



COMMANDO

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSN (NSW) INC.

News

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Senior Firefighter Stephen Sewell
Northern Territory Fire and Rescue Service
Australian Regular Army
1989 -2009 (WO2)

“As a kid growing up I always wanted to join the Army and be a firefighter, it was my lifelong ambition and I got to do both. By going to NTFRS the transition out of the Army was easier than I expected, with better work-life balance, similar work practices and comradeship.

The skills I developed in the Army have assisted me in my career as a firefighter. The way that we are trained to think and react fits well in this environment and communicating daily with the community is rewarding. Depending on what you want to do, the skills taught in the Army are transferrable.

I've had plenty of support; I get paid time-off to continue in Norforce. A lot of what I do is relevant in both jobs and that's rewarding.”

Constable First Class Erin Simonato
Northern Territory Police Force

“I joined the NT Police Force in 2007 and enlisted into the Army Reserves at the end of 2008.

The Army and the Police Force have provided me many opportunities to improve my skill sets with my career choices complimenting each other. I have had the opportunity in both jobs to have some amazing and unforgettable experiences, these experiences I would not have had working in any other job.”

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The Australian Commando Association's membership consists of Servicemen who have served with Independent Companies, Commando Squadrons, "M" and "Z" Special units and Special Forces during and since the Second World War.

DISCLAIMER: Opinions expressed within this publication are those of the authors, and are not necessarily those of the Editor, Publisher, Committee Members or Members of our Association. We welcome any input as long as it is not offensive or abusive but if any member has a problem with a printed article we would like to be informed in order that the author may be contacted. We do encourage your opinion.

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CONTENTS

Aust Cdo Assn National Committee	1
NSW President & Editor's Report	3
Airfield Seizure:	
Rangers Lead the Way	5
Obituary: WO2 Ernest Charles Tarr	10
NSW Welfare Officer's Report	12
Letter to the Editor	12
War Widows Guild Report	
on Visit to Timor-Leste	13
Vietnam War Commemoration Service	13
Sydney Anzac Day March	14
Vale	14
From the Prolific Pen of Harry Bell	15
Aust Cdo Assn NSW Events Calendar	21
"Q" Store Order Form	23
Book Reviews	25
Aust Cdo Assn VIC	27
Aust Cdo Assn QLD	40
Membership Application/Renewal	43

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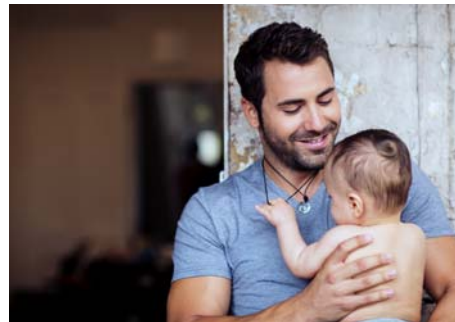
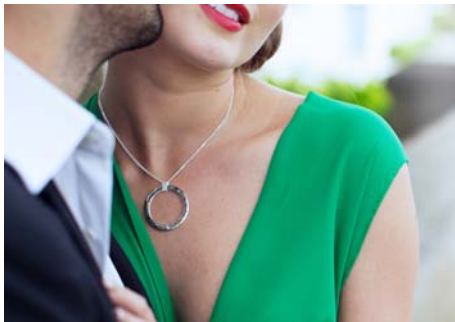
THURSDAY, 30th JUNE 2016

All news on members and interesting articles accepted.
(Subject to editors' approval.)

Barry G



Front Cover: Soldiers from the Sydney based 1st Commando Regiment, a part Reserve, part Regular Commandos, on Exercise Red Pegasus. They are carrying out a "load follow" into the waters off Manly last year.



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NSW President & Editor's Report

The 1st Commando Regiment is once again recruiting from outside the ADF, this initiative is to boost the Unit's numbers.

The program will be over a number of years to get the recruits up to standard without impacting too much on their civilian occupations and to prepare them for selection.

As we know it has been a couple of decades since this recruiting model has been attempted.

Traditional methods of recruiting within existing Army units is also being conducted.

In March I was once again invited back to Timor Leste by their Government representing the Australian Commando Association. The Timorese still hold Australian Commandos in high esteem.

The group included Mr. Rod White the NSW President of the RSL, M/S Gina Parelli representing the State President of War Widows and Mr. Chris Perrin, former State Secretary of NSW RSL.

Later in the week we were joined by His Excellency Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC Governor General of Australia.

The reason for the visit was to attend a conference of Timor Leste Veterans who are forming an organisation to advise their government on Veteran issues.

Over 650 delegates attended the conference and we were made most welcome.

The conference was addresses by Sir Peter who is held in very high esteem by the Timorese due to his role in commanding our forces during the Interfet Peacekeeping mission.

The highlight for me was the trip to Balibo, some 3 hours from Dili, this was the location of the murder by Indonesian Special Forces in 1975 of 5 Australian journalists now known as "The Balibo Five".

Accompanying us on the trip was Jorge, a former resistance fighter who at the age of 14 met up with the 5 journalists just before their untimely end.

The old Portuguese Fort a 100 meters up the hill was where several Australian Units were based during our deployment to TL.

It is now a very nice hotel within the grounds of the fort, air conditioned with a very nice restaurant.

It was easy to see troops had been stationed there as the area had been cleared to the tree line some 300 meters away.

The Regiment will be conducting a re-enactment of the first beret parade on the Sunday, 24th July at Victoria Barracks.

Full details are not available at the moment but we will be invited to observe this parade and for some of you it will bring back some memories.

Anzac Day is almost on us again, and once again we will have former resistance fighters from Timor Leste at our service in Martin Place.

I would like to see as many ex members of the Regiment marching with the Association this year, for some of you it will be a first.

We all should take pride in our service whether we were Regular soldiers or Reserve soldiers.

We were all part of the spear.

You were either the shaft, the blade or the tip, and surely Commandos were at the tip.

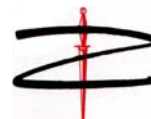
All jobs in the Defence Force are important, were that not so it would not have been created.

Form up point is in Bligh Street just behind the SASR Association.

No excuses guys!



Barry Grant



Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc



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Airfield Seizure: Rangers Lead the Way

By LTCOL Matt Stevens

“The battalion is to be an elite, light and the most proficient infantry battalion in the world. A battalion that can do things with its hands and weapons better than anyone. The battalion will contain no “hoodlums or brigands” and if the battalion is formed from such persons it will be disbanded. Wherever the battalion goes, it must be apparent that it is the best.”

