



THE VIETNAM VETERANS' NEWSLETTER

OFFICIAL JOURNAL OF THE VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA

SUPPORTING ALL WHO SERVE & HAVE SERVED

APRIL 2021

MICHAEL McKERNAN REVIEWS
The Long Shadow

**WHAT OUR NATIONAL
PRESIDENT SAID**

**FLAWED HISTORY
THE VOLUME THAT
STARTED THE FIGHT**

**HEARING AIDS AND
YOUR ENTITLEMENTS**

The Long Shadow
**REVEALS STATE OF
HEALTH OF VIETNAM
VETERANS**

**THE ATOMIC TANK
GOES TO WAR**

**FINAL VOLUME OF THE
OFFICIAL HISTORY
MISSES THE POINT**



TOMMO HADN'T BEEN UP THIS LATE FOR 20 YEARS



**More veterans' stories
The Battle of Nui Le
Viet Cong logistics
Free Heart Health Program**



AND



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claims for Detriment Caused by Defective Administration - CDDA

See our article elsewhere in this issue

Our Readers love Vietnam Veterans' Stories

Gleaned from letters diaries and memories



SO, AS YOU CAN SEE RON, YOU DO HAVE A STORY IN YOU

In this edition we welcome new author Norm Jones with his story of a Vung Tau Christmas party.

We also welcome Gary McKay MC, a renowned professional author, with his story of his platoon's part in the Battle of Nui Le.

We welcome new author RR Lee (not a veteran but a Texan civilian) who wrote to us in 1983 about his experience with Australian soldiers in Vung Tau in 1966.

We welcome back Graham Munsell and Barry Hodges, this time taking their Tank 169041 to Vietnam. ■



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NEWS

Well known military historian's view on The Long Shadow His book-review..... Page 6

'Couldn't put it down.' National President's Special Report Page 9

How credible is the Official History of the Vietnam War?..... Page 10

Hearing aids. More than the things you stick in your ears..... Page 12

The current health of Vietnam veterans. What does *The Long Shadow* say..... Page 14

Gary McKay's 11 Platoon's furious fight Page 16

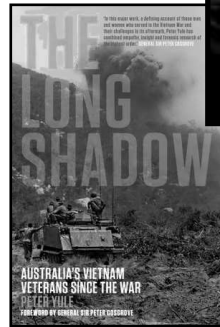
Christmas Party in Vung Tau. Careful what you decide on 'free nights'..... Page 24

The Adventures of Tank 16904 Off to the war in Vietnam..... Page 26

A 1983 letter to Phil Thompson... from an American about Vung Tau 1966..... Page 34

Does the final volume of the Official History miss the point?..... Page 38

How did the enemy logistic system work while the US Air Force ruled the skies? Ernie Chamberlain's research..... Page 54



Mr. Phil Thompson :



Commemorating the last major battles

2021 brings us the 50th Anniversary of the last two major battles involving Australian troops in Vietnam.

These were the Battle of Long Kahn (June 1971) and the Battle of Nui Le (September 1971).

In our three journal publications this year we shall be commemorating these battles.

In this, our April edition, we have Gary McKay MC's story of his platoon's fierce encounter during the Battle of Nui Le.

In our August edition we shall publish an article giving the full picture of the Battle of Nui Le by the then Battalion Signals Officer Greg Shannon OAM.

In our December edition we shall publish some personal pieces of those involved in the Battle of Long Kahn. ■



South Vietnam's President Nguyen Van Thieu presents a gift to the Commanding Officer of the 4th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment/New Zealand (ANZAC), Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hughes, aboard HMAS Sydney prior to the unit's departure from Vietnam for Australia. December 16, 1971

Australian Army Public Relations Picture

What else is making news

NSW PRESIDENT REPORT	21
NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME	22
(NSW)VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2021	23
NATL/NSW SECRETARY REPORT	36
FREE HEART HEALTH PROGRAM	53
NSW AGM 2021 NOTICE	58
NSW OFFICE BEARERS NOMS	59
PSK FINANCES ARTICLE	60
VIETNAM REQUIEM CANBERRA	62
3 RAR Reunion 2021	64
NATIONAL SERVICE 2021 Reunion	66
4 RAR/NZ Reunion 2021	67
2021 SCHOLARSHIPS UPDATE	68
VALE—MICHAEL JEFFERY AC AO	79

Regular features

VETERANS STORIES INTRO	1
AFFILIATES LIST	2
ADVERTISEMENT RATES	3
ABOUT OUR SERVICES	3
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	31
'THE MINEFIELD' EXTRACTS	37
FROM THE EDITORS DESK	52
CROSSWORD & UNKNOWN COMIC	63
MEMBERSHIP REQUEST FORM	65
REUNIONS/LOOKING FOR	70
BRANCHES LISTING	72
CHANGE of ADDRESS FORM	74
MORTALITY REPORT FORM	75
MERCHANDISE LIST	76
LAST POST	81
MEMBER DISCOUNTS	84

Sparkling review of *The Long Shadow* by well-known Australian military historian Michael McKernan.

The Canberra Times TO SERVE THE NATIONAL CITY

JANUARY 30 2021 - 12:00AM

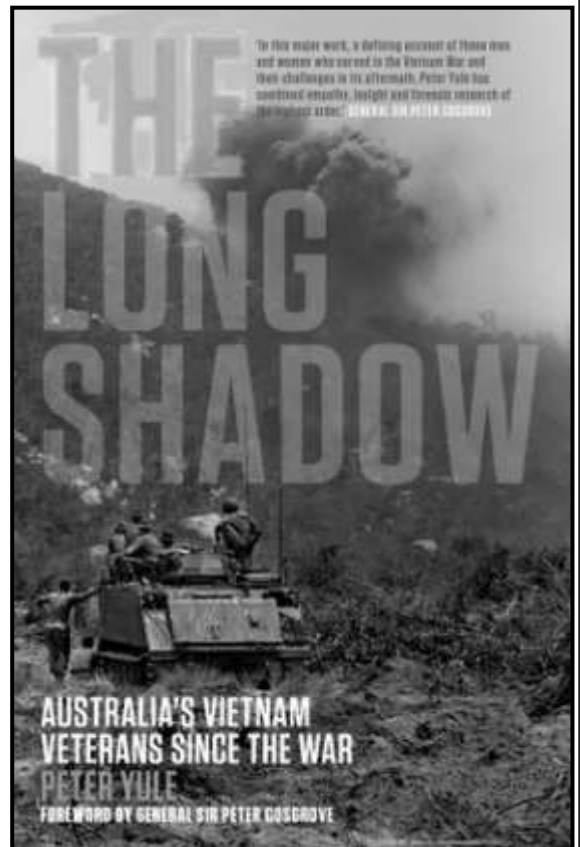
The Long Shadow, Peter Yule's account of Australia's Vietnam veterans in the years since the war, is important and impressive

- **Michael McKernan**

The Long Shadow: Australia's Vietnam Veterans Since The War, by Peter Yule.
Australian War Memorial and NewSouth.

This book is as important as it is impressive. It is a long book, 568 pages of text. In his foreword, General Sir Peter Cosgrove says he read it in a sitting. Wow! The General obviously has more stamina than most. But if he means it is hard, almost impossible, to put down, then most readers would agree.

It is remarkable - even astonishing - that the book is published by the Australian War Memorial, usually a cautious and careful publisher. You won't die wondering what Peter Yule thinks. He lines up his targets and disposes of them carefully and with forensic intensity.





A scene from the Welcome Home Parade in 1987 at the Domain.

Picture: Australian War Memorial

The targets are numerous and include: American and Australian strategy in Vietnam, Australian prime ministers and politicians who sent our soldiers to war and kept them there, the Department of Veterans' Affairs, deceitful and cowardly, most of its ministers and secretaries, the Evatt Royal Commission into Agent Orange, the official historian of Agent Orange, Professor F.B. ('Barry') Smith and, by implication, the supervising official historian who commissioned and published Smith, Dr Peter Edwards.

The Long Shadow is firmly on the side of Vietnam veterans and their families, and it abounds with their voices. The veterans were sometimes wrong. There was no riot at Sydney airport between returning veterans and anti-war protestors. No Australian ever threw red paint over marching Australian returning veterans. There was no booing and little protest at the

marches in capital cities to celebrate the return of units.

But mostly the veterans were right. It was the wrong war and it couldn't be won. They were grievously damaged by the war they fought. They were hounded and hurt by the way Australians viewed their war and by their perceived place in Australian society. They were good, perhaps great, soldiers, well-trained, cohesive, resilient, efficient, hard-working and reliant on one another.

But it is a sad book. There is misery, suffering, outrage and injury on almost every page. Yet there are moments of great happiness and joy - the Welcome Home parade in Sydney in 1987, the eventual understanding and broadly-based support of the Australian community, and the support and comfort that veterans fostered among themselves.

This is, fundamentally, a medical history and that is why it is so important. It examines physical

and psychological injury at war, it accounts for the emerging term and condition, post-traumatic stress disorder, and it shows how careful medical attention and counselling can - eventually - heal.

The book came about in response to veterans' outrage at the publication of a volume of the official history, *Medicine at War*, and Barry Smith's essay on Agent Orange in that book. Yule concludes - trenchantly - that Smith "did not so much write a history as present a case, making personal attacks, distorting evidence, and gloating over the discomfiture of veterans". "[The veterans]," writes Yule, "deserved better of an official history." They have it in *The Long Shadow*.

One of the strengths of the book is to show the interconnections between the American experience of Vietnam and the Australian experience. Yule makes the excellent point that the cohesion and comradeship of Australian units was fostered by the fact that most soldiers arrived in Vietnam as part of a unit or battalion. They had trained together to peak efficiency in Australia, they had travelled together, and they fought together. In contrast the Americans arrived in Vietnam individually and were assigned to a unit after their arrival.

But the aftermath of the war in both countries was very similar with a close liaison on so many matters affecting the veterans' welfare, health and wide-ranging medical research. It was American research and integrity that helped overturn the effects of the Evatt Royal Commission in Australia.

Readers will be amazed and warmed by the lengthy account of the persistence of key Australian veterans and organisations in confronting governments, seeking to improve the health and welfare of their mates. Men like Phill Thompson, Tim McCombe and Graham Walker deserve recognition and honour for their unpaid, voluntary and skilled campaigning on behalf of their mates.

Yule makes no distinction between the service in Vietnam of national servicemen and

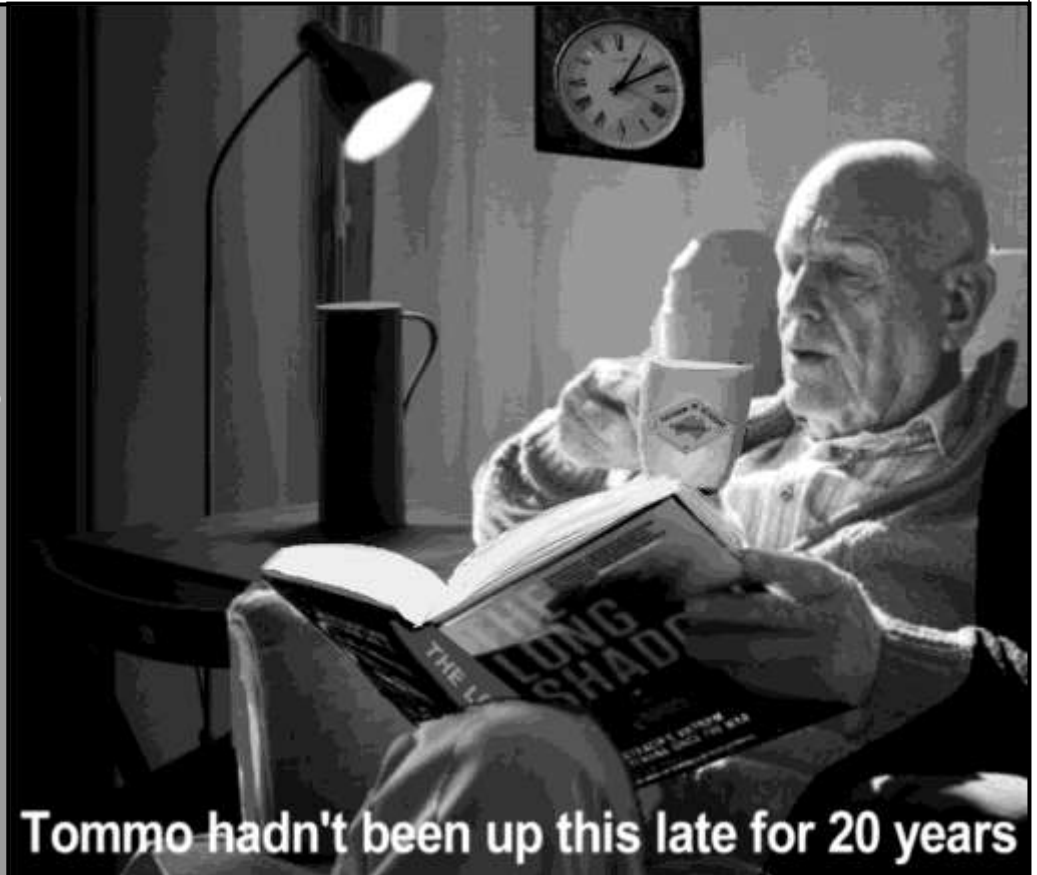
regular soldiers. But he makes the essential point that there was a great deal of difference in their rehabilitation in Australia. A national serviceman, fighting in the jungle one day, might be back at work in bank or office a couple of days later. Mates on whom they had relied for life itself were lost to them. Read this wonderful book. It will open your eyes to a tragedy in the Australian story. ■



Dr Michael McKernan is an author, editor, and historian. He has worked as an academic, public servant, and consultant. His experience includes being a former broadcaster for the Australian Broadcasting Company and a deputy director of the Australian War Memorial. Amongst the many books he has authored is *When This Thing Happened*, an account of one veteran's tragedy in Vietnam.

'Couldn't put it down!'

NATIONAL PRESIDENT'S SPECIAL REPORT



'Couldn't put it down' is what we are hearing from more and more readers of *The Long Shadow*.

The other common comment is, 'I found in the book a story similar to my own.'

Much of the reason for these comments is the very many interviews of Vietnam veterans Dr Peter Yule and his team conducted, excerpts of which he uses to illustrate his arguments.

And they were interviews with veterans of all services and most army corps.

The other reason is that there is so much fascinating information Dr Yule has dug up from the records and heard from the world's leading experts.

It tells us about the trauma of war and the effect it's had on us and our families.

It tells us too about the possible effects of the chemical deluge we were subjected to.

About Agent Orange itself he reinforces our own understanding on the evidence for

exposure and possible harm. His conclusion, like ours, is that there was and remains uncertainty.

From the beginning we have pointed to this uncertainty, reminding a recalcitrant DVA that Repatriation law demands war veterans be given the 'benefit of the doubt'. In other words, the benefit of uncertainty.

It was DVA's refusal to abide by this requirement of Repatriation law that forced the veterans to demand a Royal Commission.

This is a book about us.

It is a book about what has happened to us and our families since our return from the war.

It tells our story decade by decade right up to the present.

It is a book that helps us understand ourselves.

I enthusiastically recommend *The Long Shadow*. ■

How credible is the Official History of the Vietnam War?

Volume 3 of the Official history of the Vietnam War included an account of the Agent Orange controversy.

The account, published in 1994 and authored by academic FB Smith, claimed the veterans campaigning for a Royal Commission had no case and that they were motivated by greed.

None of these accusations was true.

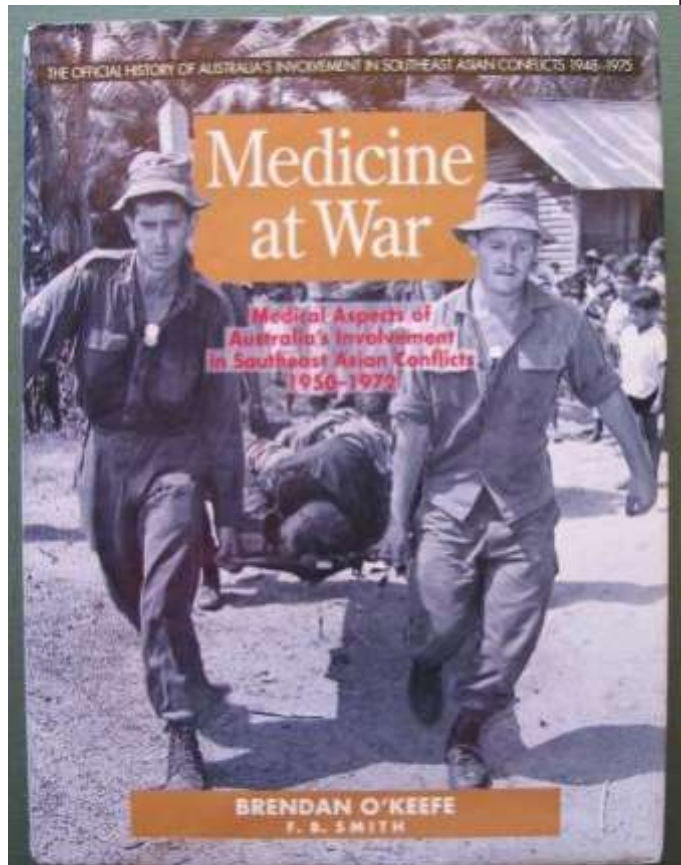
In fact, the veterans' had a good case. The Orange Royal Commission found, under Repatriation law, that two types of cancer, one with over 50 varieties, could be linked with exposure to Agent Orange.

More than this, the Royal Commission reprimanded DVA for failing to give Vietnam veterans the 'benefit of the doubt' as proscribed in Repatriation law.

FB Smith made his accusations of greed without interviewing any of the campaign leadership. If he had he might have discovered that the motivation of the campaign leadership, far from being 'greed', was standing up for their brothers-in-arms in the best ANZAC tradition.

Unsurprisingly, veterans who had campaigned for the Royal Commission took exception to FB Smith's accusations. They mounted a campaign that lasted 20 years for the Australian War Memorial to commission a new and accurate account.

But Professor Peter Edwards who had been the historian in charge of the writing of the nine volumes of the Official History of the Vietnam War wrote strongly in defence of FB Smith's



The section on the Agent Orange controversy by FB Smith is both fatally flawed and unjustly insulting

account. Ashley Ekins, an Australian War Memorial historian, who wrote some volumes of the Official History also supported and defended FB Smith's account.

Despite this, in 2015 the veterans succeeded in their campaign for a new Official account and the Australian War Memorial Council commissioned historian Dr Peter Yule.

After five years of intense research and



"This section about Agent Orange in volume 3 is hopelessly and despicably flawed. Are the other volumes equally unreliable?"

writing, the new history, *The Long Shadow*, was recently published.

In agreement with the veterans' view, Dr Yule found the Official account of the Agent Orange controversy to be shockingly bad history.

Dr Yule began by pointing out that FB Smith had simply ignored much relevant evidence come to light between the 1985 Royal Commission report and his research in the early 1990s.

Here are Dr Yule's views on some other issues:

*"It is almost unbelievable that an official historian could denigrate a veteran with no supporting evidence, and attempt to disguise the lack of evidence by giving misleading references."

*"The two veterans he interviewed were employed by the government, and neither interview is cited in the text. Beyond them, he spoke to no veterans, although this did not prevent him making defamatory

assumptions about their motives for pursuing the Agent Orange issue."

*"Smith was emphatic in his judgement of scientists who researched Agent Orange-related issues. Those whose evidence supported the official narrative of Agent Orange were uniformly 'eminent', 'leading' and 'authoritative', while those who questioned it were relentlessly disparaged."

These quotes are just skimming the surface of Dr Yule's scathing criticism. Chapter 18 of *The Long Shadow*, details flaws that will make your jaw drop.

So what of the credibility of the other 8 volumes of the Official History of the Vietnam War authorised and/or authored by the defenders of FB Smith's account, Professor Edwards and Ashley Ekins ?

