

# Half Circle



Number 171 - March 2021

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:**  
as they would like to be.

We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well



**3<sup>RD</sup> FEBRUARY 1969 – Garden Island Naval base, Sydney.** Privates Mick Dobbs, Ben Oram and Reg Smith, waiting to board HMAS Sydney for a thirteen-month deployment to Vietnam. Your editor recalls that when we boarded, we were allocated to “Mess Decks”. These sounded quite flash, but were in fact large empty hangars in the lower decks. Hammocks were issued, and everyone strung them up. When the ship started rolling and the hammocks stayed still, the nauseous feeling got everyone’s attention. From then on, we all slept on the hard metal floor! (Photo courtesy Pat Oram).



**TRAVELLING ABOUT:** Greg (Hickory) Dick – travelling from Laura, South Australia through NSW and into Queensland on a road trip, visiting family and old mates. Greg called in on your editor and we had a good yarn.

## **MEMBER PROFILE – 55533 CPL DONALD ANDREW HARROD**

I was born in Fremantle in 1949, and grew up in that area until 1962, when my parents sold up and our family moved to the small wheatbelt town of Kununoppin in WA after purchasing the local hotel. It was a great life for a young boy in the country. The big drawback was school. It was a two-hour 75km trip to school at Wyalkatchem, and the same back home – every day. I used to tell people that I was a Roads Scholar. My first employment was that of a farmhand after leaving school in 1964, just before turning 16.

I moved to Perth in 1966, and hated it. A job in a hardware store, then a bank was not for me. My parents had bought the hotel in Pemberton in south west WA and moved to that area. My lifestyle just didn't fit. In late 1967, aged 18, I decided to join the Army, signed up and boarded a train for the eastern states.

I arrived at Kapooka and spent three months there with some men who are still lifelong mates, then off to the old Infantry Centre at Ingleburn. This was the introduction to Sydney of a simple country boy. What an eye-opener! Three months at Ingleburn, then a posting to a Battalion – 5RAR. I was allocated to 7PL C Coy, and my new PL COMD was 2LT David Mead. My parents had returned to the WA wheatbelt to take over the larger and more notorious Mukinbudin Hotel (as we often sung about!).

I wasn't in 7PL very long when I completed a signals course, went to Canberra as part of a Guard of Honour, and commenced training as a rifleman. One day, when rostered as the Company Runner, 2IC CAPT Bill Titley discovered that I could read and write, and even spell my own name. That was it – my future was decided for me – Army administration.

After Vietnam, I opted to stay with 5RAR, then became a foundation member of 5/7RAR. In 1975 I was posted to the ARA Cadre of an Army Reserve Battalion. This job was awful, so in 1976 I took my discharge after nine years' service. There was no career advice at that time (see John Hellyer's article, Half Circle No 109).

The next two years were a very restless time, and I worked as a fencing contractor, courier driver, labourer, made marble furniture and tried a wealth of other tasks. Then the CEO of the RSPCA NSW offered me a job. I had spent a bit of time over past four years doing some voluntary work for them. I commenced work in the Law Enforcement Section and became an inspector, investigating complaints of animal cruelty. There were seven of us for the whole of NSW at that time. In 1981, I was appointed Deputy CEO of RSPCA NSW and held that position until late 1992. After 14 years of trying to get a better go for animals and over 70 successful prosecutions of offenders, it was time to move on. The pressure of the job was enormous. I travelled about 80,000km per year.

In 1993, I commenced work as a storeman in a lighting company, and became Stores Superintendent a year later. Five years later I was appointed Company Safety Officer – a factory with 500 workers representing 42 different nationalities, versus me. This was a difficult job trying to change third world attitudes to OH&S, but with perseverance a National Safety Council 4 Star safety rating was achieved. One highlight of this job was working with and getting to understand the Vietnamese people. We had only ever seen the other side of that race.

In 2004, aged 55, things got to me, so I retired. The girl that I had met in 1970 and married in 1971 was still standing by me. Roslyn and I moved to her home town of Coonabarabran NSW in 2009. I love the bush, fishing on the river, hitting a golf ball, and attempting to keep

the network of contact of C Coy 5RAR (1969/70) together by means of our "Half Circle" publication. Regrets? None that I can think of.

**FOOTNOTE:** *I did not do well at school due to four hours each day on the school bus, but do recall one very funny incident. Our class (seven students only) was getting behind in a woodworking project. Our teacher asked us to stay behind for a couple of hours one Friday. When another kid and I told him we had to catch the school bus at 3.30pm, he foolishly said that he would drive us home. He was obviously not accustomed to country distances. When the class finished, we asked him for a lift home as he had promised. He nearly had a fit when he found out "home" was 75km away. When we arrived in Kununoppin, I asked him to pull up and let us off at the pub. He stopped, and we alighted. I then asked him if he would like to come in and have a beer. He nearly had another fit! He turned his car around and started to drive away when he saw me walk into the pub. The following Monday I was summoned to the Principal's office and quizzed about going into the pub and warned how serious this matter was. It was only then that I told them that my father was the publican and that I lived there. I was fifteen years old.*

---

**FROM JACK BRADD - reprinted from Half Circle number 14 - January 2008:**

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 like 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.

*Ed's note: Sadly, Wally Barnett passed away last month. May he rest in Peace.*

---

From Dave Wilkins:

On behalf of us all, may I extend our condolences to Don and Ros over their recent family loss. And we thank Don for his dedication in somehow finding the time and energy to think of the C Company vets and dependants by producing this issue of Half Circle. Many thanks Don.

A blue rectangular box with white text. The text reads: "Accidentally rubbed ketchup in my eyes.....now I have Heinzsight".

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – [donharrod@bigpond.com](mailto:donharrod@bigpond.com), 0418 423 313, with help from Pat and Ben Oram, behind-the-scenes assistance from Dave Wilkins and Ted Harrison (the 5RAR Association Webmaster), **supported by The RB Co, and powered by the Lambs Valley Wine Company, Hunter Valley, NSW.**