General Creighton W. Abrams

“The Abrams Charter” upon the formation of the 1st Ranger Battalion, 1974

Offensively striking in the deep with surprise is what Special Operations Forces (SOF) excel at. For the US Army’s elite Light Infantry Regiment, the 75th Ranger Regiment, this is its *raison d’être*, its reason for being. During the period of darkness (POD) of 19th and 20th of October, 2001, US Army Rangers from the 3rd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment conducted an airborne assault seizing “Objective Rhino”, an Airfield south of the city of Kandahar, Afghanistan. The assault was enabled by USAF MC-130 Talonⁱⁱ aircraft, post preparatory fires from B-2 Stealth Bombers and AC-130ⁱⁱⁱ Aircraft. Within minutes, the Rangers had conducted an en-masse tactical parachute descent directly onto the airstrip dropzone, rapidly dominating the key terrain. The Rangers subsequently overwhelmed the already attrited Taliban and established a Forward Aerial Refueling Point (FARP) for other concurrent special operations, as well as gathering intelligence and assessing the airfield for future operations. Upon the completion of the FARP operations, the force hastily withdrew via the MC-130 aircraft package after spending only five-and-a-half hours on the ground. This action demonstrated to the Taliban (and Al Qaida) that Afghanistan was no longer a safe haven. The Taliban could no longer maintain freedom of manoeuvre when such a potent offensive force could strike so rapidly.

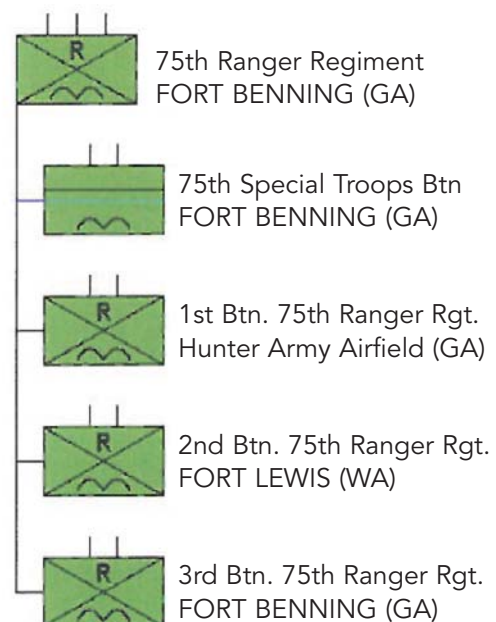
For the US Army’s 75th Ranger Regiment, Airfield seizure is one of its Mission Essential Tasks (MET). This article will outline the focus that the Regiment places on this task, by outlining the regimental history and its unique culture. In addition, the article will advocate the relevancy of military parachute operations in the contemporary environment and review the technological advances in military parachuting equipment and techniques.

The Ranger Regiment

Formally recognised as a Regiment in 1984, the 75th Ranger Regiment can trace its lineage back to the Revolutionary War and Civil War; however, the current Regiment’s genesis was really during World War II. It was during this time where six Ranger Battalions were formed, experiencing significant combat action throughout all theaters of operation. Rangers also saw extensive service in Korea and Vietnam in the Direct Action and Long Range Reconnaissance role as formation level assets (Division and Corps). In the

aftermath of the Vietnam War, the US Army decided to form a Ranger Battalion (1st Battalion) that would serve to be an example and pathfinder to remainder of the US Army in its needed focus on professionalism, values and capability regeneration, in accordance with General Abram’s above charter^{iv}. Eight months later the 2nd Ranger Battalion was formed and in 1984 the 3rd Battalion and Regimental Headquarters were formed, leading to the establishment of the 75th Ranger Regiment in 1986. Elements of the Rangers were part of the ill-fated Operation Eagle Claw raid of 1980, in the attempt to rescue the US Hostages held in Tehran (Iran). The Regiment also further distinguished itself in Grenada, Panama, Somalia, Kosovo and Iraq. The Regiment continues to be extensively involved in Afghanistan and the ongoing War on Terror.

Currently, the 75th Ranger Regiment is comprised of three Ranger Battalions, a Regimental Special Troops Battalion (RSTB) and a Regimental Headquarters. See fig 1. Due to the changing nature of warfare and the need for an agile and sustainable Ranger Force, the RSTB was activated on 17 July 2006. The RSTB conducts sustainment, intelligence, reconnaissance and maintenance missions which were previously accomplished by small detachments assigned to the Regimental headquarters and then attached within each of the three Ranger battalions.



The roles of the 75th Ranger Regiment are diverse and have applications across the range military operations; these include Direct Action, Airfield Seizure/Airborne operations, Special Reconnaissance, Personnel Recovery and Sensitive Site Exploitation. Rangers seized airfields in support of Operations' "Urgent Fury" (Grenada, 1983), "Just Cause" (Panama, 1989) "Rhino" (Afghanistan, 2001) H1 and H2 (Iraq, 2003), again highlighting the operational viability and utility of airborne operations.

Ranger Culture

To an observer, the most noticeable feature of the 75th Ranger Regiment is the unique unit culture. Strong and effective leadership is in abundance at all levels and is consistently exercised with example. This modus operandi ensures the operational preparedness^{v1} of the Regiment, as well the maintenance of its hard earned combat reputation and prestige within the US Military. The average age of the Ranger is 25 years. He has a very high level of self-discipline, individual Infantry skills and physical toughness. Every ranger lives by the Ranger Creed (see below) and again to the observer, this is clearly evident in all of their endeavours.

The Regiment selects its own personnel, everyone being a volunteer. New recruits, soldiers and officers are required to go through the Ranger Assessment and Selection Program (RASP) to assess their ability and provide them the basic skills required to be an effective member of the Regiment. For new graduate recruits, RASP is conducted after applicants successfully complete their basic Military Occupational Specialty (MOS) course [Initial Employment Training in the Australian lexicon] and graduate from the Army's Parachutists Course (Airborne School). For other enlisted soldiers and officers, who have successfully completed their

first tour of duty in a US Army unit, and meet the recruiting qualifications, a RASP date will be scheduled upon application and conditional acceptance to the 75th Ranger Regiment. Upon successful completion of RASP, regardless of what time or point in a soldier or officer's career they attend, they will have demonstrated the attributes and traits required to be a US Army Ranger and be assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment. Often confusing, the US Army Ranger School teaches the fundamentals of small unit leadership and patrolling; however, is not necessarily a qualifier to apply or be assigned to the 75th Ranger Regiment. Ranger School is the most physically and mentally demanding leadership school the US Army has to offer. Members of the Regiment desiring to be placed in higher positions of responsibility are highly encouraged and afforded the opportunity to attend Ranger School and earn the coveted US Army Ranger Tab, which is a significant mark of distinction in the US Military.

