

# Half Circle

Number 6 - May 2007

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

## VALE - WO1 CYRIL ROY (JOHN) VAGG.

It is with regret that I advise that the RSM 2nd tour of 5RAR in Vietnam, WO1 Cyril Roy (John) Vagg passed away on 17 March 2007 at the Sarah Claydon Retirement Village, Milton NSW. He was aged 81.

Colin Khan will honour John's life in the August issue of Tiger Tales.  
Another magnificent Tiger rests in peace.

Roger Wainwright

(Ed's note: Roger was the PI Comd of 8PI C Coy on the First Tour. His career took him on a number of appointments, including 2IC of 5/7RAR. Roger retired as a Colonel, and is now the President of the 5RAR Association).

## NOMINAL ROLL OF VIETNAM VETERANS:

John Humphries, former 5RAR Tracker, has advised that Tracker Dogs are now on the Nominal Roll of Vietnam Veterans. A short history is also provided. The site is [www.vietnamroll.gov.au](http://www.vietnamroll.gov.au).

## WE FOUND:

Ellis (Bunny) Hyde. Bunny is retired, and now lives in Alexandra Hills (Brisbane) with his wife Margaret. Bunny is probably typical of a lot of veterans, who left the service, and "hid" for many years. He has now come out of his burrow, put on his gongs, and attends the ANZAC Dawn Service each year. Bunny's hearing is not good, so any communication should be in writing. He may be contacted through his granddaughter Steph - [damon.1@optusnet.com.au](mailto:damon.1@optusnet.com.au). He would love to hear from any of his old mates.

## HAVE YOU.....?????

1. Applied for, and received your **Australian Active Service Medal**?
2. Applied for, and received your **Australian Defence Medal**?

If not, contact your local RSL or Vietnam Veterans Branch, Department of Veterans Affairs, or even call me for copies of the relevant application forms.

## JUST MY LUCK:

I phoned the local pizza shop the other night, and ordered a Thin and Crusty Supreme. They sent me Diana Ross.

### LUCKY?????????????

A bloke goes to the doctor, and complains of not feeling well. After a lengthy examination, the doctor says "You have got a very rare disease. It's called Yellow 24, and means that your blood will turn yellow, and you only have twenty four hours to live". Shattered, the bloke went straight to his local club. He swiped his card and won \$25. He took a mystery trifecta, and won \$60. He put \$50 into a poker machine, and won \$2000. He then bought a Keno ticket, and won \$1,000,000. Another patron who saw what was going on, went up to him and said "What fantastic luck, I have never seen anyone win like that in my life". The bloke looked at him, and said "It's not all what it seems. I've got Yellow 24". The other patron shook his head. "Struth, you've even won the bloody chook raffle!"

### IF YOU DON'T READ ANYTHING ELSE IN THIS NEWSLETTER, READ THIS:

We have received a communication from Dave Wilkins. As most of you know, Dave was the Adjutant of 5RAR during our training period in 1968, and for the first 6 months into our tour of duty in Vietnam. For those who are not aware, the role of the Adjutant was to be the CO's right hand man - his principal staff officer or company secretary (civilian equivalent), advisor, administrator, personnel manager, operational executive (not to be confused with the very important role of the Operations Officer), discipline/soldiers' conduct and general "eyes and ears" of our Commander. Following a high mid-year casualty rate in the battalion, Dave acted as platoon commander of 11 Platoon for an operation, and then stood in as OC of B Coy for an operation before becoming 2ic of C Coy in October 1969. Due to his obvious professionalism, Dave was appointed OC of C Company in December 1969, and brought us home. After returning to Australia Dave was medically downgraded which ended his infantry career so he studied law and transferred to the Army Legal Corps. He held a number of military positions culminating in his being the Chief Legal Officer (Colonel) for Eastern Command (NSW). In 1986 he left the Regular Army to commence a civilian practice as a barrister in Sydney, at the same time transferring to the Army Reserve. He recently retired from both these positions. I won't elaborate too much here, but Dave is still very much involved in working with Veterans.

Don Harrod

Dave writes:

For a professional Army man, I can say that the highlight of my military career, which totalled 43 years in uniform - 26 years as a Reg and 17 as a Reservist - was undoubtedly commanding the gallant men of Charlie Company, 5RAR, on operations in South Vietnam from December 1969 until we returned home in March 1970. It was an absolute honour and a responsibility that I took most seriously, which maybe explains why you blokes nicknamed me "the angry ant".

