

Vale: Peter John Lauder MC (2/66)

1731459 Peter John Lauder was born on 11th March 1945 and brought up in Tully in North Queensland. He was called up for National Service and commenced his Officer Training at OTU in early May 1966. He graduated as a 2Lt into RAInf Corps from OTU Scheyville with Class 2/66 on 30 September 1966, Graduate Number 207. He was posted to 8 RAR. Peter transferred into the Australian Staff Corps on 30 June 1967. Peter and Jill married in 1967 and would later have three children and nine grandchildren.

8 RAR had been formed at Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane on 14 July 1966 as part of the expansion of the Army during Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. On 8 August 1966 it had a strength of 370 men, including 150 experienced soldiers who had been posted from 1 RAR. The battalion was expanded in the next month with both regular soldiers and Nashos and began training for overseas service. In January 1967 it was warned that it would relieve 4 RAR in Malaysia, and this movement gradually took place from 24 August to 6 November. While in Malaysia the battalion formed part of the 28th Independent Commonwealth Infantry Brigade, which also included New Zealand Army and British Army units.

8 RAR returned to Enoggera in April 1969 and began intensive training ahead of being deployed to Vietnam. The battalion arrived in South Vietnam on 17 November 1969 and replaced 9 RAR six days later. Like the other Australian Army units then in Vietnam, the battalion formed part of the 1st Australian Task Force and was based in Phuoc Tuy Province. In February 1970, 8 RAR was just two months into its tour. 9 Pl's head count was down to 24. It was before any of the National Service intakes rotated, and the 'Diggers' had essentially been together since the battalion's deployment for a tour of Malaysia a year earlier.

Headed up by a strict but talented Nasho Platoon Commander, 2nd Lt Peter Lauder, and led by a mixture of both Nasho and Regular NCOs, 9 Pl was far from your classic late war 1 ATF grunt minor unit.

It may have been 1970, but there were no signs of social revolution in the platoon. The laid back field fashions of the period - scrim bandannas, tiger cams, AK-47 toting - let alone the first-name-terms-with-the-boss relationships between the command structure and the men were 'not on' in 9 Pl. The OC demanded and received total discipline from the troops. It was cam cream and 'giggle' hats on, shirts tucked in and buttoned up, attention to detail from the bottom of each Digger's GP boots to his blackened face.

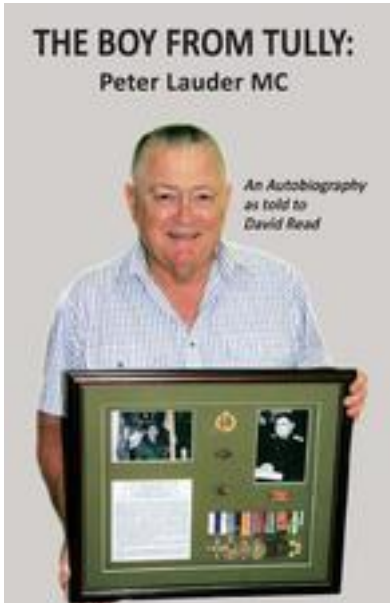
While a stickler for uniformity in field dress, the boss was into ambushing. If given a choice he liked to hit Charlie hard on the ground he chose, not blunder around the bush looking for bunkers to fight on ground of Charlie's choosing.

By February the battalion was a veteran of two major operations - Op Atherton along the Long Kahn/Phuoc Tuy province borders, and Op Keperra in the Nui Dinh hills. They were based at Fire Support Base Isa, along the fringes of the Long Hai's Hills. The base's role was providing an area from which a team of Engineers from 17 Construction Squadron could work an old quarry in the mine laden hills. FSB Isa had been gunned up with a section of 81mm mortars, a trio of Centurion tanks and a troop of M113A1 armoured personnel carriers. C Company provided the on-the-ground security. However, the routine security operation they were undertaking was about to become a battalion-sized assault on a hidden VC headquarters complex and the worst disaster of their Vietnam experience.

On February 15, the understrength 9 Pl, C Company, 8 RAR left the relative safety of FSB Isa to conduct an area ambush. The ambush was initiated mid-way between moving from the day ambush position to the night position. It hit the HQ of a NVA column. The rest of the column used their counter-ambush drills well, but 9 Pl was located on a hill known as 'Tit Hill' (after the battle it was renamed 'Lauder Hill') giving the platoon good observation of the attackers. The battle lasted five hours. Miraculously, none of the Aussies was seriously injured. Five Diggers from 9 Platoon were slightly wounded as was one of the sappers from the Splinter Team who had spent the night fighting like infantrymen.

8 Pl mounted on the backs of Centurions were reacted to relieve 9 Pl. After dropping off 8 Pl, the tanks swept through the ambush killing ground with their search lights on, firing splintex to clear any VC or NVA stupid enough to stay around.

Peter was promoted to Lieutenant on 20 June 1970. For his actions he was awarded a Military Cross, listed in the Government Gazette on 17th December 1970.



The battalion's first tour of Vietnam ended in October 1970, by which time it had lost 18 men killed in action and suffered 108 wounded. As part of the reduction of the Australian force in Vietnam 8 RAR was not replaced by another battalion when it returned to Enoggera.

After Vietnam, on 4th April 1972, Peter was posted to the Regimental Supernumerary List (RSL) in Northern Command and discharged with the rank of Captain.

Post-Army Peter became an insurance agent and superannuation consultant in 1972, and built a long and successful career offering clients specialist risk advice. Commencing with National Mutual, Peter went on to become a top performer qualifying for the 'Top 20' AXA Agents worldwide on numerous occasions. In 1982, Peter co-founded Templetons and served as Director and Authorised Representative there until 2010. During his time at Templetons, Peter helped build the business on a firm foundation of integrity, honesty, and putting client

interests ahead of all other considerations.

In his last years Peter enjoyed his role as consultant with Lauder Financial Solutions, drawing on his extensive industry knowledge to provide LFS with training, management advice and counsel, helping to steer the development of a first class professional practice.

Peter passed away on the 21st October 2015 as a result of cancer. His funeral was held in St Augustine's Church on in Hamilton, Queensland on 30th October 2015. The bearer party was provided by the Lauder family. The funeral was followed by a cremation with the wake being held at the Royal Queensland Golf Club.