For the non-commissioned officers, the career path is based on the premise of a 'daily renewable contract' with competition for senior appointments becoming incrementally more selective as soldiers' career progresses. Within the US Military lexicon, the Ranger is an Infanteer by MOS (trade), known as MOS 11. A soldier can be laterally transferred to another infantry or manoeuvre unit as required and with relative ease depending upon the individual circumstances. This system serves to further reinforce the quality of the Ranger pedigree. For the Ranger Regiment Officers, all must have met the entry requirements of the enlisted personnel, however, in addition they must have successfully commanded outside the Ranger Regiment in an infantry or manoeuvre unit prior to assuming any command appointment within a Ranger Platoon, Company or Battalion. This highly competitive environ-

The Ranger Creed

Recognising that I volunteered as a ranger, fully knowing the hazards of my chosen profession, I will always endeavour to uphold the prestige, honour, and high 'esprit de corps' of my ranger regiment.

Acknowledging the fact that a ranger is a more elite soldier, who arrives at the cutting edge of battle by land, sea, or air, I accept the fact that as a ranger, my country expects me to move further, faster, and fight harder than any other soldier.

Never shall I fail my comrades. I will always keep myself mentally alert, physically strong, and morally straight, and I will shoulder more than my share of the task, whatever it may be, one hundred percent and then some.

Gallantly I will show the world that I am a specially selected and well trained soldier. My courtesy to superior officers, neatness of dress, and care of equipment shall set the example for others to follow.

Energetically will I meet the enemies of my country. I shall defeat them on the field of battle for I am better trained and will fight with all my might. Surrender is not a ranger word. I will never leave a fallen comrade to fall into the hands of the enemy and under no circumstances will I ever embarrass my country.

Readily will I display the intestinal fortitude required to fight on to the ranger objective and complete the mission, though I be the lone survivor.



ment brings out the best in the Regiments' soldiers and officers, further reinforcing the robust Ranger capability and reputation.

Airfield Seizure

Annually, each Battalion of the 75th Ranger Regiment conducts an exercise focused on the Airfield Seizure mission set. This complex, multifaceted and joint operation focuses on all the enabling assets training collectively and being able to operate with a unity of purpose in a synchronised and coordinated manner against a credible adversary. This basis of training further enhances the habitual intra-unit relationships and joint standing operating procedures (SOPs). The size and combat potency of the Ranger Battalion Airfield seizure force is simply staggering. The operation, regardless of the size of combat force [which is generally at a minimum Battalion (-)], requires numerous manned fixed and rotary wing assets, as well as a number of Unmanned Aircraft Systems (UAS) to generate the seizure effect. Fixed wing assets that support the mission include the C-17 Globemaster, MC-130 Combat Talon, AC-130 Spectre and Spooky Gunship, KC-135 Aerial Refuellers, AWACs and the A-10 Warthog. Amongst the various Air enablers is the V-22 Osprey which is quite a unique capability given that it combines the vertical takeoff, hover, and vertical landing qualities of a helicopter with the long-range, fuel efficiency and speed characteristics of a turboprop aircraft. The Osprey fills a long standing USSOCOM requirement to conduct long-range infiltration, exfiltration, personnel recovery and resupply missions during night operations. All aircraft that support the Airfield Seizure mission set have an aerial refuelling capability.

The purpose of the airfield seizure mission is often to secure a transload point deep in enemy territory for the subsequent exfiltration of precious cargo. The specific detailed tactics, techniques and procedures of the Ranger Airfield Seizure mission are beyond the scope and classification of this article, however, the operation is enabled by multi-faceted and fused Intelligence, Surveillance and Reconnaissance (ISR), including support from the Ranger Regiment's own Reconnaissance Company (from the RSTB). Prior to an airborne lodgement, information dominance is critical, coupled with the deliberate targeting, neutralization and suppression of threats via fires and other assets. Of course, as well as depending on these aforementioned enabling criteria, there is the need for the atmospheric conditions, typically winds no greater than 15 knots on the DZ. The airborne insertion of the Ranger Battalion is then the crux of the operation. Within a short period of time, the Rangers can neutralise threats and rapidly mass combat power following the clearance of a minimum distance (limit of exploitation) off the runway in order to commence airland operations. Of particular note in the force package is the inclusion of joint assets such as the Special Tactics Squadron (STS) from US Air Force Special Operations Command

(AFSOC). STS operatives maintain a habitual working relationship with all Airfield Seizure Mission set enablers, providing the Joint Force Commander with austere air traffic control; assault zone (landing zone/drop zone) survey, assessment, establishment, and control, close air support using strike aircraft and gunship missions, weather observations, environmental reconnaissance, personnel recovery and advanced trauma care.

The airborne lodgement is merely the insertion phase of the operation. The conduct of combined arms manoeuvre up to and including the seizure of the objective/s is where the 'rubber meets the road' for the Rangers. Mission Command^{vii} is exercised by a joint operation centre, commanded by the 75th Ranger Regiment Commander, with the ground force under command of the Battalion Commander operating distributed and redundant mission command nodes on the ground. Multiple layer C41^{viii} supports all levels of mission command and is vital to the successful execution of the Airfield Seizure mission. The Ranger Battalion possesses potent mixes of direct and indirect weapon systems to either destroy, neutralise or suppress the adversary. Some of the unique weapons in the impressive Ranger arsenal include the 5.56mm M4 with 10" Barrel (standard across a Ranger Battalion), the 60mm, 81mm and 120mm Mortar systems, 84mm Carl Gustav M3 Anti-Armor weapon (6.35kg lighter than the current AUS M2 version), FN SCAR 7.62mm Assault Rifle and the M240L (a light-weight version of the M240B, which is essentially a shorter and lighter version AUS MAG58 7.62mm Machine Gun).

