

Half Circle



Number 62 - February 2012

(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.

VALE - 2791611 PTE KENNETH THOMAS (Kenny) BLACK
March 1949 to January 2012

Members have been advised of the passing of Ken, one of the reliable, loyal, hard-working diggers of 8PI, who joined us in September 1969. After becoming wounded in February 1970, Ken was returned home, finished his National Service, and then faded out of the picture. We understand that he had lived in a tent in the Australian bush for over twenty years. His Section 2 I/C, Alan Riley summed him up: "Kenny carried the M79 for us (6 Section) he liked the idea of just it and a 9mm pistol. He did change his ideas on that after a contact up in the Nui Dinh Mountains but not sure if he did go back to carrying a SLR. Kenny was, if I recall correctly slightly built – wiry probably more like - and very likable. Got on with things, did his job, didn't bitch and minded his own business. A sad day." Bob Hooper expressed the same sentiments, having served alongside Blackie.
Rest in Peace Ken, your duty is done.

From Terry Major: If anyone is in W.A. and would like a round of golf on one of the better courses in the State, I'm the Captain of the Mandurah Country Club and would really be happy to arrange a game for anyone passing through the West. Mandurah is 75 km from Perth and has a fast rail link from the City or use the Kwinana Freeway. I can be contacted on 08 95357695 or tezmajor@bigpond.net.au. **Ed's note: thanks Terry.**

A COUPLE OF FACTS.....

Knowledge is knowing that a tomato is a fruit. Wisdom is not putting it in a fruit salad.

I was filling in a form yesterday. Where it asked who to notify in an emergency, I wrote "a Doctor".



MY PAGE, MY WORDS

3794130 Pte John (Buddah) Martini

One Nasho's Experience with Bastardry

After my marble dropped out I eventually joined the Army on July 17th 1968, and was immediately posted to Puckapunyal for recruit training. From there I went to Singleton for Infantry training (Jack Bradd being one of our instructors). From there to Canungra and back to Ingleburn in Sydney to await posting to Vietnam. As all diggers know the early days of training involved a lot of discipline, which although ridiculous on occasions taught us all to react to a given command.

After spending a few months at Ingleburn we were eventually posted to Vietnam and assigned to ARU (reco wing) before being shipped to a Battalion. During this period we did a few overnight ambushes, but most of all, I remember digging a lot of holes and filling sandbags. They told us this was to acclimatise us (yeah right).

During one of the many inspections a young officer whom I had not seen before had the platoon lined up for a rifle inspection, so naturally we thought this would be a walk in the park as we all knew the value of keeping our weapons clean, after all this was our most valuable possession after our wedding tackle. This officer then proceeded to single out a few of us for dust behind the sights of our weapons, including myself, although I was bugged if I could see it. So as we know when one digger stuffs up then all the rest are in the poo too.

We were then ordered to put 'pull through' in our floppy hats, and strip down to the waist. The officer then instructed to NCO to take the platoon on a jog around Nui Dat with rifles held above our heads. After about 1km of this the diggers were really pissed off and I thought we were being treated like s**t for a small misdemeanour. I then spat the dummy and stopped running which brought the rest of platoon to a halt, and told the NCO to f**k off, and we were not going to be treated like criminals. The NCO s**t himself, I think he thought he would be in trouble if we did not do as he said. Anyway he said I would be charged, and I responded that I didn't care and that I want to see the OC.

Needless to say I thought I would be in deep mire once I fronted the Major. To my astonishment he asked me to explain what happened. I told him I was a Nasho, proud to serve my country and very keen to be assigned to a battalion and do not believe I should be treated like a POW. After all I was in Vietnam to fight the enemy not be one of them. Although I jacked up on this occasion, because of unjust and degrading treatment, I have always followed orders. He listened patiently to all of this, then said

he would talk to officer in question before dismissing me. Naturally I expected the worst after he had spoken to the lieutenant as he would side up with him. However to my great delight I was never charged, and never heard another word about it. I think he may have given the officer a bit of dressing down.

A short time later I got my wish to be assigned to a Battalion, and along with my mates including Andy MacDougal, we were posted to 5RAR to form the new 7 Platoon. Unknown to us was the sad circumstances in which we replaced the original platoon, having been devastated in Long Hai mine disaster. This started the most memorable stage of my army career as we eventually became a formidable platoon due to some great leadership through Ian Hosie, supporting NCO's and some remarkable diggers amongst our group.

DAVE'S DIARY: (From the diary of Capt David Wilkins, OC C Company 5RAR, December 1969 to March 1970).

Continued from the previous edition of Half Circle.

