

Half Circle



Number 170 - February 2021

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.

THE 2021 AUSTRALIA DAY HONOURS LIST

It is with much pleasure that we advise the award of the **Order of Australia Medal (OAM)** has been made to **Colonel Roger Wainwright (Ret'd)**, in recognition of his service to the 5RAR Association and the Australian Army as platoon commander of 8 Platoon in Vietnam, 1966/67. Roger has served our Association as president for over fifteen years, and is currently the vice president. We congratulate Roger on receiving his OAM. Another Tiger shows the way! *(See picture on page 6).*

FROM THE EDITOR:

This year in Half Circle, I would like to trial a new concept. I would ask that you all consider submitting an article for your mates to read. The subject? **YOU**. The idea is that you submit an account of your Army service, and what you have done since you took your discharge. Your article should be no longer than **1 ½ to 2 pages**, in order that others may have a go. Everyone has a story to tell, and here's your chance. Don't worry about grammar – you send in the facts and your article will be prepared for you if required, and the final draft submitted to you for approval before publication. Half Circle belongs to all of us, and if it is to continue, you will need to contribute. A list of profiles we already have appear at the end of this newsletter. Thanks, Don



AT THE RAP:

We send our best wishes to our mates who are not as well

as they would like to be.

People you meet during your travels – by Barry Morgan

I spent 32 years in the Regular Army in three different Corps – 5 years in RA Inf, 5 years in RAAOC and 22 years in the RAAMC. The three Corps stints felt like three different careers to me. But one constant thread during that time was meeting people who had served with 5RAR in Vietnam. Hopefully you will find this trip down memory lane interesting.

I arrived back in Australia at RAAF Base Richmond, by C130, and then I was transported to RGH Concord where I was to spend the next 10 months. Then I was transferred to the 2nd Military Hospital at Ingleburn. While I was there, a Nursing Officer mentioned that a C Coy 5RAR Officer was a patient in the Officers' ward. I requested permission to visit (as it was out of bounds to a junior NCO). The patient was Dave Wilkins and I was asked to leave by staff after a short while as he was very sick.

After being discharged from the 2nd Military Hospital at Ingleburn, I was told I was on the Unallotted List Eastern Command (UL E Comd) and would be detached to 4 RNSWR at Arncliffe. When I arrived I had been downgraded medically as a Rifleman so I would be re-trained as a Storeman. I was sent to the Q Store where the CQMS commenced my training in the mysteries of the Q world. After a month or so, I was informed that I would be detached to a new unit called the Central Clothing Store located at the Moore Park Barracks (situated where the Sydney Football Stadium is now). The Central Clothing Store was a trial concept and was staffed mostly by UL E Comd personnel.

When I arrived I found that Bob Byrnes (ex 7 Platoon) and the late Mick Matysiak (ex B Coy) already there. Bob used to do very well at cards during the lunch break. I was employed as the ledger clerk working under the supervision of the RQMS (WO2 Bill Simmons, a Rat of Tobruk Veteran). After a while, I was sent to attempt the Storeman Technical and Quarter Master Sergeant (QMS) Grade 1 exams which I passed but was not happy in the Q stream.

Next I applied to attend a basic Clerk Administrative (Admin) course. On the course I meet Neville Paine (ex A Coy). After passing the course, I was posted to the 2nd Army Recruiting Unit at Marrickville working in the Orderly Room with Cpl Frank Peacock (ex A Coy). Also at Marrickville was Cpl Barry Fitton (also ex A Coy). The three of us used to car pool from Villawood (where our Married Quarters were located) to Marrickville.

Whilst at Marrickville, I heard this gravelly voice shouting at a bunch of new recruits that had just arrived from York Street in the city. The voice could belong to only one person. Sure enough it was Sgt Jack Loader (ex 7 Platoon) now posted to 1 RTB Kapooka.

One day the WO2 from the Recruiting Section ('Slim' O'Shea formerly Chief Clerk 1RAR) dropped off some travel claims for me to process for his team's next trip north. I noted they were travelling to Glen Innes, Tamworth and Bingara in northern NSW so I mentioned that my wife's family came from Bingara. The next day I was added to the team. Bingara was the home of the late Reg Smith who served with 9 Platoon. In Tamworth I caught up with the late John Faint (ex 7 and 8 Pl) who was involved with the local cricket club.