Relevance of Military Parachuting

Although military parachuting is a viable insertion technique that is at least 70 years of age, there remains in the author's opinion no faster way to achieve a mass 'boots on the ground' effect regardless of tactical insertion means or technique. This includes the use of RW aircraft to insert troop's en-masse. Within very short period of time, the Ranger Battalion can swiftly seize and dominate terrain, neutralise threats, receive and support follow-on force elements, enable the recovery of personnel and equipment (including any potential sensitive cargo) and rapidly withdraw within a period of darkness (POD). In the littoral environment, the ability to seize an Aerial Point of Disembarkation (APOD) and/or a Sea Point of Disembarkation (SPOD) is critical to enabling Non-Combatant Evacuation Operations (NEO), Special Recovery Operations or any follow-on land manoeuvre. The use of vertical envelopment via parachuting techniques remains especially relevant in the contemporary operational environment (in particular within Australia's primary operating environment), especially given the limited range, endurance, asset complement and utility of RW to achieve a rapid en-masse decisive effect. The C-17 and C-130 fleet and crews supporting the airborne lodgement are the real 'heavy lifters' and are extremely



well suited and operationally proven to achieve mission success.

The demise of the conventional Australian Airborne Battle Group (ABG)/Airborne Combat Team (ACT) capability over the last 10 years has resulted in all military parachuting operations being the sole responsibility and domain of Australia's Special Operations Command (SOCOMD)^x. Whilst the capability of SOCOMD to conduct parachuting operations is well founded and operationally mature, the ability of the extant ADF ORBAT to achieve a mass 'boots on ground' effect via vertical envelopment in order to seize an objective of an nature is now limited, regardless of threat.

Military Parachuting Technological Advancements

Parachuting techniques and equipment have advanced significantly in recent years, serving to reduce risk to mission and force. This has been a necessity given the ever-increasing combat loads of soldiers. The introduction of the T-11 main and T-11 reserve canopies by the US Army has been a key part in this progression. The T-11 main canopy is a modified version of a cross/cruciform platform. The canopy has an increased inflated diameter of 14% and a 28% increase in surface area, when compared with the T-10B-D (current in-service Australian Static Line (SL) parachute). The T-11 main canopy utilizes a unique deployment sequence to reduce the opening shock and canopy oscillation. The T-11 is designed to have an average rate of descent of 19 feet per second (5.8 m/s) for the 95th percentile service member^x, compared with 24 feet per second (7.5 m/s) with the T-10B-D. This reduction is intended to significantly lower landing

injury rates for paratroops. Detailed US Army analysis, as a result of extensive trials and testing indicate that paratroop injuries incurred from the T-10 parachute are 2.1 times higher than the T-11^{xi}. The reserve canopy is a derivative of the British Low Level Parachute (LLP) aero-conical design that includes apex scoop pockets at the top of the reserve canopy and skirt assist lines at the system's hem to promote fast opening of the reserve system during low-speed malfunctions. Unlike the T-10R (current AUS in service reserve parachute system), the T-11R reserve uses an omni-directional, center-pull deployment system. Another feature of the T-11 system is the harness which is designed to displace the opening shock forces of the serve parachute equally along the long axis of the paratroop's body. Like the T-10, the T-11 has an extremely successful canopy opening rate and is highly suitable to the military parachuting environment after years of rigorous testing and evaluation by the US Army prior to its introduction into service.

Recent discussions with the leadership^{xii} of the 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment indicated that the battalion typically expected 1-2 serious injuries (career-ending type injuries for an Infantryman) per 500 paratroops for each Airfield Seizure activity, when using the previously in-service T-10 parachute. The injuries were typically broken tibia/fibia or shattered heels. Since transitioning to the new T-11 parachute, the percentile injury rate with the T-11 is less than 1%. The Battalion now expects zero serious injuries and those that have occurred are usually as a result of another Paratrooper accidentally stealing another's air – which will obviously affect any variant of parachute. Airfield seizure requires paratroops to land on runways – this is a critical task.



Parachute Comparisons^{xiv}

	T-10B-D Main Parachute	T-11 Main Parachute
Descent rate (feet per sec/ metres per sec)	24.7 fps (7.5 mps)	19.1 fps (5.8 mps)
Max suspended weight	230 kg	250 kg
Canopy diameter	26.9 feet (8.1m)	30.6 feet (9.3m)
Stabilisation height @ 800ft AGL	600 feet	525 feet
Seconds to open upon exiting aircraft (seconds)	4 secs	6 secs
Altitude lost from aircraft exit	200 feet	275 feet

Conclusion

General Creighton Abram's vision to create an elite light infantry unit in order to set the example and reestablish the US Army's core values, post Vietnam has been a reality. The 75th Ranger Regiment represents a robust and potent task organisation that is poised to respond to any crisis at very short notice in support of the US national interest. The Regiment's ability to affect Airfield Seizure is certainly a highlighted capability within the unit's application across the range of military options. Commensurate with increasing soldier loads, the US Army has introduced a new generation tactical parachute system, the T-11 main and reserve. This parachute system has brought about a dramatic reduction in injuries to the ground force, reducing risk to both mission and force. Given historical precedent and the resident capability organic to the 75th Ranger Regiment, parachuting remains a viable and relevant insertion method in the contemporary environment. There remains no faster way to rapidly achieve a mass 'boots on the effect'. This fact remains particularly germane to Australia's POE. The 75th Ranger Regiment is an impressive and potent elite infantry unit. It will continue to lead the way for the US Army.

Biography: Lieutenant Colonel Stevens is a career infantryman, having served as both an Infantry Soldier and Officer. He has served as Platoon Commander in the 4th Battalion (Commando), The Royal Australian Regiment and as a Patrol, Troop and Sabre Squadron Commander in the Special Air Service Regiment, including operations in these appointments in East

Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan. Lieutenant Colonel Stevens is a graduate of the Australian Command and Staff College (Joint) and is currently serving as the Australian Infantry Exchange Officer within HQ 1st (US) Corps at Joint Base Lewis-McChord in Washington State, USA.

ⁱ Codification of the General Abram's vision (*The Abram's Charter*) in creating the new Ranger Battalion. The 1st Ranger Battalion (75th Infantry) was raised at Ft Benning, Georgia, 24 January 1974.

ⁱⁱ A Special Operations modified C-130 'Hercules', crewed by select and highly trained US Air Force personnel. MC-130 crews maintain habitual working relationships with other US Special Operations Command (USSOCOM) units and personnel.

