

Half Circle



Number 141 - September 2018

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 – Claude Ducker, MC, MID, OC Coy 5RAR Vietnam 1969

As I think you all know, Claude has been living with Parkinson's for over ten years and tackling it with his usual courageous tenacity. Most people think of Parkinson's as the disease that gives you a tremor and makes you shake, but in fact Parkinson's can affect almost every system in the body – and no two people with Parkinson's have the same symptoms.

Claude is one of the 30% of patients who didn't have a tremor. His major problem has always been muscle stiffness, affecting his walking, his writing and his fine motor skills. He was lucky in that he was 75 when the symptoms first started affecting him (some people are in their forties when diagnosed) but unlucky in that in recent years his condition has deteriorated quite quickly.

This year we decided to go to Queensland for our usual holiday, despite all the difficulties involved. Ian Leis very kindly obtained a bed rail for Claude to borrow – essential for Claude to use to turn over in bed - and we were able to have some lovely walks on Coolum Beach and enjoy the Queensland sunshine.

Unfortunately, despite being in the same apartment we have rented for five years, and in Coolum where we have been visiting for over twenty years, the change of environment seemed to trigger a marked deterioration in Claude's Parkinson's symptoms and he was hospitalised in Nambour.

Late stage Parkinson's symptoms can include changes in normal behaviour, including agitation, but the situation was not without its funny moments. The brakes on his wheely walker (which was brand new) were faulty and Claude rang DVA in Brisbane and demanded they fix them immediately. DVA, to their everlasting credit, managed to get on to a mobility shop who rang on the Friday afternoon to say they could send someone out on Monday. That wasn't good enough for Claude, who thundered down the phone: "When I was in Vietnam and told to attack an enemy bunker system I couldn't say "I can't do it, it's Friday afternoon and tomorrow's Saturday!""

Claude went from hospital in Nambour to hospital in Canberra, and his regular doctor here gave me the very unexpected and sad news that I would be unable to nurse him at home any longer. (As a former nurse I've been able to manage everything up to now, though I admit that without that background it would have been impossible.)

You will probably not be surprised to know that Claude anticipated this happening and was prepared. Four years ago he organised an ACAT assessment for himself, investigated nursing homes, chose the one at the end of our street (Calvary Retirement Community Haydon Village) and chose the wing where he would like to reside. He filled in all the paperwork and filed it with his ACAT assessment, Advanced Care Directive and his Enduring Power of Attorney. We were extremely fortunate that a room became available on the very day I was told he could not come home, and when I went to the filing cabinet, everything I needed was in an envelope ready for me.

He is settling in quickly and making the best of it – it's been a very big change for us both. He is not ready to have visitors yet, but if anyone wants to drop him a line please do – his postal address is still **92 Jaeger Circuit, BRUCE ACT 2617**.

I'm adding two photos for this story. One was taken on our last day at the beach, when Claude, ever resourceful, hitched a ride back up the beach with the lifesavers. The second was taken in hospital here in Canberra and you will see that he is still smiling.

Many thanks again to Ian Leis, and very best wishes to you all. Judith Ducker



***Ed's note:** Every member of C Coy joins me in conveying to Claude our sincere best wishes, and equal thanks to Judith for her years of dedication. Claude, you hit the ground running and demanded results when you joined C Coy in Vietnam in April 1969, but now we understand why. You were a great leader and a fine officer. Thank you.*



AT THE RAP: Peter Commerford, Barrie Taylor, Barry Morgan and Colin Summerfield. Colin has just spent a short stint in hospital. We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well as they would like to be.

VALE – 216528 Corporal John David (Jack) LOADER OAM

7 September 1941 - 28 July 2018

We regret to advise that Jack loader has passed away at his home town of Nerang
CPL John 'Jack' Loader passed away on Friday 27 July in his hometown of Nerang,
Gold Coast.

Jack joined 1 RAR in South Vietnam in April 1966, when 1 RAR returned to
Australia he was posted to 6 RAR. He returned to Vietnam with 5 RAR on 28 January
1969 as a member of 7 Platoon Charlie Company. During the second phase of
Operation Federal Overlander, Jack was wounded in action during a bunker contact.
Due to his wounds he was medically returned to Australia on 7 April 1969.

