

The ***Scheyvillian***



O.T.U. Association National Journal No. 2, 2006

Officer Training Unit, Scheyville NSW 1965-1973



Vietnam Now – Vietnam Then

IN THIS ISSUE: Vietnam Now theme by Kevin Chesson. Vietnam Then by Gary McKay, Gordon Hurford, Dan McDaniel, Geoff Daly, Peter Lauder, Neil Weekes and John Neervort.

Also compelling stories on Gordon Sharp, Keith Payne VC, OTU's first Major General and just who is OTU's Oldest Nasho?

And a scintillating roundup of reports and photos of annual dinners and reunions.



The intrepid 2/69ers at it again. This time in Tassie, pictured here at Constitution Dock in Hobart in March, before the effects of another gruelling reunion kicked in.



The Victorian Chapter in democratic action at the Country Committee Meeting in Geelong, in April. Serious business under discussion aided by a splash of red and a modicum of sparkling. Only Neil Leckie and Ray Elder are alert to camera-wielding intruders.



The Qld Black Tie Dinner in April. The Class of 4/69, back: Don McNaught, Tony Parks, Geoff Gardiner, Don Keyes, Geoff Daly and Warwick Setttee. Front: Terry O'Shea and Chief Instructor Dick Flint AM (Honorary Class Member).



Wal Hall (2/68) presents Lt. Steven Towner with the Scheyville Prize at Duntroon last December.



Don McNaught (aka McZero) and the lovely Liz.



National Secretary Mick Hart (2/69) and the saintly Tricia.



National Treasurer and Honorary Chaplain Geoff Daly (4/69) and the charming Carmel.



Little – Big – Biggest. National Chairman Laurie Muller AM (1/65), Dick Flint AM & CSI 69-71 and Warwick Setttee (4/69).

CONTENTS *The Scheyvillian*



	Page
Around the Traps – from the Chairman and Editor Laurie Muller (1/65)	4
Queensland Chapter news – Geoff Daly (4/69)	6
Victorian Chapter News – Neil Leckie(3/68)	7
The Scheyville Prize at Duntroon – Wal Hall (2/68)	9
NSW Chapter News – Greg Todd (2/71)	10
The Scheyville presence at Duntroon –courtesy of the Commandant	12
The Two Sixty Niners in Tasmania – David Jervis (2/69)	16
Plains, Trains, Automobiles and the Occasional Cyclo – Kevin Chesson	18
Images of Contemporary Vietnam – Kevin Chesson	21
“Sharpie” – Laurie Muller (1/65)	25
Snapshots of Schevillians at War – Gary McKay (1/66)	27
Keith Payne VC – Rodney Chester	32
Major General R.P. Irving – Neil Leckie (3/68)	36
Review of Long Tan and Beyond – Gary McKay (1/66)	38
Our Oldest Nasho – Neil Leckie (3/68)	39
Film Faker of Film Maker – John Neervort (2/67)	40

Deadlines for 2006:

Issue 3 of 2006 due out Sep/Oct. Receipt of material no later than 1 August 2006.
Issue 4 of 2006 due out December. Receipt of material no later than 1 October 2006.

Deadlines for 2007:

Issue 1 of 2007 due out April/May. Receipt of material no later than 1 February 2007
Issue 2 of 2007 due out June/July. Receipt of material no later than 1 May 2007
Issue 3 of 2007 due out Sept/Oct. Receipt of material no later than 1 August 2007

www.otu.asn.au

The new website is up and running – so log on and check it out. User name and password directions are on the Homepage. It's well worth a visit!

Editorial Committee:

Laurie Muller (1/65) Chairman and Editor, Gary McKay (2/68) and Owen Williamson (4/70) with assistance from Alan Storen (1/67) and Tony Sonneveld (1/70).

Q store SEE WEBSITE www.otu.asn.au FOR Q-STORE PURCHASES.

Around the Traps

Laurie Muller AM 1/65
Editor and National Chairman



In August this year we commemorate the 40th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan. This battle, fought mainly by Delta Company 6RAR, occurred on 18 August 1966. Two of the three platoon commanders were from the first class from OTU Scheyville and had only graduated in December 1965. They were graduates 0022 David Sabben and 0050 Gordon Sharp. David commanded his 12 Platoon with distinction, being awarded an MID for his role and has gone on to write extensively about the battle. Gordon, whose 11 Platoon made first contact, was killed by enemy fire whilst calling in artillery support very early in the engagement.

Gordon Sharp was the first OTU graduate to be killed in action in Vietnam. His death shocked both his classmates and instructors and also the 1966 classes going through OTU at the time. It reminded us all that this soldiering profession was not just harmless training exercises; it was a deadly serious business. Some eight Scheyvillians lost their lives in Vietnam. They were Gordon Sharp (1/65) of 6RAR on 18 August 1966, Kerry Rinkin (1/65) of 5RAR on 7 April 1967, John Fraser (2/65) of 3RAR on 24 March 1968, Leonard Taylor (1/66) of 3RAR on 8 February 1968, Terence Langlands (2/67) of 1RAR on 24 November 1968, Alan Jellie (3/67) of 161 Ind. Rece. Flt. on 3 December 1969, David Paterson (1/67) of 3RAR on 20 March 1971 and Ian Mathers (1/70) of 12 Fld Reg. attached to 3 RAR on 7 June 1971.

On 18 August this year, if you attend a Long Tan function, or even if you don't, take a moment or two to remember these blokes. They were young twenty one year olds, doing a dangerous job, at a difficult time, in a foreign place. They are an integral part of the short history of OTU Scheyville and we must not neglect their memory. I have written a short piece on "Sharpie" for this edition. It's how I remember him.

Gary McKay has contributed a reflective piece telling the story of five OTU graduates; all platoon commanders, who distinguished themselves in Vietnam. Their stories are candid, free of glorification and laced with wry humour – all hallmarks of Scheyvillians. Gary has also contributed a hard-hitting, critical review of Long Tan and Beyond to balance the review of this book presented in the last issue of *The Scheyvillian*. A good robust difference of opinion is always a good thing.

Keith Payne VC was an instructor at Scheyville during the inaugural years of 1965-66 and was then posted to the AATV. In 1969 he was awarded the Victoria Cross for his courage and leadership under fire on May 24 1969. Recently the Courier Mail in Queensland carried an extensive article on the now seventy two year old. It makes compelling reading and is reproduced in this issue for those of you who did not see it first time around.

Forty years on Vietnam is a different place altogether. It's well worth reflecting on Vietnam Then and Vietnam Now. Kevin Chesson, who is our publisher, has made four trips to Vietnam since 2002 and has travelled it extensively. His story is the feature piece of this edition of *The Scheyvillian*, together with his quite outstanding photos (including the cover pic). I am sure you will enjoy them. Kevin Chesson, whose brother Barry graduated in 1/68, is considering taking a "Best of The Best No Frills Tour" to Vietnam in April 2007. It should be ideal for couples who want a little adventure in their lives. Let Kevin know if you are keen.

The Commandant of RMC Duntroon, Brigadier Chris Appleton, has provided an impressive pictorial record of the OTU presence at Duntroon, and has affirmed his commitment to recognising the close link between OTU and Duntroon. I for one am impressed by the sincerity and generosity of the Duntroon recognition and suspect it is in no small part come about by the thoughtful representations made by our emissary Wal Hall (2/68)

When it comes to scaling the heights in military rank OTU has produced some thirteen brigadiers, but Paul Irving (2/72) has taken out the big one, making it to Major General. Within the magazine Neil Leckie reports on Paul Irving's career, as well as presenting his surprising research finding on who the oldest national service officer is.

Speaking of National Service you may not have noticed that the Department of Defence has very recently announced a new medal. It is the Australian Defence Medal, which is for ADF Regular and Reserve personnel who have demonstrated their commitment and contribution to the nation by serving for at least four years, or completion of their initial term of engagement. The latter criterion makes national servicemen

eligible for this medal. Details on how to apply are contained further on in the magazine.

This issue also has a good roundup of the annual dinners that are held in the early part of the year. Queensland kicked the season off in early April with its Black Tie affair at the United Services Club, hosted by the head banana himself, Gary McKay MC (2/68). The ACT was next, in late May, with a stylish affair hosted in Canberra by John Peters (2/68). Most recently in June, Victoria had their big night at the Naval and Military Club, under the gaze of the new Vic Chairman, Peter Don (3/69). The NSW dinner was held in early July, at Victoria Barracks Paddington, under the very experienced gaze of NSW Chairman Greg Todd (2/71). There is a good smattering of photos from all these major events displayed throughout the magazine.

Most of you would have seen the very recent four part series "From Peking to Paris" on ABC TV. Alert Scheyvillians would also have known this was the brainchild of the intrepid Lang Kidby (1/67). They would have recognised the gnarled old adventurer beneath his battered pith helmet as he cajoled, urged and herded the fleet of cantankerous cars and even more cantankerous drivers across the Asia and Europe to Paris. It made for great TV and is also available as a terrific book.

Finally the much delayed OTU Association website is up and running. The address is www.otu.asn.au and it's well worth a visit. As is invited on the website, feedback, constructive or otherwise, is most welcome. Most importantly we hope the State Chapter noticeboards become well used and a source of information for Scheyvillians right through Australia.



Nil Bastardium Carborundum

VALE

Gary John Kendrick 1/65

Passed away 14 April 2006

A Vietnam Veteran (B COY, D COY - 4RAR, 1968-1969), Gary was a graduate of Scheyville OTU. His career in the army spanned 25 years including posts in PNG and Malaysia.

Retiring as a major, he assumed a career in the Australian Public Service (House of Reps, NOIE and DCITA) and was a Canberra resident for 25 years. Gary attained a MA of Information Technology (UC) and a MA of Public Administration (UC).

A man of strength, integrity, humour and kindness.

OTU Association

21 April 2006

To the Kendrick Family.

I write on behalf of the members of the OTU Association to pass on our sincere condolences to you all on the loss Gary.

Gary, being a member of the very first class that went through OTU Scheyville, is therefore held in special esteem within the Association. He was graduate number 0059 out of a total of 1880 who graduated. We are all saddened by his passing.

Being a classmate (1/65) of Gary's in 1965 I have a special memory from that time and am particularly saddened at losing an old mate, who was also a genuinely good bloke.

May your memories of him remain strong and good.

Yours sincerely

*Laurie Muller AM
National Chairman*

Submission of Material:

Please provide text and photos in *separate* files. Text only in a Word document and photos as JPEGs (medium or high resolution if possible, minimum 1 megapixel), or as prints for scanning. Captions either as an addition to the Word document, or on back of prints in soft pencil. If possible, please avoid having dates on electronic or printed photographs.

Please send direct to Laurie Muller via email lcnuller@bigpond.net.au, or post a disc, or print material, to OTU Association c/o Cleary Hoare 145 Eagle Street Brisbane Qld 4001. Laurie Muller's phone numbers 0733741841 or 0418788493

Queensland's Annual Black Tie Dinner *by Geoff Daly (4/69)*

It was another grand occasion as the cream of OTU and their glamorous partners gathered at the United Services Club in Brisbane for the Annual Dinner, under the watchful gaze and benign patronage of the head banana himself, Gary McKay MC (2/68).

As a consequence of young Gazza being embarrassed at a colour photo of his goodself appearing in the last edition of *The Scheyvillian*, showing a large splash of red wine on his pure white shirtfront, he came along well camouflaged this time. Costing a small fortune in Hong Kong, he had made a copious waistcoat of startling hue, which varied from a gentle blush of rose to the more sombre depths of cabernet sauvignon and was woven out of silk and taffeta and other fancy threads. It was a wondrous thing to behold. It certainly worked, as at no stage could we pick a splash of anything, including darker gravy tones but we are sure they were there!

The guest speaker for the evening was young Peter Sheedy (1/65) who quite amazingly got called up before he turned twenty. He explained that in order to impress his then girlfriend and to gain a drivers licence in Western Queensland he put his age up. The various call-up authorities wouldn't accept the deceit as evidence and in he went. His identical twin brother was called up the next year and served as a digger in Peter's battalion, causing occasional consternation when other diggers and NCOs saluted him in confusion.

The evening was as usual graced with the presence of former Chief Instructors Stan Maizey (67-9) and Dick Flint AM (69-71) and a very large and noisy presence from the Class of 4/69. The gracious setting, the sumptuous meal, the exceptional dining companions and the wit and wisdom of the evening were such that it was unanimously agreed we should do it all again next year.



Peter Sheedy (1/65) showing little evidence of his great age whilst Robin Apted (3/69) ponders the matter.



Don McNaught (4/69) and known in aviation circles as McZero, providing a sterling rendition of the old song whilst Liz his wife looks on in amazement.



Officer Cadets Muller and McKay, either competing for the attention of a young lady, or perhaps belting out the OTU song.



There's trouble brewing as a section of 4/69 platoon discover the port decanter. Geoff Gardiner, Warwick Setttee and Chaplain Geoff Daly are the chief suspects.

Victorian Annual Dinner *by Neil Leckie (3/68)*

A new venue and, in the main, a new organising sub-committee, saw the largest gathering at a Victorian Chapter Annual Dinner for many years. The 18th Dinner saw 123 members and guests attend.

Master of Ceremonies (and Master of Mirth) Ray Andrews (1/70) welcomed all to the Sir Arthur Streeton Room at the Naval and Military Club on Friday 26 May 2006. Victorian Chapter Chairman Peter Don (3/69) also joined in the humour of the night with his Chairman's Address which included thanks to Frank Miller (4/67) and Roger Nation (3/68) for their work in organising (with help from other committee members) the night.

The usual raffle raised \$1815 for our Youth Leadership sponsorship at Lord and Lady Somers/Powerhouse where this year we part sponsored 26 youngsters with 8 being cosponsored by Graeme Chester's (2/67) Healesville Rotary Club Branch.

Prizes donors and winners were:

John Fletcher (1/72) \$500 Coles/Myer Gift Voucher:

Vincent Berne (4/69)

Peter Hateley (2/71) \$100+ bottle of 1997 Barossa Valley Shiraz: Alan McCallum(3/70)

Mick Stone (1/68) \$100 Book Voucher @ Camberwell Books: Christine McCallum

Grant Baker (3/67)\$80 Aromatherapy Pack:

Annette Ablett (John Taylor (4/68)

Frank Miller (4/67) \$75 2 Cadbury Gift Packs: Gus Steegstra (3/70), Ruth Madden, David Harrison ((3/67), Jim Madden (2/66) & John Neve (1/72)

\$60 Gift Voucher from Basement Discs: Peter Matters (3/70)

Warwick Sellars (1/65) \$40 Wine Pack: Colin Walker (3/70)

Table 12, with McCallum, Steegstra, Walker and Matters, did well scooping six of the prizes. Must have been rigged!

The chapter, along with Lord and Lady Somers/Powerhouse, thanks all those who donated gifts and congratulates the winners.

As said earlier, there was plenty of humour on the night.

Some of Ray Andrews classics are:

Ian Crook (2/70) had an early Scheyville Experience in the Cadets' Mess. The Steward bragged that the Cook's best dishes were Porterhouse Steak, done rare, and Pavlova. At dinner Crookie replied "Which one is this?"

Ray said it was good to see that John Fletcher was able to dispose of the Myer portion of Coles/Myer. After a 'think tank' the executives had a flash of creativity and came up with a new name for the company: 'Coles!'

Peter Don chimed in with the occasion when one of his classmates was ill at Scheyville the RMO said "After the anaesthetic he won't know a thing!" Peter said, 'Well, you can save the anaesthetic, Doc!'



Clockwise: Carl Wood (1/72), Paul and Rosemary Mulraney (2/72), John and Rosemary Neve (1/72), Margot Stork and John Fletcher (1/72) and Rob Walters (1/72).



Left to right: Marg and Colin Chapman (1/71), Beryl Nation (wife of Roger 3/68), Kaye and Neil Leckie (3/68).



Former Chairman Peter and Gail Hateley (2/71) and Glen a guest of PH's, with Heather and Graeme Chester (2/67).



Peter Don (3/69) newly appointed State Chairman orating powerfully from the OTU podium.

THE ANNUAL VICTORIAN COUNTRY COMMITTEE MEETING

The third annual Victorian country Committee Meeting was held on Sunday 2nd April. The first country committee meeting was held in 2004 at Ranger Barracks, the headquarters of the Army Reserve Infantry Battalion 8/7 RVR, where Major Neil Leckie (3/68) serves as the battalion Executive Officer (or 2IC).