Clearly we should be suspicious.

It is frightening to think that the other volumes may be as flawed as the Official History's account of the Agent Orange controversy. ■

The contentious issue of hearing aids

Are you entitled to more than the basic pensioners' hearing aids if they are inadequate?

Here's what's available

MANY veterans find the basic model HSP (Australian Government Hearing Services Program) hearing aids that DVA provides to be inadequate. Some even slam them as useless.

After much protest from the veteran community, new DVA guidelines give hope for veteran gold and white card holders.

The new guidelines make clear that you are entitled to Assistive Listening Devices (ALDs) if you need them. ADLs are devices separate from the hearing aids that will improve your hearing.

'Assistive listening devices (ALDs) work in combination with hearing aids and are designed to help you hear better in specific situations, such as using the telephone, watching television or in social situations.

ALDs available through DVA include items like:

- induction loops – a cable that picks up and transmits sound to your hearing aid, providing hearing support in a specific area;
- headsets for watching the television;
- microphone / FM listening systems;
- door bells and smoke alarms with lights;
- telephone accessories,
- streamers that transmit sound from a mobile phone, tablet or television to a hearing aid.'

Such devices might help at committee meetings, dinner parties with multiple guests, watching movies on TV screens and so on.

But these devices may not be enough.

Many veterans complain that even using ADLs, their hearing is plagued by background noise. Many have miserable experiences at noisy committee meetings, AGMs, associated lunches

(Continued on page 13)



What do you mean you can't hear me? You only got your new hearing aids from DVA yesterday

and dinners, restaurant dining and socialising in crowded rooms etc because background noise interferes with what they want to hear.

It may be there is a hearing aid that is a better quality than the HSP pensioners' model that can reduce this background interference. Certainly some providers point to the higher quality models as much better for social events and crowds.

This situation may be covered by the new guidelines as follows:

'Exceptional circumstances – hearing aids

'If your hearing provider believes your hearing needs are exceptional and cannot be met by the base level HSP hearing aids and/

or assistive listening devices then ask your hearing provider to submit a request to DVA. DVA will review your request and if required, work with your hearing provider to make sure all available options available to you are explored. Check with your hearing provider to ensure DVA has approved the request before they provide you the device/s.

But it is up to you to provide your audiologist with your reasons for needing ADSs and a better quality hearing aid. Without valid reasons there is no entitlement.

Good luck. ■

What does *The Long Shadow* tell us about the current state of the physical health of Vietnam veterans?

But first, what is the *Healthy Soldier Effect*

The army (and navy and airforce) had rigorous selection processes. National Service provided an abundant supply of candidates, so only the most physically and mentally healthy were recruited.

This meant that, as a group, Vietnam veterans were much healthier than the general community.

This is the basis of the *Healthy Soldier Effect*.

It means that there is not much point in comparing the health of a group of veterans with the general population.

This is why, in a 2005 government study, the health of National Servicemen who fought in Vietnam was compared with the health of National Servicemen who stayed in Australia; both groups being the result of the same selection process.

The study showed that veterans who served in Vietnam experienced a higher than expected mortality and cancer incidence compared to their colleagues who did not serve in Vietnam. Specific causes of death that contributed to the higher than expected mortality include death from diseases of the digestive system (primarily liver diseases), lung and pancreatic cancer and death from external causes such as suicide and motor vehicle accidents. The incidence of lung, pancreatic and head and neck cancers was also higher than expected.

In other words, fighting the war was disastrous to the health of the group who went to Vietnam.

But here's where the *Healthy Soldier Effect* shows up.

Even after that deterioration of the health of those who fought in Vietnam, National Servicemen, as a group, still had lower mortality and cancer incidence rates than the general population.

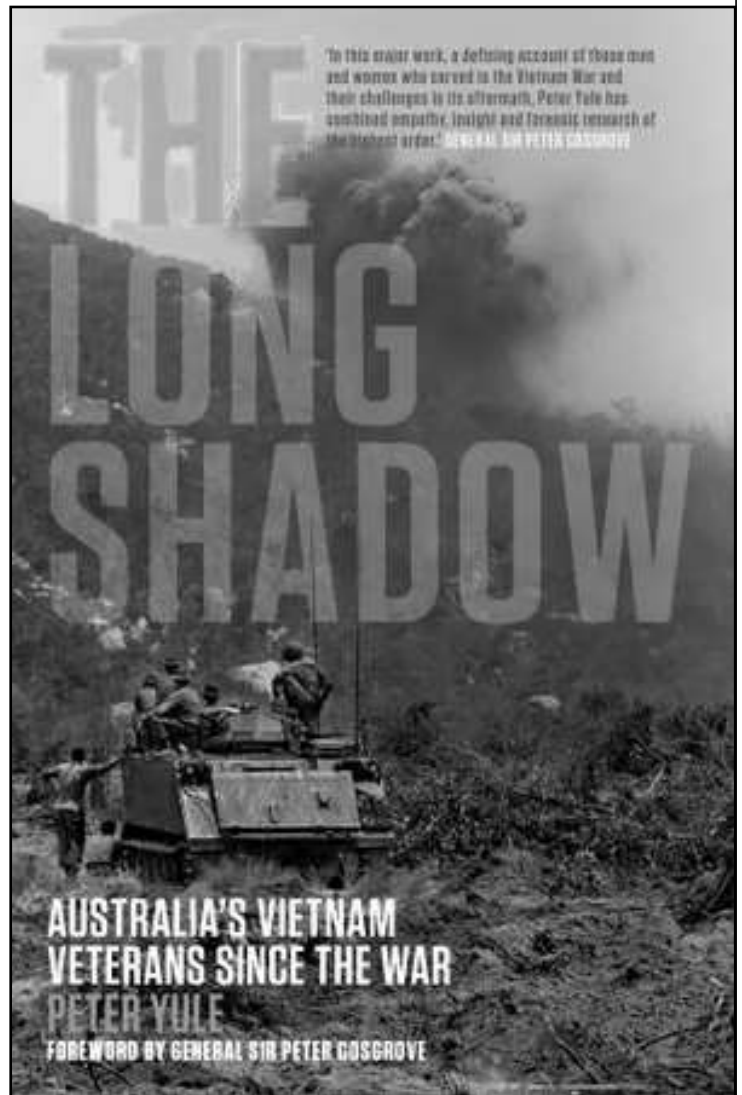
So that's the *Healthy Soldier Effect*.

In Dr Yule's *The Long Shadow*, there is a chapter titled *The Physical Health of Vietnam Veterans Since 2000*. In it he examines in detail veterans' state of physical health.

At the end of the detailed chapter Dr Yule sums up as follows

Epidemiological studies of the physical health of Vietnam veterans show conclusively that service in Vietnam increased the likelihood of poor health in later life. With the passing years the healthy soldier effect has faded, and the health of veterans relative to the rest of the community has steadily worsened. Mortality rates for Vietnam veterans, which were significantly lower than the general community has steadily worsened. Mortality rates for Vietnam veterans, which were significantly lower than the general community in the 1970s and 1980s, are now as high or higher. The incidence of many serious diseases has been increasing more rapidly for Vietnam veterans than for the general community.

The focus for research on Vietnam veterans' health has been on life-threatening conditions—cancer, cardiovascular diseases, liver diseases, diabetes and neurodegenerative disease. There has been comparatively little research on the common ailments that can make life miserable without being life threatening ... Yet these conditions are much more common among Vietnam veterans than in the general community and they are conditions that in many cases are clearly the result of war service... Among these conditions were high blood sugar levels, high cholesterol, migraines, cataracts, hearing loss, tinnitus, angina, haemorrhoids, emphysema, chronic sinusitis, irritable bowel syndrome, dermatitis, eczema, back pain, urinary incontinence and gout. For many veterans, the daily pain and discomfort of these conditions is a continual reminder of the sacrifice they made through their service in Vietnam. ■



After 20 years of campaigning, the Australian War Memorial commissioned this book.

It is a complete account of Vietnam veterans' homecoming, right up to the present.

The author, Dr Peter Yule, 'gets it'.

Here's a link to the video of the AWM launch of the book.

Just Google: Utube The Long Shadow book launch AWM

The book in paper and e-book editions can be purchased on-line from the AWM and other book stores.

The book is highly recommended.

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

We bring you a personal account by renowned professional author Gary McKay MC of 11 Platoon's furious encounter

Editor's note: In our next edition, in commemoration of its 50th Anniversary, we shall bring you the whole story of the Battle of Nui Le of which Gary McKay's 11 Platoon fight was a part.

We were patrolling on our very last operation through the jungle in northern Phuoc Tuy Province. My battalion, 4RAR would be withdrawn out of the task force base at Nui Dat and down to the logistic base at Vung Tau in preparation for return to Australia. For those of us in Delta Company 4 RAR/Anzac Battalion however, we would be soldiering on as rear party/stevedores until around March 1972. But, as far as search and destroy operations were concerned this would be our last real hump through the scrub looking for bad guys.

My platoon had clashed rather fiercely with a platoon-sized group of North Vietnamese Army (NVA) soldiers on 20 September. They were dressed in greens with chest webbing, carried small green packs and wore green pith helmets. The end result of a half hour long fire fight was that we had

Gary McKay
MC standing
outside my
tent in Nui
Dat about July
or August
1971.



NVA green pith
helmet

killed at least two that we later searched and then buried. The next day we would be sent further north towards a hill complex comprising two features: Nui Sao and Nui Le. We had been previously advised by coded radio message that there was a possible large concentration of enemy somewhere close to these hills. It turned out to be an understatement.

Nui Le hill today. In 1971 we couldn't see the hill owing to dense jungle



By the early morning of 21 September all three platoons were moving in an easterly direction towards Nui Sao/Nui Le with 11 Platoon furthest east and on the same latitude as 12 Platoon (commanded by 2LT Graham Spinkston) about a kilometre to the west. Ten Platoon (commanded by 2LT Kevin Byrne) was to our south travelling with company headquarters (commanded by Major Jerry Taylor) about a kilometre south.

Spinkston hit the enemy first and after savage fighting had lost one Digger killed and several wounded. I had been told to stay where I was until Spingo sorted out his contact. We set up our machine guns covering a track we had been checking and around 9.30 am we were surprised when a large group of enemy numbering about 50 burst out of the bush to our immediate front and started assaulting our position. We beat them off but not before we had used up a fair amount of our ammunition. We had put a marker balloon up to indicate our position to the American and Australian fighter bomber and chopper crews. It seemed that there was some confusion as to where that balloon was in regard to the enemy, so I moved my platoon to the west and placed ourselves about 100 metres from where our last fire fight had been with the NVA. The platoon was now very low on ammo and my sergeant

Daryl Jenkin set about redistributing what little we had, and began calling for an Opdem (urgent resupply) of a complete first line of small arms ammunition.

Before long the enemy again attacked our position but they came at us on an oblique angle and so we had them almost enfilade. They were rushing forward on a 40-metre front in a skirmish formation. I had deployed our Claymore mines in two banks of six to help stave off any likely attack. The platoon held their fire until I initiated the Claymore banks about 20 metres in front of the enemy. The blast of these powerful weapons tore their assault to shreds. It was devastating, and the NVA withdrew very quickly after half of their assault line went down.

Our commanding officer, Lieutenant Colonel Jim Hughes, (later Major General), was

(Continued on page 18)

Kiowa
heli-
copter



airborne and 15 minutes later he free-dropped our resupply of pre-packed magazines and grenades through the 20 metre-high canopy from his light observation Kiowa helicopter. The ammo was quickly distributed and we waited to see what would happen next. We could hear over the radio and in the background the sounds of 12 Platoon's contact that seemed to be going on forever. Things were really warming up.

It got a lot busier now as an American forward air controller came on our internal radio net and commenced marking the area to our front with white phosphorous rockets, and then we witnessed an awesome display of firepower as F-4 Phantoms and Cobra helicopter gunships started rocketing and bombing the area to our front. I adjusted the fire support as close as I could as I didn't want the enemy to start 'hugging' our position. The enemy did come at us again but we managed to dissuade their attempts at taking our position with judicious shooting by the machine gunners and well-aimed shots by the riflemen. The NVA were not withdrawing and our forward air controller, whose callsign was Jade 07, cranked up US Army Huey gunships and they brought their fire into about 40 metres and strafed and rocketed the area to our front with mini-guns and 2.75 inch Zuni rockets. They denuded the jungle to our front and we could now see out to about 75 metres.

The enemy were still engaging us but now slightly further out, and after I told Jade 07 this, he said he would call up some 'wall to wall heat'. Before long several F-4s returned and dropped napalm bombs to our front. The impact of this was spectacular to say the least. We felt the blast and shock wave and then the heat as the canisters exploded about 150 metres in front of us. I looked around and everyone was wide-eyed and grinning; the sort of grin one sees when not sure if you should be happy or scared.

It was now around 1.30 pm and Major Taylor decided to regroup the company into a single position and see what the CO wanted to do next. While we were moving we heard radio traffic



F-4 Phantom attacking a target in Vietnam

from the pilots describing large bodies of enemy troops withdrawing north towards Nui Le. We also heard that American 'Pink teams' were being engaged from the top of the Nui Le feature with 12.7 mm anti-aircraft fire and they had been taking hits.

By 2.30 pm the company was regrouped to the east of where my platoon had had its contacts and we were now south of what was believed to be a large enemy bunker position. Pilots who were flying the Super Sky-Master A-37s reported that they were engaging columns of enemy withdrawing to our north. The bunker position was still being engaged with artillery fire when the aircraft were not on station. Jerry Taylor told the platoon commanders we were in front of a battalion position, but it looked like it was being abandoned. I think we all quietly sighed deep inside. Soon, it seemed we would have nothing to do but sweep through burying corpses.

By 3.30 pm I was called into another orders group and told we were going to assault the bunker position in a classic two-up company assault. My platoon would be the right forward platoon. As I returned to give my orders my legs felt like jelly. We knew precious little about the position we were about to assault. We had no tanks and only our artillery to help overcome any dug-in enemy. I had quick orders and said we were

(Continued on page 19)

going in, and I could read the look of dread on my section commanders' faces. We all knew that every time we attacked bunkers we took casualties, and this would be no different. I was trying like hell to remain cool and calm but I had wedge-tailed eagles in my stomach.

Just before we crossed the start line at 3.45 pm someone dropped a sandbag of M-26 hand grenades next to me saying that everyone was loaded up and these were left over. I stuffed half a dozen grenades down the front of my shirt as we commenced our assault. We moved very slowly in a half-crouch for about five minutes and then came across the first line of bunkers. I gave the field signal for everyone to now crawl on their guts. We continued like this for another 30 metres when the platoon came under withering small arms and machine gun. The ferocity and intensity of the engagement was stunning. I had never heard noise like it before.

The enemy were firing RPGs into the trees above our heads and it wasn't long before we realised we were in a fire lane. I had trouble seeing what was going on and took the chance on standing up and could see that my men were having trouble moving to fire positions, but much worse my two assault machine gun teams were out of action. I raced forward to where Private Ralph Niblett lay wounded and could see a huge hole in his chest. In this movement I had my hat shot off my head but arrived safely next to the gun. Ralph's number two on the gun was a recent reinforcement and he had been head shot and was dead. I ripped one of his dog tags off and stuck it in my breast pocket and clamped the other tag into his teeth. My stretcher bearer came forward and started treating Ralph. I started stripping ammo



The life of a grunt. Six weeks without a wash, always wet from sweat, smelly and never more than 4 hours sleep a night.
L-R: Privates Gus Evans, Ralph Niblett and Trev Walpole three weeks before Ralph was killed.

off Ralph and his dead number two.

At this time it became evident that without our machine guns working the enemy were about to counter-attack. I started getting the machine gun back into action. Over to my right I could see that Private Kevin Casson was trying to get the second machine gun back into operation. Both machine gunners were shot through the head. Under extremely heavy fire Casson went forward recovered the M-60 and started to engage the enemy.

The NVA were starting to move in small groups of two or three and rapidly darting from bunker to bunker as they closed on our now depleted assault line. I now started throwing all of the grenades I had down the front of my shirt with great effect. I also heard at this time that my platoon sergeant had been wounded and was out of action. Things were looking decidedly untidy.

Artillery fire was now walked in to hit the enemy and for the next 15 minutes or so it seemed that the outcome of this fire fight was in the

(Continued on page 20)

balance. I did think fleetingly that I was probably not going to get out of this alive, and was determined to take as many bad guys with me as possible. It seemed an eternity but soon the amount of incoming enemy fire slowed and lightened. My radio operator yelled at me that the company was to pull back to allow the artillery to come in closer.

In failing light Delta Company moved about 400 metres southwest and went into all round defence. Just as we were about to complete our harbour drill, we found we had withdrawn into another smaller bunker position and the enemy were now on three sides of us. A short fire fight ensued that was followed by a long engagement where most of the fire was incoming. It was hard to locate a target in the failing light as it was now close to 6 pm. While trying to consolidate this position the NVA were constantly raking fire into the position, but luckily it was above our heads. I was still trying desperately to link my section of the perimeter up with 12 Platoon. I had to place my soldiers on the ground one by one, and all of this on my guts, as to stand up was inviting death. Green tracer fire zipped everywhere just above head height.

Every time I tried to yell a fire order I was shot at by several enemy. Eventually they tracked me down, and as I was taking cover behind a small tree, several AK-47 rounds ripped into my shoulder shattering the joint, dislocating my arm and one round tore a huge exit hole near my shoulder blade. That was the end of my active fighting for the day.

I spent the rest of the night propped up against a tree in company headquarters with Corporal Mick O'Sullivan, the company medic, pressing shell dressings into my wound to stop me bleeding to death. I was evacuated the next morning around 9 am and winched out on a jungle penetrator.

Post script

Private Kevin Casson was recommended for the Military Medal but the 'ration' system of awards

1 Military
Hospital post
3rd operation
and I was to
spend 6
months in
that plaster
cast from May
to October
1972

Gary McKay
MC



saw his decoration downgraded to MID status. I sought a hearing at the End of War Tribunal and Kevin was eventually awarded the Medal for Gallantry (MG) which he thoroughly deserved. Niblett died on the casevac chopper despite every effort by Mick O'Sullivan (later awarded the Military Medal for his bravery) to save him. Our three dead that I was forced to leave on the battlefield were recovered untouched the next morning when our New Zealand rifle company swept the battlefield site. Major Taylor was awarded the Military Cross for this action and the previous battle in July. MIDs were awarded to 2LT Kevin Byrne and Sergeant Daryl Jenkin.

On looking back at this last major engagement by Australian infantry, I am still amazed that the Centurion tanks were allowed to be withdrawn for movement back to Australia. It seemed the logistic considerations outweighed the operational requirements. The intelligence people knew that large groups of enemy were still in the province yet our heaviest form of combat power was not made available. Having done a bunker attack in July against 274 VC Main Force Regiment and won, I always wonder what might have happened if we had the Centurions with us in this last battle. ■

NEW SOUTH WALES PRESIDENT'S REPORT



National Service

This year we mark 55 years since the first National Serviceman arrived in South Vietnam. Australia has once again honoured those who have served our nation through compulsory military service, recognising their contribution to the nation's defence. Australia has had four periods of compulsory national service, most recently between 1951-1959 and 1964-1972.

The last National Service Scheme was introduced in 1964 due to increasing fears about Australia's security as there were tensions in nearby regions and therefore a need to bolster Australia's defences. More than 804,000 men registered for national service between 1964 and 1972 with more than 60,000 called up to serve. Of these, nearly 19,500 served in Borneo and Vietnam and the remainder in support units in Malaysia and Papua New Guinea. More than 15,000 served in the Vietnam War and some 200 died and over 1200 wounded. Errol Wayne Noack was the first national serviceman killed in Vietnam. Two also died in Borneo in 1966.

Many former national servicemen who served in Vietnam are now leaders of our branches and sub-branches.