ⁱⁱⁱ A modified C-130 'Hercules' capable of providing enduring and precision fires in support of ground manoeuvre.

^{iv} Kearney, Francis H. III, *The Impact of Leaders on Organizational Culture: a 75th Ranger Regiment case Study*, Strategy Research Project, Carlisle Barracks: US Army War College, 7 April 1997.

^v The US doctrinal term *Spectrum of Conflict* and/or *Operational Themes* has been replaced by *Range of Military Operations*, US Mission Command Centre for Excellence, dated 16 Dec 2011.

^{vi} Preparedness = Readiness + Sustainability.

^{vii} The US doctrinal term *Command and Control* has been replaced by the term *Mission Command*, US Mission Command Centre for Excellence, dated 16 Dec 2011.

^{viii} Command, Control, Computers, Communication and Information systems.

^{ix} Transfer of the Parachute Insertion Capability from FORCOMD to SOCOMD occurred with effect 26 Aug 2011. The Parachute Training School transferred from FORCOMD to SOCOMD with effect 01 Oct 2011.

^x US Army Public Health Command Study, dated 29 August 2011.

^{xi} *ibid*

^{xii} Discussions with Major John Lubas - Executive Officer and Staff Sergeant Patrick Lachney - Air Operations NCO, 2nd Battalion, 75th Ranger Regiment, dated 18-20 Apr 2012.

^{xiii} T-11 introduction into service (US Army) Briefing, dated 02 February 2012.

^{xiv} US Army Public Health Command Study, dated 29 August 2011.

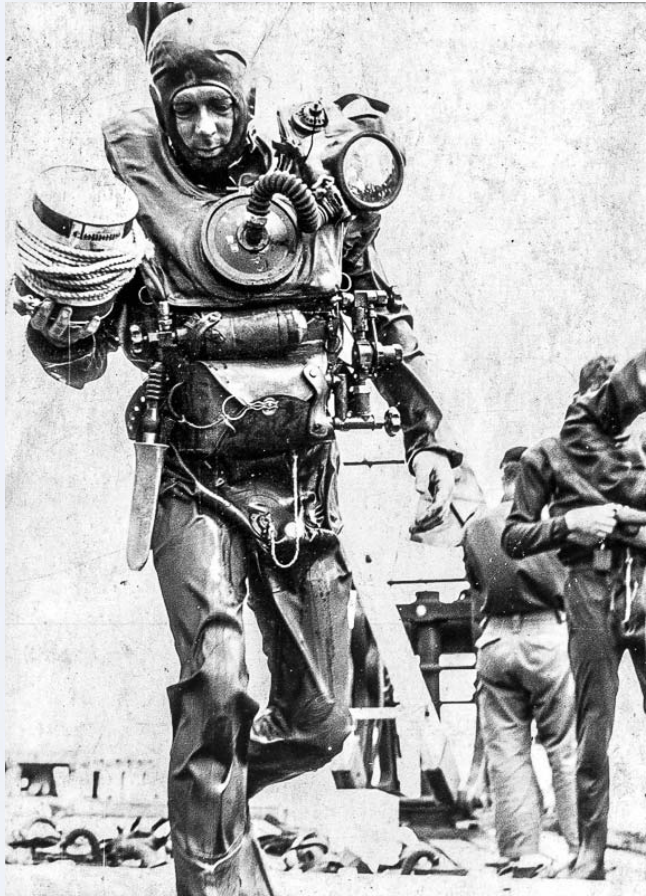


Warrant Officer Class 2 Ernest Charles Tarr

7 Oct 1924 - 29 December 2015

As part of Army Week celebrations, the Military Tattoo held at the Sydney Showground on the 23rd October 1958 included a simulated cliff assault performed by 1 Infantry Battalion (Commando) (1 Inf Bn (Cdo)). Perhaps the highlight of this demonstration, performed before an estimated audience of at least 30,000 people, was the demonstration of a highly spectacular "Flying Angel" by Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) Ernie Tarr from the top of a -20 metre high "cliff" constructed of scaffolding and timber covered with canvas. This technique required him to lie on top of a taut rope, facing down the rope, with one foot crooked over the rope and the other foot hanging free for balance. The rope was secured at the bottom end to one of the "assault craft" (actually a small military vehicle disguised to look like a boat). Once he commenced his very rapid descent he spread both arms for effect – hence the term "Flying Angel". This was the first occasion upon which 1 Inf Bn (Cdo) had demonstrated its many and varied commando skills to the public, which Ernie Tarr planned and coordinated, although he had injured an elbow during rehearsals on the day of the demonstration.

Ernie Tarr was born in Sydney on 7th October 1924 and enlisted in the Australian Army on 29th July 1943. The place of enlistment was Tenterfield, NSW, and the locality of enlistment was Townsville, Queensland. He was discharged from the Army on 29th September 1946, and his posting at discharge was as a Signaller with the 2/4 Australian Infantry Battalion. He took part in the landing of the 2/4 Battalion at Aitape, Papua New Guinea, on 2nd November 1944 in its only campaign against the Japanese, with the most intense fighting occurring between April and July, 1945. Subsequently landed at But, adjacent to a Japanese airfield, the battalion advanced in an easterly direction, covering some 150 kilometres in three days under very trying forced march conditions, along the coast to capture Wewak on 10th May 1945, after which it swung



inland to clear the foothills of the Prince Alexander Range.

He re-enlisted in the Australian Regular Army early in 1948, and was allocated the service number 1704. He served as a member of cadre staff with a number of Citizen Military Forces (CMF) units in North Queensland, including Ingham and Townsville, rising to the rank of sergeant. In 1950, with the outbreak of the Communist Terrorist Emergency in Malaya, he volunteered for active service in Malaya where he served periods of attachment to several British Army units. Upon return to Australia he was promoted to the rank of WO2. He successfully applied for posting as Company Sergeant Major (CSM) to the yet-to-be-

formed 1 Commando Company in Sydney, which carried with it a commitment of an extended period of specialist commando training in the United Kingdom. WO2 Ron Smith was the other successful applicant, who was subsequently posted to 2 Cdo Coy in Melbourne.

