

Half Circle



Number 148 – April 2019

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.



AT THE RAP: Peter Commerford, Barry Morgan and Barrie Taylor.
We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well as they would like to be.



TRAVELLING ABOUT:

Colin Summerfield has bought himself a mobility scooter. He now travels under his own steam to the local shops, improving his independence and allowing social contact. Well done, Col.

Bob and Margaret Hooper off to Japan to see the cherry blossoms.

FROM DENNIS (Digger) NEVINS – NAMIBIA Part 3

4 July 89.

American Independence Day – I think. We are working in a country where the people want their independence, when it happens will it work? We all wonder as the blacks don't have the business knowledge, it's been run by the whites. After they have their elections it will be interesting.

We went up to the Okahandja refugee camp to continue tasks but wasn't able to achieve much as the plumbers are waiting on pipe fittings and I'm waiting on gravel to arrive. The place is stinking mess, human faeces is all around, it's a foot hazard. There are droppings all over the place, around the open area, in front of the kitchen where they line up for food, the drains that take the water from their showers has floating human waste and the little kids play in it, the toilets they do have are flowing over as they are not emptied and I've seen little kids with their arms in it slopping it around, it's appalling. Around the camp toilet paper

floats in the wind, there is stained paper stuck in trees and on the ground, people are toileting all over the place, the way women have to toilet is appalling and cannot be described here.

Meanwhile the men laze and smoke under trees that's why we have no time for them but the women do their best and we can see that. The camp is run by a minister of the church and I've even heard him saying the "F" word in frustration trying change the culture, to me this camp needs shutting down as the whole area smells of an acid vomit.

Last night Big Bill and I got on the grog with the Danes, we worked out we drank a gallon of beer and finished off with Schnapps, I went to sleep alright but woke at 0400hrs with a pounding headache saying I will never drink again—of course that is not going to happen. The Danes are great blokes and we get on so well, the Danes have taken this boozier over from the South Africans, it a senior NCO boozier but we rocked in there not knowing and got beer, when we found out it was for senior ranks well we told them we were senior plant operators when fact most were Sappers except for me as I was a Corporal. The Danes didn't care as we drank lots of beer and we all sang lots of Neil Diamond songs. Big Bill would show them things like crushing a beer can between his huge shoulder blades and put an empty beer can in his mouth, like I said we got on well.

Ed's note – the above article is a continuation of the diaries of Dennis (Digger) Nevins, outlining his service in the African nation of Namibia.

A Court Martial in Windhoek, Namibia **(Part 1- Pre-trial events)**

By Dave Wilkins

Dennis 'Digger' Nevins' recent two-part story in *Half Circle* of his service in Namibia, not as a Crunchie but as a Sapper, reminded me of my own time there in the same year, but neither of us realized at the time that another Tiger Battalion man was nearby.

In 1976, after being medically downgraded, I changed direction, studied law and with my new qualifications, transferred in 1979 from Infantry to the Army Legal Corps.

In 1989 two soldiers serving in an Australian Engineer unit with the United Nations Transition Assistance Group (UNTAG) Namibia, Sappers GP Boseleys and AJ Phillips, were unhappy with the way their corporal was running the section so decided he should be taught a lesson. They bashed him, most severely. Each was charged with two offences of assault occasioning actual bodily harm and two alternative charges of assault upon a superior. Their CO considered the case too serious for him to handle summarily so he referred them for trial by Restricted Court Martial in Windhoek, the capital of Namibia.

The legal officers for the trial travelled from Australia: the Judge Advocate Colonel David Wilkins, prosecutor Captain Harry Dempsey and defending officers, Captains Lynne McDade and Paul Wilkinson.

And 'travel' we did, as the forward trip took an exhausting 52 hours. It was the era of South African apartheid and the sanctioning Commonwealth of Nations' Gleneagles Agreement that restricted contact with South Africa. One consequence (at least for Government personnel) was the cessation of direct flights from Perth to South Africa, which could then connect with the shorter hop to the neighbouring Namibian capital. Instead, we had to fly via Europe. To start with, the Qantas flight from Mascot in Sydney on 26 July 1989 was delayed seven hours due to strikes in Melbourne. Then we flew via Singapore, Bahrain and London, which took 32 hours (including the delays) before transferring to Pan Am Airlines

for the leg from London to Frankfurt. It was there that Wilkins and McDade had luggage problems. Naive to the uncertainties of international travel we had not booked our luggage through to the final destination but instead, just to Frankfurt, with a view to collecting it there and transferring it to the South African Airlines flight. Delays had reduced the transfer time at Frankfurt but with over an hour we had time to collect our luggage. Or so we thought. After walking for nearly forty minutes towards the luggage carousels in this enormous airport, we realized we had to turn back or miss our flight. With neither of us able to speak German and the desk officer with no English, we somehow instructed her to forward our luggage to Windhoek on the next flight. At that stage however, we were unaware that there was only one flight per week to Windhoek. Our South African Airlines flight went via Abidjan for refuelling but passengers remained on board in the stifling temperatures with the cabin thick with cigarette smoke. Did those South Africans know how to smoke! You could barely see through the haze. We finally arrived at Windhoek on Friday 28 July, exhausted from this marathon journey.

