



# RAM-RAMBLINGS

Volume 13 Edition 2, December 2016

## *From the Presidents Pen,*

Hello to all Rammers,

Just a short RR this time around with a nice story at the end about Aussies who have turned to Bar-Flies in Vung Tau. It made me wonder how many of the later Middle East War Veterans will go and finally settle in Baghdad or Kandahar in a few years time. I can just imagine a nice little bar in Kakar St or just off the Bamiyan-Kandahar Highway by an ex-ASLAV crewie, catering for Ex-Pat Aussies. Full on Burkah Barmaids serving Bundy OP and OJ and lamb shaslik swords on the grill in the corner with Kabuli Pilao in pots on the stove.



I have only recently returned from that part of the world. Four weeks teaching English in North Kazakhstan with a visa renewal trip into Kyrgyzstan's capital Bishkek then time in the old Kazakh Capital Almaty on the middle weekend. I renewed some Kyrgyz acquaintances and made new ones. I keep meeting incredible people, the latest being the # 1 re-enactment Mongol warrior for the World Nomad Games. He is also a blade-smith, furniture maker and hunter. He manufactures Mongol bows, armour and furniture from Ibex horns, steel rings and walnut timber. Quite a craftsman. "Halil" is pictured in his armour on his Mongol Pony.

I also had time to wander the beautiful city of Almaty. Kazakh and Kyrgyz involvement in WW2 and Afghanistan fighting as part of the Soviet Army was substantial. The 316th Rifle Division of the Kazakh/Kyrgyz area, under General Panfilov, was at the forefront of the battle for Moscow in December 1941. There is a magnificent memorial in the huge central park in Almaty to this involvement. Panfilov's words on the memorial are famous "Russia is a huge country but we will not retreat into it because Moscow is at our backs" On the 16th November, twenty-eight soldiers from the division's 1075th Regiment destroyed eighteen German tanks while fighting to the last man. This was typical of the actions of the Division. Panfilov was killed on 17th, he was later posthumously awarded the title Hero of the Soviet

Union (equivalent to our VC). The Division are still referred to as Panfilovtsy or "Panfilov's Men".

A smaller but by no means less imposing memorial is close by. It was erected by the mothers of the soldiers of Almaty who were killed in the Afghan war (the memorial base - Right). There are 72 names on the memorial. Every city or large town I visit in Kazakhstan has such a memorial. I am also fortunate to have as a friend, the President of the Afghan War Veterans Association in Kokshetau, where I teach English at a small private school.



December 9th was the 50th anniversary of my graduation from OCS as a army officer. I was 18 years, 4 months and 28 days old. I believe I hold the record, post WW2 of the youngest regular commissioned officer in the Australian Army.

This RR will arrive just on or very early in the New Year so I wish all the members of the Association and their families, the very best wishes for 2017.

Keep on Ramming  
Cheers, Warren "Noddy" Feakes

**Around the Water Cart:** Furphies and other sometimes good useful but often useless information acquired, scrounged and stolen by your Secretary and others.



Artillery adds dignity to what would otherwise be a vulgar brawl.  
*Frederick the Great*



Pleasingly for all current Black Sheep no one accept their final posting to the Great Gun Park, over the last four months.



***WE SHALL REMEMBER THEM, ALL OUR LOST RAMMERS - LEST WE FORGET***

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### **December 2016 - From the Battery at Townsville:**

**Battery News:** The 'best' awards for 2016:

Best Soldier:	GNR Oliver Humphreys
Best JNCO:	BDR Clinton Martin
Best SNCO:	SGT Brendan Murray
Best Young Officer:	LT Fergus Roberts.

Each awardee was presented with a copy of the Association book, 107 Battery 1965-1971, Australia, Malaysia & Vietnam by Association member and former Battery BSM, John Wilson. Thanks again John for presenting the awards to these fine young Rammers, yet again. It is also pleasing to note that Sgt Brendan Murray attended Reunion R16 The Entrance in April this year. Clearly he picked up a few pointers from those more mature Rammers present!

**From Battery Commander Major James Casey:** Fellow Rammers, this will be my last opportunity to write to you as the incumbent Battery Commander; with the beginning of 2017 begins my new posting as the Operations Officer of 4th Regiment RAA, and my handover to the incoming Battery Commander, Major Brendan Perkins. Brendan joins the Rammers after a stint at the Directorate of Soldier Career Management – Army, where he has spent two years tirelessly shattering the dreams of many a gunner hoping for a posting to Brisbane. Brendan is well placed to take over the Battery, ably supported by the incoming Battery Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer David Cleland, who comes to us from the School of Artillery.

Since I last wrote, the Battery has remained busy. We deployed to High Range on Exercise NADZAB for two weeks, where we fired a number of missions and I was subjected to my first BC's fireplan by the Commanding Officer. I'm pleased to report that all went well, and that the Battery met the challenge as always. The exercise finished with the conduct of danger close missions, and the dedication of the 'Captain Bryce Duffy Observation Post' on Ant Hill. Bryce was the Assistant Operations Officer of the Regiment when he was deployed to Afghanistan to replace an injured fellow officer, and was killed in an 'insider attack' in his Forward Operating Base at Sorkh Bed in October 2011. Immediately prior to the dedication, the Duffy family joined the Regiment for the direct fire competition, in time to see one of the Battery's detachment's flip a car onto its roof after a direct hit! BDR Wyatt's A Detachment was declared the winning detachment from across the Regiment, and he collected his prize (the RSM had put a carton on no-one flipping the car) with a huge grin on his face.

Just over a month later, the Regiment deployed on Exercise BROLGA'S RUN, the Brigade exercise at High Range. Working with our supported infantry unit, the First Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR); the Battery completed the exercise supporting live fire company attacks for 1 RAR, 2 RAR and the Second Cavalry Regiment (2 Cav Regt), whose tanks are newly arrived from Darwin. Having responsibility to support 1 RAR's attack with VIPs in attendance, the supporting fireplan was well executed by the observer, BDR Clint

Martin (Best JNCO 2016) and the gunline; once 'continuous fire' was ordered, the rate of fire was awesome. No sooner had the echoes of the last round exploding faded, the whistle of the next volley of rounds pierced the cacophony of the attack. It was extremely fitting as my last fireplan as the BC.