My diary entries are in *italics* whilst additional data from Battalion and Task Force logs, as well as explanatory or descriptive commentary, are in plain text:

28 Dec

The battalion proceeded on Phase 1 of Operation Bondi today, a cordon and search of Duc Trung and Binh Ba (on Route 2), to be done in that order (of villages) on successive days. There had been numerous reports and sightings indicating enemy from D440 Battalion were using these two villages to replenish their diminishing provisions. An extract from our orders for this op is shown below:

C Coy

(1) Grouping

Remaining under comd	FO Party MPC Four SB one interpreter
Under comd for all phases from 280800H Dec	one splinter team

(2) Tasks

(a) Phase 1

(i) Move by APC to fwd assy area YS462737 departing NUI DAT at 281500H

(ii) Occupy posn facing SOUTH

(iii) Move on ft in order of march B Coy, Tac HQ, C Coy to occupy cordon posn as per trace

(iv) Close in cordon posn as per trace with B Coy and APC tp by 281830H

(v) Move no closer to DUC TRUNG than 800 metres before 281730H

(b) Phase 2. Remain in cordon posn as per trace

(c) Phase 3

(i) Remain in cordon posn

(ii) Provide one pl for bn ready reaction on ten mins notice to move

(iii) Be prep to occupy cordon posn outside BINH BA on late PM 29 Dec

This was our first cordon and search operation since Hoa Long in February. This arose from a change in Task Force strategy from March 1969 of having increased confrontational operations with main force enemy in their traditional locations such as the Hat Dich. And with this cordon and search it was decided to use a different method: *The move, in late afternoon and then lying in the cordon by night, proved to*

be far a more efficient method of occupation than the "midnight mile" used by us previously at Hoa Long during Operation "Quintus Thrust". There is less confusion, there is little chance of accidents, you can see what you're doing & you still enclose all the workers who have returned from the fields because you close the cordon just before last light. In addition, and probably most importantly, the soldiers are fresh the next morning to commence the search after having had a reasonable sleep, whereas in the other method they're moving till the early hours of the morning and then have to commence the search soon after first light. This could not lead to efficiency.

C Company was transported in tracks to an initial drop-off point in the rubber plantation to the east of Binh Ba and Route 2. We then moved by foot for the last 1,000 metres to a position north of Binh Ba. The closing of the cordon at 1830 hours allowed all the field workers to unsuspectingly return to their village, without any sympathisers getting word to the VC outside. The locals were caught completely by surprise.

Early in the night at 1935 hours one of our depth ambushes hit a squad of VC making their way towards the village. They killed one VC and possibly wounded more.

Unfortunately at 2100 hours one of our sentries in the cordon became disoriented in the pitch black of night and fired at movement, hitting our C Coy int rep in CHQ, LCpl Barry Morgan. It was not a good start. I arranged an immediate Dustoff, which was completed within 20 minutes of his being wounded.

The next morning C Company remained in its cordon position whilst other companies conducted the village search in the presence of the District Chief. The District Chief was personally responsible for the search of two Frenchmen's houses. In all approximately 1,100 people were screened. From Duc Trung 12 persons were detained for further questioning concerning their activities with the VC; and from Binh Ba 29 were detained.

(To be continued)

A Touch of Humour

A friend recently returned from a short sojourn to the Arabian Gulf and expressed surprise at the extent of political influence exercised by the Royal family in day to day management of the kingdom.

He relates how Sheikh (pronounced "Shake" as opposed to "Sheek") Well B'for Use, is President of the Union; his son, Sheikh Ali Bin Dere Dundat is Vice President and Minister for Planning and Adventure; his uncle, Sheikh Al Falah Ma Goodness is Minister for Defence; a brother, Sheikh Ali Kat is Minister for the Environment while another brother, Sheikh Rattle 'N Role is Minister for the Arts. Coincidentally, the latter's twin, Sheikh 'N Orlova, is, strange as it may seem for he possesses no medical qualifications, Minister for Health.

Another brother, by a different mother, Sheikh Itup was dismissed from his portfolio of Infrastructure Management when he disrespectfully insisted that responsibility for administration of the proposed nuclear power plant be brought under his jurisdiction. He was moved to the Department of Non - Alcohol Licensing where he is now more famous throughout the kingdom than his other relatives for the innovation he has brought to the world of juice cocktail mixing. In fact, his fame is so widespread that a wag ex - pat suggested that as he had taken juices and dairy products, such as yoghurt, cream and ice cream etc, combinations to a new level, he should be known as the Milk Sheikh. Shortly thereafter, the ex - pat was invited to return to his country of origin; my friend informs me that we Westerners would say that he has been deported.

Shortly before the friend left the gulf, Sheikh Al Falah Ma Goodness became incapacitated through illness. As at the time of writing, the kingdom is anxiously

awaiting release of the Promotions List and, as the kingdom is now experiencing a Sheikh down, all dread that the vacancy will be filled by the President's favourite but youngest son, the philanderer, Sheikh Down an Out.

Fred McCarthy. Ed's note: only Fred could write something like this!!

A CHALLENGE..... One of our blokes (quite a senior one) has suggested that we have a segment in Half Circle for funny stories from our time in Vietnam. Here are the rules: (1) the editor has the right to clean things up if necessary; (2) all articles should be no longer than two or three paragraphs; and (3) no stories which could compromise your current domestic situation can be accepted. LET'S HEAR FROM YOU!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

Paddy's in the bathroom and Murphy shouts to him.

"Did you find the shampoo?"

Paddy says, "yes but it's for dry hair and I've just wet mine

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