Vietnam Veterans Day 2021

We are increasingly confident that Vietnam Veterans Day will proceed as normal as we slowly make our way out of the COVID-19 pandemic. Whilst we must adhere to the expert medical advice on holding such a function the situation at the time of writing is looking positive as the vaccines are being rolled out across the country.

The prime Vietnam Veterans Day commemorations in Sydney will be held at the Bankstown District Sports Club which for many years has assisted the NSW Branch hold successful commemorations and lunches. Current details on this event are detailed on page 23 of this Newsletter.

We hope that you are able to join us on this special day of commemoration and to participate in the lunch and entertainment which will follow. Remember, we may be restricted in numbers so the sooner you send those forms in the more likely you will be of joining us at Bankstown Sports.

8 RAR

The 8th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment Association (NSW Branch) conducted a very moving service at their Long Hai Day Commemorations at Boronia Park, Epping NSW on Sunday 28 February.

During the ceremony a remembrance plaque was dedicated in honour of Sergeant Alan Ahearn who was killed in action on 14 May 1970 and who attended Epping Boys High School. An honour roll was also unveiled commemorating those who lost their lives whilst serving with 8RAR in South Vietnam.

Our long time National research Officer Graham Walker AM was the Guest Speaker at the lunch which followed. Graham gave a summary of the *The Long Shadow*, a book by Doctor Peter Yule which is an enthralling read.

Your Association campaigned for 20 years to have the War Memorial commission this book which covers in detail the health and medical legacies of the Vietnam War. We published a summary of this book in our Newsletter of December 2020, and further comment is made in this Newsletter which you should read.

Scholarships

National President and AVCAT Director, Bill Roberts OAM, gives an overview of our new scholarship recipients beginning on page 68, and advises on the outcomes of the more recent previous recipients.

Frank Cole
NSW President

NATIONAL REDRESS SCHEME

If you joined the military under the age of 18 years and you were sexually abused before you turned 18, you may be eligible for compensation

This is the information on the National Redress Scheme. Of course, Defence or ex-Defence employees, their spouses or dependent's, can also go to the Defence Force Ombudsman at the Commonwealth Ombudsman for complaints specifically about Defence. Easier to contact online but the phone number is 1300 362 072 between 10.30am-3pm.

National Redress Scheme Phone: 1800 737 377

The National Redress Scheme provides support to people who experienced institutional child sexual abuse.

The Scheme:

- acknowledges that many children were sexually abused in Australian institutions
- holds institutions accountable for this abuse, and
- helps people who have experienced institutional child sexual abuse gain access to counselling, a direct personal response, and a Redress payment.

The Scheme started on 1 July 2018 and will run for 10 years.

NB: not every organisation has signed up to the Redress Scheme, so check on their website first: www.nationalredress.gov.au

Our name has changed but we will continue to provide professional, military aware, support to all current and former serving ADF personnel and their family members.



Free and confidential counselling to support your mental health and wellbeing is available 24/7. We also run group programs and suicide prevention training.

JUST CALL 1800 011 046

If overseas call +61 8 8241 4546

FORMERLY KNOWN AS

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service



**Call
24/7**

A service founded by Vietnam veterans



VIETNAM VETERANS DAY 2021

VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION of AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) Inc. in conjunction with BANKSTOWN DISTRICT SPORTS CLUB

Are tentatively preparing to hold our

VIETNAM VETERANS DAY on

WEDNESDAY, 18 AUGUST 2021

COMMEMORATING THE 50TH ANNIVERSARIES OF THE

"THE BATTLE OF LONG KHANH JUNE 1971" &

"THE BATTLE OF NUI LE SEPTEMBER 1971"

IF SO PERMITTED UNDER COVID-19 RULES AND REGULATIONS

If you wish to avail yourself of the TRAVELODGE HOTEL located within the club premises at special rates for those attending the function, we advise to book early. YOU MUST MENTION THE VIETNAM VETERANS FUNCTION TO ACHIEVE ANY SPECIAL RATES (if) ON OFFER, WHEN BOOKING PRIOR TO END OF JULY. Take note of current COVID-19 regulations and by-laws. For bookings call

02 9793 0000 or 1300 886 886.

This is a ticketed event and entry will only be granted to those holding tickets. Pre-booking for tickets is the preferred method to ascertain attendance figures for essential Covid planning and catering by the club. Use the form below to confirm your place as numbers may be restricted. No bulk bookings will be accepted for club or unit or group. Only individuals and partners to use the form below. Tickets will go on sale from or about 15 July, with those utilising the form below given preference on a first come, first served basis. No pricing is available as yet due to special arrangements for catering. Those wishing to book for a group are asked to contact the office directly to confirm numbers and arrange payment.

Contact the Granville office for further information: Ph 02 9682 1788 Fax 02 9682 6134 or

email to secretary@vvpfa-granville.org

Acceptance of attendance only. Send no monies.

Name : _____ Contact number _____

Street: _____ Suburb/Town: _____

Email Address if applicable: (print clearly) _____

Nominate one other person attending with you: _____

Should the event move ahead as planned, you will be emailed or posted a separate ticket pre-purchase offer to the address you supply as above, so be sure it is completed in neat print please.

Complete and return the form to: Secretary
VVPFA NSW
PO Box 170
Granville, NSW 2142

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

Christmas Party Vung Tau 1969

By new author Norm Jones

Before Ronnie Hulm left Vietnam in early 1970, he anointed me as his successor as President/Secretary/Treasurer/Barman of the OR's canteen (popularly called the Boozer) of 110 Signal Squadron.

Now Ronnie was an utter larrikin. He managed to foster a small tinea infection to the degree required not to wear socks or boots. His Vietnam tour was done in thongs. The condition miraculously disappeared a week or two before he went home. This condition also allowed him to go to the base medical unit every time there was a roll call or parade.

Ronnie had the OR Boozer running like clockwork. A local edict was that if the funds held in the OR's canteen account exceeded a certain amount, the excess went to the NCO canteen fund. Needless to say, not one dollar went to the NCOs under Ronnie's watch (nor mine). A can of beer normally sold for 11 cents a can, but if our accumulated funds were getting towards the limit, Ronnie would hold 5 cent nights (bring \$2 – shout the bar) and sometimes free nights. After he left, I followed his formula.

Sometime in early November 1969, one of our cohorts suggested we hold a Christmas party on the appropriate night and this somehow ballooned into a Christmas extravaganza.

The folly of decisions made after many beers on free night!!!

We subsequently booked a Filipino band, bought fancy decorations, sent invitations to every unit in Vung Tau to visit us and even invited our

officers and NCOs.

Now how to fund this party.

The food: Just before the day, we sent our cooks, loaded with several slouch hats and aussie combat boots, down to the nearby Yank airbase. Now the Yanks highly coveted our boots, as they had a steel plate in the sole, which deflected punji sticks (a most hideous booby trap). Our cooks came back laden with steaks, turkeys and a host of other food. Christmas dinner fixed.

The alcohol: two problems faced the organising committee. (a) would we have enough money to pay for everything and (b) more importantly, would we have enough beer etc to satisfy the expected roll up (all to be free). Ah, the resourcefulness of the Australian soldier under difficulty came to the fore.

The supply ship Jeparit was due to arrive in Vung Tau just before Christmas. It almost didn't sail on this trip, as the wharfies refused to load the ship. The ship was commissioned into the Australian navy and loaded by naval seamen. However, my father, who was a heavy in another very militant union, had forsaken his principals, and had arranged a large number of men who were prepared to assist with the loading. Not needed in the end but very proud of my Dad.

When the Jeparit arrived in Vung Tau harbour docks, it was met by a contingent from 110 Sig Sqn, and quite a large quantity of beer cartons ended up stacked to the roof in our Deployment Troop hut. Deployment Troop was

(Continued on page 25)

OR's boozier

Going to Christmas
lunch 1969

out in the field at this time, but returned earlier than expected, which cost the OR's canteen two cartons each to the Officer's and NCO's mess. The beer excess to our needs was sold to front line units at cost plus a very small handling cost, and to logistic units at cost plus a somewhat higher handling fee. Two problems solved.

Our 1969 Christmas party was a huge success. Xmas lunch, which was shared with officers, NCOs and our Vietnamese helpers, was scrumptious. The evening's festivities were great. Being apart from family, loved ones and close friends at Christmas is unwelcome. I, like many young National Servicemen, also had my 21st birthday in Vietnam. Our Christmas party, in the middle of a war, stoked those feelings of mateship

and camaraderie. We were visited by many other units who shared our hospitality. Many stayed to sing and carouse until late in the night.

The clean up next morning was monumental. And then it was back to the routine of army life – working at your assigned post, guard duty, patrols, inspections and other work details. War is a serious business but our Christmas party in 1969 was, for many, an opportunity to throw off the shackles of fear and anxiety, and just be a young bloke going out with his mates.

Norm Jones
110 Signal Squadron

Vietnam 1969/1970 ■

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

The Adventures of Tank 169041

Part 2

Our Tank Goes to War

From the book, A CENTURION'S LONG JOURNEY
by Graham Munsell and Barry Hodges

On operation in South Vietnam



169041 was commanded for the majority of her service in South Vietnam by 217980 CPL Graham Munsell. CPL Munsell and his crew, as part of 4 Troop, B Squadron fought in Phuoc Tuy

Province and other out of province locations in 1969. This is his account and reflections from that period of time.

INITIAL MEETING

In early April 1969 I was choppered out from Nui Dat to Fire Support Base (FSPB) Mardi and on landing, the departing crew commander threw his gear aboard, shook my hand and left. Standing a short distance away was a tank with the call sign 24C and the name Sweet Fanny painted on the barrel of the main gun. This was the first occasion that I laid eyes on her and she looked impressive. I introduced myself to the crew and just stood back to admire my new beast.

FIRST ENGAGEMENT

During the nights the enemy circled the FSPB, periodically ringing a cow bell till an hour before dawn. During daylight hours the troop would push through the heavy growth looking for bunkers and occasionally spotting caves in the

(Continued on page 27)



nearby hills. Quite a few caves were engaged with High Explosive (HE) rounds, and I was able to gauge that Fanny's main armament was well zeroed in and very accurate. Towards the end of the month the bell ringing ceased and signs of the enemy were rarely sighted, so FSPB Mardi was vacated and we returned to Nui Dat for resupply.

FSPB BRUISER

On the 23rd of April, our troop left Nui Dat to take up a position in FSPB Bruiser, which turned out to be the best base in South Vietnam because Bruiser was situated on a dry sandy lake bed with only light scrub growing on it. Bogging was not a problem and the more we drove on the sand it became so refined that it was as soft as a mattress, which made sleeping very comfy when not on picket duty. During the days our job was to

participate in search and destroy missions; on several occasions we were engaged by RPGs, which we thought were aimed too high. Later Intelligence discovered that it was enemy tactics to aim high into trees so the explosion would disable crews of armoured vehicles. The month passed with no casualties.

EXTRACTION OF BOGGED VEHICLES

Our next mission was protection of D8 dozers doing land clearing exercises.

During bulldozing of creeks and wet areas some became bogged and the tanks were used as recovery vehicles utilising the steel tow rope that was carried on each tank. On one occasion the recovery tank also became bogged and Sweet Fanny, being on higher dry ground, was able to extricate both bogged vehicles in the one pull.

PENENTRATION OF RPG 7

On 7th May, our troop leader LT Chris Sweeney was called into task force HQ for the latest intelligence reports, but the troop was also required to recce an area around the Long Hai hills due to increased enemy movement. As only three tanks could respond, SGT Robert Browning of 24A took over as troop leader and we set out with Sweet Fanny leading the push.

Around midday we stopped to examine many foot prints on the dirt road-way, which were leading into the jungle. After an "O" group SGT Browning decided we needed infantry for flank protection because of the limited ability to traverse the main barrel in dense vegetation. SGT Browning relieved Sweet Fanny of the lead and ordered 24B (CPL Joe Dziedzic) to speed back to the FSPB for infantry support. As she came around Sweet Fanny and began accelerating 24B triggered a mine, considered 12 - 20kg, which blew the front road wheels off,

(Continued on page 28)





cracked the idler wheel, broke the track and damaged the suspension station. Sweet Fanny had been spared this damage.

After half tracking 24B, we noticed a bridge over a creek two hundred meters ahead. Thinking the approach or indeed the bridge itself being mined, SGT Browning instructed me to try and find the easiest crossing for the half tracked 24B. As I followed the creek bank an RPG 7 was fired at us from an ambush position in a clump of bamboo on the opposite bank. The war head hit the hull between the track and the running board and the molten jet penetrated the compartment and travelled between the two ready round bins (one holding two HE and the other two canister rounds). A few inches either side and the ammunition would have been ignited... again Sweet Fanny's luck held. However, the fragments of flame and molten metal travelled across the hull severely lacerating the operator TPR Robert (Woofa) Carter's lower legs and feet. The gunner, TPR Stuart Clements, also received small shrapnel wounds to his buttocks and right shin. All power stopped to the turret due to the severing and shorting out of the electrical harness. Because of the power failure we had no comms, and no power traverse for the turret or for the firing pin of the main gun.

During this commotion 24A and 24B tried to react to my position and in

doing so 24B threw the remaining half track and became immobile. I immediately trained the commander's .30 calibre machine gun on the spot where the RPG 7 was fired from and I was able to get the driver, TPR David (Rommel) Smith to jump in and manually operate the .50 calibre machine gun, because TPR Carter was slumped on the floor. Shortly after, all enemy activity ceased.

TPR Carter was extricated from the turret and placed on the engine decks until he was dusted off to 1 Australian Field Hospital, and days later repatriated to Australia. Waiting for dust off Woofa asked me to take a photo of him in his wounded state, but because of heavy censorship at the time, the only photo in the whole roll blacked out was of Woofa's injuries!

Shortly after the enemy engagement, TPR Clements (gunner) repaired wires and changed fuses and sometime later had electrics operating normally in the turret. 24A then had to tow and drag 24B back to the FSPB; during this arduous trip the exhaust mufflers on 24A were glowing bright red. Upon arrival at the FSPB the motor in 24A seized, which left Sweet Fanny the only tank in mobile fighting condition. Work commenced on 24A and 24B by RAEME in the FSPB. For the remainder of May 4 Troop took up the roll of dozer protection and on occasions did sweeps and ambushes with elements of 6RAR.



FSPB VIRGINIA

After being resupplied at the start of June, 4 Troop moved into position at FSPB Virginia and as this was the start of the wet season Virginia became a bog hole. The conditions were made worse by the



arrival of a Sqn of American 155mm self-propelled guns, regular movement of Australian and American re-supply vehicles, plus Centurion tanks and APC's patrolling daily, to the point where conditions were almost unbearable. The battle for Binh Ba was initiated by N.V.A main force firing RPG 7s at Centurion 20E, which was struck and penetrated. Instead of retreating, the enemy dug in and waited for the battle to begin. This battle has been well documented and Sweet Fanny played her part.

SWEET FANNYS LUCK HOLDS AGAIN

Sweet Fanny did have one unusual trait, being that she steered slowly to the right so regularly that the driver had to flick the left stick to correct it. On one occasion 4 Troop was reacted from FSPB Virginia and onto route 15, with Sweet Fanny leading and 24A immediately behind. 24A detonated a mine of approximately 15 - 20kg which resulted in the front road wheels being blown off, damaging the front suspension and cutting the tracks. The troop came to an instant halt, and on investigation showed that Sweet Fanny had slewed around the pressure plate because of her unusual tracking fault. 24A, driving

straight ahead, found the triggering device. An ARV was called to tow the severely damaged tank to 106 Field Workshop.

LONG PHOU C HAI

To flush enemy out of the heavily vegetated areas, 12 gallon drums of CS crystals were dropped out of Hercules (C-130) aircraft and were supposed to break open on impact and release the tear gas, however some were cushioned by the jungle and remained intact. On 20th July, Sweet Fanny ran over one of these rusted drums, which were unseen because of the covering undergrowth. The ruptured drum exposed the troop to the gas, resulting in burning eyes and coughing fits, and a mad scramble to get to the gas masks stored in the rear of the turret. The CS crystals stayed in the tracks for days, so the troop had an uncomfortable time during this operation.

This area had also been previously carpet bombed by the Americans, and I called to the driver, TPR Barry Hodges, to halt after noticing an Unexploded Bomb (UXB) of 240kg just beside the tank with the nose cone exposed. An engineer mini-team used plastic explosive (C4) to dispose of the bomb.

Green Ants nests hung from dense vegetation, and would often dislodge and fall into the turret or drivers compartment, and en-mass would bite anything that moved. This was one more discomfort for the crew.

BOOBY TRAPS AND M16 JUMPING MINES

Dozers doing land clearing often encountered M16 jumping mines that had been lifted by the VC from the ineffective Australian Barrier minefield (a minefield that was laid by 1st Australian Task Force in 1967), and were then placed in positions to kill and injure our troops. During a recce of a track, Sweet Fanny came in contact with one such mine, and the resultant force of the blast cracked a

(Continued on page 30)

track link so badly that the 9kg link had to be replaced. No wonder the mines can maim the human body.

At another time when travelling at speed, Sweet Fanny flicked up a M16 jumping jack which exploded in mid-air. Luckily, I had the cupola hatch positioned at 90 degrees to the blast, which stopped the shrapnel from peppering my back.

Another occasion when still supporting land clearing operations, we stopped behind a working dozer to make a brew when the dozer was ambushed by enemy firing a RPG. The dozer driver was wounded, jumped clear of his D8 and ran past us yelling with pain. We immediately accelerated to where we thought the enemy had fired the RPG and pushing through the virgin jungle we discovered a cave with a tunnel system behind it. Believing this to be the escape route we fired 2 x HE rounds into the tunnel, hoping the shrapnel and concussion of the blast would cease enemy aggression. Land clearing was very hard on tank crews because it was routine, but vigilance was required all day. The dozers had 2 shifts of drivers to change over, however breaks for the tank crews were not allowed for.

B52 STRIKES

169041 witnessed at least two B52 bomb strikes in her tour.

In late August 1969, 4 Troop was ordered to the Long Hai area to set up a blocking force with infantry before a B52 strike, in order to capture enemy escaping the blast area. After witnessing the spectacle at a distance and observing the damage from the 240kg bombs raining down from 38,000 feet, I doubt if there were any survivors.

When a B52 strike was imminent, we on the ground had to pull back several hundred meters. From the driver's perspective, sitting in the driver's seat of a 52 ton Centurion as the ground shook was like experiencing a devastating earthquake.

In the next edition we find our 'how lucky can you be?'. ■

See the launch
of
*The Long
Shadow*
on
Utube

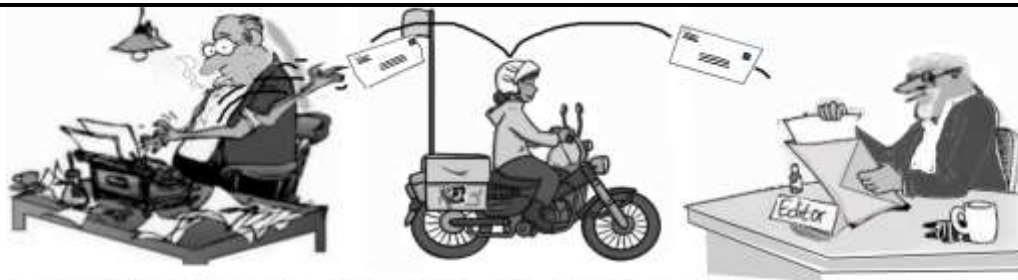
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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR



Office of Senator Jacqui Lambie Senator for Tasmania

17 December 2020

To the Veteran community,

Re: Royal Commission into defence and veteran suicide It's the end of the political year and I want to update you on where things stand with respect to the campaign for a Royal Commission into defence and veteran suicide.

I've noticed there's a bit of confusion floating around about what's happening right now, as well as what comes next.