Being the year's end, we also enjoyed the opportunity to promote a number of Rammers, and recognise those who have performed admirably. While we did not manage to secure the title of champion battery for 2016, the reputation of the Battery remains head & shoulders above our sister batteries. In the two years I have commanded, no other Battery has deployed on every field exercise in its own right – both 106 & 109 Batteries have had to combine their CPs, gunlines or observer parties to get out the door in good order. This has not been easy, and where it could have been used as an excuse for a poor performance or a number of mistakes, the Rammers have insisted on setting the highest standard, which our sister batteries have failed to meet on a number of occasions. It speaks volumes that the Rammers, despite all the challenges and difficulties laid before them, and more than enough room to make excuses, have set the bar for others to aspire to. The Rammers have persistently led the way for the Regiment, and while the title of 'champions' eludes us (improvement in sports competitions is a key handover note for Major Perkins), the reputation persists – even outside of 4 Regt, gunners remark that 107 Battery has a reputation for getting the job done, and doing it exceedingly well.

2017 will be an extremely busy year; since joining the Regiment four years ago, it is very much my experience that we are getting busier each year, and leave breaks are both few and far between. Luckily, our Christmas break offers us the opportunity for time with our families and friends before the challenges of 'readying' for deployment begin. As many of you would have learned from my previous articles, the Army now uses a 12 month, three year cycle between its three combat brigades where they are either 'readying' for deployment, 'ready' for deployment, or in 'reset' after a period of readiness. Our Regiment is currently 'readying', preparing to support scheduled operations in the Middle East and on standby for short-notice deployments around the globe. Our Battery will contribute to the Army's short-notice deployment capability that will be 'online' later in 2017, requiring much of the Regiment's attention and resources to focus on the Rammers' preparations. This will include some time aboard the Navy's new amphibious ships, HMA Ships *Canberra* and *Adelaide*.

As my time comes to hand over to the new command team in January, I am thankful for the support, enthusiasm and dedication of the Battery, and similarly the Association. I've never experienced a battery association as close as ours, and I hope it is more widespread than I have known. My final contribution as Battery Commander would not be complete without sincere and heartfelt thanks to my Battery, and my command team. The success of the Rammers during my tenure lies squarely on their shoulders, and for their support, dedication and guidance, I cannot be more grateful. In particular, my Battery Sergeant Major, Warrant Officer Jason Bourke, has worked tirelessly and with dedication for the soldiers of the Battery. His forethought and frank opinions are often the sole reasons for our success. We wouldn't be where we are without you, Jason. I am forever grateful - thank you.

I wish you all a Merry Christmas, a Happy New Year, and a fulfilling holiday season with your families and friends. We pray for a speedy return for the only Rammer currently on operations, Captain Jackson Stanhope. I look forward to hearing what the Battery and its Association are doing well into the future, albeit from afar.

Ubique Major James Casey Battery Commander  
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**Reunion 2017 Malaysia:** The long-awaited return to Malaysia is to take place in September 2017, exactly fifty years after the Battery's original deployment to Terendak. A specially planned relaxed two-week tour commencing in Singapore, travelling north with special high-light stops and tours at Malacca, Port Dickson, Kuala Lumpur, Cameron Highlands, Ipoh and Penang. A holding deposit of \$100 will secure your place now. The tour will be travelling in two coaches with around 24 in each coach for comfort and space to spread out and not be cramped. Arrange your own air travel to Singapore and return home from Kula Lumpur. The Reunion Tour will look after the rest except for some meals. Already 41 have registered comprising the Beamans, Bains, Burnetts, Eatons and party, Feakes, Jones Bryan and son, Jones (Trevor and Margret), Lenards, Nathans, Bauldy Moat, Patersons and party, Shellys, Simpsons, and Tapps. So get in quick to reserve your position on this history making, relaxes, friendly, exciting Reunion and Grand Tour of Malaysia. See our

website [www.107fdbty.com](http://www.107fdbty.com) for full details and the Registration or contact Jon Eaton (mobile 0402 248 716) with questions. Final dates and price will be available shortly, to be posted on the Association's website and advised direct to all those who have registered with their holding deposit.

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**Castle Hill RSL Sub Branch visited the AWM** in Canberra late November, at the invitation of the Director, Brendan Nelson. A full bus load of us made the journey and what an afternoon we had. Group guided tours of various exhibits and then we participated in the closing ceremony- very stirring. This visit also afforded me the opportunity to place a poppy at the Wall of Remembrance against the name of my wife's uncle, a decorated Squadron Leader, killed in the Korean War. One small tribute to a very brave man. We have been invited to visit the AWM storage facility next year and that I think is something to look towards. Hope finds you and your well and that you all enjoy the festive season. Best wishes, Ken Walsh

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**Your Water Cart Operator was in contact with life serving member, Tim Gommers** mid-December.



Those at R14 Darwin will remember Tim as the young Lieutenant leading the team from the Battery from Townsville, as guests of the Association.

That is Tim on the left with Brendan and Brett at Reunion 2014 Darwin. Brendan is now a Lance Jack, so he clearly learnt something from us older Rammers, at Darwin.

Tim has been posted and moved on from 107 Battery and is now a Forward Observer (they are now called Joint Fires Team) with our sister Battery, 108 Battery, working as a FO with the 2 RAR component on HMAS Canberra, the new RAN Docking Ship Heavy. As such Tim and the rest of the Army component on board are on call to provide humanitarian aid plus to be part of any Ready Reaction force, if required, in support of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) operations.

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**Personal cancer Update from Lindsay "Warrie" Walpole:** Firstly, I'm now in the position of remission with my cancer. In July, I had to have Pers and Cat scans to see how the Chemo went towards killing off the cancer bugs. Well, I was supposed to have a neck, chest, abdomen, pelvic scans but, they gave me a head scan which revealed that I had a 10mm cerebral aneurysm. On the 23 Sep 16, I underwent a cerebral coiling procedure for those that want to know how many coils it took fill the aneurysm, it took 18 coils to do the job. No side effects or troubles so far, that's about all I can give you for now. GO THE SWANNIES.

*On'Ya Warrie....From Noddy...*

And Warrie's last ever (at his request) word: *"DEAR MR. MURPHY, we are pleased to inform you that the biopsy of the redness on your penis showed it was not cancerous. It was lipstick. We deeply regret your amputation."*

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**From Bo Plenty,** I was in Canberra to visit family and it coincided with 18<sup>th</sup> August. I went to Parliament House for the reception and next day to the service at our Memorial site on ANZAC AVENUE a very moving service Cosgrove spoke with much dignity and a lot of common sense.

