

Half Circle

Number 34 - October 2009

(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.

Barry Morgan said: Six weeks ago I had some central chest pain which increased in intensity. When I felt the pain go down my left arm, Kathleen called '000' and asked for an ambulance. When the ambulance arrived, the paramedics set up an ECG and sent the results by email to a Cardiologist who saw the results on his Blackberry. The Cardiologist told the paramedics to take me directly to The Canberra Hospital (TCH). When we arrived at the TCH, we bypassed the Emergency Dept and I was taken directly to the new Catheter Lab. I had an angiogram and they discovered a small blood clot was blocking one small distal artery. The Cardiologist inserted a catheter into that artery and inflated a small balloon which removed the blockage and the pain disappeared **immediately**. The following morning I was up walking and went home the following day, albeit with some medication to thin my blood.

I was diagnosed as having suffered a 'heart attack'. That blockage resulted in some damage to the heart muscle but it would have been worse if I had delayed calling 000. The Cardiologist said I could start playing golf after six weeks (once my shoulder comes good!!!!).

So if fellows our age experience shortness of breath, are fatigued or experience pain in the chest, arm, jaw or throat or even between the shoulder blades, they should see a doctor urgently or if the pain is severe call 000. "We are in the Zone". Be alert to the signs and symptoms of heart disease and do something quick.

Terry Major said.....I recently attended the opening of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Kalgoorlie, there was a mixed group about 30 of us from "Mandurah / Murray Vietnam Veterans Group" travelled up to Kalgoorlie on the Friday and returned on the Monday. (Pretty good trip takes a little over 6 1/2 hours to cover the 600 kilometres)

The hospitality of the Goldfields people was exceptional, we were all fed well and the lubrication flowed freely all weekend.

We had a meet and greet at the Boulder Ex Servicemens Club on Friday evening, it was great to catch up with several vet mates that I hadn't seen in 40 years, I was a Kalgoorlie Boy when I was Called up, surprising was the number of guys who I had no idea had been called up, even a guy from my original home town of Gwalia, Steve Fannetti. Saturday was a good opportunity to have a look around Kalgoorlie, there are some very interesting Museums relating to the Mining industry and Kalgoorlies' infamous past. Saturday evening saw us at the Boulder Town Hall where they had a sitdown dinner for the Vets and in particular for the sponsors, there was approx 30 tables set up and there was a sponsor allocated to each table which was a great idea. Once again we were wined, dined and entertained into the wee hours of Sunday morning.

Sunday saw us put on all our regalia and attended the official opening of the Memorial, there was a large number of Vets who joined in a short march to the Memorial where we were greeted by a large crowd.

The Memorial is set at the lower end of the main street which is Hannan street and is indeed a spectacular sight, as per the photos which don't really show the water cascading over the top of the Memorial.

The main address was made by Graham Edwards a retired politician, and ex Vet who lost both legs in a mine incident in Vietnam

After the opening we enjoyed the Goldfields hospitality again with a rather large refreshment tent set up to ensure no one became dehydrated. The group I was with drank the tent dry and eventually headed up Hannan Street making every hotel a winner. It was a really great weekend and the sense of mateship between us Vets never ceases to amaze me.

Whilst the Kagoorlie-Boulder group have done a magnificent job in getting the Memorial built, credit must also go to the sponsors who donated in the vicinity of \$250000 over the first 2 weeks of fund raising.



Ed's note: That's Terry, second from right.

A REQUEST FROM A FAMILY MEMBER: Samantha Ross, daughter-in-law of our late mate Bill, contacted the 5RAR Association with the following request:

"I writing to enquire on how I would go about gathering any information or photos you can obtain of my father-in-law Mr. William John Ross. My husband is his only son and I would like to put together for him any service information on his dad that I can. Bill was in a photo in the latest newsletter you published if that is any help. If you could assist in this matter or let me know how I go about finding out anything that would be greatly appreciated"

If you can help Samantha and her husband Adam (Bill's son), please contact her at sross@baillieu.com.au.

GRANDMA AND GRANDPA WERE WATCHING A RELIGIOUS PROGRAM ON TV. THE EVANGELIST CALLED UPON EVERYONE TO PUT ONE HAND ON THE TOP OF THE TV SET AND ONE HAND ON THE PART OF THEIR BODY THEY WANTED HEALED.

GRANDMA HOBBLER TO THE TV AND PUT HER RIGHT HAND ON TOP OF THE SET, AND HER LEFT HAND ON HER ARTHRITIC HIP.

GRANDPA MADE HIS WAY TO THE TV AND PUT HIS RIGHT HAND ON THE SET, AND HIS LEFT HAND ON HIS GROIN.