The Government and Pauline Hanson's One Nation have 38 votes in the Senate, of 76. You need an absolute majority (39 votes, under normal circumstances) to pass legislation; a tied vote counts as a fail.

With only One Nation and the Coalition supporting the legislation for a National Commissioner for Defence and Veteran Suicide Prevention, the legislation cannot pass the Senate.

The Government has indicated it intends to spend the summer Christmas break trying to switch the votes of members of the Senate crossbench, with a view to putting the legislation to a vote only once it has the numbers to pass.

During the last sitting fortnight of 2020, the Government twice joined with Pauline Hanson's One Nation to oppose procedural moves to require the National Commissioner's enabling legislation to be dealt with before Christmas of 2020. The preference of the two was that the legislation not be debated, amended or passed before that time. In both instances, Jacqui Lambie, Senator Rex Patrick, Centre Alliance, the Greens and the Australian Labor Party supported the move to bring the bill on for debate.

The interim National Commissioner, Bernadette Boss CSC, continues her work on a desktop review of known suicides from 2001-2018. It's been confirmed that the legislation is not required for this initial work to proceed.

The fact that this legislation has not gone to a vote means that it remains on the Senate's Notice Paper until it is resolved.

Until it is no longer on the Notice Paper, it is not defeated. With little notice, the Government can bring anything that sits on the Notice Paper up for debate. With little notice, debate can be brought to an abrupt end, and a final vote be taken. The Government will not do that (as it would amount to rushing into a loss), preferring instead to keep open the chance to persuade one Senator presently opposed to the National Commissioner to either change their mind or abstain from the vote. (With a Senator abstaining from the final vote, the total available number of votes is 75, not 76. Considering that passage requires an absolute majority, which in the event of an abstention is 38, the Government would achieve the same outcome from a Senator abstaining as it would from a Senator voting with them.)

In short, the battle continues. The Government does not have the numbers to pass their legislation; we do not have the numbers to have it discarded. Without a change to the numbers in the Senate, the legislation will come to a vote at a moment of the Government's choosing (if ever).

I'm firmly of the view that victory isn't

(Continued on page 32)

simply depriving one's opponent of victory. Until this is won, it's not. But we are winning. That much is clear.

Between now and the new year, my focus will be on campaigning as if nothing has changed: telling the public what the difference is between the Government's National Commissioner and a Royal Commission and where the Government's model falls short.

Defeating the National Commissioner is a critical step in the campaign for a Royal Commission. It remains an important obstacle to overcome. Defeating it requires more than blocking from it coming to a vote. We seek a vote, which we will win. Then, having won, we just keep going.

Yours Sincerely

Senator Jacqui Lambie

Senator for Tasmania

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4/22 Mount St, Burnie TAS 7320

Dear Editor,

Political agitation continues for a Royal Commission into ADF member, and veteran, suicide. I do understand that dependants want to see the government continue to improve its mental health support to veterans. In part, political support for a Royal Commission is a genuine, and understandable, response both to the grief of dependants, and to the concern of many in the veteran community. The argument against a Royal Commission, is that enough has been done, through reviews, submissions, and a Senate committee, and that the government has acted, by its intention to appoint a National Commissioner for the Prevention of Defence and Veteran Suicide. The issue is that it is now over 12 months since the Prime Minister announced the creation of a National Commissioner, with powers modelled on those of a Royal Commissioner. Regrettably, the legislation

remains in negotiation between major political parties, and between cross-benchers. While an 'interim commissioner' has been appointed, we are yet to have a National Commissioner. DVA have certainly implemented suicide prevention programs, and when the National Commissioner's office gets going, we may see measurable progress, but in my opinion, a 12-month delay does indicate a lack of urgency.

Senator Lambie continues to lobby strongly for a Royal Commission. While she is very well-respected for her support of veterans, I think that in supporting a Royal Commission, she may have taken her eye off the ball. Her website makes the claim that one veteran/week is committing suicide. If we take a conservative estimate of a minimum of two years from the setting up of a Royal Commission, to the government accepting, and beginning to implement, the recommendations of the Royal Commission, then the inescapable conclusion, based on the senator's figures, is that 104 veteran lives will be lost during that time. How does that make any sense? Where is the benefit in waiting for yet another review? I would applaud Senator Lambie if she changed her mind.

John Godwin

Canberra

(To) The Editor,

Upon reading Part One of The Atomic Tank, now knowing how the scientist's gave out false fallout readings. Apart from Capt. Monaghan and the recovery crew it would be interesting to see if any other members who subsequently operated the tank suffered any illness related to exposure, as radiation has a long life.

Looking forward to reading Part Two as I served with 3 Cav. Vietnam 69/70 and no doubt would have seen 169041 at some stage.

Health & happiness

Name withheld by request.

(Continued on page 33)

Barry Hodges, co-author of the Atomic Tank story has kindly offered in response to the letter above, and we include it in part below:

In reply to your email 27 Jan 21 ,thank you for sending (THE) letter regarding 169041.

As suggested by the AWM there is a lot more to this story for me to research and am doing so.

To the question as to the fallout of radiation I have received a letter from the crew commander of the M60A1 of the [MTTU] MEDIUM TANK TRIALS UNIT that his gunner Terry Jones who is the son of Sergeant Jones from the crew of 169041 at Maralinga. They both died of cancer as well as Terry's sister.

LEST WE FORGET

I shall keep in touch.

Kind Regards

Angas Barry Hodges

PARATUS

LUCKY WINNERS

NSW 2021

MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL

GIFT VOUCHER DRAW

Congratulations to the following members whose names were randomly selected from all who had renewed their 2021 NSW Branch Memberships by 31st January 2021. Each winner has now received a \$100.00 Bunnings Gift Voucher.

Richard Dunford

Noel Fairley

John Kellner

Special thanks to all our members who have renewed for your ongoing support of the Association in its work to assist our serving and ex service personnel and their families in need.

BEHIND THE" MASK" (OF A VETERAN)

Sometime he is torn

Between the real world and his mind.

The ever-present cloud of fear,

Walking that fine line.

Often at his limit,

The angst of horror pending.

Life is easier in his "cave",

Anxiety never-ending.

Fifty years, that constant fear-

Afraid of crowds and noises.

Still "at war" in daily life,

"Survive the day" - No other choices.

Ross Bridle.

Vietnam Veterans' Stories

From letters diaries and memories

A 1983 letter to Phil Thompson from an American about Vung Tau 1966

Mr. Phil Thompson:

P.O. Box 218218 Houston, Texas 77218
December 28, 1983

My first day in Vung Tau was spent getting settled, and that meant going to the army PX for supplies. As a civilian, I had not been issued a ration card. An Aussie overheard me telling my woes to the fellow American I was with, and purchased for me cigarettes and two bottles of good scotch whiskey. That will make friends out of any Texan! *(See last paragraph)*

I exchanged names and etc. with the Aussie, and invited him by my warehouse that we were building at the end of the army base to have some of the crate lumber to use to construct a club for the Aussies at their base. *(A parachute was their club).*

This soon led to several fine Aussie troops and their officers paying me a visit with a large truck, and the great exchange begin. Since I have to scrounge for myself, I received large shipments of rotten American potatoes chips sent to the Aussie camp that were outdated. They were in nice 5-gallon cans that I used to keep my meager food supplies in away from the rats. I also was treated to several cases of Louisiana Hot Sauce that I used to treat C-Rations into fine meals at home.

As time went by, visits to camps were exchanged, with me providing a truck at times filled with good empty crates for the great Aussie Beer Hall. And after awhile, it was dedicated complete with a air organ musical instrument your guys either had with you, or acquired someplace. The Aussie Major presented me with an Aussie Hat, a pair of 10-1/2 Dunlop boots, a couple of hat bands, and I was "forced to sing" the Eyes of Texas song for the group.

I never met a bad Australian. We Americans had great respect for the Aussie troops we knew, and saw among our Vung Tau area.

While on a recent visit to Singapore performing my job in an offshore engineering company, I met a group of Australian tourist in my hotel bar. I told them my story about the great friends I had during my stay in Vung Tau, my great Aussie Hat the Texas bugs have devoured while I was in Saudi Arabia, and the boots there were 1-1/2 inches too small (I wore them anyhow), and how that I had never met a bad Australian, bought the whole group a drink as a salute!

Yours very truly,

R.E. Lee

RL
RMK-BRJ as it was in 1966-Vung Tau/



From the National and NSW Secretary



ONCE again, we say THANK YOU to our many members who have made a financial donation to their State Branch. Without these donations we would find it much more difficult to cater to the needs of our war veterans, service and ex-service persons generally. Whilst all donations are gratefully received, and combined are of enormous assistance to us, they are too numerous to list. However, periodically, we will publish a list of individual NSW Branch members who have donated amounts of \$200 or more.

Generous supporters of the NSW Branch since the last Journal are:

- \$2,000 KCI Lawyers
- \$1,500 Vince Curran
- \$1,000 Barry (Tab) Hunter, Michael Walker, Kevin Faust, James Simpson, Anonymous, Warren Axford
- \$500 Geoffrey Peattie, Ian Taylor, Stephen Bunter, Howard Clark, Gordon O'Brien, Peter Unwin, Tania Edwards-Hackett, John McNeil, Patricia Johnson, Geoffrey Jones, Anonymous

- \$400 Anonymous
- \$320 Neville Lemon
- \$300 Hy Xuan Trinh, Dallas Mulhall OAM, Anonymous, Garry Smyth, Bruce Cullen, Henry Walker, William Smith, Colin Robinson
- \$250 David Gibbs, Steven Howden, Denis Nolan, Richard Croall, Stuart Hart, Peter Donnelly, Wesley Hindmarsh, Adrian Starr
- \$200 Garry Chenhall, Brian Carney, Ron Giveen, William Baldwin, Alan Limn, David Gilmer, Kevin Stewart, Geoffrey Lopez, Tony Shephard, Francis Scicluna, John Stoker, Charles Shay, Samuel Panarello, Peter Paterson, Colin Kelson, John Beggs, Alfred Brown, Robert Doolan, Timothy Dowset, John Burrows.

Whilst the above refers to, mostly, individual donations, we are also indebted to the many RSL sub-branches and other licensed clubs who generously contribute to our cause.

In Memory of the Late Robert Gerard Gibson

We would like to acknowledge the following people who very generously donated to the Association as a tribute to the memory of the late Robert Gibson.

Robert left instruction on his passing that, in lieu of flowers, donation could be made to the VVPPAA.

Alistair Waters, Damon Hodges, Riccardo Rigler, Nader Uboh, Jessica Nelson, Ricki Johnsson, Linh Tran, David Hermolin, Trudie Rogers

For these special donations we are truly grateful.

Ron O'Connor JP
National and NSW Secretary

The Minefield

An Australian tragedy in Vietnam

Another extract from the book

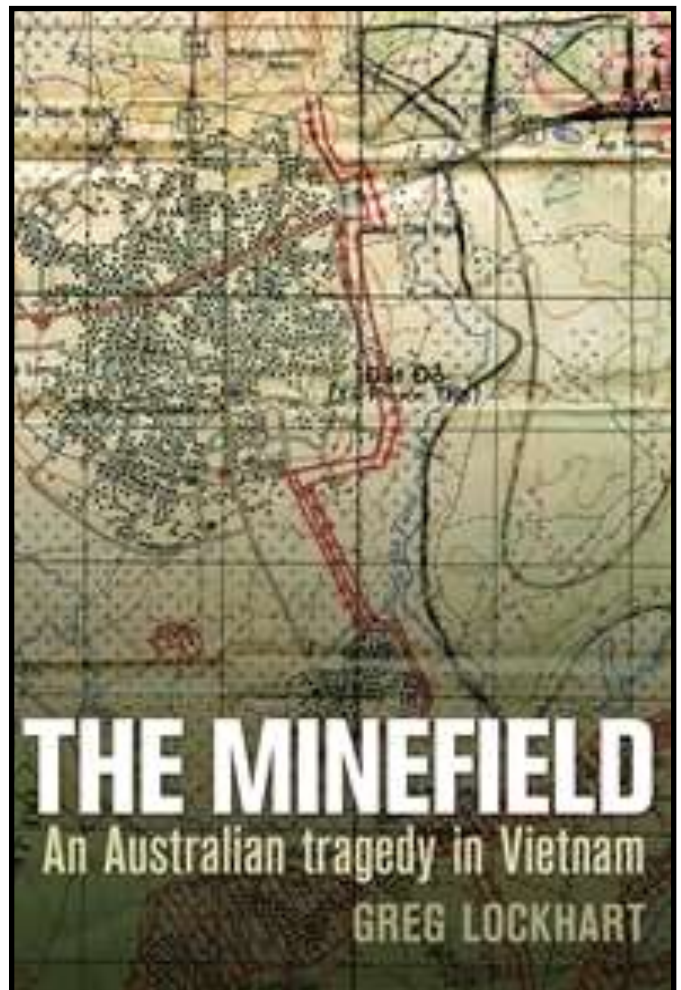
Officers and senior NCOs in 1 Field Squadron met to 'brainstorm' the problem [of clearing the minefield] before a second attempt was made in May. Various roller solutions were considered; however, heavy rollers fabricated from concrete-filled 44-gallon drums were unable to detonate mines in depressions in the ground. Lighter, more flexible rollers made of tyres or bladders filled with mastic, dirt or lead dust and pushed in front of a tank would very likely be ripped to shreds by the shrapnel from the exploding mines. Other methods were mooted. These included: burning the areas with napalm; bombarding the mines with mortars and artillery; burying the entire field; flooding the field with corrosive fluid; and using land clearing chain from one side of the field to the other pulled by bulldozers. But the massive cost and effort, plus the unlikely success or proven failure, eliminated all these proposals. ■

Dr Greg Lockhart is a Vietnam veteran, having served with AATTV.

He is an eminent historian whose work has been widely acknowledged.

His writing of this excellent book came from the VVFA's concern that it knew very little about the Minefield when dealing with veterans damaged by their contact with it.

He is the VVFA's honorary historian. ■



It is the best book so far written about Australia's participation in the Vietnam war. Written ten years ago and still selling well.

To get your copy simply ring the NSW Branch Granville Office on 02 9682 1788. Or order online at: www.vvfaгранville.org

Blocking out the nature of the Vietnam War

A review of the last combat volume of the Official History of the Vietnam War

By Greg Lockhart

First published in the *Australian Book Review* in September 2012 and reproduced here (updated and expanded in December 2020) with kind permission.

FIGHTING TO THE FINISH: THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY AND THE VIETNAM WAR 1968–1975

by Ashley Ekins, with Ian McNeill

Allen & Unwin, \$100 hb, 1139 pp, 9781865088242

Introduction: What's in the title?

Fighting to the Finish does not get off to a good start; its title is overstated.

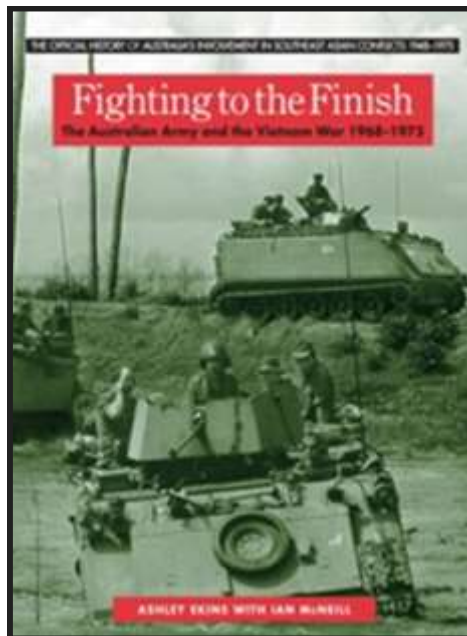
After being built up from one to three battalions in 1965-67, First Australian Task Force (1ATF) was trimmed down in 1970 from three to two battalions and withdrew from the War by December 1971. The small remaining advisory group withdrew in December 1972. Fighting finished on 30 April 1975, when perhaps 20 divisions or a notional 180 battalions of the Peoples' Army of Vietnam (PAVN) and of the Peoples' Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF) swarmed in southern Vietnam and around Saigon, causing it to fall.¹ It hardly seems sensible to be saying that 1ATF fought to the finish when it withdrew over three years before the war ended.

What is going on? The answer is that, as a memorial volume, *Fighting to the Finish* falls into line with the titles of the first two combat volumes in *The Official History of Australia in*

Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948-75 (1992-2012). Those two volumes are Ian McNeill's *To Long Tan* (1993) and, with Ashley Ekins, his *On the Offensive* (2003). As such, all three volumes represent attempts to maintain the spirit of combat accounts kept in C.E.W. Bean's foundation Anzac opus *The Official History of Australia in the War of 1914–1918* (1921–1942). All three Vietnam combat titles strongly suggest Bean's account of the Anzac Corps' participation in the allied offensive to final victory on the Hindenburg Line in 1918.

2

Yet what was going on in Vietnam was far from the conventional war of movement Bean had in mind. In Vietnam, the small two-to-three battalion 1ATF patrolled from the Nui Dat Base after it was established in May 1966. Apart from dealing with a myriad of patrol contacts, 1ATF's task was to win 'hearts and minds' and, indeed, to *fight off* offensive PAVN/PLAF forces at Long Tan, during Tet 1968, and at



Abbreviations

1 ATF.....First Australian Task Force
 PAVN.....Peoples Army of Vietnam (often referred to as the North Vietnamese Army or NVA).
 PLAF.....Peoples' Liberation Armed Forces (often referred to as the Viet Cong or VC).
 DRV.....Democratic Republic of Vietnam (The unified state of northern, central and southern Vietnam which Ho Chi Minh declared independent in 1945 with its capital in Hanoi. The country was divided in 1954. After its reunification in 1975, the DRV became the Socialist Republic of Vietnam).
 RVN.....Republic of Vietnam (covering 'South Vietnam' and its capital in Saigon from 1954-75).
 ARVN.....Army of the Republic of Vietnam (sometimes referred to as the South Vietnamese Army).
 NLF.....National Liberation Front for the Southern Region (often referred to as the Viet Cong or VC).

firebases Coral and Balmoral during 'mini-Tet' in May 1968.³

Covering the period from July 1968 to the end, the title *Fighting to the Finish* then contradicts the title of its own Chapter 18: 'Unfinished task: September 1971- March 72'. Oddly, *Fighting to the Finish* also suggests an issue that arose after the Anzac Corps' continuous part in the 1918 offensive on the Hindenburg Outpost Line: would it be rested or fight on in the final push on the Line proper? Two divisions of the Corps did fight to the final victory and, indeed, the finish.

Again, this conventional war of movement was not anything like a suitable model for 1ATF's experience in Vietnam.

We see what's in the title: a continuation of Bean's old Australian Imperial Force narrative. We see that *Fighting to the Finish* is, like its companion volumes, a memorial one that tends to miss the nature of the war it is supposed to be about. With its implicit Cold War overemphasis on 'the communists', we will also see it overlooks Vietnam's 1945-75 war of national independence, which so vividly represented the wider history of post-colonial transformation in our region.

Anzac memorialisation assumes conventional war

This oversight does not necessarily prevent the volume from fulfilling the important political and social function of recording soldiers' deeds.

While dealing with all manner of medical, civil affairs and training matters, the work convincingly captures the long grind of infantry patrolling, broken occasionally by thirty-second contacts and horrendous mine casualties. Ekins' most gripping passages describe sustained contacts, when, even more occasionally, silent patrolling erupted into protracted skirmishes and bunker battles involving tanks and artillery. Take a tank attack on 21 June 1971. An enemy rocket propelled grenade (RPG) hit the left flank tank, commanded by Corporal A.M. Anderson:

The projectile struck the commander's .30 calibre machine-gun and detonated severing Anderson's left arm and also wounding him in the head. Shrapnel also badly wounded the [radio] operator, Trooper Phillip Barwick, in the chest and head blinding him temporarily ... A second RPG exploded in the trees alongside the vehicle. Other tanks immediately returned fire. Second Lieutenant Bruce Cameron ... fired canister rounds ... silencing the enemy. Meanwhile, [a nearby infantryman] New Zealand Lance Corporal John Adams, displayed outstanding bravery ... Disregarding the intense enemy fire, he mounted the tank to direct the rescue and encouraged the wounded men ... Adams was awarded a Military Medal.