The second meeting, as was this year's, was held at Roger and Beryl Nation's (3/68) home in the Geelong suburb of Highton.

After a welcoming drink and Crab & Prawn won ton, & shushi appetisers, the men got down to

the business of the day while the women did what women do. Business on the agenda of the short meeting was:

A weekend in Echuca at the end of October.
A lack of funds for Youth Leadership (we are still waiting for National to refund us some money).

A weekend at Somers (at the camp where our sponsored youths go).

The Annual Dinner, 26th May, at the Naval & Military Club.

The Remembrance Day Dinner and lunchtime activities.

A BBQ at the Black Rock Yacht Club.

Scheyvillian Articles.

Then it was on to lunch where Roger and Beryl again produced a magnificent spread. This year

the lunch included:

Chinook Salmon caught in Lake Bullen Merri (near Camperdown), Asian style,
Vietnamese pork,
Chinese chicken,
Summer pudding and apple cake,
and Copious chocolate treats!

By 5pm it was time to hit the road and Heather and Graeme (2/67), Lyn and Ray Elder (2/67), Ingrid and John Ainsworth (2/67), Patrizia and Ian Kelly (2/67), Janice and Frank Miller (4/67), Kaye and Neil Leckie (3/68), Peter Don (3/69) and Margot Stork and Carl Wood (1/72) all left feeling that a good meeting, combined with a good social outcome, had been achieved.

So what will 2007 bring?



*Outside – busy on state business.
Peter Don (3/69) in the Chair.*



*Safely inside and into the chockies and coffee.
Peter Don still working hard.*

FROM PREVIOUS PAGE:

During the evening Ray announced that there were fourteen first time attendees, including Mick Hart (2/69) the National Secretary (who claims to be computer illiterate). Mick gave the gathering an impromptu address on national matters. Apart from Mick, other first timers were Warwick Sellars (1/65 and the oldest Graduate in the first class), Lyle Brown (1/65), Les Myers (2/65), Geoff Holland (2/66), David Jervis (2/69), Bill Watson (2/69), Paul Flanagan (2/69), Peter Wotton (2/69), Lawson Ride (3/69), Vincent Berne (4/69), Dawson Hann (1/70), Colin Chapman (1/71), and John Neve (1/72).

Interstate visitors were David and Sophie Jervis (SA), Mick Hart (Qld), Paul Flanagan and Peter Wotton (both NSW) all organised by Peter Don (3/69), Lawson Ride and Robert Walters both from Tasmania.

Out-of-towners included members from Albury-Wodonga, Bendigo, Ballarat and Geelong. Ray mentioned the difficulty for the country folk of driving tractors in the city.

Other guests at the dinner included Derek Skues, President – Camp Chief of Lord Somer Camp and Powerhouse, and Howard West also from Lord and Lady Somers/Powerhouse.

State Treasurer, Ray Elder (2/67), reminded the gathering that the chapter, and its Youth Leadership Sponsorship, cannot exist without funds, so please look out for sponsors and pay your membership.

All in attendance look forward to another equally entertaining evening next year.

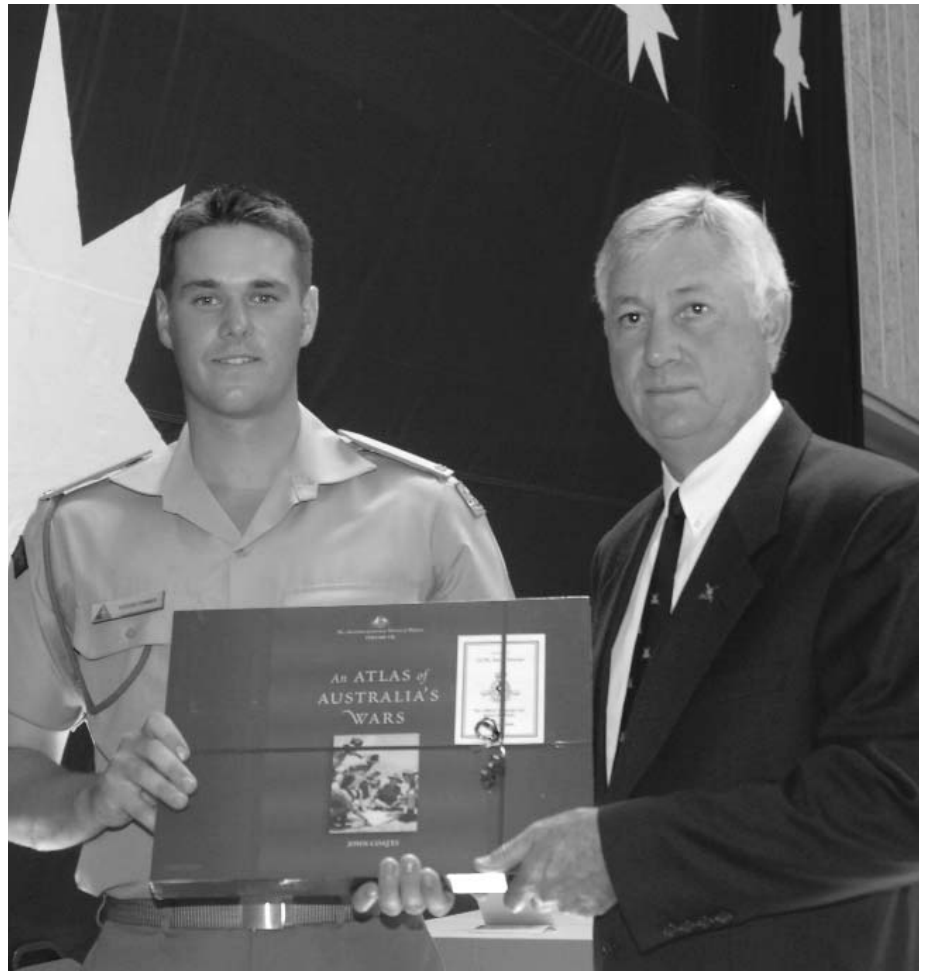
Profile

LT Steven John Towner

DOB: 23 Aug 1982
Corp Allocation: RAEME
Posting Unit: 5/7 RAR, Darwin
Sporting Interests: Aussie Rules
Football, Surf Lifesaving

Background: Attended Frankston High School in Victoria, completing my VCE in 2000. Applied to attend University to study Bachelor in Education (Physical Education) in 2001, was subsequently offered the opportunity to complete a traineeship with the AFL in Victoria. The traineeship was a government sponsored opportunity to entice young sporting persons to attend TAFE to complete a Certificate in Sports Administration while also being sponsored and employed full-time by a local employer involved in the industry. The intent was to encourage more people to remain within the sporting industry to develop the future of sport. I was employed at Frankston High School as an assistant Outdoor Education teacher, my focus of employment was to develop and run the school's Surf Lifesaving program which was very successful by developing national competitors and over 40 fully qualified Bronze Medallion Surf Lifesavers in 2001. I reluctantly had to leave the job when my twelve month contract concluded; I had to leave the ideal job which involved a working week of various rock climbing, abseiling, canoeing, surfing, mountain bike riding, hiking, snorkelling, kayaking classes, much to my heartache.

I then applied to attend the Royal Military College in 2002, and was successful in my application. I attended the college as a young nineteen year old, and was successful in my military and academic studies by progressing well through training for the first ten months. By representing the college



Wal Hal (2/68) presenting the Scheyville Prize to Lt Steven Towner at the December 2005 RMC graduation.

in the local football league I unfortunately had a major blow out in my knee resulting in an Anterior Crucial Ligament Reconstruction at that ten month mark. I was removed from training to rehabilitate my knee, unable to run for six months. I remained in rehab for long enough to see my class march out on graduation which is not an enjoyable experience. So what did I do? I just worked harder to rehabilitate my knee and to make it to graduation as well. I transferred to the Army Reserves in July, 2003, to the University of New South Wales Regiment in Wollongong for the next twelve months in order to get back to Medical Classification 1 so that I could return to RMC. I conducted the Reservist Officer Training up to the point where I was to attend the commissioning course to become a 2LT, when I decided that I was ready to return to RMC and complete my full-time training.

I returned in July, 2004, and was placed at the beginning of the training at the college in order to prove my commitment to the Army. So, that's what I did. I focused on small goals and every step of the way I just worked harder. I really enjoyed the personal and physical challenges that RMC provided, my personal drive and motivation for serving in the Australian Army is to lead Australian soldiers on operation deployments and to be a part of the Army's development and growth. So, close to four years from when I first joined I have successfully completed the training to be employed as a Lieutenant in the Australian Army, and as everyone knows I haven't stopped smiling since graduation day. I was fortunate enough to receive the honour of being awarded The Officer Training Unit Scheyville for Greatest Improvement in Leadership Qualities in the course.

NSW Annual Dinner

Victoria Barracks Officers' Mess, Paddington, 8th July, 2006.



"Dear Mr Todd, I wish to express my thanks to you and the other members of the OTU for the dinner last Saturday night. My parents and I had a really nice evening and enjoyed meeting everyone involved with the unit. We were made to feel very welcome. I feel privileged to have been given the chance to attend Lady Somers. It was an experience I'll never forget and hope to return next year as a helper. Sincerely, Laura Bunn."



Top left: David Morgan (3/72); top right: sponsored teenagers, Jessica Lock, Rachel Richardson, Laura Bun, Lauchlan Smith, Kirsten Bawden, Mark Shaw; left: Greg Todd (2/71); above: one of nine tables at the function, comprising Stan Beaman and daughter Lucinda (standing), Nina and Neil Turner, Peter and Angela Williams; above right: Carol Jarvis

There were very few spare seats available at the NSW Chapter's Annual Dinner at Vic Barracks this year. It wasn't just because of the popularity among members and their guests, but also because we had the pleasure of the company of six of the groupers whom we had sponsored to attend last January's Lord and Lady Somers Camps in Victoria. With them were parents/guardians and a representative teacher from their schools.

After the buffet dinner, these young people were invited to speak about their experiences at Somers and what it has meant to them as they attempt to conquer their final year at school. As they spoke, it wasn't hard for the members present to be reminded of the difficult but ultimately rewarding experience that had been Scheyville (although as David Morgan (3/72) observed, given his experience of 7 years as a staff-member at Somers, we at OTU at least had the opportunity to sleep between 2200 and 0600 hrs).

Carol Jarvis, Deputy Principal of Macarthur Girls High, offered her school's thanks to members for giving her girls the opportunity of Somers. She was most glowing of what the Camp experience had done for all the attendees from Macarthur and described how it had translated into behaviours back at school among the Yr 12 students.

We also are most grateful to Andrew Jetson from the Sabre Group, a member's guest, who on hearing about these young people, provided gift packs of Joico and Fudge hair products for them. Also, they and their parents were presented with a copy of the 2003 OTU Reunion DVD.

Again, not just a fine social occasion at a unique venue, but also an opportunity for members to reflect on the life-enhancing experience that was OTU.

Greg Todd (2/71)



*Standing: Mr Smith, Mark Shaw, Lauchlan Smith;
seated: Wendy and Graeme Brown, Mr & Mrs Shaw.*



*Standing: Rob Thornley, Craig Lee, Tony Sonneveld;
seated: Fergus & Sally Bell, Viv Sonneveld,
Richard Jeffkins and Di Lee, all of Class 1/70.*



*Standing: Peter Blackwood, Inge & Malcolm Brown;
seated: Pauline Blackwood, Geoff & Anne Bennett,
Robyn & David Longhurst.*



Steve & Jenny Mayhew, Greg Jenkins.



*Standing: Isabel & Al Hirschel, Carol Jarvis; seated:
Mr & Mrs Richardson, Rachel Richardson, Mrs Lock.*



*Leigh Bray, Bruce Meldrum, Diedre Bray,
Liz & Paul Meldrum.*



*Standing: Laura Bun, Barbara & Ralph Bertinetti,
Tom Geczi; seated: Kirsten Bawden,
Robert & Penelope Phillips, Gloria Bleasedale.*



*Standing: Mrs Lock, David & Suzanne Morgan;
seated: Greg & Vija Todd, Jessica Lock, Dick Adams.*

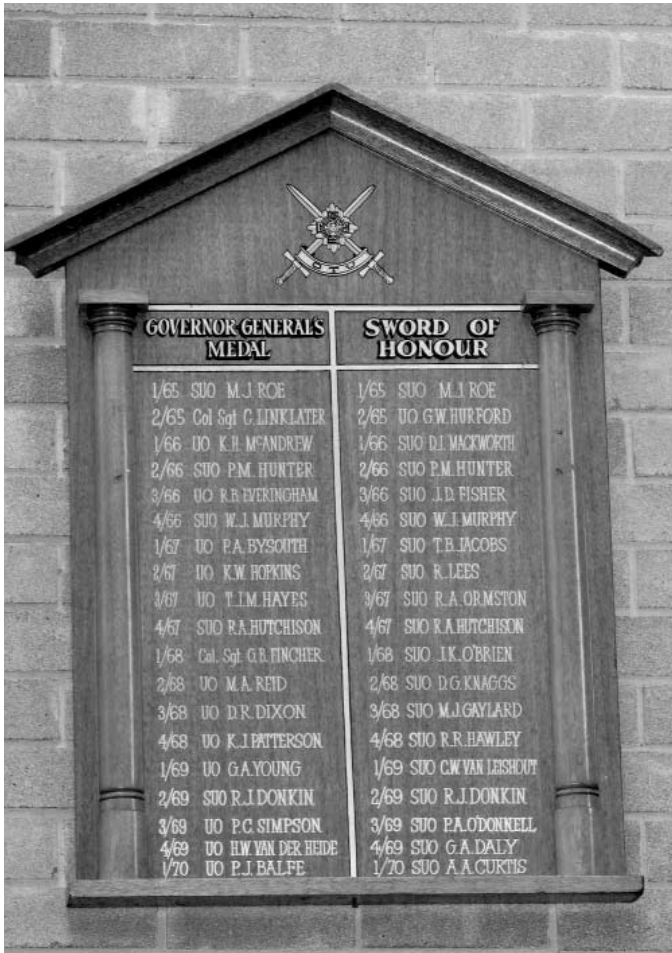
The Scheyville Presence at RMC Duntroon

Brigadier Chris Appleton, the incumbent Commandant of RMC Duntroon, has written a generous letter to the OTU Association inviting a closer relationship between RMC and OTU.

He writes “I remain committed to recognising the dedication and service of graduates of the Officer Training Unit and the close link between Scheyville and Duntroon. As you know the Officer Training Unit is commemorated in a number of locations at Duntroon and I have enclosed several photographs of those exhibits for the attention of members of the Association.”

The photos follow and show that the Scheyville presence is very much to the fore at Royal Military College Duntroon. Thank you for your enthusiasm Brigadier Chris Appleton.

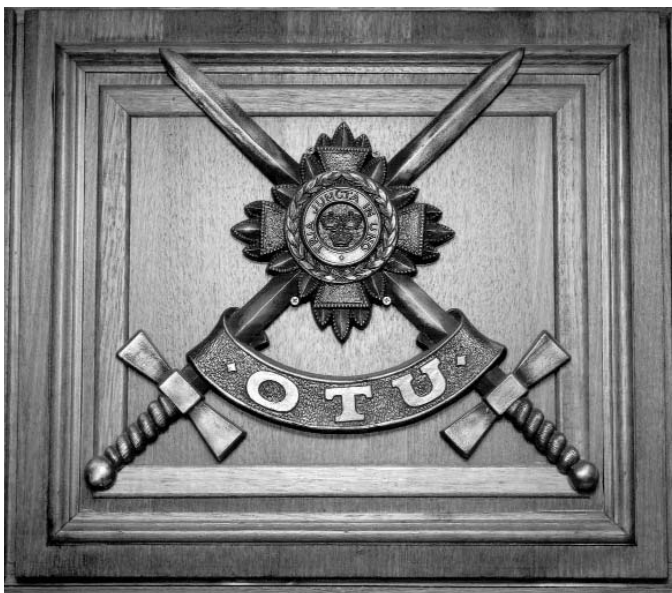




Honour Board in the CSC Mess.



