

TIGER TALES

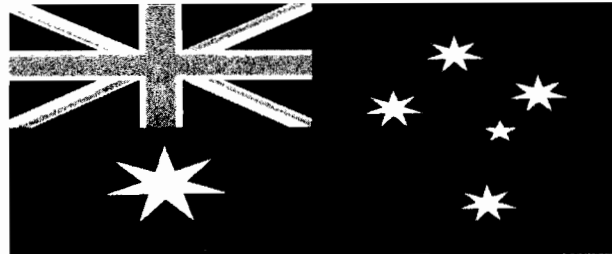
JULY 1999

ISSUE 16



NEWSLETTER of the 5 RAR ASSOCIATION

Editor's Noteook



Words seem inadequate to express the shock of the sudden passing of our first commanding officer and the president of the 5 RAR Association Col John Warr DSO. John was an outstanding officer, a passionate and committed member of the 5RAR Association and above all, a very good friend. John however, would not want us to dwell too long on his passing. He would want us to get on with the job of keeping the association together. The 5 RAR Association will not falter in this task. It will be difficult without John's leadership but with the help of all members of the association, the objectives, as set by John, will be achieved.

The Editor.



Col J.A. Warr DSO leading the 5 RAR Association on parade

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THE 5 RAR COMMITTEE

The committee changes are as follows:

Brig C. Khan DSO has taken over the reins as president of the 5 RAR Association.

Geoff Pearson has taken on the task of secretary of the 5RAR Association until someone else is willing to do the job full time. The association thanks both members for their commitment to the 5 RAR association.

The New Look of Tiger Tales

This issue of Tiger Tales will no doubt catch your eye. This has been made possible by JPR PRINT WORKS and **Ted Harrison. J P R PRINTWORKS** has kindly offered to print manage Tiger Tales to improve the quality of our newsletter.

ASSOCIATION FEES

FEES ARE NOW DUE.

please send \$25.00 to renew your membership to:

The Secretary
5 RAR Association
GPO Box 817
Sydney 1043
(get a mate to join)
See membership form

Articles for Tiger Tales

This newsletter is your newsletter, the members of 5 RAR. Please feel free to contribute by way of stories, articles and photographs, or just a letter on any subject of interest.

REGULAR DEFENCE FORCES WELFARE ASSOCIATION TASMANIA

T. Gardiner of Tasmania is trying to re-activate the Tasmanian Branch of the above association. The association is dedicated to the assistance of serving, ex-serving members of all three services and their families. This includes members of the Reserve. If anyone is interested in joining, please contact Mr T.Gardiner on (03) 62451173

VICTORIAN NEWS

Geoff Levey reports on the coming activities in Victoria. On Saturday the 14th August 99, at 1300 Hrs a Vietnam Memorial will be dedicated at Mount Macedon in central Victoria. Mt Macedon is the site of the First World War memorial cross and is the second most visited memorial after the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne. This site also contains the Memorial Entrance to commemorate the second World War. The site was damaged beyond repair in the 'Ash Wednesday' fires and has undergone a massive restoration project. Refreshments will be served after the service at the Woodend RSL.

Wednesday 18th August 99 - commencing at 1145 hrs, the annual Vietnam War Commemoration Service 'Long Tan Day' will be held at the Melbourne Shrine of Remembrance. Last year, this service was well attended by the 5 RAR association.

5 RAR REUNION IN DARWIN

A reminder that the 5 RAR reunion will be held in Darwin during the Easter weekend in 2000. The returns thus far indicate that members are keen to attend. There will be plenty to do and see with displays and activities organised by 5/7 RAR (Mech)

A mixed dinner will be held for both 5 and 7 RAR associations. 5 RAR will of course take part in the Anzac Day celebrations in Darwin. As more details are finalised, this information will be published, hopefully in this issue.

A return form was published in the last issue of Tiger Tales and will be repeated in this issue. Please complete the form and return it to the association as soon as possible.

The Secretary
5 RAR Association
PO Box 817
GPO Sydney 1043

REST IN PEACE

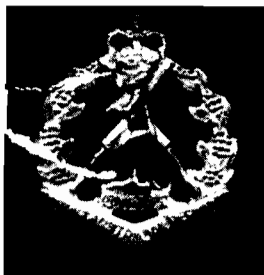
The 5 RAR Association regrets to announce the passing of ;

Maj Donald McGregor MBE

Col John Warr DSO

The members of the 5RAR Association offer our deepest sympathy to the families of Donald and John.