Ernie Tarr was one of the original members of the Australian Regular Army (ARA) cadre staff posted to 1 Cdo Coy prior to its formation in Sydney in July 1955. He was subsequently posted to the United Kingdom in October 1955 to undertake 12 months specialist training in climbing, cliff assault and casualty evacuation techniques with the Cliff Assault Wing, Royal Marine Commandos in Devon and swimmer canoeist and assault swimming techniques with the Special Boat Service (SBS) at Portsmouth. He returned to Australia in November 1956 and straight away set about identifying suitable areas for climbing training, commencing with the Narrow Neck region near Katoomba in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. He decided that this area was unsuitable and the search shifted to the Kiama/Bombo/Minnamurra and Macquarie Pass regions south of Sydney. This area was found to be quite suitable and he instructed on the very first basic climbing course which was held in this area in



September 1957 where he achieved instant notoriety through his occasional use of a Smith and Wesson 38 service revolver and live ammunition in order to add a sense of realism to the cliff assault training.

In November/December 1957 he instructed on the first basic diving course ever run by the Australian Army. This course, which was conducted at Chowder Bay, Sydney, used the Siebe Gorman swimmer canoeist breathing apparatus (SCBA) which used pure oxygen. This re-breathing system, unlike compressed air systems, left no tell-tale surface bubbles. A major disadvantage of the SCBA system was that it could not be used in water depths in excess of -10 metres as breathing pure oxygen below this water depth pressure could, unbeknown to the user, result in potentially fatal oxygen poisoning. A couple of days into the course, the OC 1 Cdo Coy, Major "Mac" Grant, received a phone call from the Director General Medical Services (DGMS), Eastern Command, at Victoria Barracks ordering him to immediately stop the course because of the dangers inherent in breathing pure oxygen under pressure. Of course, the DGMS was completely unaware that Ernie Tarr had been certified as a diving supervising officer for this equipment by the SBS in the United Kingdom, which was emphasised by Major "Mac" Grant. After a delay of nearly a day, which involved a number of phone calls, the DGMS finally gave his approval for the course to continue.

In 1959, while instructing on a basic climbing course at Bombo quarry just north of Kiama, he was demonstrating the correct technique for a controlled "peel-off" from a cliff -7-8 metres high when the very large slab of rock to which he was belayed broke away and crashed onto his right leg causing him serious injury. He spent the next 4-5 months in the Repatriation General Hospital, Concord, where he underwent a series of operations to repair his leg. This accident effectively ended his Army career and he received a medical discharge early in 1960.

After discharge he moved the family to Lucinda Point, north of Ingham, Queensland, where he became a casual fisherman crewing on fishing trawlers, sometimes assisted by his eldest son, Burnett.

He moved to Townsville in 1965 and then to Kavieng, Papua New Guinea, in 1966 where he subsequently was employed by the Department of Fisheries Research. Whilst there, he came to be known amongst the locals as "Tarrbada" ("big man around the village"). During the period 1968-69 he was working in Port Moresby, still with Fisheries Research, where he had been appointed a special constable. In late December 1974, while still based in Port Moresby and living in Commonwealth of Australia supplied married quarters, he traded a speedboat for a baby grand piano. The only problem was that he found that the piano was too big to fit inside the house, but he solved this problem by knocking down the side wall of the house to get the piano inside. He retired in the early 1980's and moved back to Bundaberg, Queensland. He later suffered a series of minor strokes. Before he had his last stroke, which affected his speech, he had been a member of the Bundaberg Pistol Club which won the contract for training the first Air Marshalls, in which he was directly involved. He later became wheel-chair-bound and refused point-blank to go into a nursing home, choosing to stay at home with a devoted carer, Joan, who looked after him really well until the end.

Ernie Tarr married Patricia Hughes after his discharge from the Army in 1946 and before he re-enlisted. They had three children:- Burnett born in 1948, Peter in 1950 and a daughter, Jedda, in 1959. Patricia passed away in 2008, and Peter, his younger son, passed away in 2013.

Lastly, I wish to sincerely thank Burnett Tarr for assisting me with details of Ernie's journey through life following his medical discharge from the Army in 1960.

BRIAN MURPHY



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New South Wales Welfare Officer's Report

Brian Dunbar has taken over the Welfare Officer's role from Ken Curran.

Ken has been the link between our WW2 "old & bold" for more years than we can remember and we look forward to Brian carrying on, contact details for Brian are below.

From Brian

" I would be grateful if you would advise me of any, of which you are aware.

Members' names are not mentioned if it is of a confidential nature.

Also we must respect members' wishes if they don't wish to be contacted.

So, if you are fit and or able, and willing to be a volunteer to support the "brotherhood", send me your details and what region you live in; e.g. Northern Beaches, Eastern Suburbs of Sydney etc.

Conversely, if you are frail, sick, going into hospital or needy and require some support, send me your details and I'll see how we can help."

Brian Dunbar
NSW Welfare Officer
Australian Commando Association (NSW)
E: dunbar33@bigpond.com
Ph: (02) 9452 2589

Letter to the Editor



FOLLOW UP ON THE WINNIE THE WAR WINNER STORY IN ISSUE #6

The following letter is of historical interest. It was received by the Editor after the last issue of Commando News.

Dear Barry,

I read with interest the article "Winnie the War Winner" in November 2015 edition of Commando News.

I would like to pass on a conversation I had with an old digger who has since passed away.

His name was Stan De Brabiner (phonetic spelling).

In 1942 Stan operated a radio at Tennants Creek in NT and on one night a very faint signal was received from Timor. He passed this on to Darwin who tried unsuccessfully to make contact.

Although Tennants Creek again received a message – this again was passed on to Darwin.

Credibility was waning, on a general prevailing thought was that a Japanese ploy was being transmitted from some unknown place? How could a message be received at Tennants Creek of all places and not at closer and better equipped Darwin?

It was thought that the Japanese were trying a trick to gain access to our code.

But next night Darwin was successful and the rest is now history.

I felt like passing this conversation to you for what it is worth as that generation is just about gone.

Regards and keep up the good work,
Yours sincerely

Gregory Doherty

Editor. Thanks Gregory, stories like this are of interest to all of us.

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WAR WIDOWS GUILD REPORT ON VISIT TO TIMOR-LESTE

1 MARCH – 4 MARCH, 2016

The War Widows' Guild of Australia, Inc. was invited by the Government of Timor-Leste to attend their National Day of Commemoration of Veterans' on 3rd March, 2016. I was fortunate to be able to attend and represent the National President of the War Widows' Guild of Australia, Inc., Mrs. Meg Green, and indeed all war widows.