Later in my time at Marrickville I was panelled to attend the Supervisor Clerk Admin course at the RAASC Centre, Puckapunyal. After the course, the instructors persuaded me to apply for a Corps Transfer to RAASC as the course qualified as Subject 4 for Sergeant (SGT). I took the advice but the Army was in the process of disbanding RAASC with some trades going to RAAOC and others to the newly formed RACT (transport).

My Corps Transfer to RAAOC was granted and I was posted to the 2nd Training Centre as an instructor, on promotion to SGT. Most of the students were from WRAAC School but quite a few came from units at Holsworthy (including some downgraded medically from their Vietnam service). All of us had to learn to touch

type which was difficult for one soldier who had a badly injured arm. He was given an exemption from the touch typing test.

After two years, I was posted as the Chief Clerk of the 1st Military District Personnel Depot (1MD Pers Depot) at Enoggera in Queensland. The Pers Depot processed people for discharge, conducted medical boards and managed the Unallotted List. The CSM was WO2 Kiwi Gibbons, a well-known character in the Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). Kiwi had served with 3RAR during the Malaya Emergency. When CO 3RAR decided to form a Tracking Team (TT), Kiwi was selected and was part of the TT when it carried out a successful action against the Communist Terrorists. The TT was commanded by Lt Claude Ducker (later OC C Coy 5RAR) and resulted in Lt Ducker being awarded the Military Cross.^{1, 2}

During my time at 1MD Pers Depot, I was selected to attend a Subject 2 for Warrant Officer (WO) RAAOC course at Bandiana (the home of my new Corps). One of the first people I met, in the SGT Mess, was Frank Peacock (ex A Coy) who was attending a Pay course. After meeting my fellow students, I discovered that about half of them started in Corps other than RAAOC. Some were clerks, other storemen (or QMS), other ammunition technicians, POL handlers or foodstuff personnel. But most of the course was about supporting the field Army so we learnt about field supply companies and brigade distribution points (DP). The field exercises were conducted near the former migrant camp at Bonegilla (now the location of Latchford Barracks). The night DP exercises were particularly useful for later postings.

In 1978 I was told my next posting would be as Chief Clerk of HQ 1 MD at Victoria Barracks in Brisbane (you bewdy another posting in Queensland!!!). However not long after I was told I had been selected to attend the Admin and Technical (A & T) Officer Qualifying course at Canungra (for 3 months). One of the instructors was MAJ Roger Wainwright (C Coy 5 RAR first tour). During the course we had to compete in the Canungra cross-country run. As I approached the finish line, hot and sweaty with wet shoes from a creek crossing, I noticed an officer who looked familiar. He was sitting under a beach umbrella with a cool drink on the table beside him. That officer was MAJ Roger Lambert (ex Pl Comd 9 Pl C Coy).

After the A & T Qualifying Course, the students had to go through a Corps selection process (just like recruit training). I was told that I had been allocated to RAAMC as a Lieutenant. My first posting was the 1st General Hospital in Sydney (not Brisbane!). After reporting to work on my first day, I was told that I was to see the Senior Medical Officer in Field Force Command. When I got to Victoria Barracks, Paddington, I discovered that Colonel John Taske had served with 5RAR in Vietnam when he relieved the 5RAR RMO for a while.

In 1981, the 1st General Hospital was tasked to support a large 2nd Division exercise in an area between Bathurst and Orange not far from Hill End. The Chief of the General Staff (CGS), LTGEN Sir Donald Dunstan, decided to visit the exercise and the HQ 2nd Division staff arranged for him to call at the hospital for lunch as we had a kitchen and a tented dining area. The HQ 2nd Div escort officer for the CGS was MAJ D.D. Graham (former OC C Coy).

In 1982, I was posted as Admin Officer of the 7th Camp Hospital at Kapooka, on promotion to Captain. My extra-regimental appointment was Vice President of the Kapooka Golf Club. The President was MAJ John Sizeland, OC Admin Coy 1 RTB (formerly CSM Support Coy 5RAR). John had been my first CSM in 5 RAR when I was a member of Signal Platoon.

In 1984 I was posted as Adjutant of the School of Army Health. While there I had to learn sword drill as I had been tasked to command an honour guard for the visit of MAJGEN Digger James. Digger James and BRIG Colin Khan (CO 5RAR in SVN) had been classmates at RMC and had served as Platoon Commanders in Korea where both were wounded.