***From David Mead, Jack's Platoon Commander:** Unfortunately I don't have a photo
of Jack but I do have many memories of him; yes he left 7 Platoon WIA in our first
contact but we were to serve together again later when Major Jack was OC District
Support Unit Singleton and I was Commandant of the Centre. Of course Jack was just
as straight and no nonsense as ever.*

*His passing particularly made me think of the Memorial Walk at Enoggera Barracks
and the fact that each tree there serves as a memorial to one of our fallen mates. Yes
trees do matter..*

*If you Google Map what WE know as the Singleton barracks area you will find scores
of platoon sized groups of gums (it may need some of your "why things are seen "
skills) ranging in age from 25 years ago to whenever the practice stopped (if it has
stopped). Although the seed of the idea may have come from the then Commandant, it
was Jack's nursery that had a production line of saplings such that after the march
out parade of every depot company platoon each soldier planted his own gum. The
families of any soldier who died while serving were also invited to plant a tree in
memory of their son*

*So Jack there are thousands of memories that continue to grow and serve to remind
me of your dedication and service. and your care for the environment.*

I hope they may help to add to the memories of all of us.

May you rest in peace,

Sincerely,

David Mead

***From Geoff Jones, ex 6RAR:** 100 people attended, army and civilian friends alike.
In the last decade or so Jack and Joan were deeply involved in a rotary project in
Cambodia. They were much admired and respected for this alone.*

*Jack had a defibrillator implanted in his chest which worked well but a chest x-ray
revealed that he had advanced lung cancer, He passed away peacefully in hospital.
I presented Joan with a 6 RAR Association sash and I had the opportunity to say a
few words, I spoke about Jack having a gift for banter, often starting the bonhomie
with a well-aimed comment or quip and keeping it alive. He was often heard to say
about his Vietnam service, "I was so far forward I had to get a leave pass from Ho
Chi Minh". Vale Jack.*

***Ed's note:** Many of us will fondly remember Jack from our period of training for
Vietnam at Holsworthy in 1968. He was a "no frills" NCO and Section Commander
who put absolute fear into young diggers (like your editor) at the first meeting. In*

spite of his distinctive gravelly voice and sometimes abrasive attitude, he was very well liked and respected. Jack continued his military career after Vietnam, and retired as a Major.

We offer our sincere condolences to Jack's family.

RE: Roger Lambert's submission regarding the Jungle Penetrator in Half Circle number 139 and 140, here are a couple of interesting comments:

1. There were two experienced users of the jungle penetrator in 7 Platoon - Ian Hosie and Sandy McKinnon (you are experienced after surviving one extraction). Sandy went up and out through the trees. Enemy fire aimed at the chopper was intense. Being early evening, the tracer arcing up into the chopper above put a shiver through us all. John (Buddah) Martini was to follow Sandy but he reckoned he was safer on the ground. I seem to remember he told Jack Lake where he could stuff his jungle penetrator (just another run-in between the two!). The US chopper stayed on station despite the incoming fire, rotating his tail rotor to the enemy to reduce his silhouette. Jim McMillan was killed that day - July 31, 1969. 49 years ago. What a great friend and wonderful soldier. *Andy MacDougal*
2. Thanks for the Half Circle, the part about the "Jungle Penetrator" I know it very well, they used it when I was hit. *John Humphries, Tracker PL*



Once a TigerBryan and Arleen Schafer with John and Maureen Halliday in Thailand.



TRAVELLING ABOUT:

Bob and Margaret Hooper – off to Africa on a safari in late August.

LOCATED – MAX AITKEN: Kevin Mulligan has advised that he has made contact with Max, from whom we haven't heard in 49 years! We will remember him as a member of CHQ's Support Section. Max is living in Ulverstone in his home state of Tasmania. You editor has since spoken with Max, who is fit and well. He has now joined our mailing list, and his email address can be obtained from your editor.



Here's one for the 9 Platoon boys ...

This is the Government Aircraft Factory (English Electric) Canberra B.20, A984-236, that dropped the 6 x 750 lb bombs in our support during the bunker contact of 21 September 1969. The image was taken at RAAF Edinburgh, South Australia in 1979, ten years after the close air support mission. The wing-tip bomb crutches that held a 750 lb bomb each had by this time been replaced by the standard wing-tip fuel tanks.
Roger Lambert

Paddy decides to take up boxing and goes for the required medical. A few days later the doctor 'phones and says "Paddy, you realise you've got sugar diabetes. "Paddy says, "Nice one, when do I fight him?"

A dwarf goes to a very good but very busy doctor and asks "I know you are busy but do you treat dwarves?" The doctor replies "Yes, but you will have to be a little patient".

FROM KEVIN MULLIGAN: I thought it was time to pass the baton (C Coy drinking mug) to someone who can better put it to its intended use! To this end I've attached a photo of my son, Lance, and myself at the handing over ceremony. I still have no idea where he gets his drinking habit from.



ED'S note: Who still has their Vietnam issue drinking pewter? I still have mine (pictured below) – as battered and bashed up it is, it still holds grog! At our 2016 Canberra reunion, Claude Ducker, with the help of you blokes, upgraded it for me.



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