His Excellency, the Honourable General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MD (Retd.) and Lady Cosgrove represented our nation along with Mr. Rod White, RSL NSW State President, representing the National RSL President, Rear Admiral Ken Doolan AO RAN (Retd.); Mr. Barry Grant, Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc; Mr. Chris Perrin, Mr. Alexander Weilsman JP MA MPP, Protocol Manager at Roads and Maritime Services Sydney and Attaché to the Office of the Prime Minister of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste. It was a great honour to represent the Guild and to be part of the official party from Australia.

Arriving at Dili airport on Wednesday, we were met by the official party and presented with a beautiful scarf and cap. We were then taken to our hotel and enjoyed lunch with His Excellency Abel Guterres, Timor-Leste Ambassador to Australia. After lunch we were given a guided tour of the Timorese Resistance Archive and Museum. I found this very interesting and was able to learn so much about the history of this nation.

On Thursday the 3rd March we attended the closing of the First National Conference of Veterans of Timor-Leste. The purpose of the conference was to establish a council and a united voice to advocate for veterans rights & support services. There were 650 delegates in attendance, some travelling from afar to be there. We were assured that the conference was a great success and much was achieved.

His Excellency President Taur Matan Ruak conducted the closing address at the Conference. His Excellency the Honourable General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd.), Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia also addressed the attendees. As a



*Standing: NSW President RSL Rod White.
Seated: Gina Parrelli representing War Widows, Barry Grant NSW President Australian Commando Association, His Excellency Abel Guterres, Timor Leste Ambassador to Australia and Mr. Chris Perrin.*

result of the conference the 3rd of March has been declared Veterans' Day in Timor-Leste. This date honours the Timorese people's memory of fight and courage.

After the closing ceremony we proceeded to Metinaro Heroes Cemetery. His Excellency the Honourable General Sir Peter Cosgrove AK MC (Retd.) laid the first wreath on behalf of our nation. I was also able to lay a wreath on behalf of the War Widows' of Australia. As we were leaving the cemetery we were asked by two young widows to visit their husbands' graves. As we placed flowers on their graves, the emotions were high and many tears were shed.

I thank the Guild for allowing me the opportunity to represent them on this memorable occasion. It was very humbling to see that my presence was greatly appreciated by the Timor-Leste widows and I will treasure the subsequent friendships that were forged.

Gina Parrelli
President' Representative
War Widows' Guild of Australia, NSW Ltd

Vietnam War Commemoration Service

29th September 2016

11 am ANZAC War Memorial Hyde Park

The War Widows' Guild of Australia NSW and Partners of Veterans Association of Australia NSW have partnered together to hold this important Commemoration Service in conjunction with the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan and of the Vietnam War.

The Commemoration Service is being held for the Widows and Partners of Vietnam War Veterans.

For more information please contact the associations mentioned above.





SYDNEY ANZAC DAY MARCH

UPDATE No. 1/2016

THANK YOU

The organising committee of the 2015 Sydney ANZAC Day March would like to thank everyone who participated in making the March such a success in marking the Centenary of the Gallipoli landings. Particular thanks needs to go to the NSW Government agencies such as the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Office of Veterans, Police, Fire Brigades, Ambulance, Traffic Management Centre and Transport NSW for the resources and man-hours they committed to the event. We also owe a debt of gratitude to the City of Sydney Council, Dawn Service Trust, the SES, our volunteer bands and especially our group of dedicated volunteer Marshals. Your hard work made all the difference on the day. Thank you.

NEXT YEAR

As you are no doubt aware there is a Light Rail Project starting construction later this year which will make the use of George Street impossible for future Marches. A group of senior members of the March committee have investigated and evaluated a number of alternate routes within the CBD paying particular attention to aspects such as the width and gradient of the street for senior veterans, having an appropriate focal point for an Act of Remembrance, access to public transport and minimal disruption to existing form up locations.

After careful discussion with key participants and government agencies the committee feels the best alternate route for the Sydney ANZAC Day March i:-

- ◆ we form up in Blight Street behind the SASR Association
- ◆ start line at Martin Place and Elizabeth Street
- ◆ march south on Elizabeth Street
- ◆ observe the Act of Remembrance adjacent to the ANZAC Memorial in Elizabeth Street
- ◆ participants wheel left into Liverpool Street for dispersal
- ◆ vehicles and bands wheel right into Liverpool Street and use Castlereagh Street to return to the start line.

This route will allow the March to continue as a solemn March of Remembrance while also allowing as many spectators including senior veterans and Legacy widows to participate.

While the March will no longer pass the Cenotaph, an Act of Remembrance will still be observed and the Cenotaph will continue to hold the Dawn Service and Sunset Service Commemorations on ANZAC Day.

Greater detail about these changes will be forwarded to participants in due course however we ask that people keep an eye on the RSL NSW website and encourage all associations to register to receive these updates.

VALE

Sandy McNab

Tony Rokov

MAJ Keith Long RFD

Gordon Phillpott



Gordon Phillpott

1st Independent Company and Coast Watchers

2 CDO Regiment

President ACA Queensland ex 2 Commando Company

SRD (Z Special Unit)

In 1942 he was accepted into SRD from the AIF.

He participated in six SRD Missions

Opossum. To rescue the Sultan of Ternate and family.

Swift. patrolling Loloda Islands.

Magpie. Reconnaissance of Majoe and Tifore Islands

Raven. Searching for a downed pilot.

Finch 1. Destroying Japanese prowes.

Semet 111. Guerilla warfare in Borneo. 250 Japanese dead.



Maj Keith Long RFD

Ernie Tarr

R.A. Clark

Kerry E Moore

Vince McCann

Henry Fawkes



1 Commando Company

2nd/5th Independent Company

1 Company

1 Company

ex Z Special Unit (6 April 2016)



Ernie Tarr



From the Prolific Pen of Harry Bell



October/November 2015; February 2016

I think you have all received the November portion; Commando Assn NSW has already published it. The Feb. 2016 section follows it on Pp 4 et seq.