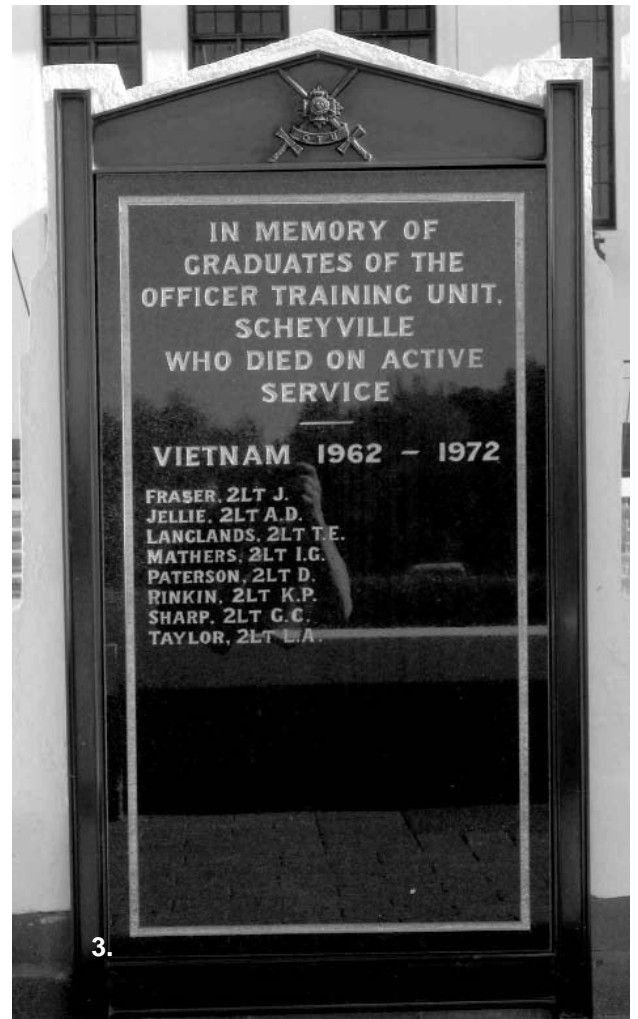
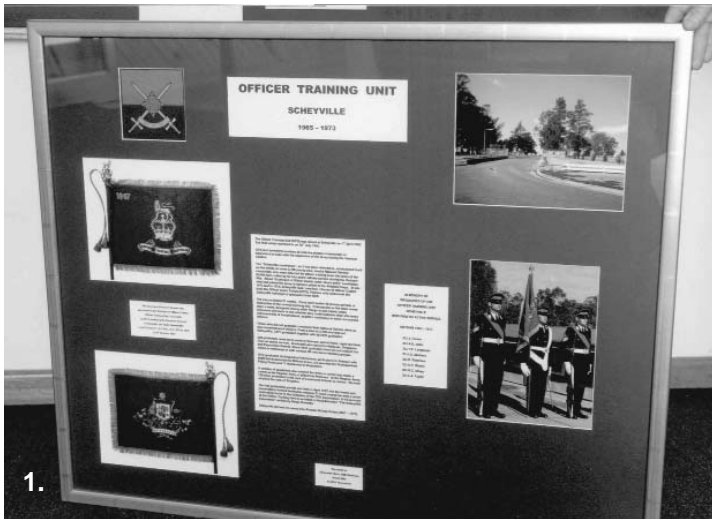
OTU-etched window in the CSC Mess.



Facing page top: Scheyville Oval; bottom: the Scheyville Bar in the Sergeants' Mess.



Above: OTU Badge over Casey's Bar in the CSC Mess; right: Honour Board in the RMC Museum.

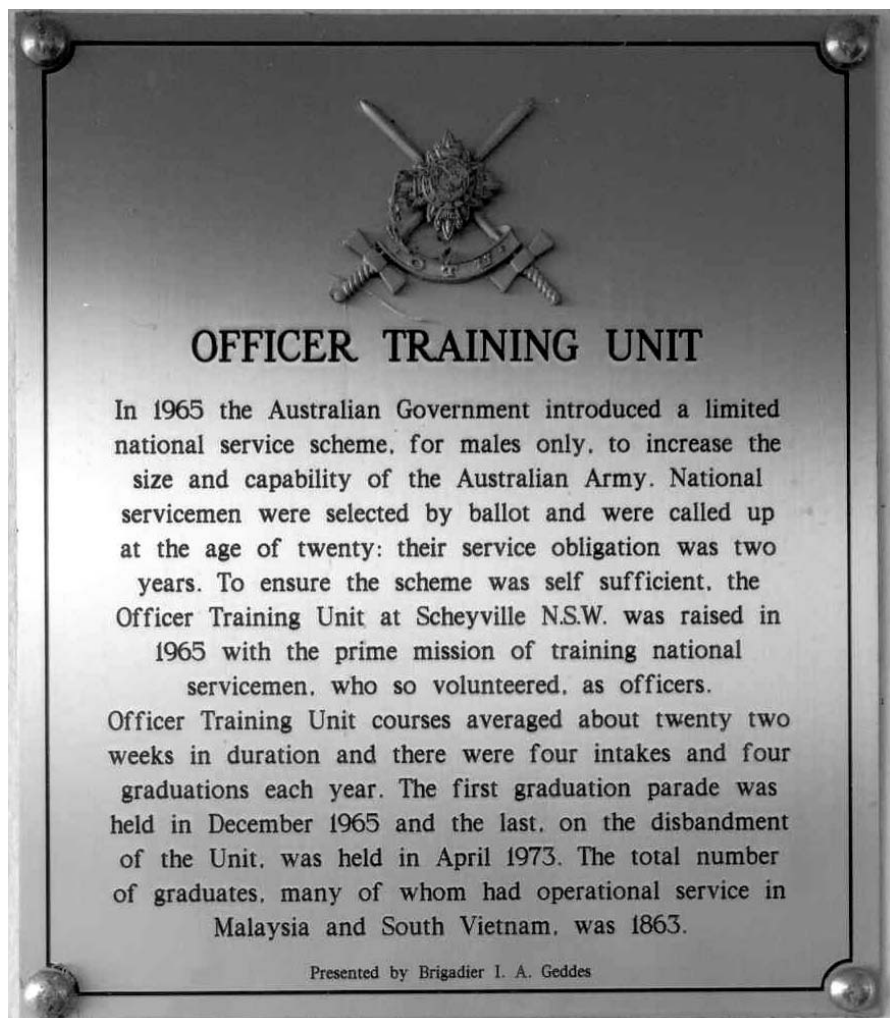




Facing page: 1 & 2, Scheyville Board and Exhibit in the Sergeants' Mess;
3, Flag Station Memorial Tablet;
4, OTU Exhibits in the RMC Museum.

Above: OTU Governor General's Banner in the ANZAC Chapel.

Right: Plaque at the entrance of the Geddes Building.



OFFICER TRAINING UNIT

In 1965 the Australian Government introduced a limited national service scheme, for males only, to increase the size and capability of the Australian Army. National servicemen were selected by ballot and were called up at the age of twenty: their service obligation was two years. To ensure the scheme was self sufficient, the Officer Training Unit at Scheyville N.S.W. was raised in 1965 with the prime mission of training national servicemen, who so volunteered, as officers. Officer Training Unit courses averaged about twenty two weeks in duration and there were four intakes and four graduations each year. The first graduation parade was held in December 1965 and the last, on the disbandment of the Unit, was held in April 1973. The total number of graduates, many of whom had operational service in Malaysia and South Vietnam, was 1863.

Presented by Brigadier I. A. Geddes

Another

Reunion

for 2/69, this time in Tasmania

by David Jervis (2/69 naturally)



It was 1100hrs Saturday, 11th March 2006. I felt ill as I leant against a stall selling flashing bow ties at the Salamanca Markets in Hobart pondering whether to slip into the nearby Irish Pub for a heart starter when I saw Ross Robbins, Andrew Sutherland and Peter Wotton and felt much better.

It would have been hard not to look and feel dreadful after the opening night of the 2/69 Reunion which involved drinks at the Hotel Grand Chancellor (HGC) at Constitution Dock, drinks at the Tasmanian Club (think Melbourne Club), dinner at Kelley's Seaford Restaurant and (for some) drinks at HGC until 0430.

This reckless overtraining reduced numbers for the "quiet" Saturday lunch and afternoon tour of the museum at Angelsea Barracks however by 1800 numbers had swelled for drinks at the Officers Mess where the PMC (Squadron Leader Alan Robertson) was presented with an OTU plaque and made an inspiring speech about OTU's contribution to the Army (which made us quite proud).

In response Dr Peter Coats told a disturbing story about how to immobilise an RSM during a digital examination (contact Peter for further details).

We then straggled through St David's Park to the waterfront to dine at the Marque IV restaurant where, after the other guests had made premature exits, it was informally decided to hold annual reunions in New Zealand, Antarctica, Latvia, Fiji, Adelaide and Perth

(travelling in a private carriage on the Indian Pacific). The Kokoda Track was added at about 0300 by the HGC late night drinking group (subsequently Thailand, the bridge over the River Kwai, the Burma Railway and the "Orient Express" have been included).

There were a few no shows for the 0830 Sunday bus ride along the picturesque Tasman Peninsula to Port Arthur (a beautiful place of great historical significance). Those who made it looked stricken but cheered up when the bus stopped at a service station to get ice for the eskys and although a sign on the bus indicated drinking alcohol was prohibited the owner's son was the driver. A substantial tip did the business.

That night a skeleton crew went to Sal's restaurant and while giving the HGC bar another workout were rudely disturbed at 0300 by a furious hotel guest who screamed she had been unable to sleep for 48 hours due to their noise and asked for silence (her request was given due consideration and denied).

Monday's Derwent River cruise to Peppermint Bay on a high powered catamaran was a tranquil affair involving bird watching (sea eagles 1, peregrine falcons 0) and viewing the colorful ocean floor on a TV screen via a camera lowered over the side. Lunch was a "regional dining experience" at the Peppermint Bay restaurant with fresh produce from the Huon and Channel regions and superb Bruny Island oysters.

We were entertained (and the other patrons horrified) by Paul Flanagan's witty limericks delivered while standing behind his embarrassed victims. (A complete portfolio of his output follows.)

Group photos and farewell drinks followed at HGC. Some then set off on driving tours while others retired to their rooms to enjoy the spectacular harbour views and "Desperate Housewives".

2/69 has held reunions in Sydney, Hong Kong, Canberra and the South of France. Hobart with its historical buildings, scenery, pubs, restaurants, and serene lifestyle more than holds its own in this company.

Ross Robbins (assisted by Lawson Ride) organised this wonderful event with the deft touch of a master. Many thanks are due from Mick and Trish Hart, Bob and Jan Wilson, Terry and Jocelyn Keogh (Qld), Grahame and Kaye Charge, Peter and Cher Wotton, Paul and Judy Flanagan, Peter and Diana Coats, Gary and Carole Ryan (NSW), Gordon and Ingrid Campbell, Peter and Birute Don, Andrew and Kathie Sutherland (Vic), Bill and Jenny Watson (ACT) and David and Sophie Jervis (SA). I am sure Jane Robbins and Viv Ride are thankful too (that it's all over).

While people are prepared to organise these events and there are those willing to put their lives at risk to attend they will no doubt continue but after what I saw in Hobart the Kokoda Track is out of the question (unless the wives go on their own).

Paul Flanagan's 2/69 LIMERICKS

Dave Jervis: *Given to making incomprehensible after dinner speeches:*

*A very strange fellow is Jervis
Whom we met while on military service
But when he fills up his lungs
And starts speaking in tongues
Even dogs in the street become nervous*

Peter Coats: *Staunch advocate of the benefits of Viagra. Favourite story relates to inflicting pain on a WO1 while checking his prostate.*

*A randy old doctor is Coats
On Viagra and sowing his oats
He's performed deeds most heinous
To an RSM's anus,
Not to mention sheep, cattle & goats*

Gary Ryan: *Like all air cadets, his first love is flying.*

*There once was a pilot called Ryan
So dashing he had the girls sighin'
But his idea of heaven
Was a 767
And his life's greatest pleasure was flyin'*

Peter Don: *Entertaining after dinner speaker. Forced to undergo fitness training at Scheyville, but has managed to avoid it ever since.*

*Like Bradman, he's known as the Don
After dinner he bats on and on
But when other are gyming
Or running or swimming
You'll find him asleep on the john .*

France, 2005 – The Ladies:

Jocelyn Keogh: *Medical type – definitely a match for Terry.*

*A no nonsense lady is Jos'
Who lets Terry think he's the boss.
When he wastes an erection
And complains of rejection
She says "Ter I don't give a toss."*

Jennie Watson: *Has her hands full keeping Bill out of trouble*

*A very nice lady is Jen.
Though she sometimes clucks round like a hen.
Looking after her Billy,
When he's half pissed and silly,
Which happens again and again.*

Trish Hart: *Mother of 5 and carer for Mick.*

*A saint of a girl is Trish Hart
And she shows that she's also quite smart
When she tells us "Mick's antics
And late night pedantics
Are because he's a silly old fart."*

Kathy Sutherland: *Still waters run deep.*

*Kathy is rather serene
With composure befitting a queen.
But when our mate Andy
Comes home drunk and randy.
Her refusals, I'm sure, are obscene.*

Kay Charge: *Objects to being photographed from rear. Strong mothering instinct but doesn't overlook Grahame.*

*A tall slender blonde is Kay Charge,
Who thinks her rear end is too large.
One way or t'other,
She'll find someone to mother,
And then give her man a massage.*

Jane Robbins: *Small in stature, but a real stayer.*

*A stout little trooper is Jane
Who plods on over mountain or plain.
But she's equally able
To dance on the table
When Ross fills her up with champagne.*

Tasmania 2006:

Ingrid Campbell: *Geologist who educated 2/69 on the intricacies of Tasmania's rock formations.*

*Ingrid's a whiz on geology
And does dating by paleontology
But she took a huge gamble
On a fossil named Campbell
And still can't work out his psychology*

Planes, Trains, Automobiles & the Occasional Cyclo



*Vietnam – North, South,
East and West in Three
Weeks, by Kevin
Chesson*



My marble wasn't drawn in 1967 but I remember following the events of the Vietnam War with interest and trepidation; and holding the Australian diggers in the greatest of awe. I realised full well that with a different outcome to the lottery, my personal world would have changed forever.

But Vietnam then and Vietnam now are so different – thankful proof of the healing powers of time. Currently Vietnam is playing host to tens of thousands of Australian travellers annually, most to enjoy the geographic splendour of the country and many to link the wartime stories of four decades ago to people and places here and now.

Before March of this year I'd accumulated three trips to Vietnam and had always gone solo. Maureen, my wife of 30+ years, had shown no real interest in going. In fact the last time I went, she had instead opted for a holiday in New Zealand with her mother! That's OK. I was fascinated and camera-happy in Vietnam; she was safe and in good company under a long white cloud.

The first time I set foot on Vietnamese soil was in 2002, about 12 months after declaring to some in-laws, "Why on earth would you want to go there?", when they had shown some interest in visiting the place. I spent 10 days exploring the bottom half from the Mekong, through Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC or Saigon), Nha Trang, Hoi An and Danang to Hue, just south of the old DMZ.

That was just a taster. I was hooked! There was no way I could leave the job undone and not see the north. The infamous north, from where the communists had tried to spill over into the south during the 60s and 70s. The enemy north and their southern counterparts – the Viet Cong, against whom we had joined the Americans in prolonged warfare. The north which contained Hanoi, that bastion of all things

evil that the yanks bombed the hell out of and for which Hanoi Jane proclaimed her sympathy.

So in 2003, I was back again, this time visiting the intriguing Hanoi, the beautiful Halong Bay, the unique and wonderful Sapa in the country's north west, then south again to middle Vietnam, then HCMC and home.

At this stage of my life, I'm trying to have at least one overseas trip every year. So, in 2004 – sometime in between the bombs, we set off for Bali. This time Maureen was in the travelling party and we were accompanied by Leon and Beverley Mansfield, old friends and similarly minded people.

Then when New Zealand beckoned Maureen and Doris in 2005, it didn't take me a lot of convincing to go once again to Vietnam. My sons asked me why I would want to return to the same place for a third trip. I pointed out that it was now a relatively safe country, one with which we share a strong historical association, quite easy to get to and about which I was now very familiar. Not much different, I declared, to anyone else going to their favourite holiday shack time and time again.