Major Donald McGregor MBE



Maj Donald McGregor MBE (Retd) treasurer of the Anzac Day Commemoration Committee and television commentator, has passed away aged 63. In a distinguished 37 year military career, he rose through the ranks to the rank of Major with the 1st MD in Brisbane, his home town. Donald served in Malaysia and in Vietnam. On retirement he became a television commentator with the ABC using his extensive knowledge on military matters to present the Anzac parade in Brisbane.

A TRIBUTE TO MY FATHER, A SOLDIER(extract)

By Duncan Donald McGregor

I said farewell to my father about five weeks ago and as I write this, I have just returned from my first Anzac Day march without him. Always he was either marshalling, organising or commentating (a duty he took great pleasure in doing). Or, as in 1998 he led the march, one of the proudest moments I know personally for him in a long time and one he cherished dearly.

It was my turn to honour him today. It was my turn to wear his medals and say yes, I was proud of him. That this is and will now forever more be an honour for me to do, as much as it was an honour to have him as my father. And so, I marched with a straight back and a tear in my eye, anonymous to so many that surrounded me for it was in remembrance to their sacrifice as well that I was there and for no gain of my own.

I lament at times as to whether he really knew how proud both my brother and I were of him. Of how much we understood the sacrifices he made for us not only as a father, but also as a soldier. He willingly risked his life, as so many have done, to ensure that we as Australians would be able to enjoy the lifestyle that we have today. A lifestyle that so many of us take for granted and could not imagine otherwise. How many of us think of this when remembering the Anzacs or any soldier who has fought or died in war.

I miss him so much. He was a man whom I not only loved and will always love but a man I respected as well. As the Queens Piper played Amazing Grace at the end of that farewell, I could only hope that I could inspire and love of a tenth of the people that he had. He was, as many men have said , 'A soldier's soldier'. A man whom many men who served under him took as a role model, and befittingly he was chosen many times to instruct others in how to be a soldier.

.....To me he was a great man. He always will be. I will always love him and I would be lying to say that writing this does not bring me to tears. He did so much, that to fit it in in this short note would be impossible. Suffice to say as I said in his eulogy, that he was a man who served with great commitment, both to his family and his country. And so I say to you, those others who serve this country whether in the past or now, that I am proud of you also.

Let it be known that one of the best has passed. I would shout it out from the rooftops, but God already knows. He now lives on in his sons and his grandchildren whom he adored.

May we continue to honour him in death, as he did us in life.

God Bless

Duncan D. McGregor BBus (QUT) MAITD

MIRACLES STILL HAPPEN SEEING THE SUN AFTER 15 YEARS IN THE DARK

SANDY McKINNON thought he had died in Vietnam when he was hit in the chest by a sniper's bullet. But he lived and recovered.

So when he went blind 15 years ago, he resigned himself to a life time in the dark.

But in a medically baffling recovery, Sandy has regained his sight and gazed into his wife Shani's eyes for the first time since 1984.



"It felt like I was floating in heaven" Sandy said "At the first sight of my beautiful wife, I was just dumbstruck." The next morning, Sandy bolted out of his house on a farm near Yass - which he has never seen - ran up a hill and watch his first sunrise since he was 38 years old. He has almost 100% sight and can read a phone book without glasses. His doctors advised that he may need glasses soon but Sandy is not really upset about this advice.

Sandy was wounded earlier in July 69 by a land mine and as forward scout, later that month he was shot in the chest as his unit attacked an enemy bunker system. He was evacuated by his mates to an LZ and airlifted by helicopter for medical attention, more dead than alive.

Now, his new lease on life has been renewed in full. Sandy can now see his children, son Heath. 22 and daughter, Amber 25. He can only remember them in his mind's eye as young kids.

The doctors comment "A recovery as dramatic as this is very rare."

Editor's note

What a good news story and as I said, Miracles still happen.

