

Half Circle



Number 103 - July 2015

(If this is hard to read, try increasing the picture size to 150%!!)

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: Barrie Taylor – ongoing oncology treatment. Barrie has not been well, but has not bothered to complain.

Colin Summerfield – medical. Col has had to face a number of issues in recent times, with no new light on the horizon. If any of his old 9PL mates would like to give him a call, please phone (02) 6762 8061.



TRAVELLING ABOUT: From WA – Alan McNulty DCM, the 5RAR Association rep: On Saturday 30th March we had the pleasure of the company of Jack and Susan Lake at a lunch in Perth. Fifteen members and their partners attended. Jack and Sue had been staying in Mandurah (south of Fremantle) and had the opportunity to catch up with another 5RAR CSM Bob Armitage, and his wife Jan. Terry Major also took Jack to the nursing home to see Kim (Hippie) Locke. Hippie is not well, but appreciated Jack and Terry's visit.

Ian and Glenys Leis – currently south of Perth – in mid June they visited Kim Locke in Mandurah, WA.

ATTENTION 7PL MEMBERS: If you have not yet been contacted by Jack Bradd regarding a project he is working on (can't give out too much information at this stage as the recipient knows nothing about it), please contact him at jackbraddwarren@outlook.com Jack needs a contribution from you. Alternatively, contact your editor, details at the foot of this Half Circle.



Jack the Cat: It was an all-night session at the SGTS' Mess bar (post Vietnam, 1970/71), and I did my best to try and keep up with the RSM, but failed! In the wee small hours of the morning I collapsed and curled up around his feet like a cat. The next day I felt as though I was recovering from an autopsy, and hid in the TV room.

Unfortunately my so-called mates found me and dragged me out to a packed bar, and my CSM told the story of my curling up like a cat at the RSM's feet. They presented me with a saucer of milk, a tin of cat food, and named me "Jack the Cat". I suffered this humiliation, and then took the tin of cat food from the bar, and had a yarn with the cook. He did a great job with the cat food, putting it on a large plate surrounded with Jatz bickies and put it out amongst the bar snacks. I warned one of the few mates I had left at the time, and we watched the blokes hook into the bar snacks. The cat food didn't last very long. Luckily for me the RSM didn't eat any of the cat food and laughed as there was a rush for the toilet when I told them what I had done.

After that I spent a period drinking at the "Chevron Rails" (the Railway Hotel in Liverpool) waiting for the cat food incident to blow over as there were a few cat food eaters waiting to get back at me.

Jack Bradd

THE C COMPANY (Vietnam, 2nd tour) REUNION is to be held in Canberra on 15th, 16th and 17th March next year. If you haven't registered or booked your accommodation, better get your skates on! If you need registration documents, please contact Barry Morgan at b.kmorgan@bigpond.com

A police recruit was asked during the exam, "What would you do if you had to arrest your own Mother?"

He answered "Call for backup."

Doctors' Law - If you don't feel well, make an appointment to go to the doctor, by the time you get there, you'll feel better. But don't make an appointment and you'll stay sick.



In Sydney and want to hit the little white ball? Then head for the Georges River Golf Course, Henry Lawson Drive Georges Hall. Geoff Grimish and his team will make you most welcome. Geoff is a Vietnam vet (RAA), and is a great supporter of this newsletter. Phone (02) 9724 1615.

Thank you young friend for your handiwork,
The small memorial would have escaped my notice,
Had it not been for your blue sprayed talents drawing me back,
To take a closer look.

'This was the area occupied
by the 22nd Battalion of the 4th Brigade
5 Division during the years of conflict'

'Australia Remembers 1945 – 1995'

You gave me cause to remember,
Young men lost in the name of Nation,
Friends still here and those gone, then and since,
The training, the mateship, the spirit, leaving those loved;
The fear, the courage, the cries of pain, the death, the sorrow
Until the next jogger broke the spell and brought me back.

Oh, and you,
I don't attempt to understand the reason for your choice of canvas,
Nor do I expect that you'll ever know what you owe them,
But I pray that you will never have to pay,
As they did.

Thank you young friend

David Mead

A zookeeper was given the task of expanding the mongoose exhibit. He went onto the internet and advertised for two mongooses. The internet told him he was incorrect. He then advertised for two mongeese. Incorrect again. He again tried for a pair of mongoose. Incorrect. He then advertised for a mongoose – and when you decide to send me one, please send another with it.