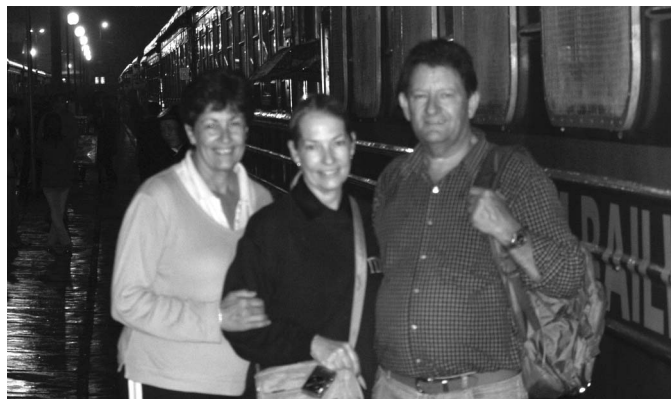
That year, I spent about two weeks in Vietnam, seeing new places and zig-zagging up and down the spine. I came back convinced that "to see the lot" and to truly experience the wonderful spectrum of Vietnamese sights, sounds and smells, three weeks would be ideal! I had my sights set on Maureen.

Well by happy coincidence, her curiosity in this strange land I kept talking about was finally being aroused – this land of pretty women in conical hats and hardened rogues on cyclo tricycles, a land of spectacular scenery, of pristine beaches and glorious mountains, a land with ancient and modern history oozing from seemingly every city and town, a third

world country with its original charm before we westerners try to change it.

By October of 2005, Maureen was excited! We were planning a three week visit (with Leon and Bev) for March/April 2006. I was a bit repetitive to all of them with my declaration that prima donnas were unwelcome and they were NOT to expect a Bali-style holiday. There are few luxurious resorts in Vietnam. We would be on the go, staying only 1 night or 2 or 3 consecutively in any one spot. Our accommodation would be nice but not 4 or 5 star. All accommodation would be chosen on the basis of cleanliness, comfort and location. We would stay in the best locations – “best” meaning for atmosphere, not necessarily for being at the top end of town. Saigon, for example, has a Rex, a New World, a Caravelle and a Grand – but all were ineligible.

Our goal was to see Vietnam – *all the best bits*, from north to south and east to west! We wanted to submerge ourselves in the atmosphere of the place and hopefully come out of the three weeks healthy, not too exhausted and thankful for the experience.



Travelling companions at the Hanoi Train Station, from left, Maureen, Beverley and Leon.



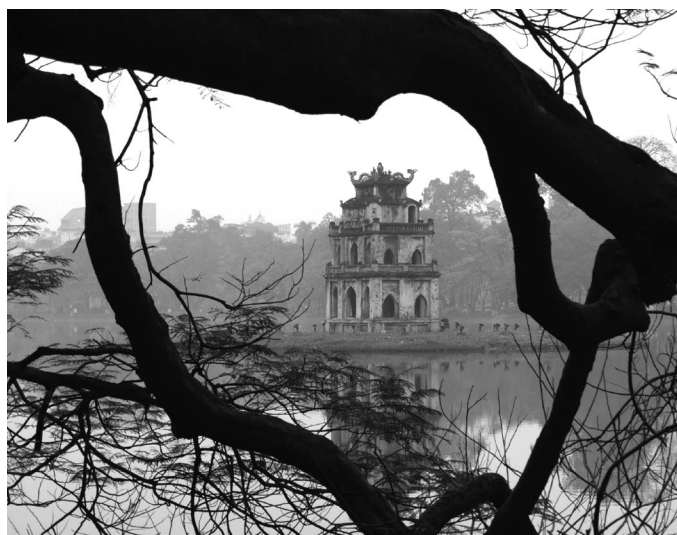
Fruit vendor in Hoi An.



Halong Bay on a misty morning.



Wreckage of a B52 in a suburban Hanoi lake.



Tortoise Tower, Hoan Kiem Lake, Hanoi.



Valley scene near Mount Fansipan, north west Vietnam.



On the edge – cottage industry at Sapa.



An old French fort at Hai Van Pass, north of Danang.



*Early morning exercise
at Hoan Kiem Lake, Old Quarter, Hanoi.*

The trip was a great success. At times as individuals or a group we showed signs of wilting but we stuck to our schedule and were rewarded with a kaleidoscope of marvelous sights and experiences.

We travelled “everywhere” and got there by pretty much all possible modes of travel. We travelled on planes (three times domestically), trains (twice overnight and that’s a story in itself), cars with private drivers, taxis, boats, coaches and motor bikes. We even fell for the attraction of going for a ride on a cyclo, despite my bad experiences every single time I’d used them previously. *(The 100% track record still stands.)*

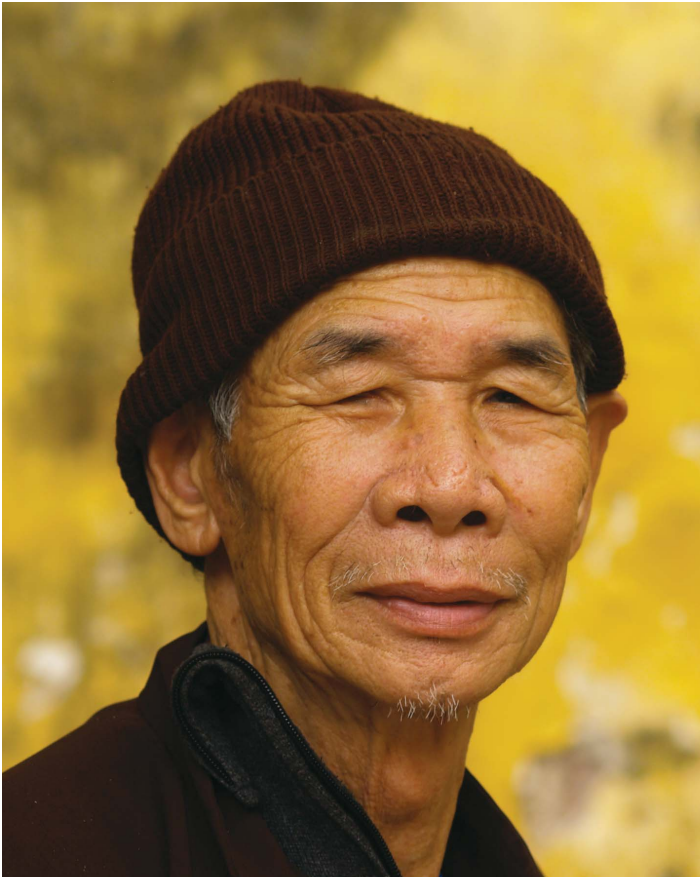
We visited and stayed at Saigon, the Mekong Delta, Hanoi, Cat Ba Island, Sapa, Hue and Hoi An before returning to Saigon and the plane home. During the trip we saw three magnificent World Heritage sites – Halong Bay, Hoi An and the thousand year old Champa buildings and monuments of My Son. At Sapa we met the engaging, indigenous Hmong people in their beautiful and unique costumes.

In HCMC we visited the War Remnants Museum; in Hanoi we saw the Army Museum and also the remains of a B52 in a suburban lake – left as a graphic reminder of the war. In Hanoi we were up early to see the lakeside rituals where many hundreds of locals practise variations of Tai Chi, undertake spiritual cleansing routines or play badminton with foot or racquet.

During our final two nights in Saigon we reflected on our experiences at a roadside bar hangout, watching the nightlife drift past. We were looking forward to some home stability but we knew we had shared something very special. We had experienced one of those “lifetime” events and had gathered memories to be cherished.

IMAGES OF CONTEMPORARY VIETNAM

Photography by Kevin Chesson



Top left: Hanoi monk; top right: a typical Saigon street scene; under: indigenous women of Sapa; above: street beggar with baby in Saigon; left: a quiet moment on tranquil waters.



Top left: Children playing on the steps of St Joseph's Cathedral, Hanoi; top right: homeward bound after the floating markets; middle right: a captured U.S. plane on display at the War Remnants Museum; middle left: World Heritage Hoi An old town; bottom left: an early morning cleansing routine; bottom right: a piercing stare on the Mekong.



Camera-shy in Hanoi.





Top left: Mekong mother and child through a porthole; top right: pineapple vendor, Hanoi; middle: Xuan Huong Lake, Dalat, Central Highlands; bottom left: cruising in World Heritage, Halong Bay; bottom right: a golden smile.

SHARPIE

Sharpie seemed the most unlikely bloke to die on a battlefield in Vietnam.

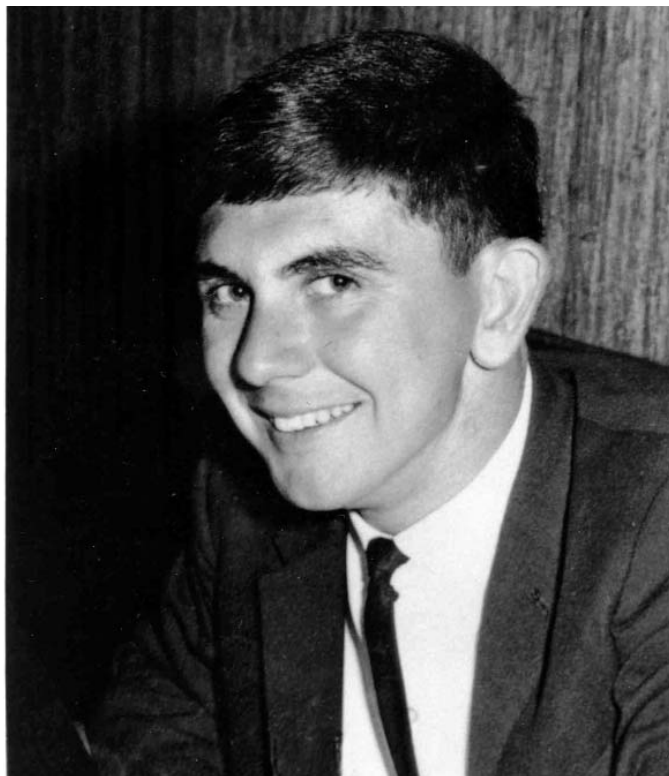
He just didn't seem a natural for military life. He seemed much more the type of bloke who should still be enjoying a trendy life in buzzy Sydney.

Covered in sweat, shouting into a sig. set above the din of battle in a rubber plantation in Vietnam, fearing for the survival of his platoon, was not the scenario you would envisage for Gordon Sharp's last days on the planet

I met him at Scheyville in July 1965 and last saw him in May 1966, just before he left for Vietnam with 6RAR. I have a photo of us all at dinner that last night in Brisbane. It was a farewell dinner with John O'Halloran's family from Tamworth and it included Gordon, a close family friend since he and John were at primary and secondary school together and then amazingly at Scheyville.

In the afternoon of 18 August 1965, very early in the Battle of Long Tan, he was killed by enemy fire whilst calling in artillery support for his beleaguered 11 Platoon, D Company 6RAR. His schoolmate from those childhood days in Tamworth, John (JP) O'Halloran, also of the first class of '65, was paused near Long Tan with B Company 6RAR awaiting orders to provide support, and listening in on the battalion net, when he heard the matter of fact call, "Sunray down", and knew that was it for Sharpie. It must have hit JP pretty hard.

It hit me pretty hard back in the comfort of 2RAR in Brisbane. Irrespective of our intense military education at Scheyville and



Sharpie of the cheeky grin.

then our extensive battalion training, none of us really ever contemplated that we would die, even though we knew the risks. That's it with twenty one year olds; you live flat out, one day at a time and give no thought to mortality. That's certainly what it was like at Enoggera in early 1966, forty years ago.

I had been posted to 2RAR, which was the battalion from which 6RAR was raised. The two battalions shared an Officers' Mess at Enoggera and shared in the hi-jinks that young subalterns get up to. Most of that centred on some pretty spectacular mess parties, many wild weekends down the Gold Coast and hitting the nightlife in Brisbane when we weren't in the bush training.



The Last Supper at the National in Brisbane. From left: "Digger" and Grace O'Halloran, Sharpie, Robin O'Halloran, Laurie Muller, J.P. O'Halloran and Carol (the then love of JP's life).

Sharpie didn't touch alcohol. He got just as cheerful as the rest of us, but on the atmosphere of a good time. The danger for us though was we would take our eye off the ball, through having an ale or several too many, whilst hatching strategies to attract young women, whilst Sharpie would have already made his successful move. The first I would become aware of this is when he would sidle up to me in some late night dive in Brisbane and urgently ask if he could borrow my car, which was a pretty snappy white MGA sports car. It would turn out that he would charm some young lady and offer to drive her home, or somewhere cosy, in his sports car. That's the last I would see of him, or the car, until next morning. I was left with catching a lift back to camp with the other unlucky desperates such as Ian Jesser, "JP" O'Halloran or John Fraser.

It was the same at Scheyville when we had those spectacular 36 hour weekend leaves. Sharpie seem to know where every party was in Sydney, how to get there and how to latch on to the best lookers. The rest of us hangers on could only look on in wonder. One night he took us to a disco, come illegal speakeasy, in Cremorne that was in a secret location. You had to have a password to get in through a straw covered side door and inside there was a place of pulsating music, lights, young women and wonderment galore. At least it was to us bushies who thought the Macquarie Arms at Windsor was pretty stylish. Sharpie was in his element.

Back at Scheyville Sharpie was doing it a bit tough. He had cracked both of his forearms when he came off the cargo net the wrong way around and missed some of the training whilst he was hospitalised. He needed to get a good score in one of the final exercises when he was given a tricky night ambush to carry out. We all rallied around our mate, who was in danger of being back-squadded and he pulled of a blinder, which must have helped him over the line.

Back in Brisbane 6RAR's embarkation was looming. They were to do their final tuning up Battalion exercise at the brand new Shoalwater Bay training area. My old company, B Coy 2 RAR, was to be the "enemy" for the several weeks of the exercise. Ian Jesser (1/65) and I had platoons in this company, together with Jim Connolly, a Duntroon bloke, who went on to Major General and Theatre Commander ADF. We had a lot of fun harassing 6RAR and for some reason my platoon kept coming up against D Coy and the wily OC Harry Smith (aka Harry the Ratcatcher) and his stropky platoon commanders Gordon Sharp, Dave Sabben and Geoff Kendall. Neither they, nor the Ratcatcher, would ever accept an umpires ruling and in that exercise, as they were determined to achieve their objective irrespective of who the enemy was and did. This seemed to be the same attitude that got them through Long Tan.

Back at the mess before 6RAR left, JP O'Halloran left behind a tidy sum of dollars on the bar, to buy a few kegs to remember him by if he copped it over there. The cheeky bugger came back and collected it a year later. Maybe we should have spent it when the news of Sharpie's death came through. We certainly needed something to deaden the sense of loss.



Proud as Punch – 2Lt Gordon Cameron Sharp.

It's odd to think I knew him for less than a year. I guess to twenty years olds that's nearly a lifetime. We had a lot of fun together at Scheyville and Enoggera and the memory of him is good. He was a mate from what is now a long time ago, yet he often pops into my mind particularly around either Anzac Day, or Long Tan Day. I guess that is what good memories are all about. RIP Sharpie and also Kerry Rinkin and John Fraser – all good mates

Laurie Muller (1/65)

I served with 2RAR at Enoggera from January 1966 until early 1967 as both a platoon commander and as assistant adjutant. The battalion left on its first tour of Vietnam in May 1967 and my two years were up in July of that year. I was transferred out to 6Task Force HQ at Enoggera where I served on for a further six months as an acting staff captain (with HDA). Mine was a very soft experience compared to most.

Snapshots of Scheyvillians AT WAR

Recollections and musings of some of the men from Scheyville who fought in South Viet Nam

By Gary McKay (2/68)

As the Viet Nam War passes into the mists of time it is distinctly possible that the observations and recollections of a significant number of Australians who journeyed there, fought in the defence of South Viet Nam, and in some instances were wounded or killed there, will disappear also.

Between January 1965 and December 1972 approximately 63,740 men were called up for national service, and of these some 15,542, a ratio of about one in every four, saw active service in Viet Nam. For many the registration for national service was a personal watershed. Some protested against conscription by burning their registration cards or even failing to register. The vast majority, however, simply registered as required under the National Service Act and waited until the ballot came due. In all, some 1803 national servicemen graduated from the OTU. Seven were killed in action in Viet Nam. In addition there were another 68 men who graduated from Scheyville as part of the OTU Wing from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea, to make up an overflow when national service was abolished by the Whitlam government in December 1972.

These are some of the thoughts of several men who served in South Viet Nam. All were rifle platoon commanders.