Whilst floating back from Vung Tau to Oz on the old rust bucket, HMAS Sydney, I think I spent 80 percent of the daylight hours on the flight deck of the aircraft carrier sleeping in the sun, reading a terrific book, Cornelius Ryan's "The Last Battle", sleeping some more, making a few notes in my diary which I kept during our tour of duty, and snoozing even more. I think that demonstrated to me just how tired we had become.

I thought you might be interested in reading those final notations I made in my diary as they contain some memories from C Company's operations and our life in Nui Dat. I have added the occasional extra comment.

From my diary:

### Charlie Company Notes

Charlie Company was a slow starter when compared with other runners, but quickly developed a steady and constant pace throughout the tour of duty in Vietnam, and then finished strongly with no signs of tiring.

Operations 'Quintus Thrust' and 'Federal' both passed without any enemy being contacted by the company, and then, during Operation 'Overlander', the three platoons and Company Headquarters all found themselves in battles with the enemy on the same day. The ice had been broken and the action continued from then on.

After fighting through the bunker systems of Bien Hoa Province, the Company became involved in thick bush, beaches, swamps, bamboo forests and mountain caves during Operations 'Surfside' and 'Twickenham'. Few will forget the persistent arguing by the OC, Major Claude Ducker, to have the LSMs deposit Charlie Company in a more suitable area along the beaches during the "assault from the sea" rehearsal for Operation 'Surfside'. It was a pleasing result to record the ability of our members who were capable of long-range ocean swimming in full battle order. [Fully laden with their packs and weapons, the C Company group ran down the ramp to jump onto the sand bank. SPLASH! GURGLE! Down they went in over their heads, sinking to the bottom with the weight of their equipment. Not to be daunted, they proceeded to walk along the bottom, occasionally pushing up to take a breath. Most fascinating was to watch the progress of the tip of the signaller's radio antennae poking a few inches above the water surface as it moved slowly towards the beach. Can anyone identify that sig?]

Op. 'Twickenham' found C Coy climbing mountains, a pastime which had begun on the slopes of Nui Nghe during 'Quintus Trust' and was continued among the caves of the Nui Thi Vai and later, on the western features of the Nui Dinhs. This attraction for the mountain slopes continued in Op. 'Esso' when the Coy searched the Long Hai foothills for a US aircraft which had been shot down, and then, as a grand finale, in Op. 'Bondi' the Coy fought in the domineering Nui May Tao [home of HQ 5 VC Division].

Seeing new faces arrive in the Company was a normal occurrence during the year, but the remoulding of a complete platoon was the result of a tragic incident. It was during a night patrolling activity in the Long Hai area that 7 Platoon, under Lt Dave Mead, experienced two simultaneous M16 mine explosions, killing three and wounding sixteen. [As far as I am aware that was the only time Dustoff choppers landed in a jungle area and shut down their engines so the crew could assist recovery of the casualties.] As a result a new 7 Platoon, commanded by Lt Ian Hosie, was raised; it quickly re-established itself as an efficient fighting force, particularly during bunker contacts against the enemy engineers, D67, in Op. 'Kings Cross', during its aggressive ambushes in the Nui May Tao, and finally during the last days of the final operation, in a most successful ambush in the Dat Set region against elements of D440 and 84 Rear Services.

Private Max Hedley was the only original member of 7 Platoon remaining at the end of our tour of duty, even though he himself was wounded and hospitalised late in the piece.

During Op. 'Kingston' Charlie Company captured many VC farmers and received dozens of "Hoi Chanh" ralliers, and in doing so, showed remarkable and praiseworthy restraint. Local guerrillas had been moving with the VC farmers and contacts with enemy, armed with rifles and RPGs, had occurred in the area. On several occasions, in thick jungle, large parties had approached C Company ambush positions, which, suspecting these people may be unarmed VC sympathisers, with women and children, revealed their position by standing up and calling on the party to surrender. [This was a display of commendable fire discipline.]