In 1985 the Government decided to close the Officer Cadet School (OCS) at Portsea and the School of Army Health was warned to move from Healesville to Portsea. I was tasked to be the School's Project Officer for the move. When I arrived at Portsea the first time, I could sense that a lot of the OCS personnel were not happy about the Government's decision. When I reported to the Deputy Commandant I found a friendly face, LTCOL Bill Titley (formerly 2IC C Coy and ADJT 5RAR), who made my task much easier.

In 1986 I was posted as the Operations Officer of the 11th Field Ambulance (11 Fd Amb) at Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane, on promotion to Major. 11 Fd Amb was in support of the 6th Brigade. The Brigade Commander was BRIG Fred Pfitzner, who had been a company 2ic during 5RAR's first tour of Vietnam. The Brigade Major (senior operations staff officer) was MAJ Gary McKay who was awarded a MC in Vietnam and later became known as the author of a number of books on Vietnam including *In Good Company* and *Delta Four*.

In 1988, I was posted to Land Headquarters (LHQ) at Victoria Barracks, Paddington. LHQ had replaced HQ Field Force Command (another Army re-organisation). One of the first people I met in the Officers Mess was a Colonel Dave Wilkins wearing the insignia of the Legal Corps. The General commanding LHQ was known as the Land Commander. In 1990 a new Land Commander arrived and it was another familiar face, MAJGEN Murray Blake MC (formerly OC D Coy 5RAR in Vietnam).

I was often tasked to undertake staff visits to Land Command units including the Special Air Service Regiment (SASR) at Swanbourne Barracks in W.A. The RAP staff had arranged a morning tea for my visit and who should turn up but the Chief Clerk SASR, Mick Radwell. Mick and I had served together in 5 Sect 8 Pl C Coy in 1968 and he always had a good sense of smell for food. Mick retired from the Army as a Major.

During another visit to medical units at Ingleburn I discovered WO2 Kevin Mulligan (formerly Coy Medic C Coy in Vietnam) working in the 2nd Military Hospital orderly room as the Chief Clerk. Kevin treated me when I was shot on the Battalion's last Operation.

In 1991 I attended the War Administration Course at Canungra (one of many courses there). One of the instructors was LTCOL Keith Van Den Belt who was the 5RAR Assistant Quartermaster in Vietnam.

In late 1991, I was posted to Army Headquarters in Canberra. In addition to my normal duties I was told I would be the Australian representative for a Quadripartite Working Group (QWG) on Health Service Support. There were 16 of these QWGs as part of the American, British, Canadian and Australian (ABCA) Armies Standardization Program. Each nation provided four Standing Chairpersons (SC). The ABCA program was coordinated out of Washington DC in the US. Every few years the QWG SCs had to travel to Washington DC to provide an update on progress. The year that I went to DC, I travelled with the other Australian SC and the SC QWG Infantry was COL David Mead (formerly Pl Comd 7 Pl C Coy).

In 1994, I was posted as SO1 Strategic Health Planning in Headquarters Australian Defence Force (HQ ADF) on promotion to Lieutenant Colonel. Then in 1996 I was selected to be the CO of the School of Army Health (SOAH) at Portsea. SOAH had two training detachments at the Army hospitals in Sydney and Brisbane. On a visit to the Sydney detachment, I called in to the District Support Unit (DSU) Moorebank (later BASC Liverpool) to meet another familiar face, MAJ Bryan (Blue) Schafer (ex 9 Pl C Coy). DSU Moorebank looked after the accommodation at East Hills (another former migrant camp) for the detachment staff.

Whilst in Sydney I had to visit HQ Training Command (Trg Comd) at Georges Heights. One of the staff officers at HQ Trg Comd was the late MAJ Jack Loader (formerly 7 Pl C Coy).

After yet another Army reorganisation it was decided to amalgamate seven Army schools (including SOAH) into the Army Logistic Training Centre (ALTC). I was given responsibility for clerk admin training (Bandiana), catering training (Puckapunyal) and chaplaincy training (Bonegilla) as well as medical assistant, preventive medicine and dental technician training at Portsea. The HQ of the new Personnel Training Division was also at Portsea. At the time the life partner of the OC of the Catering Training Wing was a Warrant Officer who served with D Coy 5RAR in Vietnam as a junior NCO.

After a year of travelling up and down the Hume Highway for opening or closing addresses and meetings, the Government decided to close Norris Barracks at Portsea and most of the property was transferred to the Point Nepean National Park. My HQ and health training were moved to Latchford Barracks, Bonegilla (previously the site of Army Apprentice and Survey training). The Survey Corps had been absorbed into the Royal Australian Engineers (RAE) and the Survey school amalgamated with SME (yes another reorganisation!).

After moving my family to Wodonga, I joined the Wodonga Golf Club. One Saturday, I saw a familiar face, Bob Byrnes (ex 7 Pl C Coy). Bob had also transferred to RAAOC and when he left the Army he settled in Wodonga. One day I had a call from Bob saying he had a couple of visitors and could I come around to his house to meet them. When I arrived at Bob's house I found Sandy McKinnon and Allan (Bluey) Austin (both ex 7 Pl C Coy). Sandy was having problems with his eyes at the time so Bluey was his driver.

While I was at Bonegilla, the Chief Instructor (CI) of the Puckapunyal campus of the ALTC asked me to hear a charge. A student had made a complaint against an instructor and the CI had been involved in the mediation process. The mediation failed and the instructor was charged so an independent authority was needed to hear the charge. The matter was escalated when the instructor asked a legal officer to represent him. The Chief Legal Officer at HQ Trg Comd responded by sending a legal officer from Sydney to prosecute the case. The legal officer was Trevor Carter, who had served as a digger in B Coy 5RAR. Trevor also served on the 5RAR Association Committee for many years.

After one year in Wodonga, I moved back to Canberra for my final posting to the Australian Defence Headquarters (ADHQ) renamed from HQ ADF (another reorganisation!). I resigned from the ARA in July 1999.

When I joined the Army it was common to see officers and warrant officers wearing WW2 or Korean War ribbons. When I left it was unusual to see officers or warrant officers wearing Vietnam ribbons.

Well this concludes my tale. Once I was allocated to RAAMC, I felt like I had started a new Army career but I still managed to encounter fellow soldiers that I had served with in 5RAR. A number who were wounded in Vietnam and downgraded medically were able to pursue meaningful careers in other trades or Corps. A number were commissioned which shows those leadership skills developed in C Coy in Vietnam proved beneficial.

¹ Bill Parry, *We Were There in the RAR*, Winston Oliver Parry, August 2005, pp 33 to 36

² David Horner & Jean Bou (Editors), *Duty First: A history of the Royal Australian Regiment*, Allen and Unwin, 2008, pp 98-99



Canberra, 16th January 2021: A group of representatives from the 5RAR Association gathered to meet with our CO, Brig Colin Khan DSO AM, on the occasion of his 90th birthday, and the awarding of Life Membership to him of the 5RAR Association. Pictured above (l to r) are Geoff Pearson, COL Roger Wainwright (8PL first tour and past president 5RAR Association), Bryan Schafer, Vince Feenstra, Brig Khan, and Barry Morgan. *Photo courtesy Vince Feenstra.*



Mr Whippy in the field – training has changed slightly since our time!
Photo courtesy Roger Lambert

Here is a list of profiles of our members, compiled over past years. Ian Leis has done an incredible job in putting many of these together. The number in brackets after the person's name indicates in which issue of Half Circle the profile appeared. Please remember that the 5RAR website has all past copies of Half Circle if you would like to visit past issues.

The list of profiles is: Ian Leis (150, 151, 152), Mike Radwell (126), John Hellyer (109), Max Aitken (153), Bill Evans (67), Geoff Ford (7), John "Tangles" Gardiner (51), Eric Hamlin (31), Russell Hill (61), Roger Lambert (115), Mat Smith (43), Robert "Blue" Newberry (44), Bob Wyatt (45), Greg "Hickory" Dick (47), Peter "Fred" McCarthy (47), Barry Morgan (49), Mick Struchlak (50), Geoff Pearson (54), Wayne "Rouster" Stephens (55), John Yabsley (56), Bob "Tex" Cunningham (57), Sandy McKinnon (78), Peter "No 10" Molloy (104), Paul McQueen (7), Eddie "Suave" Moon (4), Kevin Mulligan (4), Ben Oram (21), Don Teichelman (127, 128), Billie Waters (3). Is YOURS next?

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