I checked into the Kalahari Sands Hotel while the three captains were initially accommodated in barracks with other Australians. They considered that to be inappropriate in view of the pending trial and were moved to a hotel in town, the Continental Hotel, which turned out to be somewhat less salubrious than they had expected, as part was a brothel for the locals.

With no luggage, I spent some hours shopping for some clothes and other essentials.

At 5AM on the Saturday I drove 5 hours to Grootfontein to view the area of the alleged offences. Later that day, while the prosecutor and defence counsel prepared their cases and interviewed the accused and witnesses, I took the opportunity to spend the weekend sightseeing with the in-country Australian Legal Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Ken Northwood.

END PART 1

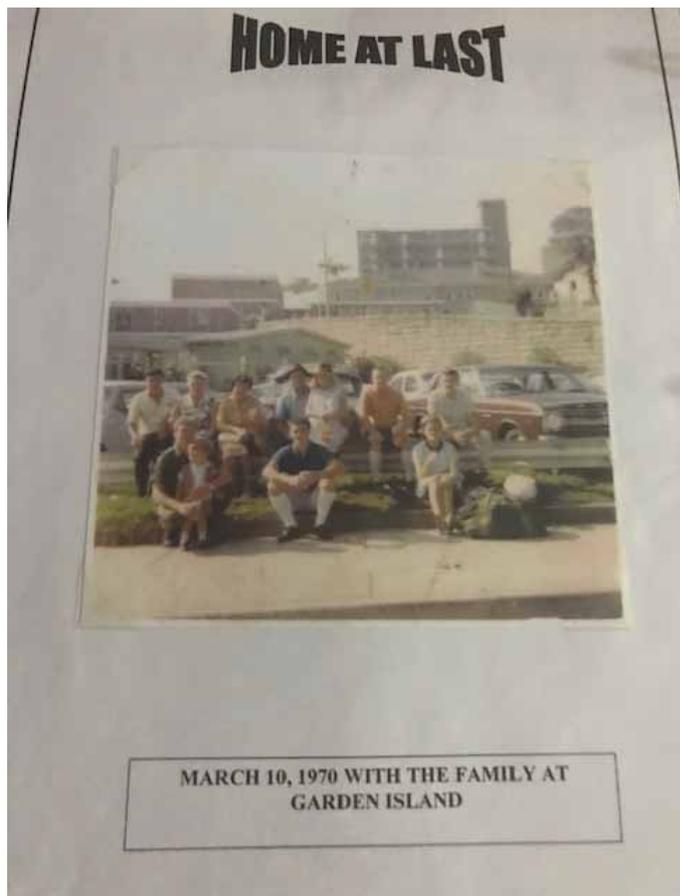


The 5RAR Association (WA Branch) meets regularly in Perth. Pictured in the far right corner is our own Terry Bates. Terry is a very active member and a very generous donor. Thanks, mate!



Darts Davis, Ray Fitzpatrick, MK Smith, Fred McCarthy + Ian 'Leisy' Leis

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March 1970 – after 13 months in Vietnam, 5RAR returned home after its second tour. This picture shows Eric Hamlin (bottom left) being reunited with members of his family.

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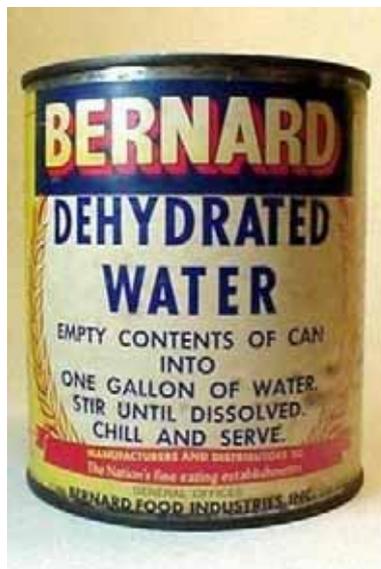
LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION

1 Trevor Adams, my assistant programmer, can always be found
2 hard at work in his cubicle. Trevor works independently, without
3 wasting company time talking to colleagues. Trevor never
4 thinks twice about assisting fellow employees, and he always
5 finishes given assignments on time. Often he takes extended
6 measures to complete his work, sometimes skipping coffee
7 breaks. Trevor is a dedicated individual who has absolutely no
8 vanity in spite of his high accomplishments and profound
9 knowledge in his field. I firmly believe that Trevor can be
10 classed as a high-calibre employee, the type that cannot be
11 dispensed with. Consequently, I truly recommend that Trevor be
12 promoted to executive management, and a proposal will be
13 executed as soon as possible.

Addendum

The idiot was standing over my shoulder while I wrote this report.

Kindly re-read only the odd numbered lines.



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