Regards Bo & Maria



Maria and I had only returned from Vietnam and Cambodia on the 12<sup>th</sup> August so saddled up on 15<sup>th</sup> for Canberra. It was my great privilege to lay a wreath at the Long Tan Cross in Vietnam BEFORE all the bullshit started, see attached photo. The lady with me had family who served in Vietnam. It begs the question “who was the bloody genius who planned to have 1000 plus attend the Long Tan Cross on the 18<sup>th</sup> August?” There is not enough room for more than about 100 let alone 1000.



Bo reported that he and Maris visited Nui Dat. At the village that now occupies the bottom end of Luscombe Field, is surrounded by mature trees. Left Bo & Maria are standing on what remains of the old airstrip that is now the main road through the village

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 In an email **'PJ' Smith reports:** *I met with Allan Henderson last week and he kindly lent me his copy of the 107 book. A lot of good memories, interesting pics, characters, etc. As a Regt Surveyor in HQ Bty I spent a lot of time cloistered within the FSCC/Arty Tac rather than out and about surveying as 131 Div Loc Bty did the lion's share of that work. I do recall doing survey for one FSB along Route 15 which was to be occupied by 107, my memory fails me here but it could have been FSB Tess? My other strong memories of involvement with 107 were:*

- *Calibrating all guns and quite a few spare barrels under the watchful eye of Syd Farrow (BSM HQ), probably including Ron Haskard and Bill Bostock, and*
- *FOing with a group from C Coy 2RAR (led by C Coy 2IC Harry Hanaveld?) and a Company of a local RF battalion, in the Hat Dich area of the 2RAR AO. I think there were 17 Aussies all up. I was with Peter Dunn and the other FO Acks with the Vietnamese coys included Sid Armistead and Dave Holmes along with a 2RAR MFC. Dave H. always broke me up on the radio with his accent and 'turn of phrase'. Years later of course I was to be a Gun SGT in 107 and even later still BSM. Fond memories! Cheers, PJ Peter Smith.*

Hilton replied: *We occupied FSB Tess, our second major deployment when we moved by air a relative short distance from FSB Nola, on 11 June 1970 then returned to from Tess to Nui Dat on 29 June. Tess was relative flat and open just north off Route 15, but with a lot of low secondary growth, diggings and local grave sites. If I recall correctly, you were bringing in orientation as we deployed initially on battery grid for the first day. The other Route 15 FSB we occupied as a six-gun Battery was FSB Gail from 14 July to 19 September 1970. Gail was far more open and flat. Next to us in a shallow sand quarry on our north flank, was Husky Chuck with their 155s. I have no recall of survey there and sure we went direct onto Theatre Grid on deployment. After the first deployment to Gail, the battery only operated in two 3 gun sections for the rest of our tour. There were several very brief stopovers at Gail by one of the sections.*

*Interestingly the calibration did not show up in any of the documents I researched for our book and it had slipped my memory. As I recall, it was EVA and occurred at Nui Dat (Koloa gun position) during my time as GPO so must have been before our initial deployment to Nola & Tess or between Tess and Gail. I suspect the earlier time. I can certainly recall Syd Farrow's presence.*

*PJ subsequently added: "You're right on the calibration, it was conducted on EVA. From memory, we kept EVA static and moved guns through. I think my contribution was lifting heavy things".*

*Hilton added, "Yes I agree, the other Batteries (106 and 161) rotated through the EVE position next to our main ammo bunker and just behind our gunline".*

*Dave Holmes, joined the Battery and my command post in latish 1969 as gunner OPCP, direct from School of Artillery. He had transferred from the RA in Hong Kong and Borneo. He was quickly promoted Bdr (after a week or two as I recall) and remained in the CP well into our Vietnam tour. Sometime after FSB Gail he was transferred to FO Ack to c/s 15, Kevin O'Brian, in W Coy then, or direct to, V Coy (Kiwi) 2 RARNZ Anzac Battalion. When V and W companies progressively returned to their Battalion in Singapore, Dave ended up with Warren Feakes c/s 12 with B Coy, replacing FO Ack Paul Holland on his RTA in early 1971. I also have fond memories of Dave Holmes. Last year he moved from Bollards Lagoon in SA to Canberra and now lives in the same suburb as myself, so we re-live some of those stories. His health is not too good, needing oxygen all the time but is full of his usual determination and still drives short distances.*

*C Coy FO party in your time, I suspect, was Dave McPherson, Syd Armistead, Jeff Roser and a selection of Gnrs Coe, Henning, LJ Smith (died near Mansfield a couple of years ago) & Jim Bray (wounded with 2 Rds FFE danger close in a training mission that George GT Salmon conducted for Dave McPherson very close to the eastern side of Nui Dat on 8 July 1970).*

*Thanks for your thoughts. I will include yours and my notes above in the December RAM Ramblings.*

Regards Hilton Lenard

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The **NBN is approaching Mildura** later this decade, so Doc issued following to be ready for Broadband in the bush!

LOGON: Adding wood to make the Barbie hotter

LOG OFF: Not adding any more wood to the Barbie.

MONITOR: Keeping an eye on the Barbie.

DOWNLOAD: Getting the firewood off the Ute.

HARD DRIVE: Making the trip back home without any cold tinnies.

KEYBOARD: Where you hang the Ute keys.

WINDOWS: What you shut when the weather's cold.

SCREEN: What you shut in the mozzie season.

BYTE: What mozzies do

MEGABYTE: What Townsville mozzies do.

CHIP: A pub snack.

MICROCHIP: What's left in the bag after you've eaten the chips.

MODEM: What you did to the lawns.

LAPTOP: Where the cat sleeps.

SOFTWARE: Plastic knives and forks you get at Red Rooster.

HARDWARE: Stainless steel knives and forks from K Mart.

MOUSE: The small rodent that eats the grain in the shed.

MAINFRAME: What holds the shed up.

WEB: What spiders make.

WEBSITE: Usually in the shed or under the veranda.

SEARCH ENGINE: What you do when the Ute won't go.

CURSOR: What you say when the Ute won't go.

YAHOO: What you say when the Ute does go.

UPGRADE: A steep hill.

SERVER: The person at the pub who brings out the counter lunch.

MAIL SERVER: The bloke at the pub who brings out the counter lunch.

USER: The neighbour who keeps borrowing things.

NETWORK: What you do when you need to repair the fishing net.

INTERNET: Where you want the fish to go.

NETSCAPE: What the fish do when they discover a hole in the net.  
ONLINE: Where you hang the washing.  
OFFLINE: Where the washing ends up when the pegs aren't strong enough.