Gordon Hurford, Infantry Platoon Commander, 2 RAR, Phuoc Tuy Province, 1967-68

Gordon Hurford was one of the first men drafted for national service in 1965. He attended the newly opened Officer Training Unit at Scheyville just outside the New South Wales country town of Windsor. He was in the first intake of approximately 3000 men called up and after selection for officer training graduated and was allotted to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps. He served in South Viet Nam as a rifle platoon commander with the 2nd Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (2 RAR), was Mentioned in Despatches, and subsequently was granted a regular commission and soldiered on in the Australian Regular Army. He was the first Scheyville graduate to command a battalion (the 8th19th Battalion, RAR) in the Regular Army. He retired from the Army in 1998 after reaching the rank of Colonel.

In my platoon, 11 Platoon, Delta Company, 2 RAR, we had about one-third regulars and the rest were nashos. We sailed in mid-April aboard the HMAS Sydney from Brisbane. On the trip over our days were spent training to a fairly ambitious program along the lines of up at six, breakfast at seven, PT at eight, rifle shooting at nine, Vietnamese language at ten and so on. The whole day was totally structured but as the boat trip wore on each day got progressively slower until about day four it seemed that no-one even bothered to get up and

things became very relaxed. We then started into boxing competitions, tug-o-war and all that sort of thing. About every third day there was refuelling of our escort ships.

After ten days we arrived in Vung Tau and went ashore by Chinook. It was the first time we had seen these huge helicopters. We were all lined up on the flight deck in our chinks with our packs and sea bags and a Chinook came in to land. About three guys nearly got blown over the side by the down draft and in fact one bag got blown overboard. We flew to the helicopter pad at Eagle Farm in Nui Dat and took over from 6 RAR. They were extracting as we came in. Our advance party had been with 6 RAR for about six weeks before we arrived. We settled in for a few days and then went out on a half-day operation up to the southern side of the Binh Ba airstrips, walked to the northern strip, got picked up from there and taken back. Two days later the battalion went out on the 'overnighter' and we went out beyond the Long Tan Rubber near Nui Dat Two; we choppered in to company LZs (helicopter landing zones) and walked home.

Gordon was asked to recall a memorable event and it was this one that came to his lips, and it was a day that he said saddened him for a long time:

Dinh Co was one day I might have liked to forget. It was a little hill with a monastery on top of it. It was south of Dat Do, heading down towards the Long Hai Hills. I was with 'Maps' Carter, OC Bravo Company at the time, and he said, 'I

want you to take your platoon up and occupy that feature up there – Dinh Co.' I asked, 'Why do you want me to do that?' and he replied, 'To see if it is occupied'. So we sat down, had a look at the map and the hill and decided how we were going to do it. I didn't expect to have any contact up there because, if I was, it was only likely to be an observation post or something like that. When we got up on top we ran into a ring main of M16 jumping mines, which killed one and wounded another fifteen of us. So that was a pretty sad day.

Looking back, the total experience was good for me as a professional soldier. For my Diggers and especially the nashos, they didn't need the experience but when they had it, they sucked the lemon dry and took all the experience they could gain out of it. That experience might have been emotion – fear, hunger, thirst, anger, sadness and all sorts of things. They sucked it out from mateship. And it wasn't just the national servicemen. I hate to delineate and differentiate between them.

It might sound like I'm being stereotyped, but the real thing about being in Viet Nam was that we generally agreed that the government said we had to be there. This is going to sound like a donkey vote, but here we were, called up and doing what our government said we had to do. The thing we had to concentrate on doing was our job and getting home unscathed and get out of the place alive.

Dan McDaniel, Infantry Platoon Commander, 4 RAR, 1971

Daniel Nolan McDaniel volunteered for national service in 1967 and after training at the Officer Training Unit, Scheyville; he graduated into the Infantry Corps and was posted to Papua New Guinea for two years. Electing to sign on for a five year short service commission, he was posted to the 4th Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment (4 RAR). He commanded a platoon in Bravo Company of the

4th Battalion (NZ/Anzac) in 1971. In September of that year he was wounded in an action which saw 15 of his platoon become casualties from a mortar bombardment. He served twenty-three years in the Army, serving in a variety of postings in Australia and overseas. His most notable achievement was his raising of the first counter-terrorist squadron in the Australian Army's elite Special Air Service Regiment. Throughout his time in the Regular Army, McDaniel enjoyed the reputation of being 'a good operator'. Today he works as a consultant in Perth and presides over his beloved Associates Rugby Club. He is married with two children, his son being an officer in the Special Air Service Regiment.

This is an extract from his diary when his battalion was involved in a series of actions against a North Vietnamese Army regiment.

Day 2: Tue, 22 Sep 71. I was very sore on waking and realised I had taken some shrapnel in the back the previous day. Along with Wheatley, who had an ankle injury, I was evacuated by helicopter. I was surprised to see Gary McKay in the chopper when I was winched aboard. He had been shot the previous day but couldn't be evacuated. I recall he still had the strength to discuss events on the way to hospital at Vung Tau! My most vivid memory of arrival at the hospital was the triage room, where Gary and I received a massive shot of penicillin in the backside, which I felt all the way to my toes! The time spent in hospital was one of the funniest times in my life. There were about 30 of us in the ward, including about fifteen of my platoon.

One of my machine gunners, Gerrit Olde, had a funny time. He wouldn't get out of bed one morning. He had to sleep on his belly because of the scars in his back and bum from the mortar shrapnel. The New Zealand nursing sister tried to get him out of bed because there was a VIP coming through and he refused. Eventually she came over to me and said he wouldn't get up and I had to get him out of bed. I went across and asked him why he

wouldn't get out of bed. Eventually he hopped out of bed and had a massive erection sticking out of his hospital pyjamas. He grabbed his erection with one hand and a crutch with the other and said to the sister, 'Now you see what you have done!' and stomped off down the ward. The little Kiwi sister went as red as a beetroot and beat a hasty retreat out of the ward.

We adopted the pop song 'The Resurrection Shuffle' as our theme song as we all hobbled off to breakfast in the mornings. We put a small sign up on the ward door, 'Callsign 23.5 also known as Six and a Half Platoon', because we had more people in the hospital than we had out in the bush.

On reflection Dan added later: The experience of being wounded and then spending time in hospital with some of my soldiers tended to bond me with my fellow man. Fellows that I still see even to this day and the fact that we still get together on Anzac Day over on the east coast is another example of how the whole experience drew us together. But I think overall the impression that you are left with is that while you wouldn't wish going to war on anybody, if you had to do it what a tremendous experience it was. And it gave you the opportunity to make friends that you will probably keep for life. There is nothing like going through a few hard times together to make you appreciate good times together.

I thought the anti-Viet Nam protesters were a bit of a pain in the arse. While I accepted their right to protest, and I remember this quite clearly, I objected to them attacking soldiers as targets in their marches through cities. I detested their inability to distinguish between governments who were involved in the political fracas and soldiers who were just doing what they were told to do. Quite often these soldiers were members of their own class in society; the nashos came from all walks of life. There, but for the grace of God, they could have been on the other side doing the protesting. Quite honestly, on reflection my

view is that the war probably was wrong politically. It was a bad decision, a bad war to get involved in, but by the same token why take it out on soldiers who are doing their job for their country and who are basically in a position where they have no freedom of choice?

I think my greatest weakness before going to Viet Nam was the fact that I really didn't think enough about the big picture and where I was heading, what the Army was doing and what was morally right, what was politically right. I think every officer has an obligation to do that. I only hope that he doesn't have to do anything like Viet Nam.

Geoff Daly, Infantry Platoon Commander, 7 RAR, 1970-71

Geoff Daly was drafted from a life of medical studies and first grade rugby union in 1969. A keen devotee of 'the game they play in heaven', he was not keen on interrupting his life at Brisbane Souths Rugby Club where, 'they cut out your liver to make way for your heart'. He deferred his entrance into national service until after a year at university and went through the Officer Training Unit at Scheyville. After graduating as the top cadet and awarded the Sword of Honour, he was allocated to the Royal Australian Infantry Corps as a second lieutenant. In October 1970 he deployed to South Viet Nam as a member of the 1st Australian Reinforcement Unit (1ARU) and served subsequently with 7 RAR. Geoff is married to Carmel and they have four children. Geoff and his family live close to his beloved Souths rugby union ground in Yeerongpilly in Brisbane and he is a successful accountant.

I got married on the 25th January 1969, the same year that I was drafted. My wife, Carmel, was pretty upset about it when I was drafted. She was upset that our lives had been disrupted and that I was going away for two years. And probably to Viet Nam.

At that stage I did not want to go into the Army, mainly because I had

heard various stories about people who had failed the medical so easily. There was one guy in fact who was playing 5/8 or centre for Souths A grade and he had gone to the doctor and said he had a sore knee or something and they pushed and pulled him around and suggested he go and see a specialist. The specialist eventually said he was going to need a bone taken out of his ankle and he came straight from the specialist appointment, virtually with his boots in the back of the car, to training. And he failed. I said to myself that if that bastard can fail – so can I. Everybody had told me that if you had a fair amount of beer it puts your blood pressure up. So, the day before I went to the medical I got right about the beer, but of course it didn't work.

I tried everything. They put earphones on me and asked, 'If you hear a noise indicate with your hand'. So I thought I would tell them I was deaf in the right ear so everything that happened in the right ear, I would not put up my hand and when it happened in the left ear, I would raise my hand. They didn't mind that at all! Then I went for the eye test and the fellow said, 'Read the chart down the end of the dark tunnel'. So I did, but bugged up the second last line which I could read alright – it read 'O' and I said 'Q' or 'C' or something like that. The doctor wandered half way down the tunnel and said, 'Yes, I thought that was a Q - you are alright.' So, whatever I did I could not fail, so I was in.

Geoff went to South Viet Nam as a replacement officer and experienced the worst possible way to go to war – as a 'reo' - replacing someone who has either been killed or sacked. He recalls some of the lighter moments:

A funny occasion was when there was an artillery bombardier who was finding it a bit hard to get through the BE Course because he was a little bit overweight and they were supposed to be fit. What really got to him was that the staff would take us out in the bush to get ambushed etc. and we would camp for the night

within 100 metres of a road and up would come the instructors in the morning with freshly starched greens and carrying their pace-sticks. This little fellow during the week was getting crabbier and more tired until eventually he could not care less and one day while he was dragging this nylon communications cord behind him, an instructor came up and asked him what he was doing dragging his cord along the ground. He said, 'Well, it would be fucking hard trying to push it along wouldn't it?' He was hoping that they would shoot him.

On reflection and when asked what he thought was the saddest part of his experience Geoff said:

The saddest thing was just the poverty of the people. We would go on patrols through villages or paddy fields compared to the relatively prosperous situation like we have in Australia – the absolute poverty we saw in a country racked by continual war. The other thing that struck me was the lack of young men around the place.

Neil Weekes, MC, Infantry Platoon Commander, 1 RAR, 1968-69

Neil spent most of his childhood on a cattle property near Mackay in central Queensland. He was drafted under the National Service Act to serve two years in the Army in 1965. He deferred his induction for several years whilst he completed his training as a school teacher and did one year's teaching. He was enlisted in February 1967 and was selected for officer training at the National Service Officer Training Unit at Scheyville near Windsor in NSW. Not long before his 22nd birthday, he graduated as a second lieutenant into the infantry corps and was posted to the 1st Battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment. He deployed to South Viet Nam with his battalion in March 1968 and in May of the same year he was heavily involved in the Battle of Coral where he was decorated for gallantry with the Military Cross. He is best described as a real 'bushy' with a

love for the Australian country, the Army and his soldiers. Before retiring he served as a Reservist, as the Commander of 11th Brigade in Townsville, North Queensland.

I left Australia on the 17th March 1968 and arrived in Viet Nam at 1400 hours at Tan Son Nhut Airport. That was at the end of the 1968 Tet Offensive. I was member of the 1 RAR advance party. When we arrived at the airport, Saigon was under attack. There was artillery fire going in, fires around the airport. There were several damaged planes that had been hit with rocket or artillery fire, and as we got off the plane we were issued our weapons and live rounds for our magazines. We were then shown across to the protection bays of the aircraft where we huddled against the walls while waiting for a couple of Caribou to fly us into Nui Dat – my diary records, 'Guns blasting everywhere – we're in it'.

I arrived in Nui Dat that afternoon, was met by our reconnaissance party, piled onto trucks and driven into our particular company areas, only to find that the company we were relieving from 7 RAR was not there but still down at Baria fighting in the last stages of the Tet Offensive. As I jumped down from the back of the truck, despite all of the good training we had and everything you tell the soldiers, my wedding ring got caught on the back of the truck and I was held suspended with a broken finger and a gash which required stitching.

Early next morning the Alpha Company advance party was sent down to Baria to link up with Alpha Company of 7 RAR. Much to my shock I found I was to become platoon commander of 3 Platoon, Alpha Company 7 RAR, as the commander of that platoon had been wounded and the platoon sergeant had gone home with the 7 RAR advance party. So I took over. That night I was talking to the senior corporal in the platoon, having a brew, when we were attacked – it was estimated that 20 to 50 enemy were across the paddy field where

we were dug in. We had some APCs and supporting machine guns that returned fire. We found plenty of blood and drag marks the following morning, but as it was with many of the contacts we had, we found no bodies. The next night, the 20th March, I took 3 Platoon on my very first combat ambush. The location was an old graveyard with plenty of fresh graves that had sunk because of the heavy rain. It wasn't the best of introductions to a Viet Nam tour. Thankfully that night nothing came through that ambush.

Neil's involvement in the battle of Fire Support Base Coral was heroic by any standards including being rocketed and bombarded, serious close quarter fighting, local counter attacks and determined fighting against a numerically superior force.

I will never forget the battlefield clearance on the morning after the first night of the Battle of Coral. We had checked our immediate area and the next duty was to check on the forward elements. Surprisingly, apart from the casualties in 7 Section, Private Dwight with his M16 magazine shot off his weapon and Private Brendt with a piece of mortar shrapnel from our own mortars in his neck, we had suffered no other casualties. However, at the pit joining my platoon and 2 Platoon we found Private King, who was in a completely dazed mental state. As we approached he jumped from his pit and pointed his self-loading rifle (SLR) at me and told me to stay away – he was going to shoot me or anyone else that came near his pit. I asked him where Lance Corporal Martin was and he pointed to an adjoining shell scrape and we found Ringer Martin dead.

An RPG had hit him in the chest and upper body and it wasn't a pretty sight. Private King then told us to stay away and pointed to the front of his pit and said they were his and we were not to touch them. I didn't understand what he meant until we crawled forward of his pit and right in front of his pit we found an NVA soldier. He had been shot point-

blank range by King through the chest and about two paces behind him was another dead soldier and to the rear was a third, again shot, apparently all by King. The second one had a home-made bangalore torpedo made out of beer cans and filled with plastic explosive.

Later on we worked out what had probably happened – this sapper team had been crawling forward with the intention of blowing up the wire which the reconnaissance parties had seen, not knowing it was one strand of wire. As luck would have it, they had gone through past the end of the strand of wire in front of my platoon and the flanking 2 Platoon. They had crawled from the irrigation ditch about 40 metres in front of us, which had been their forming-up place and mortar base plate position and where they had their casualty evacuation. They crawled through the grass and had gone the considered distance, not meeting any wire. You can imagine one fellow kneeling up to get a better view and the other one behind him saying something like, 'It should be here somewhere', when King saw him and shot him. With all the noise going on the second fellow would probably not know that his mate had been shot and so on. King was in no fit state to stay in the battle area and Bob Sutton very quickly came down to evacuate him to the rear and then send him to Nui Dat.

Likewise, Private James was in no fit state. He had already seen Thirkell, Matons, Clarke and two other boys wounded and he'd seen Young and Wallis killed. Although he stayed out for another two nights he became very jittery and threw grenades at the wire at the first provocation. He was returned to Nui Dat.

Peter Lauder, MC, Infantry Platoon Commander, 8 RAR, 1969-70

Peter Lauder was born the youngest of seven children in the small northern Queensland town of Tully. A good scholar and sportsman, he won a full blue whilst

captaining The Southport School rugby first XV. He was a warrant officer in the school cadet unit. After leaving high school he attended the Kedron Park Teachers' College and was a school teacher in Innisfail in central Queensland before being drafted for National Service in February 1966. After passing his medical examination he went to Singleton as a recruit soldier and then to the National Service Officer Training Unit at Scheyville and graduated as a second lieutenant after doing the long course (nine months), having suffered an injury in his first term. He was posted from there to 8 RAR. The battalion was preparing to embark for service in Malaysia and so Peter and Jill married in 1967. When he was a platoon commander in Viet Nam he was 22 years of age. For his actions in Viet Nam, Peter Lauder was awarded the Military Cross. He resigned from the Army in June 1972 at the end of his five-year short service commission and became an insurance agent in Brisbane. Peter and Jill have been married for thirty years and have three children.