GENERAL NEWS ITEMS

FINAL REPORT ON VETERANS HEALTH

The final report on the Vietnam's Veterans Health study will be available by September. This study will validate some of the findings from the original survey. This information will I'm sure, be available on the DVA website. The 5 RAR website has a link to the DVA. <http://www.sci.net.au/londonb>

NEW SITE FOR ANZAC DAY IN GALLIPOLI

A proposal will be submitted to the Turkish Government seeking to develop a new site known as the Sphinx. The proposed site will be between Mule Gully and Reserve Gully, subject to approval. The Dawn Service has been held in the Ari Burnu Cemetery but due to damage by the increasing numbers of visitors, this new site is necessary. The Australian Government will spend \$1.2 million to develop the site which will cater for up to 15,000 visitors.

LOST MEMBER

Keith Jones D Coy first tour is looking for a **John. V. Williams first tour**. Keith would like to contact him with regards to mutual friend in the USA. Keith and John met Jim Rocap whilst on R&R in Bangkok. Keith met up again with Jim Rocap and would like get in touch with John Williams. Contact the editor.

See the letter by Keith Jones.

Editor.

IAN SHERWYN-WHITE was killed in a gyro-copter accident recently. Ian served with 5RAR in 66/67. The association is trying to get some details on Ian's service to pass onto his widow. If anyone has any information and would like to assist, please contact the editor. It would appear no photos were kept by Ian nor did he speak of his service in SVN.

Contact the Editor

**FROM THE PRESIDENT
OF THE 5 RAR ASSOCIATION
BRIGADIER COLIN KHAN DSO**

It is with great pride that I assume duties as the President of the 5 RAR Association - I only wished the circumstances could have been happier.

The death of our recent President, John Warr has been sadly received by all members of the association. The suddenness added to the shock and we all miss him.

I would like to share with you the response from Mrs Shirley Warr following expressions of sympathy from the Association.

"Our family would like to convey to the members of the 5 RAR Association our very heartfelt hope that the association will continue for many years in the future, carrying on the strong tradition of a caring comradeship, which was started through those difficult years in Vietnam and whose spirit has never flagged over these intervening years."

To assure everyone that we are indeed carrying on, your committee has met to clarify some significant allocation of duties of which you should be aware, these include :

- Secretary - Geoff Pearson.
- Treasurer - Bob Fenwick.
- Membership Officer - Ron Hamlyn.
- Tiger Tales Editor and sales of Battalion items - Brian London.

Brig Colin Khan DSO

POINTS OF CONTACT

All correspondence concerning fees, the reunion in Darwin,
ordering of items for sale and general correspondence please send to:

**The Secretary
5 RAR Association
PO Box 817 GPO Sydney 1043**

Letters to the Editor of Tiger Tales and follow up on orders of 5 RAR items for sale:

B. London

PO Box 422 Batemans Bay NSW 2536

or,

e-mail

londonb@sci.net.au

web site www.sci.net.au/londonb

**VISIT TO 5/7 RAR (MECH) DARWIN
BY BRIG C. KHAN DSO**

In late March 1999, I was invited by the CO 5/7 Battalion to visit the battalion in its new location and to name the new barracks, "BINH BA LINES." The visit was memorable and I was left with the strong impression that the Battalion is sincerely and deeply interested in and attached to its roots and the service of both the birth battalions in Vietnam. I could not have been more welcome.

The fire power and mobility of our Mechanised Battalion is quite outstanding, despite the fact that some of the up-gunned and up-graded M113 hulls saw service with us in Vietnam. I was particularly impressed with:

- Two machine guns per section.

- Section radio communications.
- Satellite positioning systems (GPS) down to section/vehicle level, and above all, the enthusiasm, appearance and obvious professionalism of all ranks in the Battalion.

It was comforting to speak to many of the soldiers, hear their views and to hear how well and happy they appear to have settled in to their new location. The barracks are outstanding with all soldiers in individual rooms, an Olympic pool, a massive indoor fitness centre with equipment that Jenny Craig would envy.

I was interested to visit the various Officers, Sergeants and OR's messes to find all units now share common messes. Individual messes appear to be things of the past.

