

LCPL EDWARD JAMES MOON

Ed was a National Serviceman and joined my Platoon from the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit in Vietnam in 1969. From memory it was around mid year.

He served the balance of our second tour of Vietnam as a most effective and respected member of 9 Platoon, Charlie Company, 5 RAR. I had the privilege of commanding that Platoon for the duration of the tour of duty.

Vietnam is often referred to as "The Platoon Commander's War". But to my mind, it was, in reality, the Section Commander's and the men of their Sections.

A Platoon Commander, such as my role some 44 years ago, is only as good as the troops he leads and I was fortunate to have a great group of men, both Regular Army and National Servicemen, under my command. Now I'm not saying that my men were all angels; some were somewhat (to quote a former Prime Minister of ours) recalcitrant when in base at Nui Dat.

What I can say however is that whatever failings some may have had in barracks or camp, they were all excellent in the jungle on operations. In the good old Australian vernacular, they worked hard and they played hard. True blue Aussies - through and through.

They were well-trained and highly skilled soldiers who upheld the finest traditions of the Australian soldier – and I make no distinction between the Regular soldier and his National Service counterpart.

And what about Ed?

Ed came to the Platoon as a Private soldier but very quickly proved his mettle and was promoted to Lance Corporal. As such, he became the Section Commander's right hand man.

Ed's Section Commander, Blue Schafer, is with us here today. I'm sure Blue would echo my sentiments when I say that Ed was a tremendous back-stop for him on operations. In fact their close relationship in combat later transferred to civilian life and they remained firm friends even when Ed had long since left the Army.

Ed he was a muscular, fit soldier and took great pride in his key role within his section and within the Platoon. To me, Ed was a gregarious bloke (well they didn't call him Suave for nothing) who did his job very well and tried to keep himself out of mischief (which, as I alluded to earlier, is more than I can say for some of my diggers, Ed included).

I reminded of a certain Platoon Commander being strung up by his boots to the rafters of the Company boozier because he had the temerity to close the bar. I'm also reminded of a half-ton trailer of beer appearing in the Company lines towed by an American Jeep. The question "Where did that come from?" solicited the response that it (the Jeep) was swapped for a slouch hat. The Jeep (or Mutt as they were called) together with the trailer were returned to their rightful owners – minus of course the beer!

Ed approached his National Service commitment in a very professional manner and, as a result, was a totally reliable and trustworthy soldier. He was a good, solid, Aussie digger.

The greatest compliment that can be paid to any National Serviceman that served in Vietnam is that they were indistinguishable from their Regular Army counterparts. That makes them a very special breed of soldier. Ed was one of those soldiers.

There a quotation on our battalion website that states "The mateship that was formed in war will never be lost with the passage of time."

That statement holds so very true for the men of 9 Platoon, Charlie Company, 5 RAR. Some 44 years after the event, the bond that ties the men of the Platoon together remains as strong today as it was then in Vietnam. And that is evidenced by the large numbers of Ed's mates that are here today.

Stand down, Ed. There are no more gun picquets to be done.

No doubt Ed is swapping stories with the other members of 9 Platoon who have preceded him to that special parade ground reserved for combat veterans:

Corporal Ted Suttor – Killed in Action, 16 November 1969;
Lance Corporal Mick Appleby;
Private Harry Kallergis;
Private Bob Young;
Lance Corporal Reg Smith;
Sergeant Stan Arnold; and
Private Euston Swan.

"Rest Ye, Oh Warrior,
You'll Battle No more,
No longer To live
The Horrors Of War.
Your Duty Was Done,
With Honour and Pride.
Farewell Oh Brother,
Until We March By Your Side"

Rest in peace, Ed. I'm proud to have had you serve under my command.

Roger Lambert
Platoon Commander
9 Platoon, C Company, 5 RAR
1969/70