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**Paddy brought a Jeep.**



Founder and curator of the 4 Regiment Museum and honorary Rammer, Paddy Durnford of Townsville, continuing his practice of spending the kids' inheritance. He brought a Jeep. He is offering joy rides to anyone willing to test his driving ability on the wrong side of the road. (Prez Comment..Nobody buys a post 1945 jeep)

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**Jeff Roser observes:** *It seems that lately my life has been getting more complicated, and I want to thank those of you who are brave enough to still associate with me regardless of what I have become.*

*The following is a recap of my current identity:*

I was born white, which makes me a racist.

I am a fiscal and moral conservative, which makes me a fascist.

I am heterosexual, which makes me a homophobe.

I am non-union, which makes me a traitor to the working class and an ally of big business.

I am a Christian, which makes me an infidel.

I am older than 65 and retired, which makes me a useless old person.

I think and I reason; therefore, I doubt much that the main stream media tells me, which makes me a reactionary.

I am proud of my heritage and our inclusive Australian culture, which makes me a xenophobe.

I value my safety and that of my family; therefore, I appreciate the police and the legal system, which makes me a right-wing extremist.

I believe in hard work, fair play, and fair compensation according to each individual's merits, which makes me anti-social.

I, and my friends, acquired a good education without student loans and no debt at completion, which makes me some kind-of odd underachiever.

I believe in the defence and protection of Australia by all citizens, which makes me a militarist.

Please help me come to terms with this, because I'm not sure who I am anymore!

Newest problem...I'm not sure which dunny I should use...

Secretary's Report: It is with much pleasure to I advise that no current RAMMERS have been posted to the Great Gun Park since our last Ram Ramblings, but equally no new members have been accepted to the great fellowship of RAMMERS. However we must acknowledge that the Battery Commander, Major James Casey has moved on to Operations Officer of 4 Regiment and BSM Jason Bourke has been posted to assistant Master Gunner 4 Regiment. Our loss is 4 Regiment's gain. We look forward to hearing from his replacement in the next RAM Ramblings.

**Committee:** Your committee is:

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SA: Adrian (Wally) Walford – Murray Bridge – 0418 818 776

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ACT: Peter Moat – Weetangera - 0419 594 610

NT: Jim Wright – Palmerston – 0419 090 852

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Editor RAM Ramblings: Warren (Noddy) Feakes – Wanniasa– 0417 209 360

Webmaster: Doc Barclay – Mildura – 0428 251 364

Historian: Hilton Lenard – Kambah ACT – 0418 695 345

Welfare Officer: Ian (Bozo) Simpson – Sydney - 0432 610 794

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**BOARD of TRUSTREES:** Warren Feakes - Wanniasa – 0417 209 360

Hilton Lenard – Kambah - 0418 695 345

Jim Wright – Palmerston - 0419 090 852

**Members List:** There are 199 financial members. Association membership covers all regions of Australia plus Paul Gaff USA, Gordon Pound & Peter (Jock) Sime in the UK and Mac (Rob) McKimmin in Thailand. Sixteen members are currently serving in the Defence Force. Membership covers all periods of 107 Battery's post 1965 history, with approx one third having served at Holsworthy and/or Malaysia (1965-1969) a further third at Townsville then Vietnam (1969-1971) and a third at Townsville (since 1971). Many have served in more than one location. Like an updated membership list then contact the Secretary.

**Treasurer's Report:** With 165 life subscribers, all life subscriptions are held in the Trustee accounts. Your membership renewal information is included in this edition. Subscriptions for 2016 are now over-due, remaining at only \$15 PA and life subscription at \$150. As at 30 June 2016 the Association made a healthy unaudited trading profit of \$2271.48 for the previous twelve months, he profits predominately from Association items for sale. Current assets are \$6,566.31 in working funds and \$26,581.10 held by the Trustees, representing all life subscriptions and resulting interest received to date. A copy of the accounts is available on request.

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**A poem by George Mansford - Wallaby Airlines** I recently read where another retired Caribou had been moved by road to a final resting place in some fortunate town where it can be viewed by locals and visitors passing through. The news reminded me of days gone when soldiers often relied on the trusty Caribou to travel by day and night in all moods of weather to many training areas and of course on operations, particularly Vietnam. Who could ever forget the proud and familiar wallaby sign on a Caribou as it landed on a distant and primitive airstrip at some isolated outpost, or it's constant presence between Nui Dat, Vung Tau and Saigon (as the latter was once called). In OZ, our metal mate often could be seen helping during flood, fire, famine, cyclones and other challenges of nature from time to time including even a Locust Plague in Central Queensland. There would be countless memories by generations of military in peace and war, who at some time or other, travelled in her, be they weary soldiers with heavy packs returning to their home base or smartly dressed excited troops soon to invade popular Hotels and Bars armed with mischief and fun. There were also the lucky few on the first leg of going home to their beloved "Down Under." It's London to a Brick that old soldiers can still smell the oily fumes, recall the rattling and trembling of the fuselage, the roar of engines and then the whining sound of the ramp lowering to signal another phase of soldiering completed, thanks to Wallaby Airlines. I do hope the sense of duty and the wonderful spirit of Wallaby Airlines lives forever. For those who made such a unit so, their blood is sure worth bottling. Rest well all beloved Caribou, wherever you are (GM- 15 Aug 2016)

**Let's Salute Wallaby Airline, RAAF**

*(For all our RAAF who served in Wallaby Airlines)*

*A heroine from yesterday sits still and silent as we pass by  
A plaque beside her tells of our pride in this warrior's service and why  
Oh, if only if this warrior could speak of her military life  
Supporting generations of youngsters marching to drums and fife*

*With this lady, so sturdy and enduring, on her they could always rely  
To hear her faint familiar throbbing sound in the distant sky  
Soon to deliver urgent supplies or take weary warriors home  
The wallaby emblem on her side showed all they were not alone*

*Cramped in canvas seats and deafening engines on full charge  
I wonder what soldier dreamt in that narrow shuddering fuselage  
Was it being back with loved ones in the great southern land again?  
Sadly, many of those visions remain forever in that aging metal frame*

*She was always there in drought, flood or other tantrums of weather  
A welcome sight for those in plight, no matter when or where ever  
Farmers shouted with joy as she dropped fodder to starving cattle  
Refugees, now safe, sighed with relief despite her noise and rattles*

*Today this proud relic rests; her long, long duty completed at last  
Countless missions flown on routine and dangerous tasks  
Hear again the roar of the takeoff and feel her clawing for height  
At journey's end, engines slowly dying, ramp groaning; all is quiet*

*The ground teams and those who flew her are fewer by the year  
Some, ageing quickly now, will visit to bid farewell and shed a tear  
Let's cheer and salute the Queen of what was once Wallaby Airlines  
A metal warrior now part of Australia's proud history, yours and mine*

George Mansford © August 2016 Note: The RAAF Caribou aircraft affectionately called Wallaby Airlines due to the wallaby emblem on the fuselage was a versatile transport aircraft, capable of short take-offs and landings on unprepared runways. The Caribou saw service in both peace and war for several decades including Vietnam.