5/7 Bn is one of the major units in the 1st Brigade with currently the other units being:

- 1 Armoured Regiment (from Puckapunyal)
- 2 Cavalry Regiment (from Holsworthy)

Artillery and Engineers will join the Brigade shortly. I also visited the 1st Armoured Regiment and for the first time in my Army life drove a tank. The 'Leopard' was very impressive but I soon realised why I became an infantryman - apart from anything else, I couldn't fit through the drivers hatch. At 2 Cav Regt I operated the the radar search device in one of the ASLAV - 8 wheeled vehicles. Not only did the radar identify people movement at several thousands of yards but it also showed the exact range and grid reference of the target.

A fine parade for the naming of the barracks and an excellent formal dinner with the RSM and members concluded what was for me a visit I shall not forget and I am indebted to 5/7 Battalion.

I strongly recommend the reunion visit in Darwin to all those who can attend - I am sure you will enjoy it.

Brig C. Khan DSO



Letters to the editor

Keith Jones: NARRE WARREN STH VIC

Brian, this is a very brief summary of my story. It is also one of the reasons for trying to locate John Williams since 1990.

John Williams and I teamed up with Jim Rocop on R&R in Bangkok. Jim was an American Infantryman and attached to an ARVN Battalion. He wrote to us at Nui Dat wishing us well, just before returning to New Jersey in the USA. Twenty four years later in 1990 I found his letter amongst some things in my army trunk and wrote to his old address not expecting a reply. 3 weeks later I received an emotional reply from Jim who was now a Detective Sgt working in the New Jersey State Police Force. He lived in Mays Landing, N.J. - the same town but not at the same address. Luckily the post office staff knew him. We wrote many times and discovered coincidences between our families such as we both had two sons the same age, both eldest wanted to join the police and are now members and that our way of life was similar etc. My wife Elaine and I were going to England in November 1990 and Jim asked if we could travel via New Jersey. We did and spent 5 wonderful days with him and his family. We arranged to meet in Hawaii the following year. I had been home about a week in the following January and got a phone call from Jim's family saying he was missing with 4 others in a light plane off the coast of Florida. According to the last radio contact, they were caught in a freak storm and out of control. My wife and I were shattered with the news. We stayed in constant contact with Jim's distressed wife. The wreckage was finally located on the sea bed 3 months later. Only personal effects were found.

A memorial service was arranged and I was asked to the service mainly to include the Vietnam chapter of his life as well as share the story of our renewed friendship. I was a long way to travel but I could not refuse. Jim was a well known identity in his district and approximately 500 people

attended the service as well as a large police contingent providing a formal honour guard. I was introduced as the last of many speakers. When it was my turn to speak, the MC said that they would find the next speaker interesting in as much I was Australian and that many Americans were unaware that Australians served in Vietnam. Sadly this is a fact. Regardless, my speech was a bitter-sweet experience but was also a very proud moment feeling that I was in some way representing the RAR. We stayed for 2 weeks and returned home with more questions than answers about this chapter in our lives. Elaine and I keep in touch with Jim's family, have visited them again and remain close.

Keith Jones - D Coy 1st Tour

Editor's note: I hope we can find John Williams for you and thank you for your sad but interesting letter.

THE CONCLUSION TO the STORY BY MICK HENRYS IN VIETNAM

As I reach the end of my classes I am amazed at the warmth and feeling expressed by my students. There has been organised dinners and small parties and all of them seem genuinely sad to see me getting ready to leave. One student, a female doctor, aged in her 30's, asked me after I had been teaching her for four or five weeks a most interesting question. She said, "Disregarding the bonds that you would have formed with the people you served with, what was the most pleasant memory of your first time in Vietnam?" It took me a few days to come up with my answer. My reply, "The memories of the children", satisfied her completely.

On the lighter side, on my last trip to Hai Phong (I had been there 4 times now), I met with a few teachers in their homes. I enjoyed a wonderful meal but was faced with the job of defending the honour of Australian manhood by drinking a traditional brandy. "Snake Brandy" was made of the bodies of 13 large snakes stored in a raw spirit for 5 years. It was said to be Vietnamese Viagra. It certainly worked on me the next morning, but that might also have been because I was so pleased to still be alive after drinking it.