Viet Nam wasn't what I expected. I thought it would be more of a war zone. The first night we were in Nui Dat there was a welcoming party in the Mess. The main body arrived on the ship – they had had a hell of a time with cyclonic conditions and everyone got seasick.

The first contact we had was Christmas day 1969, and there was a cease-fire in effect. We were operating north of the Binh Ba rubber plantation and west of Route 2. We had just had our re-supply and had our security out and one fully armed enemy walked right into our sentry position and our sentry shot him. The soldiers reacted the way I thought they would. Handling bodies was something new for them, but they did it with the proper amount of dignity. Sergeant Matthews always looked after the dead.

Our platoon had quite a number of contacts, more than most of the

other platoons. It is the little humorous incidents that you tend to remember well. After we had had an ambush in the Long Hai hills, our platoon was given the job of following an enemy track out of a bunker position. Private Ray Smith was the forward scout. We had been going about three hours following this clear track. While we were stopped for a while and I was reporting our position on the radio, a snake came through platoon headquarters, so I picked up a stick to hit it. At that moment an enemy walked into our position. Smith's weapon misfired and Bill Westhead's shot missed because he couldn't see the track and so the enemy got away. I had an M79 grenade launcher beside me at the time and I picked it up and went to mortar feed the grenade down the barrel and the platoon headquarters men saw me do it – really embarrassing.

One of my funniest memories concerns Corporal Ray 'Tex' Weston. When we were in an ambush that resulted in a very large action, he went forward under heavy enemy fire and extracted the men in a pit that I had not heard from for 30 minutes. He brought them back one at a time and exposed himself to considerable danger more than once. He got rounds (bullets) through his greens. He was put in for a citation but it never left the battalion headquarters. I found out years after I left the battalion that apparently a friend of his, Private Vince Pica, had a girlfriend that he wanted to get rid of. So Weston wrote that Pica was dead and she wrote to Army Office that she wanted to go to the funeral. The shit hit the fan and the authorities went right down through the system and that's what happened to Weston and his medal.

Mid-way through our tour Private John McQuat was killed in action. The morale of the soldiers was greatly affected. John was a quiet, popular member of the platoon. He was killed during a contact in the middle of the night. He was shot five times through the lower stomach.

The contact was initiated with rifle fire by a recent reinforcement to the platoon. Our platoon never used these tactics. It was very dark, raining and storming.

We lost John because another soldier fired at night-time from one pit to another and broke all the rules. It got to a number of the men because of what a reckless, careless person had done, and one who had only been part of the platoon for a couple of weeks. I was not on operations at the time and flew out to cast doubt in their minds that it may have been an enemy round – but they all knew. It just didn't wash. We could have done without that. There were a couple of particular fellows, our medic, Colin 'Doc' Frederick and Corporal Gary Craig – their job was to prepare his body to be flown out. 'Doc' Frederick did a great job but he never got over it.

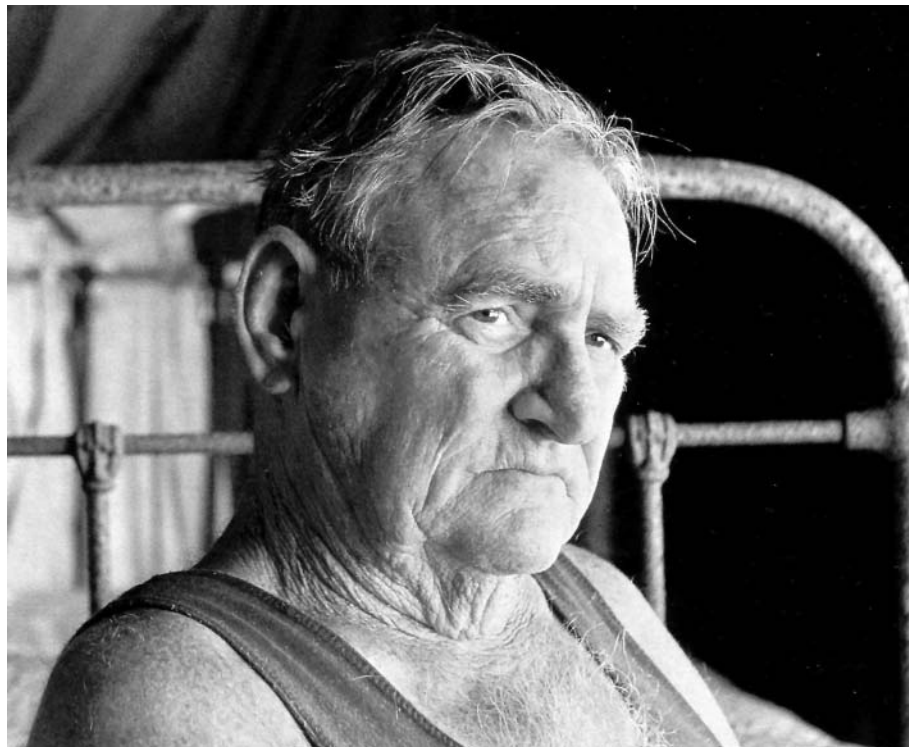
The evacuation of the body was difficult owing to the nature of the thick scrub. It was an extremely difficult position to get him out and we had to use a jungle penetrator. We have not seen Doc Frederick since Viet Nam – he doesn't come to reunions and I think you can go right back to that point, where he had to prepare his mate to be shipped out. Gary Craig is another one – he was a good corporal in Viet Nam who I think it similarity affected. He doesn't like remembering. It will all go back to that particular incident. And what really annoys me is that it was caused by somebody who was thrust upon you, whom you had to accept but that you didn't train and that could bummer up an organisation. I believe that every problem we had was because we had to accept people at short notice – reinforcements. That happened a lot. I had a corporal that I kept back in camp whenever I could, because he was an accident about to happen.

Ed Note : Thanks Gary McKay MC and particularly to Gordon Hurford MID, Dan McDaniel, Geoff Daly, Peter Lauder MC and Neil Weekes MC for their generous co-operation for this special article.

In a world where athletes are routinely hailed as heroes, some say the word has lost its meaning. Keith Payne, the last Australian to be awarded the military's ultimate medal for bravery, reflects on what it really takes to be a hero.

Story by Rodney Chester from the Courier Mail, photographs by David Kelly.

Keith Payne V.C.



Keith Payne doesn't look like a hero, or at least not right now. Wearing an old blue singlet and a pair of well-loved shorts, he's showing us around the fishing shack he escapes to when he wants to go bush. In the shack, on a

mate's property a few hours drive south of Mackay, there's a cupboard made out of packing cases, a homemade stove and a ventilation system that is as simple as it is effective – if you want some breeze, just prop open the corrugated iron sheets that make up the shack's walls.

But if a building is something to provide shelter from the world outside, then this old shack has served its purpose. "It was a saving for me," says 72-year-old Payne. "It let me get my old scrambled brain together and be able to fit back into society."

It was in the 1970s that Payne first found refuge here, after he'd quit life as a professional soldier. For a couple of years he became a professional fisherman instead, living off his boat for weeks at a stretch and bedding down at the shack. Although he didn't realise it until much later, he was suffering post-traumatic stress disorder, and it would take him many years to conquer that foe.

The fishing shack is in sharp contrast to Payne's home in Mackay, which he shares with Flo, 71, his wife of 52 years. Their home is kept neat with a precision that befits their shared background in the military. She served in the Women's Royal Australian Army Corps for two years, but was forced by army regulations to resign on their wedding day. He spent more than two decades in the Australian Army, fighting communist forces in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. Each day on the flagpole in his front yard, Payne hoists aloft the symbol of all that he fought for, and in one room of the house, proudly on display, are the records of his life in the military: citations, plaques and photographs.

As you enter the home the first thing that captures your eye is a large sketch of Payne, similar to the portrait of him that forms part of the Australian War Memorial collection in Canberra. Alongside the sketch, hanging from a small piece of ribbon, is the medal that has signified heroism for the past 150



years, since it was instituted by Queen Victoria. It is the Victoria Cross, the highest honour for bravery in combat that can be accorded to any member of the Commonwealth forces.

The medal on Payne's wall is actually a replica; the real thing is far too precious for open display and is kept elsewhere for safety. He was awarded the VC for the initiative and bravery he exhibited in the Vietnam War during a clash with enemy forces on May 24, 1969. Only 96 Australians have been awarded a VC, and Payne is one of only two recipients still living (the other is World War II veteran Ted Kenna, 86, of Hamilton in Victoria).

But Payne carries another distinction – he is the last Australian to receive the honour. That no other Australian has been awarded a VC in recent years is due, in part, to the changed nature of warfare since Vietnam. While our forces have risked their lives in theatres of war, most recently in Afghanistan and Iraq, our involvement in these conflicts has not been on anywhere near the scale of our role in Vietnam.

Payne wears his Victoria Cross with tremendous pride, and wears it often. He reckons he sleeps in about 200 different beds a year as he travels around Australia taking part in ceremonies, commemoration events and, of course, Anzac Day marches. On Tuesday he'll be marching in Kununurra, Western Australia. In any given week, he attends

a handful of functions at which he is required to wear his medals. Each time he pins the VC to his chest, he does so conscious of both the honour it carries and the responsibility. But this cross is no burden.

"You wear it for a lot people," he says. "I carry out the responsibility that goes with it. I haven't let it change me, I haven't let it go to my head, although I've been places that I wouldn't have been without it."

Keith Payne has always been one to speak his mind. He's a forceful character – when he tells you, on the way to the fishing shack, that it's your turn to open the gate, that's exactly what you do. An "individualist" is how he describes himself, a man who "doesn't suffer fools very gladly". He's quick to correct anyone who mistakenly uses the word "winner" when referring to a VC recipient. A person wins a lottery, he admonishes, while a soldier is awarded a Victoria Cross. One's a prize, the other an honour; one is merely lucky, the other is a hero, though that's a word that is used way too frequently for Payne's liking.

"I dislike (hero) being used for athletes and things like that," he says. "People who carry out courageous acts, like a sailor going around the world, that's pretty courageous but also bloody stupid. I don't know whether they should be called heroes or not. But people like the first astronauts, that was

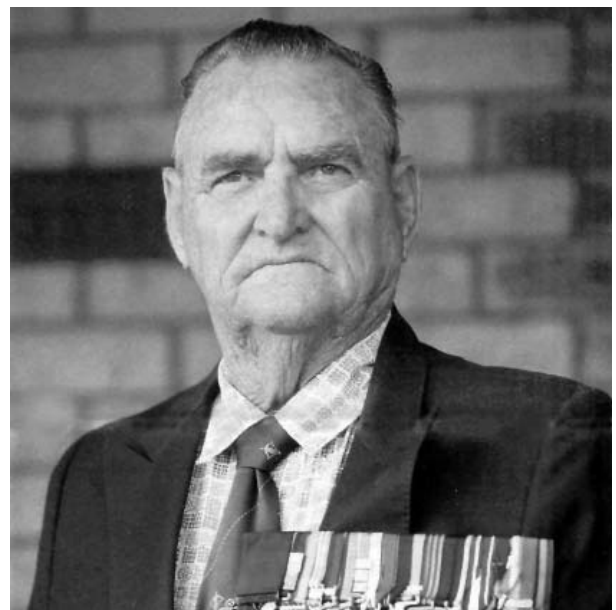
big time. While they're trained for it, I was trained to be a soldier. With our swimmers, they're athletic champions. Where it (hero) is used away from acts of gallantry ... I just don't like it. I admire our athletes, don't get me wrong, and certainly they're champions, but not heroes."

It was a hero's welcome that greeted Payne when he returned from the Vietnam War on September 24, 1969. Brisbane's then lord mayor, Clem Jones, handed him the keys to the city, while crowds on Adelaide Street gave him a rousing three cheers. The Queen pinned the Victoria Cross on his chest the following year, in a ceremony on board the royal yacht Britannia in Brisbane during her tour.

Payne has been asked many times what the VC means to him, and what it is that makes a hero. In 2002 he took part in a survey by London researchers who were looking for common links between those who had received a VC and those awarded the George Cross (the honour that ranks second to the VC, awarded to civilians or armed forces members not in direct contact with the enemy).

"They cannot find a common agenda," Payne says. "There's been big men, little men, in-between men, men of all nations, races, and colour. I myself think that it's a reaction to a time. You're there. It's your responsibility. You do it.

"In the case of the Australians, you



would find the majority of them were bushies. If there's anything common about Australians, it's that they've been around this long, wide and wonderful bloody island and they've travelled their island and they can talk the language of the people of the land. I have no doubt that the crop of (soldiers) today is as good as the crop of the youth of yesteryears, and should they be given – hopefully not – a situation where they have to react, I think they will react admirably. Some will baulk, but there will always be somebody there who will react.”

Lord Moran, Sir Winston Churchill's physician, posed similar questions in his book *The Anatomy of Courage*. He argued bravery was not an unlimited resource in a person but was rather a series of decisions made in reaction to a situation. “Courage is a moral quality,” he wrote. “It is not a chance gift of nature like an aptitude for games. It is a cold choice between two alternatives, the fixed resolve not to quit; an act of renunciation which must be made not once but many times by the power of the will.”

The title of “last Australian to be awarded a VC” is something Payne hopes to keep, but not for selfish reasons: “When you're getting VCs, there's people getting killed. If you've ever been in a war, you don't want it again.”

Payne's youngest son, Derek, was seven when the VC was pinned on his father's chest. Now 44, and working for the NSW Department of Juvenile Justice, Derek says it was difficult growing up “in army life”, especially in the period when there was strong opposition to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. “For most adolescents, you go through a period of denial about your father,” he says. During that time, Derek admits, he viewed his dad, not very kindly, as “a loudmouth, over-assertive, alcoholic stick-it-up-your-arse hero”. Now, though, “I have the utmost admiration for the man and my mother,” he says.

Keith and Flo Payne raised five sons: Ron, 50, lives in Adelaide; Gregory, 49, and Colin, 48, live near their parents in Mackay; Ian, 46, lives in Jindabyne; and

Derek in Wollongong. While Keith had joined the army as a teenager, following in the tradition of his father (who fought the Japanese in the Pacific in World War II) and grandfather (who served in France and at Gallipoli in World War I), none of his sons has followed him into the military.

“I didn't mind,” he says. “There was no necessity for it, really. They were in between Vietnam and all that's going on today. They're all too old now, thank God.” Derek says he and his brothers were never pushed towards a military career, though he thinks that “if a grandchild ended up going into one of the services”, his father “would be very, very proud”.

Keith Payne always wanted to be a regular soldier. As a boy growing up in Ingham during World War II, he was fascinated by the troops who came into town on the train: “That put a sparkle in the eye, and I said that was for me.”

He was one of 13 children (six girls and seven boys, one of whom died in infancy). His eldest sister, Gwen Britton, 76, who still lives near Ingham, says all her brothers were daredevils. “The boys used to lay over the mudguard (of the family's T-model Ford) shooting kangaroos,” she says. “We were naughty, but not like the naughty kids of today.”

Was there an inkling then, a signpost to the hero her brother was to become? Not really, she says; he was no more courageous than any other kid. “But he was very much (into) his own thing, in those days. What Keith wanted to do, he did.”

He joined the Regimental Cadets and then the Citizens' Military Forces, the forerunner to the Army Reserve, six months shy of his 18th birthday. Two months later, he enlisted in the regular army. At the time, he was an apprentice cabinetmaker, at the insistence of his mother who believed all her boys needed a trade to fall back on.

“I didn't fancy being locked up in sheds with machinery and noise and all the rest of it – Jesus, I ended up with more noise than I ever bargained for,” Payne says. “The bloke I was working for

wouldn't cancel me indentures (contract of employment), so I smacked him under the ear and he seen the error of his way,” he adds with a chuckle that leaves you wondering if he's joking.