During a year's active service there were many memorable incidents and actions but not all can be recorded. Some can: ..... 9 Platoon's night ambush in the Warbies ... Jack Bradd's bomb ... Dog Dog Graham ... Jack Lake's haircut on R & C ... Sandy McKinnon's verbal abuse at VC snipers whilst he was being "dusted off" ... Chicken Man ... Paddy's buns ... Tiger on the wire at Nui Dat ... Pirate ... coffee royale for the troops on Christmas morning ... the Grand Hotel ... Reg Smith's instinctive step over the trip wire of a booby trap ... 8 Platoon's heavy contact in bunkers with only 15 and a wakie ... the Mushroom Club ... Kev Mulligan's white rabbit ... Leg's brews ...one hundred sandbags ... Phuong, the bushman scout ... 9 Platoon's commandeered ox carts ... pogos ... HMAS Sydney ... etc etc.

No one will ever forget the seven members of C Company who were killed in action during our tour of active service. May they rest in peace.



**HOW MUCH ARE YOUR MEDALS WORTH? (Courtesy, Bob Hooper)**

Shane Murphy, of Queanbeyan, runs a company called Precision Medal Mounting. He has published a list of approximate values of honours and awards. Their values will shock you. The average Vietnam digger's medals are worth over \$2,000, depending on condition. For more information, contact Shane at [precisionmedals@bigpond.com](mailto:precisionmedals@bigpond.com). You should think about your personal contents insurance, and have your medals specifically listed on your policy, in case the unthinkable happens.

**ANZAC DAY 2007 -SYDNEY**

This year in Sydney, we had a lower than usual turn out for the march. It is estimated that only about 80 Tigers marched, and only half that number went to the Crown Hotel for the reunion. There were two possible reasons for the attendance rate - it rained, and we had a new forming-up-place. It was, however, a good day. We assembled at the RAR Memorial for the Remembrance Service at 0830, with the address given by Maj Gen Dick Wilson, a former CO of 2RAR. Some new faces, including Paul McQueen, who replaced Barry Morgan, after he was severely wounded late in the tour. How times have changed - the largest contingent was 4RAR, and showed the commitment and achievements of these blokes - some of them - no more than late 20's - were wearing 7 or 8 gongs. Well done, we applaud and recognise your service to Australia.

**WHILST YOU ARE HERE, READ THIS TOO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!**

**TRANSPORT – 1969 STYLE – Courtesy Claude Ducker**

The attached photographs should bring back some memories for C Coy personnel who were on Operation Surfside - (22 April - 2 May 69). I believe they could have been taken around 26 April when we moved to the ocean. These two photos were given to me by Jack Lake. I passed them on to the Official Historian. I understand one of the photos will be in the Official History due to its unique nature. The Official History on the Vietnam War (Volume 3) is running behind time but is likely to be out by the end of the year.

We had to move in a hurry and it was worth taking the risk of being crowded on the bridge layer. Any enemy that saw us may have been too surprised to react! You will note from one of the pictures that we had tanks with us. I'm not sure whether they were an escort or were trying to recapture from us the bridge layer belonging to B Squadron 1 Armoured Regiment. One of the downsides of this unique trip was that we may have missed out on a few more frequent flyer points on helicopters. The photos show most of C Coy and I believe we had a dog with us at the time. An appropriate caption might be "100 men and their dog".







**The 5RAR Website:**

Check it out. There is a new entry under the heading "Special Mention" - Don Harrod Remembers Vietnam. Webmaster Ted Harrison and I have been putting our heads together for a while now, and have found a few memories of our life in Nui Dat. There are thousands more, and we need your help in getting a lot more information. **Please email any photos, notes, thoughts, etc to Ted at: [www.5rar.asn.au/](http://www.5rar.asn.au/) let him know that they are for the "Remember" segment, and we will do the rest. We are sadly lacking 2<sup>nd</sup> tour information. Send items to me (address below) if you like.**

Ted recently reminded me that what we had was a significant part of Australia's and our Battalion's history. We can't afford to lose it. We just need you guys to speak up, and send any C Coy or 5RAR memories or articles.

**ALSO URGENTLY REQUIRED - YOUR RECOLLECTIONS OF THE TERMS WE HAD FOR THINGS, EG. GOFFERS, GETTERS, FIZZERS, VUNGERS, VUNG TAU FERRY, ... AND A WAKEY, HOMERS, ETC. Please send me your memories of these. We need them for the Battalion Website.**

**Don Harrod**  
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