THE TRIP SOUTH AND HOME

A brief but pleasant flight from Hanoi to Hue was the first stage. Hue was very historic and well restored and required at least a full day around the citadel area. Also the food was interesting. The 18 hour train trip was the only aspect of the whole trip that failed to meet my expectations. The

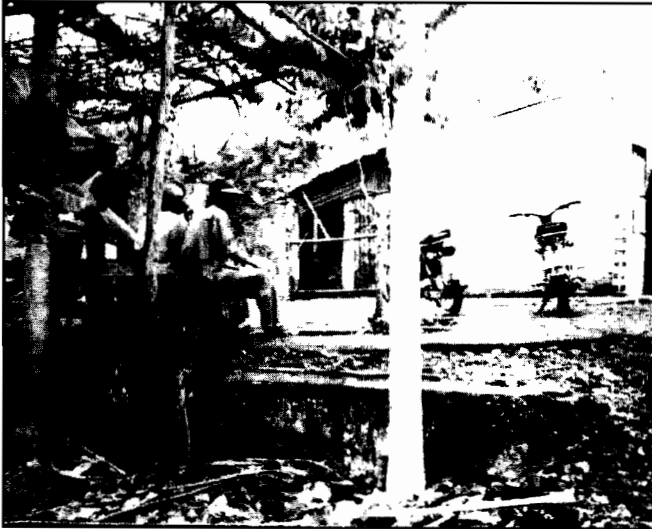
train was so dirty that any worthwhile scenery was impossible to see through the windows. The arrival in Saigon at 5.45am could not come soon enough. The hydrofoil from Saigon to Vung Tau was great. At \$10 US the 1 hour 20 minute trip is much better value than any land options. Vung Tau was incredibly quiet. I stayed in the Grand Hotel which turned out to be a newer building in the grounds of the old Grand. The old building is still there but is now hardly ever used. Following my employer's advice, I arranged for a guide from the hotel on the back of a motor bike next morning. My guide, Minh Vu, was very pleasant and informed me he had fought with the VC and then changed sides, later claiming 25 kills. He certainly showed no love for the current Government.



Minh Vu and Author

Our first stop was Long Hai which has been set up as a resort town but as yet without customers. An incredible number of Australian trees are being used along the roads and hills. It was Autumn and the smell of gum leaves being burnt seemed totally out of place

but very pleasant. We went straight to Binh Ba and after pretending to be a reporter, managed to get a local person to take us to the old villa in the rubber plantation. All that was left was a slab on The ground and even the airstrip had disappeared under a row of rubber trees. We were warned not to step off the marked paths as there were still mines being found in the area.



RUINS OF BINH BA VILLAGE

From the main road, Binh Ba looked quite different with the large and new market centre. Once we moved twenty 20 metres from there the only change to the huts were power lines and TV antenna attached to them all. Still dirt floors and obviously very poor. Our local guide then offered to take us back to Nui Dat and I am pleased he did as I don't think I would have found it travelling from that direction without him. All that remains are a few roads in the Task Force area and Luscombe Field which is now a very wide main street of a village of some one hundred that was set up after the Australians left the area. I believe it's name is Xa Phong Nhu . The effect of the regrowth has changed almost everything else. The trip back to Vung Tau took us through Hoa long. I had always remembered this as a very unhappy place and it has changed little over the years.

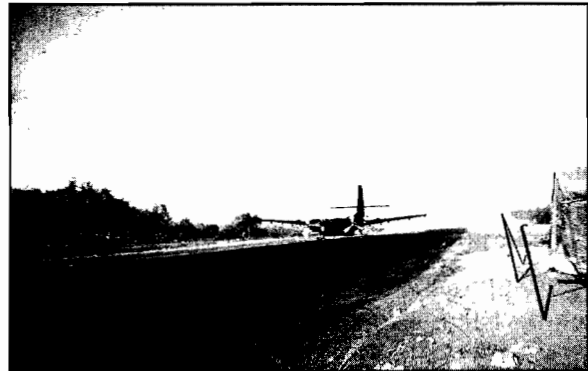
South of Baria, and in Cat Lo particularly, the development has been dramatic. Very little of the open spaces along the roads remains. Vung Tau is a large city based on oil and associated industries. Still some Russian influence remains here with some 4,000 still living and working here.

A day of relaxation and back to Saigon by hydrofoil and then a crowded plane to Sydney.