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### **Return to Milne Bay** by Hilton Lenard

They landed on the night of 25 August 1942 and quickly established a beachhead at the insignificant village of Wahuhuba, on the northern shore of Milne Bay. Within hours they had constructed a sandbag jetty and commenced the unloading of the main body and equipment.



By the end of the next night, 2,400 mostly commando troops from the Japanese Navy Marines, supported by two small Japanese Type 95 Ha-Go jungle tanks, commenced their revenge for the naval loss at the Battle of the Coral Sea, just three months earlier. Their intelligence directed they were to destroy the one or two conscript battalions of Australian infantry, defending the remote and isolated Bay. Their task, they thought, was a simple walk in the dark, something the Japanese were well trained and experienced.

Within fourteen days over 600 Japanese were confirmed dead, killed in extremely bloody fighting with the Australians, and over 500 wounded with just 10 captured by the Australians. It quickly developed into a 'take no prisoners' by both sides. Over the following months many more Japanese bodies were located around the dense jungle battle sights and floating in the Bay and its estuaries. The remaining exhausted and starving Japanese troops, they landed with only two-days rations, less their tanks left destroyed in the jungle, were extracted by their naval resources on the evening of 7 September. Australian losses were 161 killed and 535 wounded. None of the Australians captured survived.



The landing place of the Japanese on the north shore of Milne Bay. Delta Company of 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion was responsible for this eastern flank of the defensive position. The most eastern platoon was centred on the furthest visible land and another platoon just behind the photographer. These platoons took the brunt of the initial landing and fought their way back to No 3 strip in a fighting withdrawal lasting six days.

Victory came at Milne Bay just as the Australians were forced to withdrawal from Isurava, on the Kokoda Trail. News of Milne Bay resinated throughout allied nations around the world. It had not been that easy walk in the dark. The Japanese were, for the very first time in an amphibious battle, defeated on land of their own choosing!

Why is such a desperate yet well-executed and significant defensive battle at such a critical moment of WW2, so little known?

Milne Bay is horseshoe shaped at the extreme eastern tip of mainland PNG. At around 60 kilometres in length and 20 wide, it is a natural deep-water harbour. The Owen Stanley Ranges, the spine of the entire New Guinea

island, drops down to peaks of just 1,000 meters on the north edge of that horseshoe, with a spur running around the west and southern sides of the Bay. Despite its idyllic tropical appearance, in 1942 it was a tropical hellhole. The sun seldom penetrated through the extensive clouds. It rained nearly all the time with 5-6 metres of rain annually falling on the surrounding ranges then flowing through many creeks into the Bay. Malaria caused far greater casualties to the Australians than any enemy. There was no infrastructure, just a few muddy narrow tracks following the northern shoreline, with frequent deep and dangerous creek crossings. Additional walking-only tracks radiate up into the surrounding small mountain villages. No industry, just native villages and several copra and cattle plantations. Nothing existed to support the ensuing short but bloody battle, other than water!

The significance of Milne Bay was not the turf or even the harbour. It was the location in August 1942 of a single airstrip carved out of a very wet and muddy jungle.



Map by Chelsea Wilson

Fighter and bomber aircraft flying from Milne Bay could cover the entire Solomon Sea, from Japanese controlled Lae north-east to Rabaul, a major Japanese supply base for the assault of Port Moresby over the Kokoda Trail. The Japanese forces were, at that time, just about overlooking Port Moresby. The airfield provided fighter and bomber domination to the southeast towards the USA Marine campaign at Guadalcanal (Solomon Islands). Aircraft stationed at the Bay also covered the Coral Sea. Whoever controlled the airfield at Milne Bay, controlled the naval and airspace approaches to north eastern Australia.

The force Commander, Major General Cyril "Silent" Clowes, a brilliant Artillery commander from the Great War and WW2, also had at his disposal 75 and 76 Squadrons of Australian Kittyhawk fighters, commanded by Group Captain William Garing DFC, a daring and brave fighter pilot. For the first time the fighters were used in the direct support of Australian infantry. So effective was their use, the Australians dominated the daylight hours. The manual for close air support of infantry by the RAAF, was subsequently based on their operations at Milne Bay. But the nights belong to the Japanese

US Engineers, using strips of interlocking steel forming large matting for parking and taxing areas and the actual airstrip, had hastily constructed Number 1 Strip. The steel matting could be laid direct on the muddy ground surface thereby spreading the load of aircraft over a large area to prevent bogging. Number 2 and 3 strips were still under construction.



The 7th Infantry Brigade was initially deployed to defend the Bay with headquarters near the small government administrative centre of Gili Gili, at the head of the Bay. It comprised 25<sup>th</sup> Battalion held in reserve and the 61<sup>st</sup> Battalion at No 3 strip with B and D companies in platoon defensive positions spread along the northern shoreline of the Bay. Army Headquarters Melbourne intercepted enemy signals indicating Japanese intention to invade Milne Bay. 18<sup>th</sup> Infantry Brigade of the 7<sup>th</sup> AIF Division, back from the successful Middle East Syrian campaign, was hastily rushed to the hellhole. Comprising 2/9<sup>th</sup>, 2/10<sup>th</sup> and 2/12<sup>th</sup> AIF Battalions, they landed in small craft from the transports as there was limited port facilities, and immediately took up in-depth positions behind the two CMF Battalions, with the Brigade HQ at No 1 Strip.

61 Battalion took the brunt of the Japanese assault, with the initial landing occurring between the two extreme eastern platoon positions of Delta Company. The Companies commenced a bloody fighting withdrawal through the stinking mud, rain and mosquitos, fighting for every creek crossing and defensive position. The 2/12 Battalions deployed to support the decimated 61 Battalion troops and over the next nights both Battalions continued the delaying defensive battle back towards the not yet finished No 3 strip. The strip provided a cleared defensive line through the thick jungle. The party of American Engineers manned a machine post the encirclement of the withdrawing Australians, a usual Japanese tactic. So critical was this stage of the battle, the Kittyhawks were flown back to Moresby each nigh, so not to be destroyed on the ground by infiltration in the dark. But the two RAAF Squadrons continued their intensive ground support during all daylight hours, landing frequently at No 1 strip to refuel, re-arm and undertake urgent repairs during the day. Their ground staff worked around the clock to keep the machines flying.

