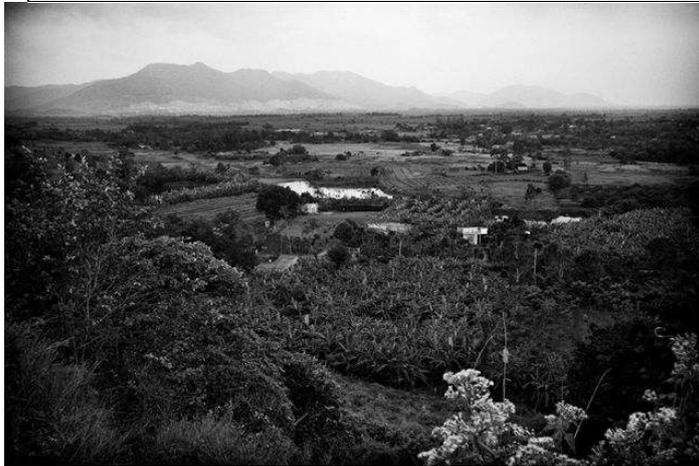
Half Circle



Number 51 - March 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.



From the top of SAS Hill, Nui Dat, looking straight at the Warbies.

Photo courtesy of Barrie Taylor, his son and daughter-in-law.

Photo taken 2010.

NEW ZEALAND EARTHQUAKES: We wish our mates from across the Tasman all the very best in coping with the recent devastating earthquakes. We all remember our Kiwi mates who served in our battalions in Vietnam. You are our brothers and we offer you our sincere support. Some of us may have spent a night in custody with you blokes in Vung Tau in 1969. We admire you, and in particular your efforts to remove the bars from the cell block, which was preventing your freedom!



In Sydney and want to hit the little white ball? Then head for the Georges River Golf Course, Henry Lawson Drive Georges Hall. Geoff Grimish and his team will make you most welcome. Geoff is a Vietnam vet (RAA), and is a great supporter of this newsletter. Phone (02) 9724 1615.

AT THE RAP:

Dennis Manhood, Barry Morgan, Barry Williams and Ian Cooper. Dianne Manhood is gravely ill and we all offer our support to Dennis.

On light duties: Euston Swan, Claude Ducker.

3792254 John William Gardiner
Nickname: Tangles

Re Nickname

John has rather large feet and on many occasions he had trouble controlling them i.e. Parade ground drill - Obstacle Course, PT and in general bush walking. Falls and entanglement were common, they still are today. Whilst at Canungra he experienced one of these occasions. Geoff Pearson (Jethro) who was nearby, stated "Your name should be Tangles", it stuck and he is still known as Tangles today.

In February 1968 Tangles fronted up for his National Service commitment. He completed his basic training. Unfortunately Tangles does not remember those who he did his basic training with, that period is all a bit of a blur to him. "Does anyone have any information re this time"?

From a family of 5 (1 brother & 3 sisters), he was the youngest. Tangles grew up in Melbourne and having completed his schooling and gaining his leaving certificate, he had a number of different jobs mainly in rural areas, all aspects of farming and plant operating. Finally working for CSIRO, a rewarding job with a future. Unfortunately he was not able to settle back into his job after his discharge.

In this era for many young male Australians alcohol already played a part in our lives. Time spent in the military increased our alcohol consumption to a stage that upon discharge alcohol was a big problem for many of us "But not admitted to".

Tangles admits that his addiction to alcohol over the last 40 years has ruined many aspects of his life i.e. a failed marriage, financially, personal health and general direction in life. Currently Tangles is DRY and has been for 5 years.

Tangles was able to settle into military life in most ways. He was a quiet/shy person who felt he was inadequate in many ways. In some ways his nature was a positive in other ways a negative. My recollection of Tangles at this time was a good, kind person willing to assist and respected by those who served with him. He was more than capable of performing all that was required of a good respectable soldier. He went to SVN on the Sydney. (He was amazed at the fresh vegetables served in the MESS after so long at sea. He spent some time looking for the market garden on the second deck that someone told him existed!)

He performed most duties of the platoon. He was promoted to L/CPL -CPL a job he performed but did not like. He became one of many in 8 Platoon who became very good at remaining quietly in the background, performing to his ability and making the best of what life dealt him.

Even before SVN, Tangles became a close friend of Corporal Ted Suttor "Eyes". They spent a lot of time together and had a common interest in earth moving equipment having both been employed in that industry. "Eyes" was a mentor for Tangles - someone who believed in him, this friendship was helpful to Tangles. It improved his confidence and self esteem.