Looking back I would have to say that it was one of life's great experiences. I was extremely pleased to have gone to Hanoi first and to have been there long enough to get to know the people. My advice to anyone going to Vietnam now would be to travel to Hanoi and Cat Ba. not everything is good but it helps you get a better understanding of the people and the country and this makes visiting there , and the past, much more meaningful.

Mick Henrys

**SOME EARLY SHOTS OF OUR TOUR BY THE EDITOR
TIGER TALES**



Luscombe Field



EARLY CORDON AND SEARCH BINH BA



**SIGNAL PLATOON LINES WELL INTO THE FIRST TOUR
LINE SECTION NUI DAT.**

5 RAR REUNION
DARWIN 2000

The reunion for 5 RAR will be held over the Easter/Anzac day period hosted by **5/7 RAR (Mech) at Binh Ba Lines Robertson Barracks. PALMERSTON NT.** 7 RAR will join 5 RAR at Binh Ba lines for a joint reunion.

TRANSPORT

In the last issue of Tiger Tales, the association asked members if they were interested in travelling to Darwin by chartered bus. On investigation, the association found the organisation of this proposal, beyond the resources of the committee. **Therefore, all members attending the reunion are to make their own travel arrangements.**

ACCOMMODATION

Accommodation is **NOT** available at Binh Ba lines. **Members are to make their own bookings.** Please consult your local travel agent for accommodation available and suitable to your needs.

MIXED DINNER

A mixed dinner will be held on the Saturday night at 5/7 RAR Binh Ba lines for both 5 RAR and 7 RAR. The cost of the dinner will be \$25.00 per head. Attending members please attach a cheque/money order to your return form to secure your seat/s for the dinner. A list will be provided by Lt Col Ron Hamlyn listing all members who have paid. Please indicate the total number of seats required on the return form.

ANZAC DAY IN DARWIN

5 RAR will take part in the Anzac Day celebrations in Darwin. Final details such as order of march and groupings will be advised on the weekend prior to the march.

BRIEF OUTLINE AND OTHER INFORMATION

Bn Parade at Binh Ba Lines and mixed dinner 23 Apr, Open Day at Binh Ba lines. 24 Apr, Dawn Service at Binh Ba Lines 25 Apr, and Anzac Day parade in Darwin, all timings TBA. The association will arrange a bus service along with 7 RAR if there is a need. Members requiring transport please indicate on the return form. There will be a charge for this service and could be between \$5 to \$8 per head. Note that Robertson Barracks is some 25 kms South of Darwin. Pick up points will be advised at a later date. Public transport is also available and members should seek information/timings on the routes if using this form of transport.

REUNION 5 RAR DARWIN
RETURN FORM

I will be attending the reunion of 5 RAR in Darwin 2000.

NAME.....

GIVEN NAMES.....

ADDRESS.....

.....POST CODE.....

I will require the following number of seats for the mixed dinner.

I will require arranged transport to Robertson Barracks for **passangers for:**

- 1. Bn Pde..... Tick if yes
- 2. Mixed Dinner.....
- 3. Open Day.....
- 4. Dawn service at Binh Ba Lines....

I will be attending Anzac Day Parade in Darwin.
(Tick the box)

I enclose my cheque/money order
N0.....

for the mixed dinner for \$..... @
\$25.00 per person attending.

Signed.....Phone.....

SEND THIS FORM TO:

5 RAR ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 187
GPO SYDNEY 1043

5 RAR OFFICE USE

**5 RAR ASSOCIATION APPLICATION TO
JOIN AND RENEWAL OF MEMBERSHIP.
THE SECRETARY 5 RAR ASSOCIATION
PO BOX 817 GPO SYDNEY 1043**

**I wish to renew my membership to the 5 RAR
association.**

I am a new member.

SURNAME.....

Given Names.....

Address.....

Filed

Post Code.....

Contact phones..B.....H.....

If a new member, give a brief outline of service.

I enclose my cheque/ money order for \$25. 00.

NO.....

Signed.....

Date.....