Action enlivens the narrative. Other stories convey similar intensity, including those of Cameron's heroic feats, for which he was awarded a Military Cross. Optimally, *Fighting to the Finish* contains a series of linked citations for shared

madness and glory.

Yet in realising that goal, the volume does not fulfil its intended purpose as a *conceptually coherent history*. Conjured up from the old imperial perspective in the new 1945-75 era of decolonisation, the proposed 'pattern' of 1ATF operations has no meaningful political or military context.

Fighting to the Finish depicts 1ATF in mid-1968 fighting against the regular main force units of what it calls the 'North Vietnamese Army (NVA)' in and around remote parts of Phuoc Tuy Province. It then describes what it vaguely assumes to be 'the other war' in and around the villages, where

the Saigon government's authority is said to have disintegrated as a result of terror and small-scale guerrilla action orchestrated by the 'Viet Cong (VC)' – Vietnamese Communists.

Even if such a construction of separate wars accommodates a 1ATF conception of what it was doing, the *Official History* misses the big picture. Gesturing to the Anzac legend, Ekins and McNeill fall back on culturally embedded assumptions of conventional war. They see a regular war of movement with the enemy main forces, which they tend to assume represent an 'invasion' from the north, while forgetting that main force units were also raised in the south. At the same time, they vaguely separate the war with those main forces from the guerrilla insurgency around the villages. They fail to grasp the integrated historical, political and strategic significance of both.

Accepting without question the blind faith that the Australian political authorities and military command originally had in American purpose and power in the Cold War, the official combat historians see no reason to take a serious interest in the situation in Vietnam. Falling back on a heavily politicised sense of the monolithic nature



Ekins convincingly captures the long grind of infantry patrolling, broken occasionally by thirty-second contacts and horrendous mine casualties

AWM Cam/68/0003/VN

of 'the communist' menace from the north, the official affinity for conventional war tends to block out the complexity of the conflict in Vietnam between 1945 and 1975. It tends to obscure the nature of the Vietnam War.

Blocking out Vietnam's complex war of decolonisation

It is uncontroversial to say that those combat volumes have blinded themselves to what Vietnamese histories routinely describe as Vietnam's 'Thirty-Year War for National Liberation'.⁴ It is important to add that this war was fought within the irreversible, post-1945 Asia-wide process of decolonisation. There is no recognition in the official Australian volumes that, in such a historical and political context, victory in Vietnam would have required a revolutionary strategy, not one of on-going colonial control, as underpinned the Australian decision for war.⁵

It was our enemy that had a strategy of decolonisation, not us – the US and its allies. Such a strategy would enable initially weaker peasant forces to grow in their fight for national independence and a better life against superior counter revolutionary foreign forces. This

description of the foreign forces was confirmed by the title of the Australian Army's official training manual for Vietnam: *Pamphlet No 11, Counter Revolutionary Warfare* (1965).

The misnamed combat volumes proceed to misname 1ATF's enemy. Focusing on *Fighting to the Finish*, we see it almost invariably refers to the 'North Vietnamese Army (NVA)' and 'Viet Cong (VC)'. These terms have long been in common use, as the volume's Glossary emphasises. Yet it hardly matters that they were widely used—by soldiers on the battlefield, for instance. The point is that a government and high command, which is unable to correctly name its enemy has serious problems, as Australia's clearly did in Vietnam. Similarly, a history that uncritically recycles the original official ignorance can only go on to be seriously flawed.

Along with McNeill, Ekins failed to realise that no state of 'North Vietnam' and, for that reason, no NVA, ever existed. They do not ask why an army wanting to unite northern, central and southern Vietnam would call itself NVA.

After Ho Chi Minh declared the independence of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam (DRV) in Hanoi on 2 September 1945, the army that supported the DRV in all parts of the country from 1945-54 was the Peoples Army of Vietnam (PAVN), as indeed it called itself. By simplistically dividing Vietnam into a communist monolith in the north and a bastion of the Free World in the south, the official historians show they are unable to grasp the complexity of the war.

Neither do they seem aware of the extent to which the 1953 division of Korea into a communist north and an anti-communist south hangs over their understanding of the 1954 division of Vietnam. By making an unthinking transposition from Korea to Vietnam, they seem to have forgotten major differences between what happened in the two countries.

The division of Korea was based on a cease-fire line at the 38th parallel after a conventional war. In South Korea, there was no civil war. The Communist and United Nations forces each withdrew to their side of the line, and the

Americans helped create stability in the south by implementing land reform – on what was, in fact, the Korean Communist model.

A year later, conditions surrounding the division of Vietnam at the 17th parallel were very different. There, the division occurred after a multifaceted war, in which a communist military victory had integrated a widespread guerrilla insurgency with regular main force army operations. In 1954, prior to the partition negotiated at the Geneva Accords, PAVN controlled almost all the northern and central parts of the country and 60 to 90 percent of the south.

Following petition, the country was not divided as a cease fire line, as in Korea, but to enable the French to re-group in the south before leaving Vietnam. To decide the issue of the unification of northern and southern Vietnam, elections were to be held by 1956. The DRV decommissioned PAVN units in the south. Yet, the guerrilla infrastructure and anti-colonial sympathy that formerly supported the DRV there remained significantly intact. The elections were never held and tensions in the south led to civil war.

In July 1954, the Americans bankrolled the Republic of Vietnam (RVN) with its capital in Saigon and, also, its Army (ARVN) and other armed forces. This meant the US backed the RVN's repressive Catholic President Ngo Dinh Diem who, in 1955, confirmed his dictatorship in a rigged referendum.

The situation in the south became progressively unstable. With partition, some 900,000 refugees, including many Catholics and Buddhists, came from the north. The American CIA got to work supporting Diem, who issued a famous decree on the need to 'behead communists.' With Hanoi sending operatives into the south, and with Diem's corrupt government, repressive security policies and shortsighted obstruction of rational land reform all alienating many non-communists, especially Buddhists and landless peasants, the situation in southern Vietnam was, by 1957, one of virtual civil war.

It was, indeed, Diem's inequitable land program, not 'the communists', that inevitably caused renewed conflict in the south. From 1941 to 1954, the Viet Minh Independence League had redistributed a third of the available land in the Mekong Delta. But in 1954, the richest tenth of the landholders still held, at least on paper, 65 per cent of the land. When the French left, Diem posed as a reformer by confiscating their sizeable former land holdings. At the same time, he abolished the legal standing of the Viet Minh's land reforms. This unleashed a social crisis that created for him and his RVN a widespread enemy base. The Americans understood there was a fundamental agrarian problem. But as their presence in Vietnam was wedded to Diem, whom they could not then control, they were unable to solve that problem.⁶

From 1960, at least, anarchists, Buddhists, religious sects, and landless peasants, as well as communists, supported the southern insurrection against the US-backed RVN and its armed forces. The Front that emerged under Hanoi's direction in December that year was, at least for some time, far too complex to be described accurately as 'VC'. It was accurately named the 'National Liberation Front for the Southern Region' (NLF), with units of its military wing forming the Peoples Liberation Armed Forces (PLAF). These forces included guerrilla units of a particular village or semi-regular or regular regional units—as we will see they did in Phuoc Tuy Province.

Fighting to the Finish and its companion volumes can touch lightly on some of the key issues, including the failure of RVN land reform.⁷ By still accepting blindly US power and neglecting to name accurately Australia's enemy, however, those works tend to nurture an overdetermined view of the communist menace from the north and forget the civil war in the south. Taking refuge in the official history's memorial function, they miss the fact that the DRV had developed a successful strategy for achieving national liberation within the global process of decolonisation between 1945 and 1954.

Ekins does not realise that the two wars he

tends to describe were interrelated aspects of the same one. They were manifestations of a single, overarching strategy that integrated small unit irregular and large unit regular warfare in a unified form. This was the strategy of 'protracted war', known also in Vietnam as 'peoples war', for which there are conspicuously no index entries in the official Australian combat volumes.

Protracted Revolutionary War

Protracted war strategies, which give weapons to the weak, are as old as human nature. The Vietnamese application of them post-1945 was derived both from their own tradition of resistance to Chinese invasions over the centuries and, more recently, from Chinese communist resistance to the powerful Japanese armies of invasion, which marked the beginning of the Second World War in China in 1937.

By 1938, two books, which seem to represent the earliest modern Vietnamese thinking on 'protracted war' were published in Vietnam.⁸ These books contained Vietnamese translations of selected writings based on the experience of the revolutionary Chinese political and military strategists Mao Zedong, Zhou Enlai and Zhu De in their war against the Japanese invaders and colonisers of their country. The Vietnamese would adapt the Chinese protracted war strategies to their own conditions in their own war of decolonisation in the 1940s and beyond.

Four points will set up the salience of the strategy of protracted war in determining the nature and outcome of the Vietnam War.

First, the DRV's war of independence was protracted. Led by the Viet Minh, it began on 27 September 1945, when French forces seeking to re-occupy France's Indochina colonies after the Second World War attacked the offices of the newly proclaimed DRV in the Saigon Town Hall. The war ended on 30 April 1975 with the fall of Saigon.

Second, the war was not only a protracted one because of its long, thirty-year duration. It was protracted also because it had a political foundation that enabled the DRV to keep fighting. That is to say, its military dimension, which from

the 1940s involved raising armed forces from the villages based on the society's capacity to support them, was grounded in an enduring, more or less popular political program of national liberation and a better life. Hence, also the Vietnamese idea of a 'people's war' and 'people's army' grounded in the popular political will.⁹

Third, protracted war was not then about holding ground; it was about maximising popular military participation in a conflict wherein regular forces grew out of the irregular ones in the villages. Small guerrilla units raised there by Communist Party cadres coming from base areas would employ 'hit and run' tactics, where 'run' meant to disperse and take refuge among the people. They would also pickup enemy weapons from the battlefield – as, for instance, they picked up thousands of M16 Mines from the Australian minefield in southern Vietnam in 1967, before turning them back with devastating effect against Australian soldiers.

Initially, these tactics were more about impressing the people in the villages than the stronger enemy. Eventually, such units could grow and amalgamate to form larger semi-regular and regular units. Small and large units could then operate in interdependent tactical combinations. These would vary from region to region depending on the terrain, the population density, the local economy and the level of political-military development.

Fourth, the war *could* be protracted in such a revolutionary political-military frame, because the process of mass mobilisation had an effective political-military mechanism. This was 'armed propaganda', a term wherein 'propaganda' does not necessarily have in Vietnamese the connotation of 'misinformation', but rather means something closer to religious proselytising. As such, armed propaganda had been going in Vietnam from 1942, some two years before PAVN's official birthday on 22 December 1944, the day its first main force unit was named 'The Vietnam Propaganda and Liberation Unit'.

Armed propaganda was, then, the military method of advancing the political process of

mobilising widespread support for national independence and a better life in the peasant society and vice-versa. Not always called that, we will see it had local, regional, national and, even, international political and diplomatic dimensions.

Given the pressures of war, the lofty ideals of the revolution could lapse into terror and revenge killings, as it probably did most egregiously on the Hue Front during the Tet 1968 Offensive. Yet such political and military failures did not compromise the centrality of armed propaganda in the ultimately successful strategy of protracted war: Saigon fell.

As weakness became strength, my book *Nation in Arms* (1989) explained how the war took its conspicuously varied tactical and strategic character in the 1945-54 period. This was when the forces of the 'Viet Minh Independence League' were first configured from the bottom-up and top-down as well as across regions and took many forms and combinations. Units dispersed where they were confronted with superior enemy force and concentrated in places where the enemy was relatively weak. With no ground to take, no decisive battle was possible for the stronger enemy. The revolutionary forces would suffer setbacks. But they could not be extinguished as long as they related to the process of mass mobilisation among the people.

The first strategically significant main force regiments and divisions were recruited in the mountainous northern regions, not far from southern China in 1950, where and when those units were initially trained and armed. From then on large regular formations, still raised from regional units and interacting with them, tended to dominate the war in areas with proximity to supply lines from the north.

This was in both the so-called 'First' and 'Second Indochina Wars'. Still, in both, village guerrillas and local militias remained the key to strategic success. By concentrating and dispersing in the 'First' one, smaller military units helped keep the French forces divided in the north – and between south and north. Crucially, mass mobilisation boosted by land reform in the north

also produced the supply trains carrying vast quantities of rice from the valleys and artillery and other ammunition and supplies from across the Chinese border for the large battles in the north that, in 1954, culminated in the decisive French defeat at Dien Bien Phu.

Large formations were also possible in the centre and south in 1945-54, as they were in 1960-75. In this latter period, for instance, main force action tended to be most pronounced in US MR

(Military Region) I with its northern most province Quang Tri on the DMZ. Yet main forces were also spread through the central Highlands in MR II and south through MR III and IV to Cambodia. This meant they were usually close to supplies coming down the Ho Chi Minh Trail and to cross-border sanctuary. They were also close to reinforcements. Historian Gabriel Kolko shows how in 1966 these came down the Trail at a key time; he tells us that the main force PAVN/PLAF ranks in the south grew by 60,000 as a response to the 400,000 Americans who had arrived since mid-1965.¹⁰

Meanwhile, in the more densely populated coastal provinces and Mekong Delta, the regional militias and guerrillas operated among the people, massing their forces to attack and disperse as required. The main forces would periodically enter these provinces and operate in combination with the local ones and leave.

By contrast, US forces, which were absorbed with servicing their logistics, defending their bases and patrolling in empty zones, lost strategic control everywhere. With their manpower, helicopter mobility and firepower, US generals applied a strategy of attrition. But PAVN/PLAF forces generally had the initiative.



PAVN logistics

Knowing that US helicopters carrying troops and helicopter gunships bringing great fire power to bear would soon reinforce embattled US patrols, PAVN/PLAF commanders usually initiated contact when they wanted to stand and fight – before withdrawing more or less at will. This was an American ‘war of attrition’ based on a contradiction: America’s enemy controlled the rate of casualties.

Meanwhile, US tactical air operations emptied themselves into the tactical void. The massive US strategic bombing campaign, the most awesome in world history, had no significant industrial targets to strike at and similarly dropped its bombs into the strategic abyss.

The US found no alternative to a costly defensive strategy. Kolko shows how, from 1967 to 1972, PAVN/PLAF could maximise its fighting strength with far fewer people and more limited resources. Available PAVN/NLF combat strength in those years roughly equalled US/ARVN, although their total army was generally less than a quarter of their enemy’s.

By then, soldiers from the north outnumbered southerners in southern main force units. But, similar to the situation in 1950-54, the ‘key’ to their role and the future of the political

military strategy was still, as he says, ‘the local guerrillas, who immobilised the growing ARVN forces seeking to hold the populated regions and “pacify” them and who were far better able to engage in the critical political tasks.’¹¹

This supports the centrality of armed propaganda in the protracted war. It also confirms an excellent global strategic formulation of it by one Vietnamese strategist with an inside view. In 1961, elegantly summarising the lessons of the ‘First’ phase of the war and projecting them into the ‘Second’ one, he advised:

If you do not have guerrilla war, then you are unable to have a [regular] war of movement; but if you have guerrilla war and do not advance to a war of movement then not only will the strategic responsibility to destroy the enemy’s main force be unrealized but you will not be able to maintain and develop the original guerrilla war.¹²

Strung like a necklace of negatives, the strategy of protracted war arose out of nothing but political will, was built on military weakness and had everything to gain.

The Protracted Armed Propaganda War in Phuoc Tuy Province

The operation of such a strategy in Phuoc Tuy Province, where 1ATF was based between 1966 and 1971, is not difficult to depict.

Phuoc Tuy was a coastal province in MR III with sizeable rice growing plains and a population of some 102,000 in 1967. With the Long Hai Mountains in southwest, the most populous area in the centre and jungle and mountains in the northeast, the province was well suited to small-scale guerrilla and local force activity periodically bolstered by the appearances of large main force units to impress the population.¹³

As in general Vietnamese histories of the war published since 1975, the local ones dealing with the period 1945-75 in Phuoc Tuy Province –

including *Long Dat District* (1986), *Dong Nai Province* (1986) and *D445 Battalion* (1991 and 2011)¹⁴ – all espouse the ideology of decolonisation in some form. They refer to liberation of the ‘Fatherland’ and ‘Socialist Fatherland’ in the spirit of ‘patriotism and revolutionary heroism’. The leadership of ‘the Communist Party’ comes up, but in a determined national and, for both those reasons, anti-colonial frame.

Quoting the *Long Dat District* history, my book *The Minefield* underlines the revival of efforts ‘to organise armed forces’ by ‘establishing armed propaganda squads’ in Phuoc Tuy. On the night of 25/26 November 1960, we learn that an eight-man squad from the armed propaganda unit ambushed an enemy jeep on Route 44, killing two enemies including an American adviser.

That was the first time the armed propaganda team had killed an American. News of the victory spread and strongly stimulated the movement. Only a few days later, the district armed propaganda unit burst into Tam Phuoc [village] ... We got the nine [RVN village guards] gave them a long lecture then released them on the spot after collecting their nine rifles and two grenades. ... In a number of villages, the local guards handed over their weapons and went home and returned to work.¹⁵

Note that small-scale military action was followed by political proselytisation: lecturing people and scaring and shaming RVN personnel to change sides and hand over their weapons. The timing of the action was also as significant as the method: it heralded the emergence on 19 December of the ‘National Liberation Front for the Southern Region’ (NLF), the Front that would focus armed resistance in the south to the American backed RVN.

In 1961, the Long Dat District Company C25 was formed for guerrilla operations with



A group of D445 soldiers
(origin uncertain)

translation of *Heroic D445 Battalion: History/Tradition*¹⁶ includes the following armed propaganda operations: the abduction/kidnapping of '187' Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) recruits from firing range in the Province Capital Baria in mid-November 1966; the raid by D445 elements on the Farmers' Bank on Baria's western outskirts on 26-27 November 1967; and a D445 show of force around the Dat

armed propaganda assistance from elements of an established company outside the district. This was C40, which along with another established company in the province, C 45, had histories going back to at least 1957. C40 and C45 were based on villages north of Route 23, Baria, Hoa Long and others in the Hat Dich area.

In mid-1964, some 24 intelligence operatives were sent south from Hanoi to the Minh Dam Secret Zones/Long Hai Hills. Ernie Chamberlain's 'Research Note' in this *Newsletter* mentions how the members of this Group designated B46 came south by various routes, including some at their ease from Hue to Saigon on *Air Vietnam*. Significantly, B46 also called itself 'Ba Bien Province Armed Propaganda Unit'.

By December 1964, that unit was probably involved in developing a major NLF display of the growing incapacity of ARVN. This was when C40 and C45 combined with PLAF units to rout a divisional sized Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) formation around the Catholic village of Binh Gia in the north of Phuoc Tuy Province. On 19 May 1965, Ho Chi Minh's birthday, C40 and C45 amalgamated to form the local D445 Battalion.

Along with various actions along Route 15 in the 1964-66 period, Chamberlain's valuable

Do Church on Christmas Eve 1969 – which included, 'for about an hour', the delivery by cadres of a homily on the politics of the NLF to the highly attentive congregation inside the Church, as everyone knew the US withdrawal was on. This operation is typically said to have made a 'deep impression' in the province.

Equally persuasive 'armed propaganda' in the grassroots was also implicit when PLAF or PAVN regular main force units came, just as the operatives in B46/Ba Bien Armed Propaganda Unit had, into the province from outside it to stimulate military development and mark major political or military events.

