

Half Circle



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(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.

CHANGES AT THE CURRENT C COMPANY: Major Dave French, OC C Company 5RAR, Darwin, advises that he is to take up the position as Operations Officer (OPSO) in the battalion in 2012. We congratulate Dave on his appointment, and thank him for his outstanding leadership of C Company in 2011 and in particular his achievements in Afghanistan as the OC of Combat Team Charlie. Dave is to be replaced by Major Matt Lewis. Matt recently sent your editor an email outlining his military service. The email (in part) is as follows:

"I am currently serving in Israel with Operation PALADIN and preparing to return back home next week.

I look forward to being a very active contributor to the "Half Circle". I intend to follow in the footsteps of Dave French and continue to make sure we have a very strong relationship in the future.

Just to give you an overview of myself, I started my Army career as a Reservist in Adelaide with the 10th/27th Battalion, The Royal South Australia Regiment whilst I was at University completing a degree in Physiotherapy. I quickly realised that my passion was in soldiering and after completing my studies and practising for two years; I decided it was time for a change in career and joined the ARA.

I started my professional soldiering in Townsville with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment and deployed to Iraq as a Rifle Platoon Commander. I have spent most of my career as a Light Infantryman with subsequent appointments at the School of Infantry and the Combat Training Centre. I have more recently been an Instructor at RMC-Duntroon then an OPS Captain with HQ 1st Brigade. This year I have been serving on the Golan Heights as an observer with the UN based in Northern Israel.

It goes without saying that I was extremely happy with my posting to the 5th Battalion as a Mechanised OC and look forward to the challenges of this new environment. To hear that there is a very active and supportive ex-Serviceman organisation for C Coy has made this an even better opportunity. Once again, I look forward to communicating with other members of the Half Circle once I get settled into the position next year".

DAVE'S DIARY:

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:

25 Dec 1969

Xmas day back at the Dat and a suitable amount of booze is consumed by all. We began the day with the company officers and sergeants serving Coffee Royale to the diggers IN

BED (strong coffee, sugar, cream and laced with a healthy dose of brandy- not sure if we used rum instead). Later, we continued our duties and served the diggers their Xmas

dinner, much to their delight. This is an old Army custom and one the Diggers enjoy immensely. It was terrific day for the Diggers, sergeants and officers alike.

I invited the CO and the RSM to join the Company for a beer and dinner. It was during the Christmas drink when spirits were high that "Doc" Mulligan produced his white rabbit, (illegally smuggled from Vung Tau and secreted in the lines away from the prying eyes of officers and SNCOs) and handed it to "Genghis". "Bunny-san" was well received as shown in the photo at the following website address:

<http://www.5rar.asn.au/gallery/bunny-san.htm>

We were all relaxed, the VC were kind enough to leave us in peace, and people were able to unwind for a day. I also made a quick trip to visit my wounded soldiers in the Field Hospital at Vung Tau.

I am now occupying "Yarralumla", which is OC C Coy's "mansion" at Nui Dat. It has an office and a bedroom, neon lighting in both rooms, sofa, fridge, fan etc. Very comfortable, compared with other quarters up here. The small wooden building was painted green and snuggled amongst the rubber trees of C Company lines, with the Coy Command Post dug in below it. The extra space was good for planning and holding my orders group before each operation.

(To be continued)



Lt Ian Hosie serving Christmas Dinner to Harry Kallergis and Ken Leggett

Ed's note: This article is part of a series of extracts from the War Diary of Captain David Wilkins, OC C Company 5RAR from December 1969 to March 1970. C Company soldiers will remember Christmas 1969, being served by the Officers and senior NCOs, and Kevin Mulligan's "Bunny San". I also recall a 9PI soldier being cheeky enough to offer the CO a dirty dixie mug with a strange substance in it. Genghis' reaction? - He took a swig, looked at the digger and said "I think this brandy is St Agnes!" Ben Oram may know just WHO that soldier was! Dave probably doesn't know how much of a morale booster his move to invite the CO and RSM to C Company on Christmas Day was.