GRANDMA LOOKED AT HIM WITH DISGUST. SHE SAID "YOU JUST DON'T UNDERSTAND YOU OLD COOT - THE PURPOSE OF THIS PROGRAM IS TO HEAL THE SICK, NOT TO RAISE THE DEAD"

INTRODUCING:.....THE SENTINEL..... a publication written by one of the C Coy (2nd Tour) blokes with no holds barred. The writer is putting his diary into book form and has said that anyone who knows him and his family well should be able to work out his identity: Other than that, he would like to remain anonymous. All your Half Circle editor can say is that he was a Queenslander, a rifleman and he loved his stint in the Army. He further advises that if any person is offended by the content of "The Sentinel", bad luck. Here is the first instalment:

The Sentinel

By

Matthew Peterson © 2009

Chapter 1.

The Sojourn

They had been chosen, so they were told by their Company Commander, Major David Granger, because of their level of education. He said that they had been very well educated and that the army could rightly expect that they would learn colloquial Vietnamese faster and more fluently than might be expected of less educated soldiers.

This remained a complete mystery to Yabs as he had only completed Grade 8 before commencing life as a butcher's apprentice in his home town of Taree and, to the best of his knowledge, his education had advanced no further than attending Tech College as part of his apprenticeship.

"We must be in with a bunch of dumb arses, Fred" he whispered when his name and that of Private Paul McCormack were read out on parade as the two Charlie Company soldiers selected to attend a Vietnamese language course to be conducted at the School of Army Intelligence in Adelaide.

Yabs and Fred had only been posted to 'C' company a month earlier, having spent their first few months in the battalion as members of Mortars and Assault Pioneers together with fellow tenth intake National Servicemen (Nashos), Matthew Bolt and James Warren. All four had found life in Support Company very relaxing and, in frequent spare moments, took exceptional delight in taunting the perpetually nervous Paul McDougal. McDougal, who had worked with Matt Bolt in Youngers Pastoral Agents in Brisbane before they were conscripted, had been 'christened' 'Mad Mack' by Bolt who, in turn, had been 'christened' 'Bolts' by persons unknown. Consequently, their nick names had been conscripted with them. 'Mad Mack' had received a posting to Reconnaissance Platoon at

the time of Bolts' posting to Pioneers and had made the mistake of expressing some fear and trepidation at the prospect of jumping out of a perfectly good aeroplane as was a possible operational requirement of Recce platoon members. Mad Mack failed to see anything at all humorous in Bolts' suggestion that bonuses of \$100.00 each were payable to Recce Platoon paratroopers whose 'chutes failed to open. Assurances that there were "plenty of blokes wandering around here who had received \$100.00 bonuses" did little to placate either his anger or his nervous disposition.

Such were now mere memories for Yabs and Fred: Now, the serious side of preparing to go to war was materializing.

Nonetheless, they looked upon this opportunity as a holiday in a city that neither had seen. It was also a chance for them to meet up with William "Billy" Martin and James "Desperate" Warren, with whom they had completed either recruit or corps training or both. 'Billy' had been posted to Alpha Company while 'Desperate' had been moved from Pioneers to Bravo Company. It would be good to see them again. The method of travel, however, was not at all appealing; a train ride; a two day, boring train ride from Sydney to Adelaide with a 'who knows how long' stopover in Melbourne.

Billy was not interested in any train travel. "I'm gunna drive" he said; "besides, I'll need my car to get around when I'm on leave down there". That sounded like a great idea to Yabs and Fred. They also would need a car to get around Adelaide in and Billy's car, being a '65 Holden sedan with plenty of room, would suit perfectly.

While packing, Yabs reflected on his life before Holsworthy; for that is where they now were. He had been conscripted in his home town of Taree and had been sent to Singleton in New South Wales to undergo Recruit training. There he had met Fred, who had been conscripted from his home town of Brisbane and, at first encounter, hadn't known what to think of him or how to take him. When he introduced himself as James Yablonski, Fred had asked him if he was Polish.

"No", he replied. "My father was born in Poland but his parents migrated to Australia when he was 6 years old. "

"Oh" said Fred. "I love the Poles. I think they are a linguistically unique peoples".

"Why is that?" asked Yabs.

"Well," said Fred, "they are the only people on the planet who can string the letters 'c','w','z','x','y' and 'k' together in any order, call the result a word and actually pronounce it".

Yabs didn't know what to think of that but, as Fred thought it was quite funny, his immediate reaction was to label Fred a 'smart arse'. Over time and more than a few beers, that opinion would change. More next issue.