Bob Hall and Andrew Ross show that 1ATF had some 3,900 fleeting contacts with guerrilla and other units and that these did far more to damage to the enemy than the sixteen 'landmark battles' they have also identified. These battles involved at least an Australian company and supporting arms and elements of D445 Battalion and larger formations, sometimes PLAF 274, 275 Regiments or PAVN 33 Regiment, which entered the province and chose to stand and fight, often for several hours.

1ATF usually inflicted many times more casualties on these enemy main forces than it suffered. Yet these casualties did not affect the

resilience of these enemy operations.¹⁷ Because they did not have heavy weapons support, as 1ATF did, the enemy was prepared to take casualties in infantry assaults to achieve their goals, which were, in keeping with the strategy of protracted war, primarily political. Hall and Ross emphasise that Australian writing – certainly in the *Official History* – tends to understand the ‘landmark battles’ as ‘conventional war: in simple terms of military contests stripped of political import’.¹⁸

Implicitly, the ‘landmark battles’ constituted PAVN/PLAF armed propaganda. The mere presence of main force units in the province was enough to warn people not to get too close to 1ATF. The sounds of a battle such as at Long Tan on 18 August 1966 would certainly have reinforced that message.

On that day, some 108 men of D Company 6RAR courageously stood and delivered, holding off a perhaps 2,500 strong enemy force, including elements of D445 and 275 Regiment. Well over the official tally of 275 enemies were killed – possibly as many bodies were dragged away from the battlefield – compared with 17 Australians. Yet with NLF cadres talking up the battle in the villages, it left the people in them believing that the revolutionary side won. Certainly, Hall and Ross stress something the official combat volumes miss. At Long Tan and other ‘landmark battles’, they say the NLF and DRV ‘unreservedly won’ the much vaunted struggle for the ‘hearts and minds’ of the people.

Long Tan was also timed to coincide with the important elections of the National Constituent Assembly on 11 September. There is evidence that the battle did not dissuade people in the Province from voting. In some cases, there is no data on the exact political aims and outcomes of the larger battles. The pivotal political success of the Tet Offensive generally is, nonetheless, well known. In Phuoc Tuy, Hall and Ross highlight the political and diplomatic dimensions of the combat in a number of other cases:

The battles of ‘mini-Tet’ in May 1968 were timed to maximise the

DRV’s bargaining position at the beginning of the Paris Peace Talks. The battle for Binh Ba on 6-7 June 1969 was linked to the meeting of US President Richard Nixon and [RVN] President Nguyen Van Thieu ... at Midway Island on 8 June 1969. Similarly, the battle for Nui Le on 21-22 September 1971 was connected with the RVN presidential election less than two weeks later. Although specific political or diplomatic outcomes may or may not have been achieved through these battles, the socialist revolution survived in the South.¹⁹

The Thirty-Year War could not have ended as it did without armed propaganda operations mobilising political and economic support in the villages – something the heavy, American backed ARVN forces were unable to do.

1ATF was not unaware of certain aspects of the revolutionary war. It was widely known that D445 moved from its base areas in the Long Hai Hills and entered the villages, including Hoa Long situated on the edge of 1ATF. This was to collect food and supplies and visit relatives. Such contact was also inseparable from proselytising the people—armed propaganda— sometimes using loud hailer. There was, indeed, knowledge of this happening at one end of a village such as Dat Do, while RVN forces were living with their families in the bunkers built at the other end by Australian engineers.

1ATF also had considerable experience of the indeterminate nature of the war and their enemy’s disinterest in holding ground. Adjacent to Phuoc Tuy in Bien Hoa Province on 5-7 February 1967, for instance, C Company 7RAR’s battle of the bunkers involved an intense fire fight for over two days. Yet the Company never had a clear idea of how many enemies they faced and never saw fleetingly more than about nine. After the enemy abandoned the position for unknown reasons, the company took it and was left with what one

account calls ‘reinforced silence’²⁰ ringing in its ears.

Back in Phuoc Tuy, D445 sometimes took a mauling. One occasion was on 15 February 1970, when the 8th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment, 1ATF set a very successful ambush for elements of that enemy unit near the Long Hai Hills and cornered it entirely soon after. Confusion at Headquarters 1ATF meant D445 got away.²¹ Still, with such mixed fortunes, Chamberlain tells us that ‘D445’s strength in August 1966 was 392 – but was down to 157 in September 1971 when 1ATF began to withdraw.’ At that time, he correctly stresses that D445 ‘was “dispersed” into three companies and attached to the VC districts.’ It was later reinforced in 1972.²²

In this scheme of protracted war, we may also say that 1ATF was not necessarily its enemy’s main enemy. D445 and local guerrilla forces would fight against 1ATF for defensive or offensive armed propaganda reasons. But in so far as 1ATF tended to be remote from village affairs, D445 and other PLAF forces were more concerned about indigenous opposition to their communist mobilisation. Their primary targets were obviously RVN political infrastructure and military forces. Notably, the above local histories say little about the Australians.

Overcoming setbacks by maintaining mass mobilisation meant that PAVN/PLAF development would gradually divide and weaken their initially stronger foreign enemies. Finally, unable to go on bearing the casualties and political and economic costs of the war, those enemies withdrew as the Americans and, because of their withdrawal, their allies, including the Australians did, like the French had before them.

This was nothing like fighting to the finish.

To stand back for a moment and recall the big picture. Once the RVN armed forces, which had been built up since 1954 with US money, heavy weapons and equipment, were finally abandoned by the Americans in 1975, they could not finally fight to the finish either. PAVN/PLAF were of course the beneficiaries of foreign aid, which in the case of Phuoc Tuy Province usually

reached local forces from the sea. As in Phuoc Tuy, however, those communist forces were not fundamentally dependent on such foreign aid as RVN forces were. By contrast, relatively light weight PAVN/PLF forces depended on the society’s capacity to support them; their recruits and supplies were effectively pumped up out of the villages with armed propaganda.

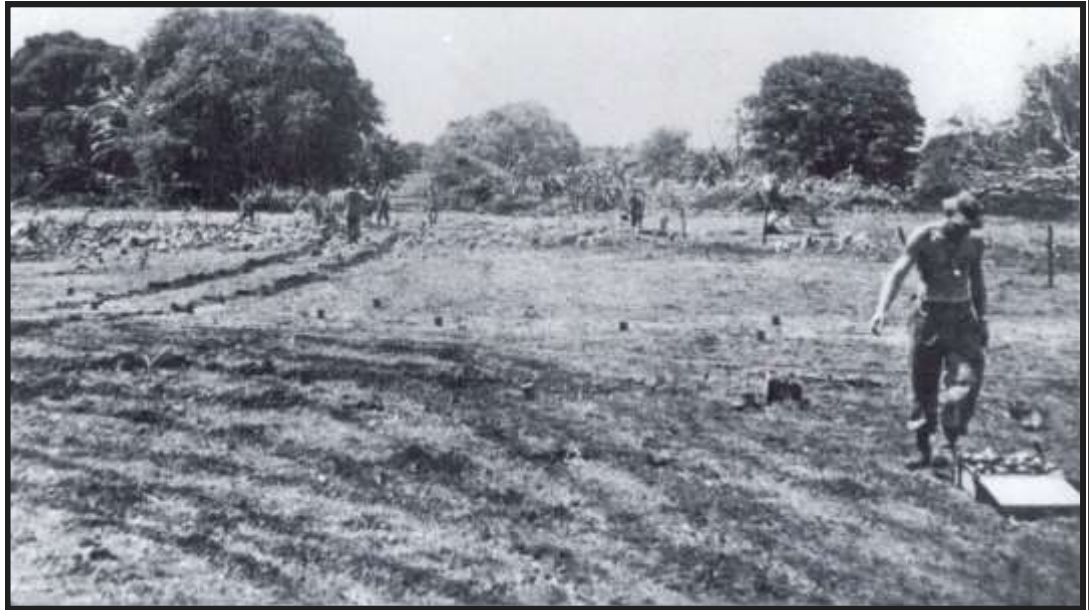
On the eve of the final communist advance on Saigon beginning 10 March 1975, RVN armed forces had, on paper, three times the overall numbers and twice the combat strength of its PAVN/PLAF adversaries – which the Pentagon estimated as 185,000 combat troops, 107,000 support troops, and 45,000 guerrillas. RVN armed forces also enjoyed total air superiority, an advantage of 1200 tanks against PAVN’s 600 and 1400 artillery pieces against PAVN’s 400. The question was whether or not the RVN’s armed forces would fight? The answer is known to the world. Even if they wanted to, they couldn’t. Denied essential ammunition, fuel and equipment, their massive superiority in men and armaments counted for nothing. The demoralised RVN forces collapsed in a few weeks when, as the strategy of protracted war anticipated, the Americans withdrew from the war.²³

After the politically pivotal Tet Offensive, it is no coincidence that down in Phuoc Tuy, the *D445 History* opined that ‘while the war would continue to be arduous and protracted – victory was certain.’ This view reflected the consummate confidence that DRV/NLF political leaders often expressed in the outcome of the war. It was also the flip side of the incredulous American/Australian post-war observation that ‘we won every battle but lost the war.’

Misreading Phuoc Tuy to the Finish

Fighting to the Finish misses the obvious fact that the side with the best strategy won.

Late in Chapter 17, that work presents a two-tiered conclusion, which undermines itself: 1ATF ‘had helped produce a level of security and [Saigon] government control ... But the underground Viet Cong infrastructure remained intact, its popular support deeply rooted in the



Laying the Minefield

Brigadier Graham did not understand that the Dat Do villagers he was trying to protect were his enemy; that those villagers would be involved in lifting the mines.
Courtesy of Graham Moon

social fabric of village life.’ How, we may ask, could an infrastructure be ‘underground’, if it had strong ‘popular support’ in the social fabric? The answer is only from a 1ATF perspective, not one from within the villages. 1ATF could not have created meaningful, long-term security in the villages, when it did not relate to the process of mass mobilisation going on in them.

Failure to grasp this fundamental problem also seriously weakens the book’s explanation for the 1ATF minefield disaster. In 1967 1ATF Commander Brigadier Stuart Graham laid a minefield containing some 20,000 lethal M16 landmines around Dat Do village. He thought that obstacle would protect the villagers from the ‘NVA’ main force units. But local guerrilla forces entered the minefield, lifted thousands of mines and turned them back against 1ATF, killing and mutilating more than 300 Australian and a further 200 Allied soldiers and civilians.

To help account for this tragedy, Ekins quotes another commander as saying Graham’s minefield concept was ‘sound’, the problem being that the friendly RVN (and Australian) forces he thought would guard the field did not do so. But

Ekins might have made more than a passing reference to the technical detail that there were not enough troops in the province to guard a minefield of the size that Graham laid in the first place. Ekins also remains silent about Graham’s primary problem: Graham did not understand that the Dat Do villagers he was trying to protect *were* the enemy.

Unable to grasp that a protracted war strategy for decolonisation integrated the political-military agenda of the winning side, *Fighting to the Finish* has no coherent argument. Rather, overloaded with opinion, the book reports such a wide variety of views that it seems to say nothing. Remarkably, on its last page, we have the *Official History* attributing the outcome of the war to the popular appeal of ‘the venerated Ho Chi Minh’. Much may be said for this view – and of the same work’s criticism of the Americans for undermining the legitimacy of the Saigon government. But such views lack balance. Rather than being derived from the main body of the work, they are free floating. They conflict with the book’s emotional fixation on ‘the communists.’

Fighting to the finish has no explanatory power.

The culminating combat volume of the *Official History* epitomises a major problem of Australian culture: the tendency to block out its place in the world, which is to say the Asian region to its north. The history hedges the truth that the Australian Army was sent to Vietnam in the Anzac imperial expeditionary tradition²⁴ to encourage and assist the Americans to suppress independent Vietnamese nationalism; that Australians also undermined the legitimacy of the Saigon government; and that, indeed, the people Australian soldiers were told they had been sent to protect in Vietnam were often their enemy. 1ATF had no strategic initiative. Its enemy's main and guerrilla force strategies tended to be politically integrated in the villages such that pressure on one meant a resurgence of the other.

1ATF was tactically proficient. Its troops did what was asked of them. This deserves to be memorialised. At the same time, Australian forces were in a holding pattern in Vietnam, a no-win situation, from which they were reluctantly rather than wisely withdrawn long before they could ever have been ordered to fight to the finish. ■

VVFA Honorary Historian Greg Lockhart had an academic career after serving in the Pacific Islands Regiment in Papua, New Guinea, the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam and the Australian Embassy Guard, Saigon. He is author of *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam* (1989) and *The Minefield: An Australian Tragedy in Vietnam* (2007).

References

- 1 These notional figures are based on Pentagon estimates that PAVN/PLAF had 185,000 combat troops, plus over 107,000 support troops and 46,000 guerrillas involved in the final offensive.
- 2 McNeill, *To Long Tan* also resonates with a World War II version of Bean's Anzac setting: Gavin Long, *To Benghazi* (1952), about the AIF's part in the successful allied advance across North Africa in 1941. Similarly, McNeill's *On the Offensive* suggests 1918 or 1941.
3. *On the Offensive* appears to be especially confused. It covers the dramatic PAVN and

PLAF Tet 1968 *Offensive*, which attacked the US embassy and overran 31 of 49 provincial towns and cities on the first day, 31 January 1968. The Americans began pushing back and inflicting very heavy casualties on attacking forces the next day. Politically, however, the dramatic surprise and scope of the offensive forced the US decision to withdraw from Vietnam. The McNeill-Ekins title might therefore be better applied to the enemy, not the US and its allies.

4 This scholarship is extensively referenced in Greg Lockhart, *Nation in Arms: The Origins of the People's Army of Vietnam*, 1989 and *The Minefield: an Australian tragedy in Vietnam*, 2007. See also Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War 1940-1975*, 1986 and Terry Burstall, *Vietnam: The Australian Dilemma*, 1993.

5 Greg Lockhart, 'Made in Britain', *The Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter*, July 2020, 18-33.

6 Kolko, *Vietnam*, 93. In March 1970, RVN President Nguyen Van Thieu enacted the 'Land to the Tiller' program with belated American support. That reform was, however, a decade too late to have a political effect.

7 *On the Offensive*, 417, for instance.

8 Nguyen Duc Thuy, *Phuong Phap Khang Nhat cua Hong Quan Tau* (The Method of anti-Japanese Resistance of the Chinese Red Army), Hanoi, January 1938 and Nguyen Van Tay, Lam Sao Cho Tao Thang Nhat, (*What Can the Chinese Do to Defeat the Japanese?*), My Tho, March 1938.

9 The classic text widely available in English translation is Vo Nguyen Giap, *People's War, People's Army*, originally published in Vietnamese in 1962. I am using the terms 'protracted war' and 'people's war' interchangeably, but lead with 'protracted war', because from the original revolutionary military discussions in Vietnam in 1938 it was understood that realising the popular will in the face of the technologically superior counterrevolutionary forces would have to be protracted.

10 Kolko, *Vietnam*, 183-4.



The last Australian troops leave Nui Dat on 7 November 1971 after handing control of the former Australian task force base to the South Vietnamese Army
AWM No. P07256.006

16 Thanks to Ernie Chamberlain who helpfully isolated in email correspondence these examples for me from his 2016 translation of D445's history into English: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/306536690/The-Viet-Cong-D445-Battalion-Their-Story-and-the-Battle-of-Long-Tan>. Chamberlain's notes to the translation are a repository of detailed information on D445 in themselves. His Preface to the work also contains introductory references to some of his other highly detailed works on other enemy formations that operated in Phuoc Tuy Province and mentions the 18 Annexes that follow the translation on 'aspects of probable interest' including the battle of Long Tan.

11 Ibid, 184.

12 Vo Nguyen Giap, *Nhung Kinh Nghiem Lon cua Dang ve Lanh Dao Dau Tran Vu Trang va Xay Dung Luc Luong Vu Trang Cach Mang* (Major experiences of the Party in Leading Armed Struggle and Building Revolutionary Armed Forces), Hanoi, 1961, 41.

13 *The Minefield*, 27-31.

14 Phan Ngoc Danh and Tran Quang Toai, *Lich su dau tranh cach mang cua Huyen Long Dat, so thao*, (A History of the Revolutionary Struggle of Long Dat District, preliminary draft), Dong Nai, 1989; Hoang Kim Chung et al eds., *Dong Nai 30 Nam chien tranh giai phong (1945-75), so thao*, (Dong Nai: 30 Years resistance war, preliminary draft), Dong Nai, 1986; *Tieu Doan 445 Anh Hung: Lich Su/Truyen Thong* (The Heroic 445 Battalion: Its history and tradition), Dong Nai, 1991, 2011.

15 *Long Dat District*, 94 quoted in *The Minefield*, 32

17 Burstall, *Vietnam*, 136 stresses that, despite their casualties at Long Tan, D445 was able six months later to combine again with 275 Regiment to fight on 17 Feb 1967 with 1ATF during its Operation Bribie.

18 Bob Hall and Andrew Ross, '“Landmark” Battles and the Myths of Vietnam', pp. 186-209, in Craig Stockings, editor, *12 Myths of Australian military History: Anzac's Dirty Dozen*, 2015, 186.

19 Hall and Ross, '“Landmark” Battles', 195

20 Gerard Windsor, *All Day Long the Noise of Battle*, 2011.

20 Lockhart, *The Minefield*, 206-9.

22 Ernie Chamberlain, 'Memorial for our old foe', *The Vietnam Veterans Newsletter*, December 2019, 16.

23 Gabriel Kolko, *Vietnam: Anatomy of a War 1940-1975*, 1986, 523-4.

24 Lockhart, 'Made in Britain', *The Vietnam Veterans' Newsletter*, July 2020, 18-33, stressed that the tradition was based on a 'race strategy'. ■



FROM THE EDITORS DESK

Join the list of authors

Join the list of veterans who have become authors by telling us your stories in words and pictures.

The List (so far)

Al Wood

Ray 'Boris' O'Brien

Tomas Hamilton

Dave Clark

Garry Gleadhill

Bill Griffiths

Lachlan Irvine

Graham Munsell & Barry Hodges

Norm Jones

RR Lee

Gary McKay (already a renowned professional author)

(Apologies if I have I missed anyone).

Send Contributions to:

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Or by snail-mail to:

Editor

VVFA

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Granville NSW 2142

Note: We prefer contributions submitted by e-mail in Microsoft Word with images in JPEG or bitmap files.

But if you can't do that then any way will do. We'll sort it out.

So find those old letters, photos and memories and think about having a go.

We welcome readers to our latest issue and a new year, with breaking news about future editions. We are moving the scheduled publications to provide orderly collection and research periods between issues. Our March issue will now become the April edition with distribution planned for early April. The close-off is now first week of March. The July issue will now become the August edition, and the close-off will be first week of July. The December issue remains as is with close-off first week of November. With an early Easter this year it's a strain, but we trust you received this issue in good time.

The 'reunion notices' and 'looking for' items are back on the agenda following last years turmoils and cancellations through the pandemic. Hopefully all intended reunions are back on track and as advertised on page 70. A reminder too, that the reunions notices, and looking for, also appear on our websites, and remain a reliable source between Newsletter issues.

[www.vvfa.org.au and www.vvfagranville.org]

Apologies for the gremlin creep last issue when our normally intrepid crew missed the error of an older listing for the Branches snuck over the top of the correct list. We hope this editions listings on page 72 is all present and correct this time. Feel free to contact the editor and complain if you find an error.

Gone is the old HQ(NSW) Membership Form, which has been replaced by a generic 'Request' form which anybody can access to request membership to a Branch or Sub-Branch of their choice. This should prevent the ambiguous usage of the old form causing mis-directed info to our membership base and data bank. See page 65.

Meet our new Scholarship Recipients in a wonderful acknowledgement of past recipients, and introduction to the latest couple beginning on page 68. the Scholarships are well received and appreciated by all.