MY PAGE, MY STORY
THE BEGINNING, THE MIDDLE AND THE END
1200748 Sgt Russell (Kiwi) HILL



It all started in the New Zealand Army in 1956 when I joined up and Volunteered to join the Infantry. (I know, and it was the only time I did it). Anyway 1958/59 saw me swanning around the jungles of Malaya as a baggy carrying a brand new FN rifle. On returning to NZ, I eventually decided I was going to Canada, to join the Canadian Air

force (At that time it was the highest paid service in the world) so I got out of the NZ army and hopped on a plane on the first leg of my journey, which strangely enough was Sydney. On arriving in Sydney, I purchased a 1948 Ford Mercury, so as I could have a look around, before moving on.

On my second trip around Aust. I reckon I had seen it all and finished up in Townsville ready to move on to Canada. Fortunately I had not purchased my ticket for the next leg, and I repeat fortunately, as I met a joker in a pub in Townsville who I had known well in Malaya. He had been in 3RAR at the time and we had spent quite a bit of time when on R&C finding out which bar had the coldest beer.

We tried the same trick in Townsville, and to cut a long story short, we both finished up in the Recruiting Office next morning, signing our lives away yet again!!! That was February 1966. Hello Kapooka, Hello Infantry Centre (didn't volunteer), then I finished up in Airborne Platoon at RAAF Base Williamtown, NSW.

After falling out of an aeroplane eight times, I was qualified to wear my wings. During my time at Williamtown, I did an Infantry Instructors course down at the school of insanity, and in 1967 was posted to Singleton as an Instructor in 1 Platoon A Coy. At the same time I decided to marry a good looking chick who saw something in me that no one else could see and Cheryl is still my wife to this day. Our first home was at Greta where the live firing range for Singleton was located and three of us staffies travelled to Singleton each day.

Late in 67, I was promoted to Sgt and remained at Singleton till early 69. It was obvious to me that I was going to be there for ever, so I applied a LITTLE bit of pressure to go to Vietnam, as at the time Aust and NZ had abandoned their reciprocal service recognition. Away I went to reinforcement wing at Ingleburn, and cooled my heels there until the day Armstrong walked on the moon, and that night I boarded a plane to Saigon. Like all reo's I went to ARU, only to be told to make my self comfortable as this was where I was going to spend my time whilst in country. Why, I asked the OC, and he stated that as I was an Instructor that's what I was going to be doing. (Yeah, like hell). I eventually managed to wangle a swan out to a FSB and no sooner had my feet on the ground when I was accosted by Claude Ducker, who said he needed a CSM as Jack Lake was currently acting PL Comd of 8pl, and could I do the job? Oh yes sir, piece of piss sir, AND that is how I joined 5RAR, and eventually found my way into good old 8pl.

I wasn't flavour of the month when I went back to ARU to pick up my gear and the OC tore a small strip off me for being so underhanded??? I never did get the chance to ask Niner, what method he used to get me over to 5RAR, and anyway, who cares. I moved into 8pl lines and shortly after a new Pl. Comd. by the name of Jan Hood turned up. He wasn't with us very long, and I'm not sure where he finished up, but his replacement was a man I still respect to this very day. His name is Peter Commerford. Pete moved into the tent with me, and it was obvious right from the start that this guy was a natural leader, and that's exactly what he turned out to be. I won't bore you with the Gory Warriies but Pete stayed on and I came home with the battalion, I mean to say, what the hell was a bloke of my age doing over there running round in the J??



A GIFT FROM SWANNY: We all remember Euston Swan - machine gunner - 9PL. Swanny was a slogger. A good, solid, reliable digger who did his job, said nothing, and was not known to be a practical joker. Until now. Swanny visited Colin Summerfield in Tamworth over the Christmas period, stayed for a while, gave Col a present and left. When Col opened the present, he found it was a walking stick. The walking stick was adorned with a built-in stubby holder, a bicycle bell and a bulldog clip with the following note: *My name is Colin. If found wandering, please return to 54 Campbell Road, Calala.* And we thought Swanny had no sense of humour!

AT THE RAP: Ian Cooper. Coops, battling serious illness, managed to get to Toowoomba for Christmas with his daughter, and also found the time to phone his mates. Good luck, mate.

Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod - 02 6842 4913, 0418 423 313, donharrod@bigpond.com with help from Dave Wilkins, Russell Hill, David French, Matt Lewis, Col Summerfield and Euston Swan.

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL