

OBITUARY – RON LENNON (2 pages)

Third generation soldier served three tours in Vietnam

An infantry soldier who completed three tours of duty totalling more than 900 days in the Vietnam War was farewelled at a funeral service at Caloundra recently.

Ronald (Ron) Lennon was born on 29 March 1943 at Paddington, Sydney, and passed away on 1 May 2012.

He joined the Army with Service Number 1200661 in 1965, following in the footsteps of his father, Roy, who served in World War Two as a Divisional Provo Corporal, and his grandfather, Albert, who served as a Corporal with 6 Australian Light Horse.

He arrived in Vietnam in August 1966 with 1 Australian Reinforcement Unit and was posted to 5 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (RAR), serving as a forward scout and returning home with the battalion in May 1967.

He served again in Vietnam as a Platoon Sergeant with 9 RAR from November 1968 to November 1969 and for a third tour served with the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) from February 1971 to October 1971, attaining the rank of Warrant Officer.

He was awarded the Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry with Silver Star and the Unit Citation of the Vietnam Cross of Gallantry with Palm; in total he served for a highly significant 928 days as an infantry soldier in Vietnam. Post-Vietnam he served with the Military Police and retired from the Army in 1980.

“We all held Ron in high esteem and followed his service in the Army including his Vietnam service with pride,” his brother John said. “I recall vividly farewelling and welcoming home Ron on his first deployment with 5 RAR which was the trigger that influenced my decision to join the Navy at the age of 15 in 1968.”

Before joining the Army Ron had been in a number of jobs since leaving school including farm hand, truck driver and railway shunter. After leaving the military, Ron worked with Queensland Railways at Cloncurry, Queensland, before moving to Mildura, Victoria, where he worked on farms as a leading hand.

Two years ago he was diagnosed with cancer and moved to Landsborough near the Sunshine Coast, Queensland, where he spent his final months with some of his children and other family members.

“Ron's service in Vietnam left him with some deep mental scars that only soldiers who served in combat can understand,” said John, whose own son, John, is a Captain with Engineering Corps and has served in Timor Leste and Afghanistan.

Last year Ron, with son Kip and John Snr made a trip to the AATTV ‘Home of the Australian Advisers’ grove at the Land Warfare Centre, Canungra, where Ron had completed a number of courses during his Army service.

A tree has been planted to honour each AATTV member and they located Ron's tree, as well as a tree and memorial plaque for Warrant Officer Tom Phillips

who was killed in action with the training team and was grandfather of John's daughter-in-law.

Kip said of his father: 'A strong honest man who won't be forgotten'. Two fellow 9 RAR soldiers, 'Dick' Van Dyke and Ron 'Tex' O'Toole, paid tribute: 'A good man and a great soldier. We'll raise a glass in memory of him. Lest we forget.'

Ron is survived by his mother, Margaret, three step-sisters and one step-brother, six children from his first marriage to Yvonne and a son from his second marriage to Kathryn who passed away in 2006.

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