

Half Circle



Number 127 - July 2017

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:
Colin Summerfield – medical

3794462 – PTE DON TEICHELMAN – MY STORY (Part 1)

We left Australia from Mascot Airport in Sydney. Everybody was having a drink. My brother had driven up from Melbourne with me after pre-embarkation leave.

He was to drive my car back to Melbourne after I left. We all boarded a Qantas Boeing 707 (City of Sydney). Qantas shouted everybody a free beer.

We landed at Singapore the next morning and had breakfast while the aircraft was being refuelled. We noticed that the weather was hot and humid, a taste of things to come in Vietnam in the wet season. Next thing we were back on the aircraft heading to Vietnam. Looking out of the portholes you could see how wet it was – water everywhere.

We landed at Ton Son Nuit in Saigon. We then left the aircraft. It was then that I knew I was in a war zone – jet fighter flying overhead and planes everywhere on the ground. Our next move was to fly to Nui Dat. This was with the USAF in a Hercules C123 Provider, which is a cargo aircraft. We had to sit on the floor and hang on to web belts that were at our feet.

We landed at Luscombe Field at Nui Dat. It was raining heavily. WE were then transported to 1 Australian Reinforcement Unit for two weeks further training before being posted to a battalion. That night, lying in bed, it seemed like “Combat” on TV, with artillery shells going overhead sporadically all night. We would get used to this whilst we were not on an

operation and were at the Nui Dat base. The artillery would start firing at any time during the night just to upset the enemy. Next morning I got out of bed and opened my locker, and an M26 grenade rolled off the shelf and landed at my feet. Fortunately the safety device was still intact.

During our two weeks training at 1ARU, we had to conduct a patrol of the perimeter of Nui Dat. During this patrol we came across an unexploded bomb, and I was asked to take a picture of it as it was unknown. The Army developed the film, but it was of no interest to them.

Two weeks later I was posted to 5RAR, which was in a rubber tree plantation. It was the wet season. I was posted to 9PL, C Coy, where I met SGT Knight. He advised me that the rest of C Coy was on an operation and I would be choppered out to join them the next morning. That night, after I had packed my pack and cleaned my rifle, I went to the 5RAR Boozier because C Coy's was not open due to the Coy being on operation.

When I left the boozier, it was pitch black. In fact, you could not see your hand in front of your face. I had to make my way back to our lines, and as I have a poor sense of direction, I had great difficulty. When I finally got back to C Coy I found a hootchie which I later learned was not mine. It was in the 7PL area. These four-man tents were barricaded by sandbags, about 3 feet high. The mouldy, stinking tents covered these. There was a light globe hanging from the roof of the tent. This was suspended from an electric cable, and a switch was located above the globe. When I turned the light on, the globe exploded in my hand – back to pitch black again. I had been cut when the globe exploded as I could feel blood on my hand. Then I went wandering around C Coy's lines to try and find some help. I finally saw some light. It was the C Coy Command Post, and it was underground. I descended the steps and found another member of C Coy. I then looked at my hand and saw blood gushing out in spurts. I thought I must have severed an artery. The other fellow organised transport for me to 8 Field Hospital, where the doctor stitched me up. He told me I was not going bush until the wound had healed. I spent the night in the hospital.

When I arrived back at C Coy, I told SGT Knight what had happened. He sent me back to get a chit, which I did. When I presented it to him, he called me a malingerer. I then told him that I would go on the next chopper, which occurred the next morning. I was now in country, out on an operation in the Vietnam wet season. This was something I hope I never have to repeat. If you weren't wet from rain you were wet from sweat due to the high humidity. At night you slept on the ground. I would leave my boots on as my socks were wet anyway. After three days I started to get sore feet, so that night I took my boots off and to my astonishment my feet were a deathly white. After that I took my boots off every night. About this time, my finger was giving me some pain, so I saw our PL medic, "Stoney". He took the dressing off and my finger was completely white. Stoney just pulled the stitches out. They pulled away easily because the skin was dead. He then got a needle and proceeded to puncture my finger to get the blood flowing. The next few days saw my finger starting to heal, thanks to Stoney.