Our sincerest condolences go to the family and friends of all who have passed on since our last edition. In grief we also love. Lest we forget. ■

VVFA recommends the Free Heart Health Program



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Registering your interest or checking eligibility is easy. Simply visit <http://www.veteranshearthealth.com.au/eligibility/> and

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Editor's Comment

Whilst much of the supply for enemy troops in the South was sourced locally, a great deal of material, especially weapons and other equipment, was supplied from the North.

But with the US Air Force completely dominating the skies over Vietnam, resupplying the vast southern army was difficult and dangerous. Its success was something of a logistics marvel.

Ernie Chamberlain was an intelligence officer in Vietnam and has continued the study of our then enemy since.

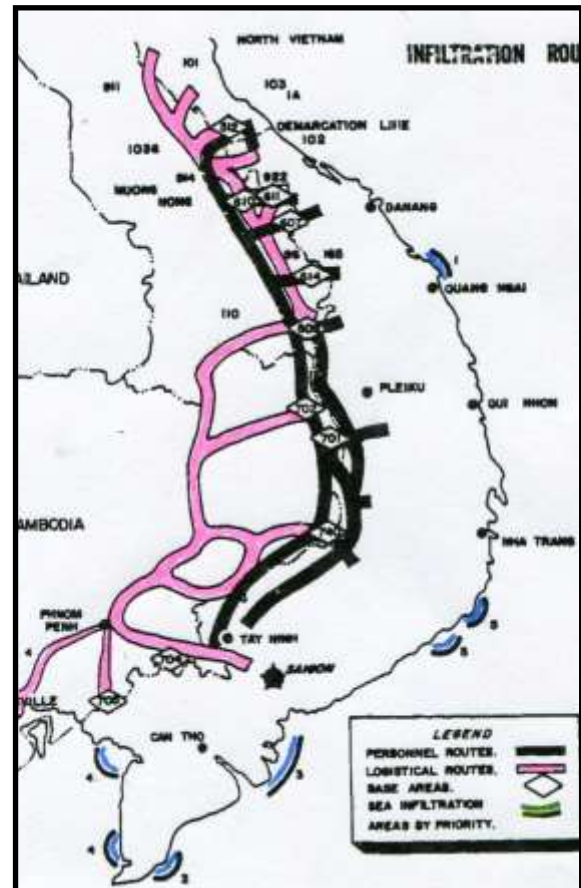
Here he throws some light on just how that logistical system worked.

How the South was Resupplied

Research by Ernie Chamberlain

Vietnam War: Coming South – by Land, Sea and Air

Under the Geneva Accords of 20 July 1954, large numbers of Việt Minh were “regrouped” from the South to North Vietnam. Over a 300-day period, about 90,000 Việt Minh reportedly regrouped, in phases, to North Vietnam from six assembly areas, including the Hàm Tân - Xuyên Mộc area (10,700) in Bình Thuận - Phước Tuy Provinces. The “regroupees” expected to return to the South after the anticipated communist victory in the national elections in 1956 that had been mandated in the Geneva Accords. “Most of the physically fit Southerners had been placed in the North Vietnam Army (NVA) where they acquired military training and discipline, and political indoctrination. The 305th, 324th, 325th, 330th, and 338th NVA Divisions were filled with Southerners - and remained so until 1959 when infiltration started on a large scale. ... During 1963, the ‘regrouped’ resource waned visibly, and in 1964 apparently dried up; by early 1965 at least three out of four infiltrators were ethnic North Vietnamese.”



The “Trail” System – Land and Sea

By Land

NVA infiltrating reinforcements moved down the Hồ Chí Minh Trail through the NVA Military Region 559's system of "*binh trạm*" (way-stations). "Travel-time" from Vịnh in North Vietnam to the B3 Front in the Central Highlands - in the mid-1960s to the early 1970s- averaged 60 days, and 120 days to the COSVN region farther south. US signals intelligence (SIGINT) closely monitored the flow southward of the infiltration groups – usually about 550-strong, down the Trail system. D440 Battalion – under its infiltration title of "Group 211", travelled down the Trail from North Vietnam "without a break for a full five months", before it reached "the provinces of Bà Rịa-Vũng Tàu and Đồng Nai." In April 1974, US intelligence reported that travel down the Trail from Vịnh in North Vietnam to Lộc An north of Saigon – all by vehicle, had taken 18 days.



33rd NVA Regiment "ralliers" tracing their Trail route for US/RVNAF Intelligence

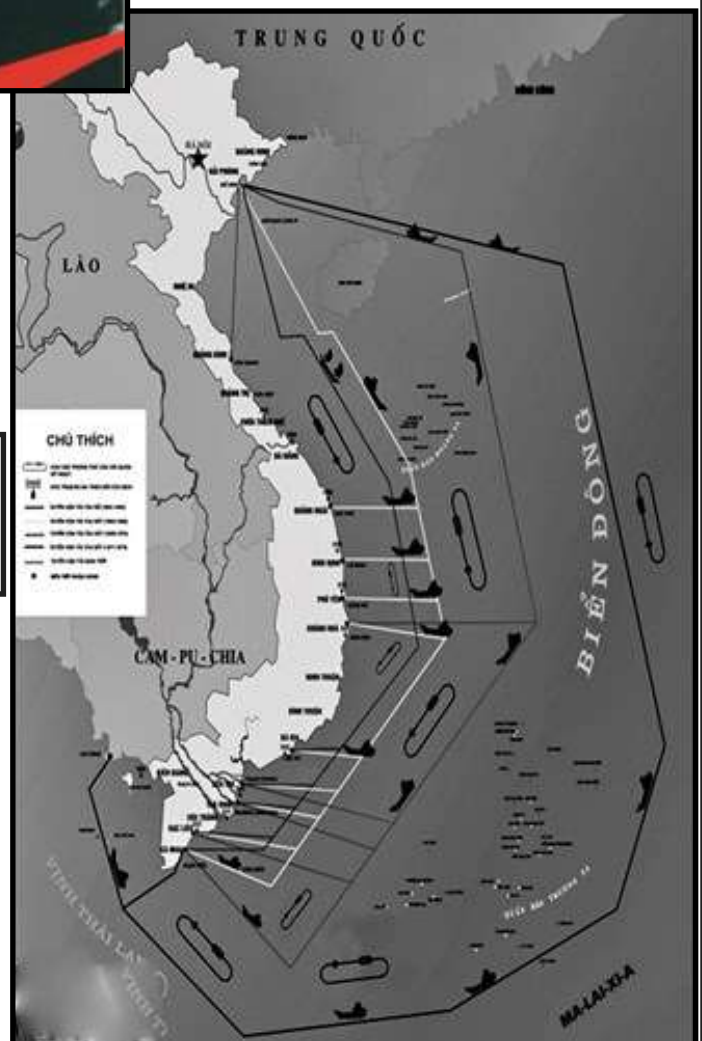
By Sea

By November 1963, the “Sea Trail” from North Vietnam into the South was operating regularly. This included trawlers/“sampan” of the “Un-Numbered Fleet” carrying large tonnage of cargo to Lộc An on the Phước Tuy coast and to Bến Tre in the northern Mekong Delta. Through the VC’s land-based Group 150 in eastern Phước Tuy, materiel off-loaded at Lộc An supplied the Việt Cộng multi-regimental force for the Battle of Bình Giã (18 kilometres north of Bà Rịa Town) in December 1964-January 1965 – including AK-47s, B-40s, and ammunition. From December 1966, larger freighters transported materiel from the North and Chinese ports to the port of Sihanoukville in Cambodia – materiel was then moved in civilian trucks to communist logistic installations on the Cambodia/South Vietnam border until the fall of Prince Norodom Sihanouk in mid-March 1970.



Trawler/“sampan” of the “Un-Numbered Fleet”

Resupply by sea



By Air (very rarely)

In mid-1964, the North Vietnam Intelligence Directorate established the 24-strong B-46 Unit in the Minh Đạm Secret Zone/Long Hải Hills in south-eastern Phước Tuy to control a communist agent network in Saigon. B-46 managed three agent “liaison groups” in Saigon through its couriers, radioing coded reports from the Minh Đạm to Hà Nội using a Chinese 102B HF radio – and later a US GRC-9 HF radio. A cover-name of the “Bà Biên Province Armed Propaganda Unit” was sometimes used by B-46. In June 1966, the B-46 commander – an NVA captain, was killed in a clash with troops of the US 173rd Airborne Brigade in the Minh Đạm area. In November 1966, B-46 moved from Núi Điện Bà Mountain (YS 469535) in the Minh Đạm/ Long Hải Hills to Phước An and Phước Thọ villages in Nhơn Trạch District of Biên Hòa Province. B-46 personnel infiltrated from the North down the “land” MILITARY REGION 559/Hồ Chí Minh Trail, some came by sea (“sampan”/trawler) - and a very small number crossed the Bến Hải River into the South, travelled south to Huế where they caught an Air Vietnam flight to Saigon, and were then escorted to the B-46 location in the Minh Đạm. Source was a B-46 radio operator - Trần Như Bình, who rallied/defected in April 1967.



Phnom Penh

During the rule of Prince Norodom Sihanouk – until ousted by Lon Nol on 18 March 1970 – Hà Nội maintained an active embassy and the National Liberation Front (NLF) had “mission” offices in the Cambodian capital, Phnom Penh. The NLF Mission in Cambodia was raised to embassy status in May 1969. Both embassies facilitated the air movement of senior communist cadre from North Vietnam into Cambodia through Phnom Penh’s Pochentong airport. As noted, Cambodia relations with the Vietnamese communists declined markedly from late March 1970 following the fall of Prince Sihanouk.



Air Vietnam – Douglas C-47 and passengers: early 1960s



VVPPAA NSW ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

VIETNAM VETERANS, PEACEKEEPERS & PEACEMAKERS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

Also known as VVPPAA NSW Inc.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2021

The Annual General Meeting 2021 of the Vietnam Veterans, Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc, will be held at the

**Merrylands RSL Club, Military Rd.,
10.30am Saturday, 22nd May 2021.**

AGENDA

Opening of Meeting by the Chairman

Apologies

Confirm the Minutes of the AGM 2020

Business Arising from the Minutes of the AGM 2021

President's Report

Treasurer's Report

Secretary's Report

Membership Report

ELECTION RESULTS

Appointment of Association Auditors

Life Membership proposals

Other Business by leave of the Chairman

Close of Meeting

Any items for General Business must be in the hands of the Secretary by close of business on Friday 30th April 2021

Next AGM to be held on a date to be confirmed during May 2022

Ron O'Connor JP

Hon. Secretary

NSW Branch

VIETNAM VETERANS', PEACEKEEPERS' & PEACEMAKERS' ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA (NSW BRANCH) INC.

2021 ELECTION OF OFFICE BEARERS

Members wishing to nominate for one or more of the following positions on the NSW Committee are asked to indicate with an (X) alongside those positions. Appointment on the Committee is for a 2 year term.

President (1)

Senior-Vice President (1)

Vice Presidents (2)

Secretary (1)

Treasurer (1)

Committee Members (10)

*Members nominating for a position(s) must be financial for the year 2021.

Details of Nominee:

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No

Details of Seconders (2)

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No.

.....		
Print Name	Signature	Membership No.

NOTE:

All nomination forms must be in the Secretary's hands by COB 30 April 2021.

Should an election be required personal profiles will be requested and ballot papers will be posted. The election results will be declared at the AGM on 22 May 2021.

PSK FINANCIAL SERVICES ARTICLE

Six common mistakes investors make

In the confusing and often seemingly illogical world of investing, investors often make a bunch of mistakes that keeps them from reaching their financial goals.

Mistake #1 Crowd support indicates a sure thing

"I will tell you how to become rich...Be fearful when others are greedy. Be greedy when others are fearful." Warren Buffett

It's normal to feel safer investing in an asset when your neighbours and friends are doing the same and media commentary (whether traditional or social media) is reinforcing the message that it's the place to be. But "safety in numbers" is often doomed to failure. The trouble is that when everyone is bullish and has bought into an asset with general euphoria about it, there is no one left to buy in the face of more positive supporting news but instead there are lots of people who can sell if the news turns sour. Of course, the opposite applies when everyone is pessimistic and bearish and has sold – it only takes a bit of good news to turn the value of the asset back up. So, it turns out that the point of maximum opportunity is when the crowd is pessimistic (or fearful) and the point of maximum risk is when the crowd is euphoric (and greedy).

Mistake #2 Current returns are a guide to the future

"Past performance is not a reliable indicator of future performance." Standard disclaimer

To make it easier to process lots of information, investors often adopt simplifying assumptions, or heuristics. A common one of these is that "recent returns or the current state of the economy and investment markets are a guide to the future." So tough economic conditions and recent poor returns are expected to continue and vice versa for good returns and good economic conditions. The problem with this is that when it's combined with the "safety in numbers" mistake, it results in investors getting in at the wrong time (eg, after an asset has already had strong gains) or getting out at the wrong time (eg, when it is bottoming). In other

words, buying high and selling low. This was most recently evident in March last year with investors getting out after share markets dropped 35% or so, only to find that that this was no guide at all as markets rebounded.

Mistake #3 "Experts" show the way

"There are two kinds of forecasters: those who don't know, and those who don't know they don't know." J.K. Galbraith

Galbraith's comment may be a bit harsh for economists like me - but the reality is that no one has a perfect crystal ball. It's well-known that forecasts as to where the share market, currencies, etc., will be at a particular time have a dismal track record so they need to be treated with care. Usually the grander the forecast - calls for "new eras of permanent prosperity" or for "great crashes ahead" - the greater the need for scepticism as either they get the timing wrong or it's dead wrong.

Market prognosticators suffer from the same psychological biases as everyone else. The key value of investment experts - or at least the good ones - is to provide an understanding of the issues surrounding an investment and to put things in context. This can provide valuable information in terms of understanding the potential for an investment. But if forecasting was so easy then the forecasters would be rich and so would have retired!

Some combination of crowd support for an investment, good initial returns and some sort of expert support (which could come via "influencers" on social media) may lead some to think there is a "free lunch" to be had in investment markets. But as the recent experience with GameStop - which surged more than fivefold in late January as day traders piled in after reading comments on Reddit only to fall back to where it started a week or so later – showed, a lot of money can be lost as a result by those who come late to the party or don't get out in time.

Mistake #4 Shares can't go up in a recession...

"It's so good it's bad, it's so bad it's good." Anon

A common lament around mid-last year and through much of the second half of 2020, after share markets rebounded from their late March pandemic low, was that, "the share market is crazy as the economy is in deep recession and earnings are collapsing!" Of course, shares have since risen even further, economies have started to recover, and earnings are rebounding. The reality is that share markets are forward looking, so when economic data and profits are really weak, the market has already factored it in - as we saw last year with the 35% or so share market plunge that occurred during the first lockdown - and has moved on to anticipating economic recovery. History indicates that the best gains in stocks are usually made when the economic news is still poor, as stocks rebound from being undervalued and unloved, helped by falling interest rates. In other words, things are so bad they are actually good for investors. Of course, the opposite applies at market tops after a sustained economic recovery has left the economy overheated with no spare capacity and rising inflation and so the share market frets about rising rates. Hence things are so good they become bad. This seemingly perverse logic often trips up many investors.

Mistake #5 Looking at your investments too much

Surely checking up on how your investments are doing is a good thing? But the danger is that the more investors are exposed to news around their investments, the more they may see them going down. Whereas share markets have historically generated positive returns more than 60% of the time on a monthly basis and more than 70% of the time on a calendar year basis, on a day-to-day basis it's close to 50/50 as to whether the share market will be up or down.

Being exposed to this very short term "noise" and the chatter around it can cause investors to freeze up or worse can feed on our natural aversion to any reduction in the value of our investments and thus encourage a greater exposure to lower returning but safer investments. The trick is to turn down the noise and have patience. Evidence shows that patient people make better investors because they

can look beyond short-term noise and are less inclined to jump from investment to investment after they have already had their run.

Mistake #6 Trying to time the market

"More money has been lost trying to anticipate and protect from corrections than actually in them." Peter Lynch

In the absence of a tried and tested process, trying to time the market, ie, selling before falls and buying ahead of gains is very difficult. Many of the mistakes referred to above kick in and it can turn out to be a sure way to destroy wealth. Perhaps the best example of this is a comparison of returns if the investor is fully invested in shares versus missing out on the best days. Of course if you can avoid the worst days during a given period you will boost returns but this is very hard to do and many investors only get out after the bad returns have occurred, just in time to miss out on some of the best days and so hurt returns. If you were fully invested in Australian shares from January 1995 you would have returned 9.5% per annum (including dividends but not allowing for franking credits). But if by trying to time the market you miss the 10 best days the return falls to 7.4% p.a. If you miss the 40 best days, it drops to just 3.1% p.a. Hence, it's time in that matters not timing.

Concluding comment

Perhaps the easiest way to overcome many of these mistakes is to have a long-term investment plan that allows for your goals and risk tolerance and then stick to it.

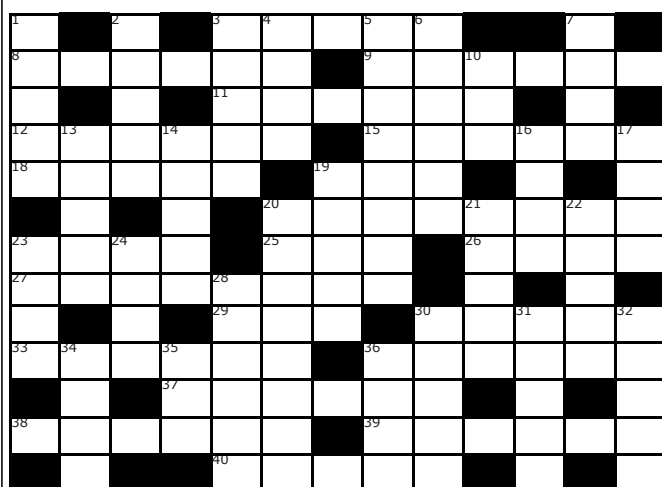
To discuss further or to arrange a time to review your current financial position please contact Paul Messerschmidt at PSK Financial Services on 0414 811 777, 02 9895 8800 or paulm@psk.com.au

Disclaimer: Article first published in 09 Feb, 2021 Dr Shane Oliver, Head of Investment Strategy and Economics and Chief Economist, AMP Capital. Provided PSK Financial Services

PSK Financial Services Group Pty Ltd (ABN 24 134 987 205) and Paul Messerschmidt are Authorised Representatives of Charter Financial Planning Ltd (AFSL 234666), Australian Financial services Licensee and Australian Credit Licensee

Information contained in this article is general in nature. It does not take into account your objectives, needs or financial situation. You need to consider your financial situation before making any decisions based on this information.

CROSSWORD CORNER



ACROSS

3. Emerge violently
8. Alter
9. Small wave
11. Venerate
12. Weakened tide
15. Hotel client
18. Plane driver
19. Owned
20. Mindless neglect
23. Waste mine process
25. Adams mate
26. Mine entrance
27. Blocked (movie)
29. Decimal interval
30. Inherited units
33. Hold for reward
36. Sea soldier
37. Distinguishing title
38. Stay
39. Lease period
40. Indian maids

DOWN

1. Rid
2. Water course
3. Eagle-like tern
4. River grass
5. Ready
6. Rant on
7. Too
10. House animal
13. Holy book
14. BBQ utensils
16. Regretted
17. Nidus (bird)
19. Safe place
20. Ritual
21. A level
22. Warning signal
23. Old wound mark
24. Soon
28. Perfect place
30. Mixed sports
31. Nest
32. Cut ties
34. Top
35. Small ocean
36. Imagined thing

Solution
Next Issue

DECEMBER 2020
SOLUTION



THE UNKNOWN COMIC

I decided to sell my vacuum cleaner—it was just gathering dust.

