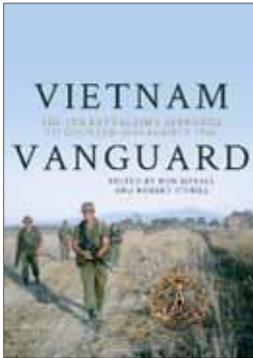


VIETNAM VANGUARD - THE WORD IS OUT!



Soon after the publication of 5 RAR's new book *Vietnam Vanguard*, Mike von Berg advised his Canadian war correspondent friend from 1967, Daryl Henry who now lives in the USA, of its availability for reading online on the publisher's website. Daryl promptly did so and his thoughts in the following paragraphs are a fine testimonial from an 80 year old adventurer who praises the traits that set Australians apart from our allies during The Vietnam War. His quote from a VC source is noteworthy.

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FROM THE FRINGES

by Daryl Henry

The excellent book, *Vietnam Vanguard*, conjured up a wealth of memories. In reading it, I was transported back half a century.

My odyssey to Vietnam had its genesis on my 18th birthday when I enlisted in the sea-going Division of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The assignment: to patrol the Atlantic coast aboard a converted WWII minesweeper. I was well-barnaced by the time I retired and set off for the University of Toronto. There I studied architecture while learning how to skydive. I managed to graduate but succumbed to the siren call of the sky and went on to captain the Canadian Parachute Team to a world record in international competition.

As a result, I was hired to coach the US Marine Corps free fall parachute team. Tasked to represent the US at the upcoming CISM games in Brazil, the team trained extravagantly using our "own" H-34 helicopters and won the overall gold medal in Rio. However, the unit was disbanded soon after when most of the Marines were sent to Vietnam.



Daryl Henry, with the 5 RAR Reconnaissance Platoon, in the Long Hai Hills 1967.

Glowing letters of the exhilarations to be had in that conflict began arriving in my mailbox back in Canada. "Come on over, Coach, and ride the tiger." One trooper flew F-4 Phantoms, later Bird Dogs, another was an infantry platoon leader, a third was a Force Recon (Marine recce) sergeant. I inveigled a letter of introduction from the editor of the *Toronto Star*, himself a WWII war correspondent, and set off in the summer of 1966 to Saigon, thence north to Da Nang in a USAF C-130 shuttle, thence aboard a USMC CH-46 to the DMZ.

I spent six months with the Marines out of Dong Ha recording the joys of being shot at without result, including a Recon training jump onto China Beach, and then ventured south to Nui Dat where good friend, Captain Bill Molloy, former Australian parachute-team captain, had been posted to 5 RAR. In short order I met 2nd Lt Mick Deak, MC—now Mike von Berg—who invited me to crawl through the scrub of the Long Hai with his Recce Platoon. More joy abounded, and I was able to compare the American and

Australian ways of war. The differences were educational. *Vietnam Vanguard* made the differences clear.

We know the Americans went searching for Charlie, brave and naïve, hoping to subdue him with irresistible firepower, and we know they eventually failed. You can only walk into so many ambushes.

An excerpt from *Vietnam Vanguard*, written by a Viet Cong commander, is the best description of the Australian way of war I've ever read, and I quote it here:

"The Australians – who were very experienced mercenaries having fought a counter-guerrilla war in Malaya, were given the task by their American masters to conduct pacification 'trials' in Ba Ria, in order to create a key defensive barrier for them for Saigon and to directly protect the military port of Vung Tau. The Australian military were very expert in ambush tactics, small-scale raids, moving in scattered half-section and section groups, and striking deep into our bases. They quickly adapted to the climate and the tropical jungle. They also bore hardship – and would conceal themselves in the marshy swamps for hours – and would put up with the heavy wind and rain throughout the night in order to ambush us. They could cross streams and swamps – and even traverse jungles of new bamboo that was thick with thorns in order to secretly approach their objective. Most dangerous of all was their ambush tactic in which they 'assimilated' into the terrain – and this cost us many killed and other losses. Cay Cay and Bau Lung were routinely under fire – and the hills and jungles, the villages and hamlets, and the base areas were torn apart and crushed."

Vietnam Vanguard, edited by Ron Boxall and Robert O'Neill, should be read by every veteran and every military historian, regardless of nationality. It is a marvelous compendium of first-hand observations and erudite opinion by members of 5 RAR during that battalion's assembly and twelve months of deployment in Phuoc Tuy province, straddling the vital highway and sea-link connecting Saigon and Vung Tau. A Viet Cong stronghold since circa 1956, it took Australians just a few months to dominate the battlefield.



The three free-fall champion parachutists, US Marine CAPT Bob Matthews, CAPT Bill Molloy and Daryl Henry outside 2LT Mick Deak's tent at Nui Dat, Vietnam 1967.

Churchillian in its scope and literacy, *Vietnam Vanguard* is both a scholarly and human chronicle of a chapter in Australian military history unrivalled by all other accounts I've been privileged to read.

I'm proud to have contributed in a very small way-- a single combat photograph I took of Mick Deak doing his job under fire in the Long Hai Hills in February 1967.

Following Vietnam, I continued parachuting, supporting my immoderations by writing, and

was honored by induction into the International Skydiving Hall of Fame. Along the way I circumnavigated the world twice, once in each direction, searching for stories, some of which I sold to Hollywood. While making Santa Barbara my home, I've also made use of my degree, recently designing an island hotel in Panama.