When "Eyes" was KIA a part of Tangles life was shattered. Many of his beliefs, upbringing and faith were torn apart. This incident has haunted and caused turmoil in Tangles life, however it is a little like the alcohol - "He has it under control".

Another sad time for Tangles was losing his best mate Rouster, Wayne Stephens. They had remained in contact over the years and spent time together when possible. Tangles drove from Gympie to Newcastle to say goodbye to Rouster just days before Rouster died.

Since discharge from military Tangles has not had any real direction in life. He has had many jobs, alcohol addiction, financial insecurity; time spent in mental health facilities and other health problems. A motor bike accident in 2008 was to see him in hospital for three months and ongoing physical problems. These will be with him for life.

His last and the longest job he held was as a school janitor. A job that really suited him. He put a lot of effort and time into the presentation of the school. A job he was left alone to perform.

Today Tangles lives a quiet solitary life living in the outskirts of Gympie in Queensland. He enjoys the company of family (2 sons & 1 daughter) and grandchildren. Never divorced he remains good friends with his wife Kathy.

Since 1988/89 I have stayed in close contact with Tangles - we have spent time together. My story/insight into his life may seem to paint a sad story - it is not meant to do so as Tangles has carried on with life, made the best of the good times and handled the bad. DVA have always assisted him with good medical advice and assistance. He is a TPI.

John Gardiner is a friend to my family. He has my respect and like all of us who know him - we are ready to assist him in any way possible as he would us. I know he enjoys his solitary life, I think we all do to a certain degree. However he has a special place and bond to his military family and would enjoy contact with those who would like to do so at any time.



Tangles with Ian Leis at the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Walk, Brisbane



Also from Ian Leis: A photo of the plaque at the Brisbane Memorial Walk commemorating the service and sacrifice of our mate Ted (Eyes) Suttor. You will never be forgotten, Ted.

DAVE'S DIARY (From the Diary of Captain David Wilkins, C Coy 5RAR, 1969-70)

Continued from last edition of Half Circle

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

4 Nov 1969

6 Pl B Coy is again in heavy contact, this time unfortunately losing one soldier (Pte Mathew Linton) from a direct hit from an RPG round, and having another wounded.

There are many contacts occurring in all Companies over the last couple of days. The battalion tally for this operation in just a few days is now 24 enemies KIA (by body count), 2 PWs and several possible kills who were dragged away by the fit enemy.

5 Nov

We received a chopper resupply today and also joined up with a troop of tanks. At this stage we are in "big" bamboo country only a few hundred metres from large bunker complexes to our east. Tomorrow we head into these bunker systems.

6 Nov

Movement with tanks: 7 Pl and CHQ moved with the troop of tanks whilst 8 and 9 Pls moved on a parallel axis about 500 metres left and right of us.

7 Pl led well forward followed by CHQ (less Support Section) then the troop of (four) tanks, then Support Section.



7Pl

CHQ

8Pl

Tank

Tank

9Pl

Tank

Tank

Spt Sect

This layout allowed the forward elements of 7 Pl to be far enough forward of the tanks (sometimes 3 to 4 hundred metres) not to be hampered by the noise of the engines. This also meant that the noise of the tanks would not have reached any enemy before our scouts had located them.

The Coy 2ic (myself) walked near the tail of CHQ and directed the tanks whenever they strayed off the axis of advance, something they quite easily did in the dense undergrowth.

The tanks travel in a two-up formation except when the going became too thick, at which time they adopted single file. The Centurion tank found no trouble pushing through the primary forest, but slowed extremely when in the thick bamboo areas. Some of the bamboo clumps become so entangled that they completely strangle and harness the tank as it attempts to move through.

Support Section moved behind the tanks as rear infantry protection.

This use of tanks in such thick scrub was foreign to their traditional employment as open-terrain fighting vehicles that could manoeuvre and close with the enemy at high speed. Here, we used their extra firepower and their brute strength and bulk when fighting through enemy bunker systems in close country. They proved particularly effective with their massive firepower and also in destroying the bunkers by swivelling their tracks when on top, causing the bunker to be crushed and to collapse.

(to be continued)

Paddy buys two Goldfish and names them 1 and 2. Mick asks "Why did you name them 1 and 2?" Paddy replies "Well if 1 dies I still have 2 left!"

The new Government in Egypt has asked the city's taxi drivers to drive around Cairo sounding their car horns. It is hoped that the familiar sounds of the city will induce a return to tranquillity and normality.

Operation Toot 'n Calm 'Em will last for the rest of the week.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod, donharrod@bigpond.com, (02) 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, with thanks to Barrie Taylor, Dave Wilkins, Ian Leis and crook humour courtesy of Bob Hooper and Blue Schafer.