After weeks of training in Queensland, and in Japan, Payne was sent to Korea in March 1952. The snow was too cold and the welcome too warm. “We would get 200 bloody shells of a night-time on the company position,” he says. “They were coming in like raindrops.” He spent 12 months in Korea, then on a training course in Brisbane he met young WRAAC Florence Plaw. They married soon after. Later he served with the 3rd Battalion in Malaya, was posted to Papua New Guinea, and then he was sent to fight in Vietnam. He wanted to go to Vietnam, after spending 18 months at the Officer Training Unit in Scheyville, NSW, turning the brightest national servicemen, who had volunteered for officer training, into second lieutenants. Payne felt that as they were going to Vietnam, so should he.

“Christ, mate, you were a regular soldier. That's what you did. Flo wouldn't even have thought of trying to tell me not to go. It was a job I was trained for, very highly trained for. It was great to be able to be thought of enough to be put in that position of command, and it was great to be able to pull it off.” Flo agrees: “I don't know what would have been worse,” she says. “Living without him, or living with him knowing he couldn't go.”

Payne was one of four soldiers awarded the VC for bravery in Vietnam. The others were Warrant Officer Class II Kevin “Dasher” Wheatley and Major Peter Badcoe (both awarded posthumously), and Warrant Officer Class II Rayene Simpson (who died of cancer in 1978). Don Palmer, 71, who saw service in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, knew and served with all four men. He says his mate Payne “was always a good soldier. You've only got to look at his record. I can remember at the time thinking when he got it (the VC), good on him.”

Palmer says that although Payne is one of only two living VC recipients, he feels his mate is probably better known

in the United States, where he has been honoured with the Distinguished Service Cross (for the actions for which he also received the VC), and the Silver Star for his actions around Anzac Day, 1969.

“They’ve got him on a real pedestal, and rightly so,” Palmer says. “Australia takes him more for granted than they do, yet they’ve got hundreds of Medal of Honour (recipients) but we’ve only got two (living) VCs.” American veterans have voted Payne an honorary life member of the Special Forces Association and an honorary life member of the Special Operations Associations, and his portrait hangs in the Hall of Heroes in the JFK Special Warfare Museum in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

Palmer says he’s heard some people in the army knock Payne and the other VC recipients. He puts the criticisms down to pettiness and jealousy. “Anybody who has received the award has been vetted fairly well,” he says.

The mantle of VC recipient has been hard for some men, who failed to fit back into the society they had fought to protect. Second Lieutenant Hugo Vivian Hope Throssell, awarded the VC for bravery at Gallipoli, suffered depression after a failed business venture and community persecution for his left-wing ideals, and committed suicide. Private Martin O’Meara, a stretcher bearer awarded the VC after rescuing wounded men at Pozieres, France, in 1916, spent the last 25 years of his life in a hospital psychiatric ward.

Payne has given a lot of thought to the toll war takes while dealing with his own post-traumatic stress and helping other old soldiers suffering the same condition. “We have a lot of (Vietnam) vets in jail purely and simply because of post-traumatic stress disorder,” he says. “It’s only that they’re sick because of what occurred. I can understand that. They were never violent before, why are they violent now? In the first war, they called it ‘bomb happy’. Then they called it battle fatigue. Then they called it something else. They never, ever recognised it, really. You don’t know when you’re going to break, you don’t know when your time’s up and you

can’t do this any more.”

Payne left the Australian Army in 1975 to fight with the forces of the Sultan of Oman against leftist rebels in the Dhofar War. He was one of a group of about 100 Australian specialist soldiers who went in a private capacity. Two years later, aged 42, he returned and tried to re-enlist in the Australian Army but was rejected because of his age and because he is tone deaf, a condition he was diagnosed with prior to his service in Vietnam. He fought the decision but lost. Looking back, he’s glad it marked the end of his career as a soldier. It was time for him, he says, to get out of the military and fit back into society. It was time to go fishing.

After a few years as a professional fisherman in the waters of North Queensland, Payne tried his hand at a few different jobs. He applied to the Mackay Council for something with no responsibility and no exposure to the public, but lasted only two weeks as a street sweeper. He caught snakes for taipan man Ram Chandra and sold aluminium cladding. Health faltering with symptoms he later realised were linked to post-traumatic stress disorder, he effectively retired from work in the early 1980s.

Then he found himself in a new fight, this time with the Department of Veterans Affairs. Despite proof of a VC citation, “the bean counters” in Canberra told Payne there was no evidence he had been wounded in Vietnam. He eventually was deemed to be a TPI (totally permanently incapacitated soldier) in 1983, but only after several years of writing letters to the department presenting his case. “We weren’t seeing eye to eye,” he says. “They ended up seeing things my way.”

Payne realised his dispute with Veterans Affairs was the tip of an iceberg. “If these people are stuffing me around like this, when there’s all this proof on paper, then what are they doing for the Diggers?” For a few years, and with the help of Flo, he assisted other Vietnam vets in their battles with bureaucracy. He and Flo did a welfare course with the Department of Veterans Affairs and then became accredited with the RSL to help other vets. Having the letters “VC”

after his name, he says, didn’t really help win any of the bureaucratic battles, “although I wouldn’t mind if it did”.

Eventually he had to step back. Living with the other vets’ problems only worsened those in his own life. He knew he was drinking “far too much” and his doctor had him on Valium. The drinking, like the medication, was another escape from the anxiety and anger that, he knows now, were part of post-traumatic stress disorder. One day in the pub, he realised the people he’d lost wouldn’t want to see him live like that. He threw the Valium down the toilet, got a new doctor and now has only the occasional social drink.

Payne is still involved in community work on veterans’ issues, but also works with army cadets. This year he was recognised with an Order of Australia medal for his commitment to young people and veterans. Community work has given him, he says, “a purpose in life, a purpose that I enjoy”.

Says son Derek, who joined his father in 1995 on an emotional trip to Vietnam: “Unlike many other soldiers, he had something to hold on to and to identify with after the war. His post-traumatic stress and his rationalising what he did over there makes some sense, and it also holds him with the army. A lot of other soldiers didn’t have that opportunity. For my father, it was very fortunate. It gave him a strong identity; he just didn’t become an old soldier.”

As we drive away from the fishing shack that had been Payne’s early refuge, he stops to point out a waterhole at the base of a sandstone cliff. Standing at the edge of the ten-metre drop, Payne notes my hesitancy to join him. “It won’t bite you,” he says. Standing safely behind him, I point out that he’s comfortable with heights, he can handle snakes, and he doesn’t mind the harsh comforts – and the odd threat from wildlife – of roughing it in the bush. So, what does frighten one of our last true heroes?

“I’ve never thought about it,” he says, with a look that supports his claim. After a pause for thought, he responds: “I don’t like people shooting at me.”



OTU Graduate No 1665, Class 2/72.

MAJOR GENERAL R.P. IRVING, AM, RFD

COMMANDER 2ND DIVISION

by Neil Leckie (3/68)

Major General Paul Irving graduated from the Officer Training Unit Scheyville on 5th October 1972 into the Royal Australian Corps of Signals. At the completion of his National Service obligation, Major General Irving transferred to the CMF where he undertook a wide variety of regimental postings in field force signals units.

Following a posting as an instructor at the Officer Cadet Training Unit (New South Wales), Major General Irving was promoted to Major and commanded the 142nd Signal Squadron, then an independent signal squadron. He also undertook postings as a staff officer at Headquarters 2nd Division and as a tactics instructor at the 2nd Training Group.

In 1986 Major General Irving was promoted to Lieutenant Colonel and posted as a Staff Officer Grade One at Headquarters 2nd Division. Here he planned the re-raising of the 8th Signal Regiment, which he then raised and commanded from 1 December 1987 to 14 July 1991, following which time he attended the Joint Services Staff College at Canberra.

Following a staff posting on Headquarters Land Command, Major General Irving was promoted to Colonel in 1993 and posted as Commander of the Command and Staff Wing in Sydney. He was then posted as Director, Army Personnel Agency – Sydney.

In December 1997 Major General Irving was promoted to Brigadier and commanded the 8th Brigade. On 1 January 2001 he was posted as Assistant Commander Training Command – Army. During this posting, Major General Irving also filled the Chief of Staff position on Headquarters Training Command – Army on full time duty.

In December 2002, Major General Irving was promoted to Major General and appointed to command the 2nd Division from 1 January 2003.

Major General Irving was appointed a Member in the Order of Australia in the 2001 Queen's Birthday Honours list in recognition of his services as Commander of the 8th Brigade and his contribution to the Army Reserve.

Major General Irving holds a Bachelor of Commerce, Bachelor of Legal Studies, Diploma of Labor Relations and the Law, and a Graduate Diploma in Strategic Studies. In his civilian occupation, he is the Executive Director of Human Resources Division with the New South Wales Department of Corrective Services. His interests, apart from his family, include sport (football and cricket) and reading, particularly military history.

Maj-Gen Irving retired from the Army Reserve on 31 December 2005, having reached the highest rank of any National Service Officer.

RCB68 Commendation

Members of Rifle Coy Butterworth, Rotation 68 (or RCB68) have been awarded a Unit Commendation for their outstanding dedication to duty.



Maj-Gen Richard Irving, Commander 2nd Division, made the presentation at Puckapunyal on behalf of CO 324 CSSB Wg-Commander Peter Viggers who made the commendation to the unit, which is formed by reservists from the Victorian 4th Brigade, and based on 8/7RVR. Maj-Gen Irving said that the award was in recognition of the growing professionalism of the reserves, and highlighted their growing responsibility in supporting deployments during such a critical a time of increased operational tempo as the war against terrorism.

"The reservists who deployed to Malaysia as part of RCB68 demonstrated how reservists contribute real capability to the Army, which has troops deployed in peacekeeping operations in many places around the world," he said.

Maj-Gen Irving said the reservists had served with distinction in Malaysia and also Timor-Leste in recent times. He said Victoria's reservists are "ordinary people doing extraordinary things", who serve the best interest of the Army and the community.

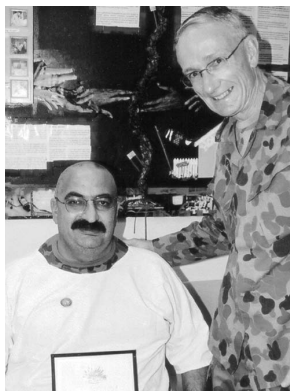
The reservists of RCB68 were based at Butterworth from November to February as part of a long-standing agreement between Malaysia and Australia. While in Malaysia RCB68 assisted in the Tsunami relief effort by setting up the transit accommodation used by ADF members passing through Butterworth on their way to the Tsunami affected areas.

Commendation to Lt Col Lalas

THE history of 2 Div contains numerous stories of infantrymen who fought against the odds in the service of their country.

To add to that record is the story of an infantryman who has been fighting serious illness to see his plans for 2 Div's 90th anniversary celebrations become a reality.

Lt-Col Ian Lalas recently received a Commander 2 Div commendation for his planning and execution of a range of anniversary activities.



Having served in the reserves for more than 30 years, Lt-Col Lalas is passionate about 2 Div's history. So much so that when he was struck down by a life-threatening brain-tumour only 30 minutes before the division's anniversary parade at Victoria Barracks in July, his main concern was that he'd miss the parade.

Fellow HQ 2 Div member Lt-Col Matt Vertzonis said Lt-Col Lalas' need for ongoing medical treatment also prevented him from attending the 2 Div battlefield tours of Gallipoli and the Western front.

"He was down, but he wasn't out," Lt-Col Vertzonis said. "He could see an opportunity to attend the memorial parade at the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier at the Arc de Triomphe in Paris. He only had a brief window between treatment sessions, and was able to spend 36 hours in Paris before returning home. The other Australians on tour didn't know he was coming, and they were so pleased to see him that they appointed him the parade commander for the day."

Comd 2 Div Maj-Gen Paul Irving said Lt-Col Lalas' selfless dedication to the Army Reserve was an inspiration to all his friends and Division members.

"He has an amazing strength of character and is totally dedicated to the Division and the Army Reserve.

Lt-Col Lalas said he kept going with the project because it meant a great deal to him. "2 Div has such a rich history," he said.

"The anniversary celebrations provided an opportunity to take today's soldiers back to their predecessors."

Australian Defence Force Medal



The Australian Defence Medal has very recently been established to recognise Australian Defence Force (ADF) Regular and Reserve personnel who have demonstrated their commitment and contribution to the nation for an initial enlistment period, or four years, whichever is the lesser.

National Servicemen are eligible to receive the medal as the completion of the national service obligation is considered completion of an initial period of service.

Application forms and other useful information is available from the Defence Department website
www.defence.gov.au/dpe/dpe_site/honours_awards/resources/forms/forms.htm

Apparently it will speed up processing considerably if you are able to supply your certificate of service and/or discharge papers, otherwise there has to be a search of the records which can add up to a substantial time lag.

All OTU graduates should be eligible and we encourage you to apply.

BOOK REVIEW

In the most recent issue of The Scheyvillian (1-2006) we carried a review of this book by John Neervort (2/67). As with most books varying views occur as to their worth. The Battle of Long Tan evokes strong passions. There has always been an element of controversy surrounding it, with the action being remembered differently by various participants. The following review by Gary McKay MC (2/68) provides another perspective on Charles Mollison's book and is presented to readers of The Scheyvillian in the interest of balance and fairness.

Long Tan and Beyond

Alpha Company 6 RAR in Vietnam
1966-67

By Lt Col Charles Mollison

Cobbs Crossing Publications

Reviewed by Gary McKay

This self-published book fits straight into the mould of 'vanity press', and like most self-published works could have done with a good editor and more conventional usage of source attribution such as footnotes or chapter endnotes. At 427 pages it is a lengthy tome that could probably have been written in a less verbose manner and saved a few trees at the same time. However, the book does have an index, which is a useful guide for those wanting to use the book as a source reference. The quality of the paper, printing and images are very good.

The author has had a difficult time getting his story into print having been excluded from a recent release entitled *The Battle of Long Tan – As told by The Commanders* to Bob Grandin (Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004). Charles Mollison's first attempt to tell his Alpha Company story did not pass critical review or examination by this reviewer (who had been tasked to edit that same manuscript by the commanders) as Mollison's views and accounts on certain aspects of the battle of Long Tan varied with the other contributors to the point of the ridiculous.

So it was with some trepidation that this reviewer undertook to review *Long Tan and Beyond* and it is hoped that any bias or prejudice has not managed to find its way into the review.

The style of the writing is uncomplicated with the exception that the author has included source details into the text, with the result that it clogs up the flow of the narrative. In the prologue are some personal views on why Australia came into the American war in Viet Nam that are somewhat naïve or poorly phrased, as senior historians both within and outside Australia would quickly point out. His rationale for the establishment of the AATTV is also off the mark.

The overuse of italics and bold print whilst relating events is a common failing of most self-published books, and the author has fallen into the trap of 'shouting' at the reader by using bold typeface when it is not required. A good copy editor

would have made the tome less of a challenge for the non-military reader. The maps in some places are amateur and contain typographical errors that detract from their purpose.

Generalisations litter this account from throw away lines such as '...reconnaissance of the whole of South Vietnam...' with no factual source to complement and account for who did any such 'recce', and when it was done, and in what report the results could be located.

Apart from the impression that the reviewer felt as if this book served nothing more than a vindication of why Mollison or any of his fellow officers in Alpha Company were not immediately decorated for their part in the battle (which did not warrant distinctive recognition), there was little to recommend this book to readers of military history. At worst it is flawed and at best it is inaccurate. To describe the Viet Cong D 445 Battalion as 'Regional Force' is misleading and inaccurate. It was a Provincial Mobile Force battalion. Regional Forces were the ARVN militia that also worked in the Australian area of operations.

However, the majority of the book survives close examination and it is really only Part Three of the book regarding the Battle of Long Tan that draws severe criticism. However, time and other reviews will attest to the veracity of the bulk of the book.

Members of the APC troop and others in Delta Company, who this reviewer interviewed, seriously dispute some events about the relief force and the actions of the commander of Alpha Company. The author's version of events does nothing but muddy the waters. The OC of the APC troop has a totally different account of what occurred during the transit to the battlefield and who was doing what to whom. Unfortunately the author has taken some information from personal hindsight, and from other sources, and has it appear as 20-20 vision on the battlefield. For example he claims he knew how many men were missing from Delta Company on the night of 18 August when in fact the number was not known until very early the next morning on 19 August (approximately 0100 hours). There are other errors of fact that detract from the narrative, and other misleading statements on the conduct of the battle.

There are other statements that defy belief. The author claims he saw shrapnel coming towards him, and this, as most physicists would explain, is highly improbable given the speed with which even 'dead' shrapnel travels. It falls into the category that if you say something often enough, you will eventually believe it.