(\$25. 00. is for membership period 2000/05)

5 RAR OFFICE USE

State Representatives

**QLD Lt Col Ron Shambrook AM
57 Lade St Enoggera 4051
(07)38554055 B 33541706 H**

**VIC Mr Geoff Levery
40 Brook St Sunbury 3429
(03) 93391229 B 97444078 H**

**SA Mr Bob Naismith
33 Martin St Morphett Vale 5162
(08) 83261813 H**

**WA Mr John Burridge
88 Watkins St Dalkieth 6009
(08) 93866826 B 93841218 H**

**TAS Mr Colin Illman
3 Blackstone Rd Launceston 7250
(03) 63449716 B 63430999 H**

**ACT Mr Greg Negus
3 Daplyn Close Weston 2611
(02) 62431029 B 62882070 H**

**NSW Brian London AOM DCM
PO Box 422 Batemans Bay 2536
(02) 44725748**

Editor Tiger Tales

**5 RAR ITEMS FOR SALE
5 RAR ASSOCIATION PO BOX 817
GPO SYDNEY 1043**

1. 5RAR VIDEO @ \$40.00. \$.....

2. 5RAR Tie @ \$15.00. \$.....

3. Car Stickers @ \$3 \$.....

4. Caps @ \$13. 00. \$.....

5. Honour Rolls@ \$30.00. \$.....

6. Plaques @ \$20. 00. \$.....

7. Vietnam Task @ \$20.00. \$.....

**8. Year of the Tiger @
\$68.00. \$.....**

\$.....

**My cheque/Money order for
\$.....is attached**

**Full
Name.....**

Address.....

.....post code.....

5 RAR ITEMS FOR SALE

The Association has on hand the following items for immediate delivery:

1. **Vietnam Task, the book on the first tour.**
2. **The Year of the Tigers, the book on the second tour. There are only 6 of these left and when they are gone, no more will be printed.**
3. **5 RAR ties and car stickers: ample stocks**
4. **5 RAR VIDEO: 8 left with more on order however, it will be a while before new stocks are available.**

STOCK SHORTAGES

The Association is out of Caps, Honour Rolls and Plaques. More are on order. There are members still waiting to receive these items, the association regrets the delay and inconvenience caused by the shortfall. We are doing our best to rectify the problem. Members in this category may apply for a refund or, await the arrival of new stocks. If you wish to apply for a refund, write to the association stating the details of your outstanding order.

Brian London.

HONOURS LIST 1999

PETER TUCK has been awarded the ORDER OF AUSTRALIA (OAM) in the recent Australian Honours List. Our congratulations on a well deserved award.

The 5 RAR Association

PETER ISAACS

Bosnia & Herzegovina Mine Action Centre

In recent years, there has been much publicity about mines, particularly the international campaign to ban anti personnel mines. I support the concept but the fact remains that if all the countries in the world signed what is known as the Ottawa Treaty tomorrow, it would not make a scrap of difference to the task of clearing the millions of AP mines that are already in the ground.

We know what they can do. Mines caused a large proportion of the casualties the battalion took during both tours. Little did I know whilst watching David Rowe and the Anti tank Platoon dig our battalion CP in the red mud at Ap An Phu in May 1966 that thirty three years later, he and I would both be earning our living attempting to deal with the wretched things in Bosnia.

I got into it through necessity really. I needed a Job! For about nine years, I had worked for an international security company in London. We did some mine clearance in Mozambique and I had written the commercial bids, hired the specialists etc and therefore

knew a little about the theory and the costs. But in 1995, I was sacked for instigating a revolt to topple the chairman. Through the work the company had done in Mozambique, I phoned the U.N. HQ in New York and was hired a week later to go to Angola as Deputy Program Manager.

Mine clearance is hardly 'Rocket Science' and by listening and watching I was soon able to hold my own with ex sappers who abound in the business. The trick is to avoid conversations about individual fuse mechanisms and other such tedious detail. The reality is that mine clearance programs succeed or fail because of the people that manage them - not the poor devil who spends 8 hours a day on the end of a mine detector or prodder.

The Program Manager resigned on a point of principle several months after I arrived in Angola, so I became the one everyone assumed knew what to do. Some were fooled into thinking I had great experience because of my lack of a leg and other bits but really, to manage a mine clearance program in a difficult situation you need only common sense, some determination, a willingness to work together with many different nationalities and perhaps most important of all the ability to resist feeling defeated through a constant state of frustration. I don't claim to have many of those particular attributes!