On the night of 28 August the Japanese assault on No 3 strip failed. It was touch and go for most of the night, but the Australian infantry line held the south-eastern side of the great scar through the jungle. The 2/9 Battalion broke out of the main defensive position around Strip 3. And pushed the enemy, now exhausted, low on ammunition and out of food, back along the costal strip. The Japanese had advanced just 14 kilometres before withdrawing and the final Japanese evacuation on the night of 7 September 1942.

It was during the Australian advance that the dreadful atrocities against the natives and the captured Australian troops became clear. Both soldiers and natives had been disembowelled, decapitated, used for repeated bayonet practice and native women rapped, mutilated and then bayoneted.



A captured Japanese 50 mm mountain gun mounted in the Battle for Milne Bay Memorial Park, located on the eastern end on the Number 3 strip. It marks the site where the Japanese advance was finally halted and the Australians forced the Japanese back to their landing place at the village of Wahuhuba and out of Milne Bay and the eastern end on New Guinea.

Why did the Japanese Naval forces fail at Milne Bay? Their intelligence had not been updated from the initial force of one or two conscript Australian infantry battalions. The RAAF had clearly prevented any effective aerial reconnaissance of the battleground. So the Japanese were outnumbered from the start. But there is a twist to the story. Over the Owen Stanley Range along the northern shoreline is Goodenough Bay and within, Goodenough Island. The Japanese landed a battalion plus force with considerable stores and support on the Island with barges for mobility. The intention of this force is not clear. Two opinions exist. One is that they were to attack over the narrow section of the Owen Stanley Range to a point west of No 3 strip. If successfully undertaken, the battle for No 3 Strip may have had a different outcome. The cable decoding at AHQ Melbourne, supports this proposal. The second theory is they were to proceed in their barges along the inside north coast of the Bay in support of the main force attacking on ground along that route. Again an assault landing somewhere near Gili Gili at the head of the Bay and behind No 3 Strip defensive line may have had an affect on the battle outcome. This defies the normal Japanese tactic of wide encirclement. But both theories remain conjecture. The RAAF located and destroyed the barges and much of the stores. Natives on Goodenough subsequently reported a 'large fish' swallowing the Japanese from the Island after the battle. What they saw were the Japanese submarines sent to extract the defeated force.



The north west corner of Milne Bay today from the administrative centre of Gili Gili and No 3 airstrip to the rear of the photographer and the cruise ship tied up at Alotau, now the capital of Milne Bay Province. The rugged 3,000 foot Owen Stanley range is just to the north or left of the photo.

*Major (Retd) Hilton Lenard's interest of the Milne Bay campaign developed during his first visit in 1980, while seconded to the Papua New Guinea Defence Force as the PNGDF Director of Manpower. Returning in June 2016 on a P&O cruise, he re-examined the ground of this little known but vital Australian military operation.*

#### **VETERANS NOW CALL VIETNAM'S VUNG TAU HOME**

**Swearing they'd never go back, many veterans now call Vietnam's Vung Tau home – by Lindsay Murdoch - Sydney Morning Herald Good Weekend - 10 December 2016.**

After serving in the war, most Australian veterans swore they'd never go back to Vietnam. But scores have since moved permanently to the southern port city of Vung Tau.

**Raymond Low says he saw the first body fall** from a grey helicopter that swooped low over Vung Tau beach, where his RAAF squadron mates were drinking beer and barbecuing Australian steaks under an awning. Low was bobbing up and down on a surfboard in the choppy waters that humid day at the height of the Vietnam War in 1968, and thought at first he was seeing a US Navy commando undergoing free-fall training. However, as a US Navy patrol boat circled nearby, no one surfaced where the body splashed into the water.



Veterans living in Vietnam. 50 - 60 Vietnam veterans now call Vietnam home. Living on old battlegrounds the move has laid their ghosts to rest. Low says he doesn't know whether it was an American or South Vietnamese helicopter, but minutes later it returned, swooping over the beach at a height of about 400 feet. "I saw a second body fall," he recalls.

*General view today overlooking what was known as the Back Beach in Vung Tau. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

"This time I noticed there were no flailing arms or anything like that. The man's hands were tied behind his back." Then a leading aircraftman in his early 20s who'd grown up in the inner suburbs of Sydney, Low recalls sitting on the surfboard thinking, "What kind of a war am I in?" Low says he learnt later that suspected Viet Cong infiltrators were sometimes taken on deadly helicopter rides for interrogation. The practice was to push one of the suspects out of the door, screaming to his death, as a way of convincing others to talk.

*General view today overlooking what was known as the Back Beach in Vung Tau. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

He spent only nine days in Vietnam during the war, working on Caribou aircraft at the airstrip at Vung Tau, a city in southern Vietnam wedged between two mountains on a strip of land jutting into the South China Sea. Back then, Vung Tau had an airstrip, logistics base and about 100 seedy beachfront bars that had sprung up to cater for US and Australian forces on rest-and-recreation leave during the war. Almost half a century later, sipping a beer in the Australian-run Tommy's, a bar and restaurant near the same waterfront, Low says that when he flew out of Vietnam that year, he never thought he'd return. "I was profoundly affected by what I saw. I couldn't talk about it for years."

Now 71, Low is one of about 50 Australian veterans of the war who have returned to the country of their former enemy and settled in Vung Tau, a prosperous regional city of more than 470,000 people situated some 30 kilometres from Nui Dat, the wartime base for Australian forces. Scores of other Australian retirees, most of them divorced from Australian women, have followed the veterans, with high-rise apartment buildings and luxury hotels catering for a booming tourist industry and workers on oil rigs off the coast. Its beaches are packed at weekends with residents from crowded Ho Chi Minh City, two hours' drive away.

Advertisement

But Vung Tau also has a seedy underbelly and is a single man's paradise for many of the Australians frequenting bars with names like Sweethearts, Red Parrot, Hot Lips and Bearded Clam, where young, scantily clad Vietnamese prostitutes vie for their attention. Some spend their days drinking \$1 beers, complaining about how bad things are in Australia, in sometimes sexist and racist rants. "I can't even call a waitress 'love' without offence being taken over there," says one veteran.

Glenn Nolan, 58, a war historian and former soldier who served in 6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment (RAR) after the Vietnam War, says some Australians who arrive in Vung Tau after going through a bad divorce at home fall in love with the first girl they meet in a bar.



*1966: a helicopter lands at Nui Dat, Australia's wartime base, some 30 kilometres inland from Vung Tau. Photo: Graeme Cusack*

"He sees love, she sees ATM. I've seen houses gone and fortunes lost. If they take their time, they can meet some very nice Vietnamese ladies outside the bars who are absolutely beautiful. But for others, it's Groundhog Day. They go to bars at 10am for a few beers, go home for a nap at 1pm and are back drinking at 4pm until stumps, seven days a week. It's pretty sad to see some of them."

The veterans here have an unwritten code of conduct. Anyone disrespecting Vietnamese women is bluntly told to behave or leave town. Some with drinking problems who lose control are escorted to the airport and put on a plane back to Australia. One Australian who spread a sexually transmitted disease among prostitutes was ordered out of town.



Locals working in nearby rice paddies. Photo: Graeme Cusack.

Ho Chi Hoang Kim, 29, a waitress at the popular Belly's Watering Hole, often sings *Úc-dai-loi*, Cheap Charlie, a song made famous during the war years about stingy Australian soldiers from the country of "big rats" (there is no word in Vietnamese for kangaroo). "Sure, some of the Aussies are Cheap Charlies but they are good men," she says. "You see them help poor people on the streets all the time."

Some Australians living in Vung Tau have happy long-term partnerships with local women. Dozens work in charities, helping impoverished local families, and in an orphanage where children have deformities believed to have been caused by Agent Orange, the chemical defoliant sprayed by the US military during the war to eliminate forest coverage for North Vietnamese troops.



*Graeme Cusack, 78, 2nd lieutenant, 6th Battalion, RAR, 1966. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

Some, like Nolan, conduct tours of the former battlefields for Australian tourists, including Long Tan, 40 kilometres north-east of Vung Tau. It was here, on August 18, 1966, that 105 Australians and three New Zealanders fought off wave after wave of Viet Cong fighters in a battle that came to symbolise Australia's 10-year involvement in the Vietnam War.

**Raymond Low, who spent 22 years** working on aircraft in the RAAF in Australia and overseas before leaving the service in 1995, says it was only in 2002 that television programs rekindled his interest in Vietnam. He says he then began making frequent trips there, booking into a cheap hotel in Vung Tau for weeks at a time.



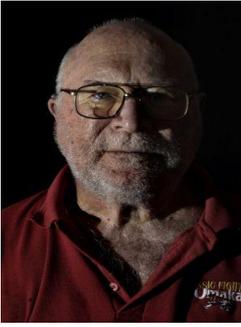
*Rod Harlor, 68, mortar platoon, 9th Battalion, RAR, 1969. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

"Every trip was better than the previous one," he says, adding that he now lives in Vung Tau for months at a time, but travels back to Australia for business and to deal with health problems, including a lung condition. (Medical treatment in Australia is free for veterans receiving TPI – Totally and Permanently Incapacitated – pensions.) "The people are generally friendly, although in any developing country you find people who will scam you if they can.

I've made good friends here. The cost of living is low. And I feel totally relaxed ... this is where my heart is now." Some of the stories Vietnam veterans tell about the war are recycled, embellished; old Asia hands are sceptical, for instance, about Low's account of bodies being thrown from a helicopter, especially over an area where troops went for R&R. But Low insists the story is true and he has a US magazine article with a photo of a suspected North Vietnamese infiltrator falling from a helicopter.



*Russell Hutchison, 67, RAN, 1965 and 1967. Photo: Kate Geraghty*



*Raymond Low, 71, aircraftsman, 35 Squadron, RAAF, 1968. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

the boat watching [Vietnam] disappear and saying to myself, 'I will never return, never ever,' " he says. "That lasted 35 years."

Taylor, 68, doesn't want to talk about the war, how he was wounded or how some mates never came home. "It takes a lot to get rid of some of the terrible things you did and saw," he says. He's sitting with his partner of two years, Chau, 34, at a table in a corner of Belly's, which serves lamb shanks and is an unofficial clubhouse for many of the veterans.

Peter Taylor, a machine-gunner with 5th Battalion RAR, left Vietnam in March 1970 on the light-aircraft carrier HMAS Sydney, marking the end of his 11-month tour of duty at Australia's Nui Dat base. "I remember sitting on the back of

For decades after the war, living in Canberra, Taylor hated the Vietnamese. "We'd been told all the propaganda ...



*Peter Taylor, 68, machine-gunner, 5th Battalion, RAR, 1969-70. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

that they were bad buggers and we should kill them. That they eat babies and sell their sisters, all that stuff. But it was wrong. They're a beautiful race of people and they need our help."

Taylor, who has three adult sons from two marriages in Australia, returned to Vietnam in 2005 with a couple of mates to attend a ceremony at Long Tan. He wanted to leave after two days. "The smell was still here; everything like that," he says. But he stayed for several weeks and, after repeated trips, now calls Vung Tau

home.

"There is no pressure here as long as you keep your nose clean and don't get into any trouble with the police, or anything like that. If you want a taxi, you just walk out and get one – unlike in Australia, where you have to wait an hour. And I don't like the way Australia is changing. I just don't agree with the people they are bringing to Australia these days. They are not workers – not like the Vietnamese when they came to Australia on boats [after the Vietnam War]."

Taylor is a key figure in the [Vung Tau Veterans & Friends Children's Fund](#), a charity run by Australians that repairs houses for poor local families, among other things. "If street kids need an operation or something like that, we can hold a fund-raiser and get the money at the drop of a hat," he says. "The boys will all chip in."



*Glenn Nolan, 58, war historian. Photo: Kate Geraghty*

Glenn Nolan, who married a local restaurant owner 11 years ago, says Australians living here feel they have more freedom than at home. "Australia has become too much of a

nanny state, where you have a minority dictating to the majority. One example is the Muslim issue: you can't say anything. You're gagged."

Here, he says, you can have a few beers and drive without worrying about losing your licence. "You know you've had enough when you fall off your motorbike," he laughs.

**Russell Hutchinson, 67**, says those people who criticise him for marrying Hanh, a local woman 42 years younger than him, "can all get stuffed". Hutchinson was a raw navy recruit aged 16 when he made a brief port visit to Vung Tau in 1965, returning in 1967. He believes he is sterile as a result of water contaminated with Agent Orange that was recycled on the ships he served on, and admits he is quick

to become angry.

He met Hanh in a bar in Vung Tau bar seven years ago. Hutchinson, who has an irregular heartbeat and other health problems, receives a TPI pension of \$877 a fortnight. (Many of the Australian veterans in Vung Tau receive the TPI pension, which entitles them to benefits that include medical care. Hanh will be eligible for an Australian war widow's pension if Hutchinson dies before she does.)