It must be understood that Alpha Company's part in the battle was not as dramatic as has been implied, nor was it Sergeant Frank Alcorta's premature dismounting short of the battle field that swung the tide of the battle. It was the APC troop with their .30 and .50 calibre machine guns, and the threat of the tracked 10-tonne vehicles crushing the enemy foot soldiers that changed the ultimate tide of battle. A peek at the after Alpha Company after action report (p379) – written and signed by the author – will show the relatively miniscule number of small arms rounds that were fired by his company indicating a lack of infantry engagement.

Probably what was most disappointing of all in this easily read but disappointingly inaccurate account of some aspects of the battalion's tour of South Viet Nam, is the inclusion of a highly inflammatory image of a skull with a bush hat upon it, that does nothing to enhance the reputation of the Australian soldier, and is an indictment on the author for a lack of professional judgement and sensitivity.

Not recommended.

Gary McKay (2/68) is a full time non-fiction writer and historian. He served for 30 years in the ARA and retired in 1998 as a lieutenant colonel after 30 years military service. He was a rifle platoon commander in South Viet Nam where he was seriously wounded and subsequently awarded the Military Cross for gallantry. He is the author of nine books (Allen & Unwin) on the Viet Nam War and has been military reviewer for the Courier Mail newspaper in Queensland.

THE OLDEST NASHO OFFICER

Who is the oldest Scheyville Graduate?

It was thought that Warwick Sellars (1/65), who attended the Victorian Chapter Annual Dinner on 26th May at The Naval & Military Club, was the oldest Scheyville Graduate. However, as a member stated during the evening, another graduate was in fact 3 days older, but had deferred and graduated some years later. As it turns out, Warwick had another classmate, Dave Roberts, who shared the same birthday of 4th January 1945. So, Warwick and Dave are the oldest 1/65 Graduates. Sorry to destroy a long held belief Warwick!

However, there are quite a few Nasho officers who are older than them:

Date of Birth: 1st January 1945:

Lynton Day (1/67)	Anthony Pfeiffer (2/69)
Peter Matthew (4/68)	Phillip Shepherd (4/68)
Damien Wilkinson (1/68)	John Wright (4/66)

Date of Birth: 2nd January 1945:

Les Maike (1/67)

Date of Birth: 3rd January 1945:

Don Coward (1/67)	Francis Magnus (4/67)
Roy Ward (1/67)	

Date of Birth: 4th January 1945:

Michael Banks (4/69)	John Castray (1/67)
David Paterson (1/67)	

It would seem a deferment of two years did the trick for many as six of these graduated in Class 1/67.

However, as to who is the oldest Scheyville Graduate, the honour goes to Brian Hayden who

graduated with Class 1/66. Brian joined to become a pilot and attended Southern Command Basic Flying Training School in October 1966 before being posted to JTC in January 1967 and to the Infantry Centre in April 1968. His last known posting was to 1 ARU and HQ 1 ALSG, SVN in September 1968. Brian was born on 14th January 1940.

The Database

So how do I know all this? I am compiling a database on National Service Officers from various sources. The officers include Scheyville Graduates, Doctors, Dentists and Lawyers who did not attend Scheyville, Nashos who served on and were commissioned through OCS Portsea and those who were commissioned through the CMF/ARes. The places Nashos were posted makes very interesting reading.

And remember 'You can sign on for 5 years, but won't make it past Major!' Well, we had one Major General (in the Reserve) and 13 Brigadiers at last count, plus countless Colonels and Lieutenant Colonels including several ARA Battalion Commanders.

I would be most interested in hearing from any Nasho officer who served more than his two years (or eighteen months) National Service, to compare the official posting dates and units I have with the actual dates of postings and units.

Please contact me on:
nkaleckie@optusnet.com.au
03 5333 1383, or 0400 573 802.

Neil Leckie (3/68)

Editor's Note – Neil, check the Peter Sheedy (1/65) story in the Qld Dinner report it may change some of your stats!

Film Faker or Film Maker?

Cecil B DeMille and Ben Hur. John B Neervoort and Ben Hoa.

Cecil B DeMille was a Film Faker. One of his most famous films, Ben Hur, was a fake. Set in the days of the Roman Empire, before the invention of any form of motion camera and long before the birth of Cecil B DeMille, it was a complete fabrication. The sets were artificial, the people were actors, the lead actor was American (the country hadn't been discovered at that stage) and no one could speak Latin.

On the other hand, John B Neervoort (1/67-2/67) was a Film Maker. His films, set in Ben Hoa and Phuoc Tuy provinces in South Vietnam were real. The sets were real. There were no actors, although it is true that the soldiers portrayed in the films were bullshit artists, connivers, and could not be trusted anywhere near alcohol or bar girls. But they were bloody good as soldiers.

One thing John Neervoort wasn't was a school teacher. He realised this on day one of the first school term in 1966. A few months later, his girlfriend realised that he was not her lover, at least not any more, and sent him a "Dear John" letter. He in turn sent a French letter to the Foreign Legion requesting an application form, but received no reply. At the same time the National Service Board notified him that they also didn't want him. Confused, bewildered and unwanted, he volunteered for National Service. The Army wasn't fussy so they took him onboard. At the Officer Training Unit in Scheyville, WO2 Laurie Tillbrook was on the lookout for idiots to wander around on the 25

metre range so that he could shoot them with the M60 during "Home on the Range". Wanted at last!

In June of 1967, one of the Officer Cadets nailed up a thong on the noticeboard advertising "*Egyptian Sandals – used only once, very cheap price, unlimited quantities available*". The 6 day war focussed my mind on the 360 day war in the land of the Ho Chi Minh sandal. At this point in time, I decided to document my life. Not in words, for if they put my name on a book cover as the author, there wouldn't be any room for the title. No, I would document my life visually, via film. In the home movie market, 8mm film had just recently been replaced with Super 8 movie film. This gave a slightly larger image, but the major improvement was that the film came in cartridge form and didn't need to be turned over half way through the filming. Easy to load and easy to use. Nock and Kirby's offered an entry level package consisting of a Titan Super 8 camera, movie projector and screen for \$150. I bought it and had a family member film my 2/67 Graduation Parade. I practised using the camera over the next year or so.

In May of 1969, the Sixth Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment arrived in Vietnam to embark on its second tour. Being a responsible Platoon Commander (at least in some ways), meant that I didn't take the movie camera out on operations until our third operation in August, in Ben Hoa province. At first the filming was done at the Fire Support Patrol Base

(Diggers Rest). Spending much of our time patrolling within 3 km of the FSPB, we quickly appreciated where the chance of enemy contact existed, and where it was most unlikely. When patrolling in areas with little likelihood of contact, I would advise the platoon that this would be a "camera patrol". There would be opportunities for members of the platoon to take photos. More importantly, I would take the movie camera and film the platoon as well. To avoid court martial, I handed over command to my sergeant, before commencing filming. I would only film platoon headquarters and the centre section, before putting the camera away and formally taking command of the platoon. Knowing that it was a photographic patrol, the soldiers resisted firing a burst at the whirring noise of the camera, although they were sorely tempted. The soldiers quickly dubbed me "Cecil B De Neervoort".

The Titan was an ideal camera for use on patrols. The pistol grip could be removed, as it didn't contain the batteries like some other cameras. This made the camera small enough to fit into a basic pouch. The pouch was additional to the two used to hold M16 ammunition, and only worn on "camera patrols". Being an entry level (cheap) camera, the zoom was limited and the overall quality was basic. Half way through the tour the motor slowed down resulting in the images appearing to move quickly Charlie Chaplin style. The lens also became contaminated with fungal growth. An Artillery artificer came to the rescue and dismantled the lens and cleaned it, as well as restoring the speed of the motor back to normal. Unfortunately, the edge of the lens always appeared a little blurred after the rebuild. Still, I didn't know that as all exposed film was sent back to Kodak and after processing it was sent to my home in Australia.

Towards the end of the tour, the filming became more prolific. This was due to more variety of scenes to film, better filming conditions during the dry season and the realisation

that opportunities were fast running out. I jumped at opportunities that gave a different perspective. OTU classmate, 2Lt Greg Monteith (2/67) was always a good bet, as he often required a passenger in his Bell Sioux, and being stationed at the FSPB I was often available, camera at the ready. As well, I had befriended a USAF pilot – Captain Chris Neal, who was a Forward Air Controller based at Vung Tau. He flew a Cessna O2 (Oscar Deuce), similar to a normal Cessna but with twin tail booms, as there was a “pusher prop” motor behind the cockpit as well. He would call me whenever 6RAR returned to Nui Dat after an operation, inviting me to fly with him. I greatly enjoyed the hours spent meandering above Phuoc Tuy province, waiting for an Airstrike request. The one Airstrike I was able to film consisted of RAAF Canberra bombers dropping 500lb bombs on a bunker system. Greg Monteith was piloting a Bell Sioux and doing low level bomb damage assessment after each Canberra run. On the flight back to Luscombe Field I managed some air-to-air shots of Greg in the Sioux, a unique opportunity, captured on film. It was during these FAC flights that I used my new Canon 814 Super 8 movie camera. This was state of the art, and being bought through the PX, ended up being cheap as well. However the Canon was too bulky,

too heavy and too good to take out in the field.

To complement the filming, I carried a cassette recorder in my pack. The microphone was taped to the shoulder strap, and incorporated an On/Off switch to control recording. This was mainly used in static situations – in Fire Support Bases, whilst airborne on helicopters or travelling with armoured vehicles. Because of the weight and bulk, it wasn't taken on patrols (what was there to record anyway?). Eventually the sound was transferred to CD in digital format, to be used for the sound effects when creating the DVDs *Aussie Trackers Vietnam*.

During 1970/71, I edited the films and amalgamated them onto larger reels. Using a sound stripper, a gadget to cement a 1mm wide sound tape to the edge of the film, I then added a soundtrack using “illegal” music stolen from records, plus the sound effects and a narrative. These films were then donated to the Australian War Memorial in the mid 90's along with the copyright. They made a video copy for my own use, and after much badgering, ended up giving me 20 copies. I then had to pay about \$600 to get a further 15 copies so that I could present each member of my platoon with a copy. A number of these videos were copied and I was propositioned to

give permission for others to copy and sell them (even though the copyright lay with AWM). At that stage I decided to approach the AWM with a view to creating DVDs with kosher music so that they could be legitimately marketed.

After the original Super 8 films were digitally scanned, frame by frame onto Digital 8 video tape, the AWM advised me that the digital image was now my copyright and I was free to do what I liked. The Sony Digital 8 video camera was plugged into my computer, images transferred, royalty free music sourced, permission obtained and royalty payments made to use songs such as “I Was Only 19”. Sound effects and narration was added. The 150 minutes of Vietnam film was too much for 1 DVD, resulting in a set of 2 DVDs. Some extra interviews with Vietnam Veterans were added. The DVDs were commercially produced (minimum order of 1000 of each). The local printer had Corel Draw software and so was able to print the artwork for the covers that I had designed using Corel Draw.

The end result is some unique colour film of Australian combat troops during the Vietnam War, shot outside the wire from a soldier's perspective. Most film clips of Australians in Vietnam shown on TV are in black and white, as the TV cameramen didn't need to shoot colour for the B&W Australian television transmissions. The US footage is all in colour as they had colour TV. Even the Australian Army PR Unit shot in B&W.

John Neervoort (2/67)

*Neer (Dutch) – down;
Voort (Dutch) – forward
Down and going forward – better than – Run of de Mille?*

Editors Note: See the last issue of The Scheyvillian for a review of John Neervorts DVD's Aussie Trackers – Vietnam and how to buy them.



Rules for Gunfights

Royal Australian Regiment [Infantry] Rules for Gunfights:

1. Be courteous to everyone, friendly to no one.
2. Decide to be aggressive ENOUGH, quickly ENOUGH.
3. Have a plan.
4. Have a back-up plan, because the first one probably won't work.
5. Be polite. Be professional. But, have a plan to kill everyone you meet.
6. Do not attend a gunfight with a weapon whose magazine capacity does not start with a "3" and end with a "0".
7. Anything worth shooting is worth shooting twice. Ammo is cheap. Life is expensive.
8. Move away from your attacker. Distance is your friend. (Lateral diagonal preferred.)
9. Use cover or concealment as much as possible.
10. Flank your adversary when possible. Protect yours.
11. Always cheat; always win. The only unfair fight is the one you lose.
12. In ten years, nobody will remember the caliber, stance, or tactics. They will remember who lived.
13. If you are not shooting, you should be communicating.

RAR (1Cdo) Rules For Gunfights:

1. Look very cool in sunglasses.
2. Kill every living thing within view.
3. Return quickly to looking cool in latest beach wear.
4. Check hair in mirror.

SASR Rules For Gunfights:

1. Walk in 100 km wearing 50 kilo pack while starving.

2. Locate individuals requiring killing.
3. Request permission via radio from "Higher" to perform killing.
4. Curse bitterly when mission is aborted.
5. Walk out 100 km wearing a 50 kilo pack while starving.

3RAR (Para) Rules For Gunfights:

1. Select a new beret to wear.
2. Sew unique para wings on right shoulder.
3. Change the colour of beret you decide to wear.

Royal Australian Air Force Rules For Gunfights:

1. Have a cocktail.
2. Adjust temperature on air-conditioner.
3. See what's on pay TV.
4. Determine "what is a gunfight".
5. Request more funding from Government with a "killer" Power Point presentation.
6. Wine & dine 'key' Parliamentarians, invite DoD & defence industry executives.
7. Receive funding, set up new command and assemble assets.
8. Declare the assets "strategic" and never deploy them operationally.
9. Tell the Army to send the grunts.

Royal Australian Navy Rules For Gunfights:

1. Go to Sea.
2. Drink Coffee.
3. Watch porn.
4. Tell the Army to send the grunts.

Somewhere on some part of the globe ...



Our man in New Guinea, Paul McLaren (1/66) was minding his own business when quite unexpectedly, out of the blue, he was groped big time.



His little fishing mate cracked them both up when he observed, "That groper look like you eh, Mr McLaren?"



Buttsy makes it ashore. Cruising the Thames on the Black Pearl, Geoff Butts (1/72) staggers onto dry land and ties up at Hampton Court Palace, in search of a Bundy and Coke.



Royal Security Camera footage showing the Black Pearl loosely connected to its mooring and the palace gate wide open, as Buttsy went in search of a direct telecast of the Wallabies v. Poms from Telstra Stadium.



Our other men in New Guinea. Brendan Killen (1/69) of the ANZ Bank on Lihir Island, discussing basic banking needs and financial literacy with local customers. Another of the ANZ (PNG) execs is David Mee (3/66). And to top that Mal Smith (3/66) is Governor of Goroka Province. Not far away in Honiara, in the troubled Solomon Islands, John R. Brown (2/68) is busy as Chief Justice.



Legacy Needs You

Legacy Week
27 August - 2 September

If you can spare a few hours during Legacy Week to help with the sale of Legacy Badges please contact Legacy on **1800 LEGACY (534 229)** or visit www.legacy.com.au



At Work and Play in the ACT and Vic



ACT Chapter Chairman John Peters (2/68) hard at work at Royal Canberra Golf Club in June. Wal Hall (2/68) listens attentively in the eye closed posture.



Jim Gilchrist (1/72) second from left and Vice Captain of Royal Canberra, watches nervously for lapses of social graces as Laurie Muller (1/65), John Heggart (4/71) and Denis Archer (2/71) look on.



A very wary Rob Thomson (3/66) is on casual alert as Winston Bucknell (2/68) either makes a telling point or orders another bottle of house red.



At the Victorian Annual Dinner in June a large bunch of sixty year olds sang Happy Birthday to themselves with great relief and obvious gusto.



Looking lucky at table 13 were Paul and Gael Prosser (4/70) and Patricia Van-Stevens and Alan Stevens (3/70).



One of the old codgers Warwick Sellars (1/65), with his wife Jan, beams full on whilst another old codger Lyle Brown (1/65) and Alison Harris look on in growing alarm.



Shrewd ex-engineer Brian Scantlebury (3/67) pours himself another fine red whilst ex-Ordance Ray Elder (2/67) mistakenly thinks it's his glass that's been topped up. Cathie Donovan and Leonie and Grant Baker (3/67) are on to their sleight of hand.



A much more sedate and distinguished table with Jim and Ruth Madden (2/71) sharing a laugh with Patrizia and Ian Kelly (2/67) whilst Chris Coates (3/71) looks relaxed and comfortable.