The following is an article written by Brigadier George Mansford. Brig Mansford's biography will be featured in a Half Circle very soon, but briefly, he was a digger who made it to the most senior ranks of our Army. He was also the first platoon sergeant of our own David Wilkins. George Mansford is a digger's man, and has spent many years actively supporting the average digger. We thank him. Ed.

The Corporal

For good reason, it is an accepted fact that NCOs constitute the backbone of the Australian army. Among their ranks are the overworked, often neglected but reliable and dedicated Corporals who wear one or two stripes. Their duties and responsibilities are far from easy.

As junior leaders they too are called upon to make quick critical life and death decisions in the fog of war, particularly when the plan goes wrong or the unexpected occurs. In such circumstances they are often without support and direction. In simple terms, when in such isolation there is no time to seek guidance thus there is a need to decide, often instinctively, and act then and there. They're on the edge between life and death which includes those they command. The success or failure of that quick decision when confronting the unexpected could well determine the outcome of the overall battle at hand.

The Corporal, be it man or woman at the sharp end of war is far distant from those who determine strategy and direction and yet it is the corporal and his or hers troops who more often than not, fire the first shots.

It follows that such Corporals and the troops they command with very few exceptions are the furthest from the Generals and at the far end of supply lines. Thus it is not surprising that there may be times when even basic every day needs are in short supply.

Given the chain of command where Corporals are at the far end from where ever those orders filter down from, they have the least time to prepare to comply and of course even more vulnerable to sudden changes of plan. Thus the time frame between receipt of orders and execution can be dangerously short. Clearly such circumstances require a sharp mind, sound battle procedure and team work. Mind you, there are no excuses such as "we didn't have adequate warning time." or "insufficient resources."

Thus it is evident the Corporal is burdened with immense responsibilities and may indeed have within his grasp the outcome of an operation if not expectation from seniors for the junior NCO to achieve the impossible or create miracles.

They're expected to maintain the highest standards of discipline within their small band and yet live and sleep with them, share rations, water, gauge their physical mental stamina and demand more of them and often push them to the very limit of endurance.

To add to the list, in dangerous circumstances they may have to order soldiers in their command, face to face, to carry out immediate tasks where injury and death are most likely to occur.

No matter where or when, they are both mother and father to those they command embracing both welfare and discipline. They welcome inexperienced young commissioned officers to the fold, obey them, offer advice and are very much an influence in how well that young officer develops.

If their seniors become casualties, they are expected to take command then and there, often in the heat of battle and get on with the task.

Like all good leaders, when confronting danger, exposed to cruel weather, hungry, tired, exhausted and fear of the unknown, there must always be that smile, never a frown and always going forward. Despite such physical and mental demands they are in the main, professional dedicated warriors who lead by example. They are indeed very much the pulse beat of the NCO Corp which in turn is the backbone of any Army.

I have been honoured to have known and served among them in peace and war. The least I can do is to put pen to paper to recognise them in a small way with some scribbles below. I do hope my words are sufficiently adequate to express in a small way the Corporals lot in life. God bless them

George Mansford June 2015

Those Who Wear One or Two Chevrons

You can tell Corporals by the chevrons worn on military suits
They're far distant from HQ but always among the first to shoot
They're key players of the team in peace and war
As well as mastering army manuals, they must know a lot more
With new officers, they do obey, shelter them and advise
Until such **SIRS** grow older and become battle wise
Then the cycle begins again when new ones arrive

They're expected to do the impossible and it better not be too slow
Short warning, rushed orders and scant time to get on with the show
No matter the odds, theirs is not to reason why or even dare to ask
Just comply with the order of "hurry up and get on with your task"
Such miracles are expected of junior leaders be it day or night
No matter task and limited resources, they must get it right
Regardless of hunger, thirst, fear or exhaustion to win the fight

They're mothers to each and every soldier they command
As well as being fathers who discipline and protect their small band
No matter why, where and when the chips are down
Such leaders always must force smiles and never frown
They lead the way and personal fear they must not bare
They're always expected to be bold and to dare
Yet if there is failure then the blame is clearly theirs

It's normal for the big brass to receive most of the praise
As can be seen by the many medals they wear on all days
It is true that now and then the odd Corporal will receive a gong too
Yet compared to reprimands and kicks in the arse, they're very few
So when you see one or two chevrons, for such leaders, say a prayer
Cos the poor bastards wearing them have heavy crosses to bear
Yet tomorrow it's odds on, these true blue will still be there

George Mansford ©June 2015



Half Circle was compiled and edited by Don Harrod – donharrod@bigpond.com, 0418 423 313, with help from Alan McNulty, Jack Bradd, David Mead, Alan McNulty, Ian Leis, and Brig George Mansford.