"Hanh would die for me – I mean that," Hutchinson says, sipping beer in a bar below the single-room apartment he rents near Belly's Watering Hole. "But she must be thinking, 'If I put up with this old bastard for another 10 or 20 years' – she knows my health problems – 'and then he kicks the bucket', she will only be in her 30s or 40s and she'll be set for the rest of her life, with a war widow's pension that will allow her to look after her family. That is

a fortune in this country. Here, the family comes first. I know that. I don't care. I love her to bits." Later, over a meal of prawns, I ask Hanh what she thinks of Hutchison, a former bus driver on the NSW Central Coast. "I love him. I take care of him," she says. Hutchison says he can "count on the fingers of two hands" relationships between Australians and local women that have lasted for years in Vung Tau. One Australian bought a house for his new bride but a week later came home from the bars to find that all his clothes were on the footpath and he was locked out. "This shit happens all the time," Hutchison says. "Other marriages work okay. That's life."

Impoverished families from the Mekong Delta send their daughters to Vung Tau to work in the bars, he says. "It's hard, but they do whatever they have to do to get money to send back to the family. They go to bed with blokes. It's as simple as that." Hutchison adds that he has seen girls as young as 15 working in the bars. It was in Vung Tau, in 2005, that former pop star Gary Glitter, whose real name is Paul Gadd, [was convicted of sexually molesting two girls](#) aged 11 and 12. He was jailed for nearly three years before being deported.

**Long Tan is silent now**, only a late-afternoon breeze rustling through nearby rubber trees. Here, half a century ago, 108 soldiers of D Company, 6th Battalion RAR, hunkered down for four hours in a tropical downpour, outnumbered at least 10 to one. At the end, piles of enemy soldiers lay in red mud, mutilated by a barrage of artillery fire.

All but 17 Australians survived (another soldier died later from his wounds) and by Australia's official count, 245 Vietnamese were killed and three captured.

But decades later, the battle [remains a sensitive issue for Vietnam](#), which still claims in propaganda that its forces were the victors. The country's rulers cancelled official events marking the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan last August 18, angering several thousand Australian veterans and family members who had planned to attend a commemorative ceremony at the site of the fighting where an unmarked white cross stands.

Now, despite the high-level political intrigue over the battle, Australian veterans have forged ties with their former enemies. Plans are underway for a joint Australian-Vietnamese war memorial and an RSL-like centre in Vung Tau, where former foes can meet socially.

Rod "Rocket" Harlor, 68, who mostly fought in Vietnam with a platoon of 9th Battalion RAR and was based at Nui Dat in 1969, says one of the reasons he has made Vung Tau his home is because of friendships he has made with the Vietnamese, including some former North Vietnamese soldiers. "Most of the people here don't know of the war – they were not born when it happened," Harlor says, standing arm in arm at the Long Tan cross with Vo Xuan Thu, a veteran of the North Vietnam Army who has memories of battles with Australians. "Vietnam is a very young society. The Australian veterans have no problems with the locals, including our former enemies like Mr Thu here, who is a good friend to us."

Harlor says the Vietnamese saw the Australians as the "honourable" enemy in a largely American war. "We did the right thing by the POWs and civilians," he says.

Thu insists on commenting, too. "I am very happy to be with [the Australians]. They are my friends and I really appreciate their friendship, their understanding and their feelings," he says in the Vietnamese language.

Harlor, whose wife passed away in Australia years ago, says he can't get the smile off his face when he walks around Vung Tau, which has better infrastructure than most Vietnamese cities. He pays \$400 a month for a furnished apartment with a pool and Wi-Fi. Competent medical and dental services are cheap compared to Australia; a bowl of noodles costs less than \$2, a beer \$1. "The kids give you a high-five on the street and somebody will just pull up on a motorcycle out of the blue and want to have a chat in English," he says. "It's a wonderful place to live. I swore I'd never come back after the war, but here I am."

**The radio crackled "contact" in the Battalion Operations Centre** at Nui Dat at 3.20pm on August 18, 1966.

Graeme "Breaker" Cusack, a second lieutenant with 6th Battalion RAR, was first to hear that Australia's fiercest battle of the Vietnam War was underway.

Cusack clearly remembers the dramatic events that unfolded in the following hours but says he has lost all memory of the next day, when he went to the battlefield while soldiers were carrying out the gruesome task of collecting body parts (most of the Vietnamese casualties had been hit by fierce artillery barrages).

Years later, in Australia, a counsellor suggested that Cusack return to Vietnam "to put the ghosts of the war to rest". "I replied, 'I am not going back to that so-and-so country,'" he says. But in 2004, he watched Mel Gibson's movie *We Were Soldiers*, which tells the story of the US's first major battle of the war. Then a Tour Vietnam brochure arrived, unsolicited, in the post.

He called a mate who'd also served in the war and booked a trip, arriving 38 years to the day after he had flown out of Vietnam. On that initial return trip, he met a Vietnamese woman in her late 30s called Ha. Within two days of returning to Australia, he decided to sell everything and move to Vietnam, leaving behind three failed marriages and bouts of suicidal depression.

Cusack married Ha in 2005, but that marriage didn't work out, either, and in 2011 he married his second

Vietnamese wife, Phuong. They live 30 kilometres from Vung Tau in a house where he displays his war medals and memorabilia. On a clear day, from his garden, he can see a mountain range 15 kilometres away. It was there, during the war, that the North Vietnamese occupied a series of secret tunnels and bases from which they launched attacks on the Australians at Nui Dat. In return, "we bombed the shit out of them", he says. Aged 78 and suffering the early stages of a nervous disorder, Cusack says he has never looked back since moving in 2004 to Vung Tau, where he has conducted battlefield tours and volunteered his time to be caretaker of the Long Tan cross. Four years ago, Phuong gave birth to a girl, Anna. "I never thought I would have a baby at my age," says Cusack. "But she is just the most beautiful girl in the world. She helps keep me very young".

Stocking fillers from the President.....



**Eighteen of the OCS Graduating Class of 1966, including 4 gunners, gathered for a 50th Anniversary Dinner at the Naval and Military Club in Adelaide...Its your Prez kneeling Front-Left with the hearing aid amplifier.**

**Officers and Senior NCOs of B Coy, 2RAR/NZ (The ANZAC Battalion) inbetween Ops in Nui Dat lines 1971. Yep, the FO, me, is the only one with a beer**