Ed's note: This is part 1 of Don's story, with Part 2 being published next issue. It also highlights how badly we treated the reinforcements that were sent to us. They were thrown in at the deep end, with no form of induction. As one of those who received reinforcements into C Coy, I offer my apologies. As those who grew with the Battalion through 1968, we probably expected Reos' to know what we had already learned about our culture in C Coy. David Wilkins also spoke of this treatment of our Reos' at our Canberra reunion in 2016.



TRAVELLING ABOUT:

Jock Phillips, visiting Australia and spending a week with his great friends, Blue and Arleen Schafer.

Jack and Susan Lake, spending time in WA, including ANZAC Day in Mandurah. Below is a photo of Jack with Terry Major, Peter Guyatt, and other members of the 5RAR Association.

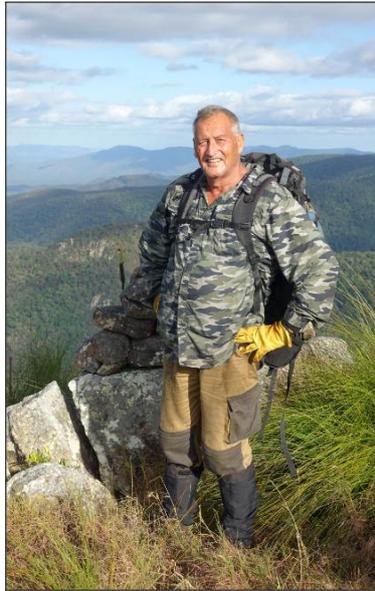


Jack and Susan Lake, en route from WA to NSW, visited Hickory Dick in South Australia. Hickory and Marie made them most welcome. They also took the time to visit the grave of our old mate Matthew Kevin Smith, buried in Yatina, near Black Rock, SA. Here is a photo of Matt's grave:





5 Star accommodation – our sandbagged 4-man tents at our Nui Dat base.



Taffy Cheeseman – still got it!



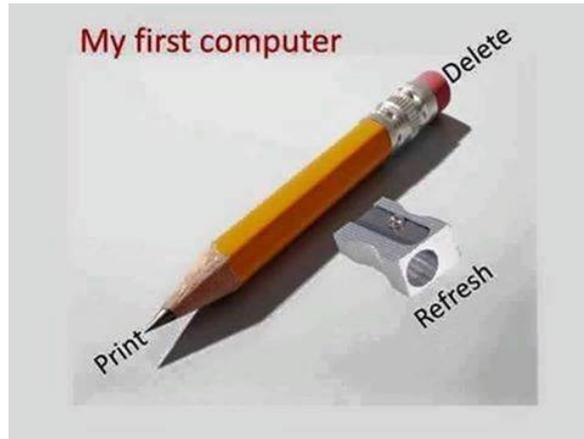
Leaving Sydney's Garden Island Naval base for Vietnam – 3rd February 1969
(Photo courtesy of Ian Leis)

I was speaking to an old mate a few nights ago, and asked what he was doing. He replied, "I'm engaged in a process of aqua-thermal immersion of ceramics, aluminium, and stainless steel under a controlled environment". I told him that sounded pretty interesting, what did it really mean? He said, "I'm washing the dishes, and my wife is watching me".

SOME SIGNS WE HAVE SEEN.....

At a Marina -
A Carpet Layer's Truck -
A Gynaecologist's Office -
A Vet Clinic -
An Employment Office -
A Funeral Home -
A Plumber's truck -
A Pizza shop -

Out to Launch
Get felt and be happy
At Your Cervix
Back soon. Sit. Stay
Get Staffed
Drive carefully - we'll wait
We repair what your husband fixed
7 days without pizza makes one weak



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