What a sorry country Angola is. Twice the size of France, a population of only 12 million, immense mineral wealth and a rotten and corrupt regime that has presided over a bitter civil war since the late 1960's. Luanda must have once been a beautiful city. Situated on the edge of the warm waters of the eastern Atlantic, its climate not unlike Sydney's in the summer. There are long white sandy beaches nearby. Now it is squalid and filthy and has an estimated 13 million refugees living in camps in and around the city. The mains water supply has long since collapsed and is not likely to be repaired as long as private tanker operators control a business estimated at \$50 US million a year. It is interesting to meet and brief visiting Western Politicians and

diplomats. I recall telling a US Assistant Secretary of State that America had a moral obligation to provide massive assistance for mine clearance in Angola. He asked why. Throughout the civil war, the Soviet Union supported the Marxist MPLA government and Cuba provided 20,000 ground troops and an air force. The US supported the South African Government which supported the opposing UNITA forces led by Jonas Savimbi. If the Assistant Secretary of State wanted evidence that the cold war had actually been fought out in Africa, I suggested he just travel outside of Luanda and see the devastation and ruin. He took the point but little financial assistance was forthcoming!

The collapse of the Soviet Union led to a deal to withdraw Cuban troops linked with South African withdrawal from Namibia and Angola. For a short time, peace came to Angola but in 1992, UNITA lost the supervised elections and a second round of Civil War began. It is estimated that more mines were laid during the following two years than had been laid in the previous 15 years of conflict. Both sides ran out of steam without their former super power sponsors and another uneasy UN brokered peace occurred in 1994.

It all flared up again last year and the demining programme on which millions of dollars have already been spent has stopped. More mines are once more being laid. There are now probably 75,000 amputees in Angola living a wretched kind of existence. No one knows how many did not survive mine or UXO blasts. The total extent of the mine pollution problem has still not been accurately estimated. May God help the people, their "leaders" certainly won't.

During the time I was in Angola we managed to raise, train and deploy a force of 300 deminers. We built a school and logistics base for a coordinating and standards setting, national organisation. It all sounds far better than the reality on the ground. Training deminers is easy, the difficult task is finding Angolans capable of being trained as managers, logisticians and accountants. The total manpower resource that I estimated was approximately 2,000. Managing that sort of organisation requires skills that Africa as a whole is woefully short of. The UN has its problems too. There is so much internal

squabbling as to who is responsible for what. Dealing with the Angolan authorities was a touch difficult at times also. There was never enough money. The Angolan staff were all ex - military about 2/3 from the Government side and the remainder from UNITA. Mostly it was a frustrating experience and my team of about 30 international staff was a very mixed bag. The majority were sappers provided by 5 of the countries contributing troops to the mission - UNAVAM - the Kiwi contingent was excellent, some of the others were of little assistance. There was a very high turn over of expatriate civilian staff and this contributed to a less than satisfactory performance. I was the fifth manager in 2 years.

With the increasing political tensions, the situation deteriorated to the extent that we had to withdraw the demining teams and the task of clearing the road from Zambia down which thousands of refugees were expected to return was not completed. I rather doubt that many made the journey anyway, given the political situation.

I left Angola in 1997 in April for purely for domestic reasons. On return to London, I had nothing to do for a couple of weeks so I stood for Parliament in the General Election as an anti European Union candidate. The British public has no time for single issue politics and my support on polling day was dismal. I did beat the Communists and National Front (Fascist) party candidates and a couple of other 'Loonies.'

I passed the time before setting out for Bosnia in June 1997.

David Rowe arrived in Bosnia in 1994. He had been recruited by my company under a contract with the UN to provide many of the specialists that provided the admin support to UNPROFOR, the UN peace keeping mission in the former Yugoslavia. David was the UNPROFOR admin officer in sector Sarajevo during the worst times of that city's siege by Serb forces.

Editor's Note: In the next issue of Tiger Tales Peter takes over again as UN Programme manager and persuades David Rowe to join him as senior Tech advisor to the Federation of Bosnia & Herzegovina Mine Action Centre. With all that is going on in the region, it should make interesting reading.