Ed and Norma had met, married and lived on the Sunshine Coast every year, and every year Ed would say on their anniversary, “We should take a ride in that sightseeing helicopter”. But every year Norma would remind him of the cost ending each time with, “That ride costs \$80 bucks, and \$80 bucks is \$80 bucks”. Every time he asked, birthdays, anniversaries, but it was still the same argument, “That ride costs \$80 bucks and \$80 bucks is \$80 bucks”. Finally, at age 75 Ed says, “Norma, I’m 75 years old. If I don’t ride that helicopter, I might never get another chance ” To this, Norma replied, “ Ed, that helicopter ride is \$80 bucks, and, \$80 bucks is \$80 bucks ”. The pilot overheard their conversation and offered to take them for a spin for free on the condition that neither of them made a sound, so Ed and Norma agreed and settled into the chopper, Ed grinning from ear to ear. The pilot went into overdrive twisting the chopper this way and that trying every stunt to make one of them break the silence. They never did. Once on the ground the pilot got out and said to Ed, “By golly, I did everything I could to get you to yell out, but you didn’t. I’m impressed!”. To which Ed replied, “Well, to tell you the truth I almost said something when Norma fell out, but you know \$80 bucks is \$80 bucks.

I have requested a glass coffin for my burial, and if it happens, remains to be seen.

When the old codger was asked if he liked his new hearing aids, he said he liked them very much, then added, “I’ve changed my last will twice!”.

When my son said he wanted a dog for Christmas, I told him that we are having turkey, like every other Christmas.

Sometimes someone unexpected comes into your life out of nowhere, makes your head boil and changes you forever....

We call these people politicians.

And, I remember being able to get up without making sound effects...Good times.



JOIN US AND BECOME A MEMBER

We continually strive for the rights of veterans and their families, whenever changes to the laws that govern and recognise their service threatens to diminish just and fair compensation for those that are sent to fight Australia's wars.

We achieve our aims by continued vigilance of government proposals that affect the Acts of parliaments protecting veterans rights and entitlements by; assuring that DVA uphold and enable due process of claims to the letter of those laws; by lobbying government and ministers where the laws could be improved for the benefit of veterans and their families.

Each individual is ineffective when lobbying governments for change, or to amend an injustice. Together as an organisation, with a strong membership base we are able to, and have done, improve pathways for better treatment of veterans, and those still serving.

We survive as an organisation on the strength of our membership, and even if you have won the battle with Veterans Affairs (DVA), there is always the risk of changes in Government policy which may erode benefits and pensions or changes to eligibility entitlements. We are here for you!

We encourage membership from all veterans, service and ex-service members, as well as war-widows and their families together with all those who support our objectives.

The following form will give you the opportunity to seek membership of the VVFA at any of our State Branches and/or Sub-Branches, of your choosing, from the Branch lists found on our websites,

(<http://www.vvfa.org.au>) (<http://www.vvfagranville.org>), or as listed in our Newsletters.

Please complete this form in clear printed definition in the boxes applicable for your personal details. Naturally, all privacy issues and existing policy concerning your details will be strictly enforced and never passed, copied or sold to any other entity. It is in your interest not to attempt to complete the form on-line as this method is currently unavailable.

Do you wish to become a member? All you need to do is to complete the following information and send it to the State Branch of your choice as listed on page 72 and you will be sent an application form.

PREFERRED BRANCH/SUB-BRANCH

--

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

STREET ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS [PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY]

--

SIGNATURE

DATE

--	--



VVFA/VVPPAA SCHOLARSHIPS NEWS

AVCAT

This Association, which is affiliated with the Vietnam Veterans Federation of Australia, has for many years, sponsored Scholarships for children or grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans and also Peacekeepers and Peacemakers who are deserving and in necessitous circumstances, to achieve a better level of education. The Scholarship will help the recipients who may have otherwise been unable to achieve their educational goals. This is the least we can do for the children of the veterans who have proudly served their country.

Presently the Association sponsors three (3) Scholarships – Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship, Phil Thompson OAM Scholarship and Graham Walker AM Scholarship.

These scholarships are administered on our behalf by the “Australian Veterans’ Children Assist Trust (AVCAT)”, who also administer other sponsored scholarships. Applications for all sponsored scholarships administered by AVCAT will open from 18 August each year and close on 31 October of that year and will be advertised by AVCAT through the Federation’s Newsletter and other media outlets, prior to August.

Those wishing to make general inquiries about our, and other available AVCAT administered scholarships, and the eligibility requirements of those scholarships, may do so at any time by contacting AVCAT whose details can be found on page 78 of this issue.

Our sponsored scholarships are mainly funded from the proceeds of the “Association’s Annual Raffle”, so please continue to support the Raffle so we can continue to assist our Veterans’ children/grandchildren with Scholarships for many more years to come. Your support in the past is very much appreciated.

The following are progress and final reports of our Scholarship recipients:

Mr Ryan Balkin (2017 recipient of the “Phil Thompson OAM Scholarship”) – Studying Bachelor of Science and Bachelor of Laws, at Western Sydney University. Ryan has now completed his Scholarship and has recently commenced work as a Legal Assistant with a local Barrister, with the prospect of being a researcher for another Barrister. Over the three years of his Scholarship Ryan has attained very high grades and the 2020 Annual Review shows that he attained 2 High Distinctions and 1 Distinction. Well done Ryan and we all wish you well for the future and hope you will successfully meet the challenges ahead.

Ryan has written a thank you note which says, in part, that he hoped that the Association members had a good Christmas and New Year. He thanked the Association for the continued support over the years that allowed him continue his academic pursuits. He mentioned that 2020 was a challenging year because of the Covid-19 pandemic, that it affected his studies and daily activities and that these challenges would have affected him more had it not been for the Association’s support. He believed that his performance at University was amazing in achieving a Distinction in Law of Associations and High Distinctions in both Molecular Medicine and Biological Adaptations to Climate Change. He feels that it is a challenge to maintain his academic standards and do well in his job, but his is coping. Well done Ryan and we are proud of your achievements.

Ms Kirsti Young (2018 recipient of the “Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship”) – Studying Bachelor of Education (Primary) at Swinburne University of Technology. Kirsti has now completed her Scholarship. Kirsti completed her undergraduate studies and is now a qualified

Teacher. She received several awards for student achievement and was announced Swinburne volunteer of the year 2020. The 2020 Annual Review shows that she attained 1 Ungraded Pass.

Kirsti has written a thank you note in which she says, in part, that she hoped everyone is doing well since her last letter. She also mentioned that she had been experiencing some adversities in her private life and those of her children over the past few years and during her studies. Despite these adversities and ongoing difficulties, which included the Covid restrictions, she managed to complete her studies and graduated in December 2020. She received several awards for Student Achievement and announced as a Swinburne Volunteer of the year for 2020. Kirsti offered her sincere thanks to the Association for the assistance and financial support provided to her over the last 3 years, and that it has made a significant difference in the lives of both her and her children. She expressed her heartfelt thanks to the Association.

The fact that Kirsti has been able to achieve her goal to be a school teacher, in spite of all the adversities that have befallen her over the years, the difficulties that still confront her and having to care for her children on her own, has shown us that with a lot of determination you can still achieve your dreams and ambitions. I believe that I can confidently say on behalf of all our members and readers that it has been a great pleasure to have been able to assist Kirsti in achieving her goal. This is what makes our sponsorship of these Scholarships worthwhile. She is a shining light for others to follow. Very well done Kirsti, we are all proud of your achievements and we wish you and your family well for the future and in all areas of your lives.

Emily Hespe (2019 recipient of the “Graham Walker AM Scholarship”) – Studying Bachelor of Performance (Deans Scholar) at University of Wollongong: Emily is continuing her studies during 2021, her results thus far:

2019 Mid-Year Review attained:

Distinctions, 1 Credit, 1 Satisfactory

2019 Annual Review attained: 3

Distinctions,

1 Credit

2020 Mid-Year Review attained: 2

Distinctions, 2 Credits

2020 Annual Review attained: 3

Distinctions,

1 Pass

Well done Emily.

We have two new Scholarship recipients for 2021, in place of Ryan Balkin and Kirsti Young:

Harrison Saunders (recipient of the “Phil Thompson OAM Scholarship”) to study Bachelor of Politics, Philosophy and Economics at the University of Western Australia. Harrison’s Step Father is a Vietnam Veteran.

Jin Ju Redding (recipient of the “Tim McCombe OAM Scholarship”) to study Bachelor of Science at University of Tasmania. Jin Ju’s Grandfather is a Vietnam Veteran.

We will report on the progress of their studies in future issues of the Newsletter.

As always, we are extremely proud of the achievements of all those we have supported with Scholarships over the years and look forward to continuing our support of eligible veterans’ children.

William (Bill) Roberts OAM, JP
National President – VVFA
Senior Vice President – VVPPAA
Director - AVCAT

REUNIONS & NOTICES

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA
FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

NATIONAL HEAD OFFICE (VETERANS SUPPORT CENTRE)

VVFA HQ	National President: William (Bill) Roberts OAM JP	Email: vvfanatpres@vvfa.org.au
PO Box 170, (8 Mary St.)	National Secretary: Ron O'Connor JP	Email: vvfanatsec@vvfa.org.au
Granville, NSW 2142	Tel: 02 9682 1788	Web: http://www.vvfa.org.au
	Fax: 02 9682 6134	

VIETNAM VETERANS FEDERATION OF AUSTRALIA
FULL STATE AND SUB-BRANCH LISTING

Currently in the ADF, Transitioning, a younger Veteran?

We invite you to join our association and become a member.

Simply select your preferred Branch or Sub-Branch from the list above, complete the form on page 65, and mail it, or email a copy, to the address indicated.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS FORM

SURNAME

FIRST NAME

SECOND NAME

--	--	--

OLD DETAILS [PRINT CLEARLY]

OLD ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

NEW DETAILS [PRINT CLEARLY]

NEW ADDRESS

--

SUBURB/TOWN

STATE

POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE

MOBILE PHONE

OTHER PHONE

--	--	--

EMAIL ADDRESS [PRINT CLEARLY]

--

YOUR SIGNATURE

MEMBERSHIP NUMBER

Complete all sections and post to:

The Secretary
 VVPPAA NSW
 PO Box 170
 Granville
 NSW 2142

OFFICE USE ONLY

MEMBERSHIP REGISTRY

DETAILS CHANGED

DATE: ____/____/____

INITIALS: _____

VETERANS MORTALITY REPORT

As you are aware, Vietnam Veterans are dying at a rate higher than while on Active Service. This situation is perhaps a natural phenomenon compared to non-serving members of the public, who might die of an illness which is equally distributed through the population of the same age group.

Vietnam Veterans Peacekeepers & Peacemakers Association of Australia (NSW Branch) Inc has for many years maintained records of the deaths of Vietnam Veterans and the cause of death if known. This has proved invaluable regarding the health standards of Vietnam Veterans when compared to the general public.

We seek your assistance in reporting the death of Vietnam Veterans, past or recent, to allow the Federation to expand and preserve it's record base.

Kindly circulate a copy of this page through your RSL Club, Unit or Corps reunions and meetings and raise it as an issue. The information gained from these reports will greatly assist all Vietnam Veterans and their families regarding future claims for benefits.

Please print clearly

VETERANS DETAILS

SURNAME FIRST NAME SERVICE NUMBER

--	--	--

SVN UNIT/S TOUR DATES

--	--

CAUSE OF DEATH (If known)

--

SR Service Related UNK Unknown S Suicide O Other)

DATE OF DEATH (If known) LOCATION AT TIME OF DEATH

	(TOWN)	(STATE)
--	--------	---------

YOUR NAME

--

SUBURB/TOWN STATE POST CODE

--	--	--

HOME PHONE MOBILE PHONE SIGNATURE

--	--	--

RETURN FORM TO: The Welfare Officer
VVPAA NSW Branch
PO Box 170
Granville NSW 2142

Phone: 02 9682 1788
Fax : 02 9682 6134
Email: secretary@vfvgranville.org

MERCHANDISE FOR SALE



SCHOLARSHIPS

FOR THE CHILDREN & GRANDCHILDREN

AVCAT OF AUSTRALIAN VETERANS

The Australian Veterans' Children Assistance Trust is a national independent charity helping the children and grandchildren of ex-service men and women to a better future through tertiary education. Through the generous support of the Australian Government Department of Veterans' Affairs, ex-service organisations, corporate sponsors and private donors, we provide scholarships which assist recipients to obtain the tertiary qualification they need for their chosen career.

One of the scholarships administered by AVCAT is the VVPPAA Scholarship, specifically available for the children and grandchildren of Vietnam Veterans. Our proud association has seen many successful recipients achieve tertiary qualifications and reach their goals, that erstwhile may not have been available to them. We hope to continue this proud heritage long into the future with your help. It is through your generous support of this organization, and valued donations, that we keep the hopes of children alive.



Some of our recent recipients and successful achievers in their chosen fields

"It means the world to me that someone I don't know cares about my education and believes I have potential."

2014 Recipient

2019 scholarships open in August 2018 and close at the end of October 2018. See below for more.

"Without the scholarship, achieving my goals would be almost impossible. The financial support has provided me the opportunity to study and without your support I would simply not be in the position I am in today, and for that I will be forever grateful". Recent recipient.

You are eligible to apply for a scholarship with AVCAT if you answer yes to the following questions:

- Are you a child or a grandchild of an Australian veteran? A veteran is a person who has rendered service as a member of the Australian Defence Force.
- Are you an Australian citizen or permanent resident?
- Are you enrolled, or planning to enroll, in tertiary studies for a minimum of one year?
- Will you be studying full-time next year?
- Are you or will you be eligible for Centrelink's Youth Allowance?
- Are you under 25 years of age?

To apply you should contact AVCAT and request to be added to the expressions of interest register.

Phone: 02 9213 7999

Web: avcat@dva.gov.au

PO Box K978 Haymarket, NSW 1240

Vale

Major General the Honourable
Michael Jeffery
AC AO (Mil), CVO, MC
(Retd).



Born in Wiluna, in regional WA, Major General Jeffery graduated from the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1958. He then served in Malaya, Papua New Guinea, Borneo and Vietnam.

His Vietnam service was with 8th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment, as OC B Company. For this service he was awarded a Military Cross.

Amongst his many postings was commanding officer of the Special Air Service Regiment, and finally Assistant Chief of the General Staff Materiel.

He became Governor of Western Australia in 1993.

On his retirement as Governor in 2000 he established in Perth, a not-for-profit research institute - Future Directions International (FDI) - whose object is to examine longer term issues facing Australia.

On 20 December 2000 he was awarded an Honorary Doctorate of Technology by Curtin University.

On 11 August 2003 he was sworn in as the twenty-fourth Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia

For his services to the State, he was appointed a Companion in the Order of Australia, a Commander of the Royal Victorian Order and a Citizen of Western Australia.

In retirement, as Australia's first National Soils Advocate, he was an ardent proponent of conserving and improving the land.

The Governor-General, His Excellency General the Honourable David Hurley AC DSC (Retd), has made the following statement at the news of the passing of Major General the Honourable Michael Jeffery.

“Linda and I are saddened at the news of Michael Jeffery’s passing.

“On behalf of all Australians, our thoughts are with Marlena and the whole Jeffery family. As a nation, we give thanks for Michael’s extraordinary lifetime of service. ■

Please consider leaving a bequest in your will

Every Veteran deserves a lifestyle and better treatment than is currently available. Every Veteran should be able to successfully attain their rights to pensions and just compensation.

Yet we still receive veterans unaware of their rights, what they may be entitled to, and where and how to apply or enter a claim.

Through your Will, you have the power to help us achieve our goals. Help surviving veterans, and those that follow them, to receive their true entitlements.

Through your Will you have the power to make a difference. Any gift you bequest to our Association, no matter how large or small, will assist a fellow veteran.

You don't need to be wealthy or have tens of thousands of dollars to make a difference to the lives of veterans and those who follow us. Many people leave amounts both large and small through their wills to our association.

Combined each amount assists our association to carry on the vital support network we provide to the veteran community.

Operation Life



Register Now!!

CALL 1800 011 046

OPEN
Veterans & Families
Counselling
ARMS

Operation Life workshops emphasis is on suicide prevention – they aim to help members of the services and veteran community to recognise someone who might be thinking of suicide, and link them with appropriate assistance. There are 3 types of workshops

- Suicide alertness for everyone (Safetalk) ½ day presentation
- Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST) 2 day skills course
- ASIST Tune Up ½ day refresher workshop

Workshops are open to anyone concerned about veterans, their family, friends and mates in the service and veteran community. Welfare, Compensation Advocates and other helpers from ESO's are welcome and encouraged to attend.

FORMERLY

Veterans and Veterans Families
Counselling Service
VVCS



Last Post





Last Post





Last Post



But each one, man by man, has won imperishable praise!

Each has won a glorious grave - not that sepulchre of earth wherein they lie, but the living tomb of everlasting remembrance wherein their glory is enshrined.

Remembrance that will live on the lips, that will blossom in the deeds of their countrymen the world over. For the whole earth is the sepulchre of heroes.

Monuments may rise and tablets be set up to them in their own land, but on far-off shores there is an abiding memorial that no pen or chisel has traced; it is graven, not on stone or brass, but on the living heart of humanity. Take these men for your example. Like them, remember that prosperity can be only for the free, that *freedom* is the sure possession of those alone who have courage to defend it. Pericles

PLEASE NOTE

We make every endeavour to ensure the accuracy of all names published in "The Last Post". If any omission or error has been made we apologise unreservedly...please contact the editor if you feel an error has been made.

MEMBER DISCOUNTS

The following businesses are offering discounts to members of The Vietnam Veterans Federation.

MOTOR VEHICLE SERVICES

CARNEEDS Pty Ltd
152 Parramatta Rd
STANMORE

Prptr: Robert Stenta
Ph: 9519 1441

10% discount

On mechanical repairs & competitive prices on tyres and batteries.

To all Vietnam Veterans Federation Members.

MALCOLM MOTORS

Automotive Service Specialist. All mechanical repairs & servicing.

15% Discount for members on services and repairs.

JOE CARE

**603-605 Parramatta Rd
Leichhardt NSW
MTA Lic. # 42198**

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carhelper.com.au

New car buyer's advocate

Buy a discounted new car over the phone and have it home-delivered

No salesmen, just independent advice from a Wheels

magazine car reviewer

Contact James Whitbourn
Motoring journalist & new car buyer's advocate
james@carhelper.com.au
0403 892 897

Service cost of \$165 reduced to \$110 for members

MOTOR CYCLE ACCESSORIES

Motor Cycle Accessories Supermarket

Head Office.
321 Parramatta Rd
Auburn NSW
(02) 9648 1400
www.mcas.com.au

CITY: 9261 5182.
LIVERPOOL: 9601 8276.
CARINGBAH 9574 5100
PENRITH 4737 6100

10% Discount except helmets and tyres

BATTERIES

POWER PRODUCTS
For all your power needs

**BATTERIES
SOLAR POWER
INVERTERS
GENERATORS**

Motor Cycle battery specialists

Russell is offering 15% discount to VVF Members on Batteries . 5% on Solar products, Inverters & Chargers 10%

3/3 Sovereign Pl
South Windsor
Ph: (02) 4577 7761
Fax: (02) 4577 7768

Ashfield Battery Centre
110 FREDERICK STREET
ASHFIELD, NSW, 2131
02 9798-6166
GEORGE KAWAUCHI
(owner)

We sell:

CAR, TRUCK, MARINE,
DEEP CYCLE, GOLF
CART,
MOBILITY, MOTOR
CYCLE BATTERIES.
CHARGERS, SOLAR
PANELS, BOOSTER
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INVERTERS,
TERMINALS, BATTERY
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30pm Mon-Fri
OPEN SAT FROM: 9.30am-
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Closed Sundays and public
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10% Discount to veterans

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Tell them you are a member and they will send us a donation

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Waratah Floor Coverings

473 Burwood Rd
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Ph: (02) 9759 6511

Ask for Special Rate

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Motor Inn Ltd**

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Must have Golden Chain Card. Its Free When You Call The Number Above And Ask

Present your Federation membership card and ask for a "Golden Link" card to be issued.

There is a **10% discount** on room rates
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