VALE NX1115172, Charles Arthur Lonergan (2/7), 13.7.1914 – 11.10.2015: On Saturday, 17.10.15, I was enjoying my leisurely breakfast and reading the Death Notices to make sure my name wasn't there, when I noticed the above name. There was no suggestion of War Service, let alone Commando Service, but the name "Charlie Lonergan" was familiar to me from my days, over 40 years ago, as Editor of Commando News. I knew I'd heard Lloyd Carrington and Geoff Leyson talk of him and the stated age, 101 years, sounded right. "To the Green Fields" confirmed his second initial, so I rang the 2/7 Brains Trust: Con Bell, Jack Johanneson and Ted Byrne. Yes, that was Charlie – he lived up Morisset way. Loved a yarn; "a good little bloke", who had invited Con and Paddy McBride to the opening of the RSL Club which he had been instrumental in founding. They also remembered him for impulsively flying to Melbourne on Anzac Day, when the Sydney reunion got a bit quiet. An original, Wilson's Prom.-trained 7th Independent Coy member, his Regimental Number looked a little high, but Jack had the answer: Charlie had been in the CMF, number N256925, but got his X Number when he joined the AIF and the Independent Companies to face the Japanese. He was a member of the Engineers section in 7 Coy (later 2/7 Commando Squadron) and after sailing on 2.10 1942 to Moresby was flown to Wau for the Wau-Mubo campaign, followed by a stint in the Bena Bena – Ramu Valley stoush. Then followed more training at Wondecla when 2/7 joined the new Commando Squadrons, 2/9 and 2/10 to form 2/6 Cavalry (Commando) Regiment, formerly known as 6 Div Cav.

On 14.10 1944, 2 years and 12 days after his first embarkation, he sailed again from Townsville, this time to Aitape. He then served throughout the Aitape-Wewak campaign.

Jack was able to put me in touch with Rose Masters, widow of Charlie's mate, Stuart Masters (2/7). Rose knew Charlie well and used to visit him in his Retirement village where she found him with all his marbles (he was still playing bowls at 99!) and interested in the doings recorded in Commando News. She was unfortunately unable to get to Charlie's funeral, at Morisset on 21st October, but was represented by her daughter. And Barry Grant was there, as he so often is, to represent the Commando Association, along with Kevin Mahony. I hope Barry knows what a great comfort his presence at the funeral must be to the relatives (he even rode in the hearse on

one occasion!). Even though he belongs to a younger generation, he represents the comrades of the deceased – most of whom, in the second decade of the 21st century, have already perished. His green beret rested on Charlie's coffin

Charlie had never married but is mourned by numerous nephews, nieces and their children as well as by a sister in law – all his four siblings predeceased him. The RSL component of the funeral was performed by Des Green of Morriset Sub-branch - Charlie was a Life Member. A Celebration of his life was held at the Morriset Country Club, of which he had been a Board Member for many years. Barry tells me that Charlie had been a carpenter in civvy life and that his work may be seen in many local buildings, including the Catholic Church.

Rose Masters kindly sent me an Obituary from the front page of the Lakes mail, the local Morriset newspaper. My wife Kathie, has scanned it and it appears below, along with photographs from the Order of Service, sent to me by Barry Grant. Rose's daughter took Rose's flowers to the church, accompanied by a double-diamond cut-out (in case any readers are unaware of this, each of the eight independent companies had a colour-patch in the shape of a double diamond). Rose also rang the widows of former 2/7 members, Geoff Leyson, Jack London, Clive Jarman, Jack Palmer as well as Howard Tankey's daughter and Ben Davies. She tells me that Ross Moutier of the Commando Museum, Holsworthy had recorded an interview with Charlie and had accepted a number of souvenirs from Charlie and from her husband, Stuart.

When I rang Reg Davis (2/9) to tell him, he and Barry Grant had gone to the Barracks in Randwick for a Commando lunch, but Phyllis was able to tell me of their wonderful trip to Alice Springs, Ayer's Rock and The Olgas, escorted by their family. Phyll was just able to fit it in amongst functions of the various Doll-making societies of which she is a valued member. Reg doesn't do much sewing himself though he reckons he got a stitch in his side climbing East Hill. And he can sing "I'd rather have a paper doll to call my own - - -"

Mention of the attendance of old friends at funerals and memorial services, reminds me of a conversation I had about 30 or 40 years ago with dear old **Frank Rheinberger (2/9)**. I had attended a service for one of our mates; Frank had been unable to do so – he had had to see his oncologist. I named those who had been there before saying: "it was good to see them all; it would be pretty lonely being the last one . . ." Frank, knowing of his limited life expectation, responded, quick as a flash: "Well, Ding, if you don't want to be the



last one, I'll be quite happy to swap you!" Touché" I've probably told this story before but nobody will remember . . .

VALE VX64527, Ralph Coyne (2/4); 20.07.19 – 7.10.15: Ralph's funeral took place on 13.10.15 at Ringwood. Con Bell tells me that Ralph had been Hon. Sec. of the Victorian Commando Association back in the early post-war days and in later years, a Trustee of the Welfare Fund. He had been Secretary and then President of the 2/4 Association in Victoria and later an Honorary Life Member. He was also prominent for many years in Legacy.

Commando; From Tidal River to Tarakan tells me that on 2.3.1942, when 2/4 left Wilson's Prom, Ralph was a sig and that by 12.3.42 had achieved two stripes. Next stop was Timor where, on 27th December, he was sprung by the Nips and had to leave his boots behind! Fortunately, Harry Levy had a spare pair of sneakers. An even closer call came in September 1943 when his Landing Ship Tanks (or "Troops"?) was torpedoed and bombed near Lae. Ralph, then a Sergeant, was one of the few survivors. He went on to train on the Tableland and accompanied the Squadron (by now, part of 2/9 Aust Cav (Commando) Regiment) to Tarakan. I am greatly indebted to "Tidal River to Tarakan" for its personal detail and helpful index – a rarity in such books.)

VALE VX109380, Arthur Norman Bear (2/3); W.I.A. 15.05. 1925 – 1.11.2015: His funeral took place at Cranborne Estate on 6.11.2015. Unfortunately, Ron Garland's otherwise excellent history, *Nothing is Forever*, lacks an index and I have not yet found any reference to him. No doubt *Double Diamond* will fill the gaps.

Don Newport (2/11) is not tap-dancing but he gets about pretty nimbly on his two sticks. **Ted Workman (2/10)**, Editor of *Cavalry News* and former long-time Secretary of the NSW branch of 2/6 Cav (Cdo) Regt Assn, tells me that Don, being geographically isolated from the few survivors of 2/9 Regiment, would like to join our Association. I look forward to his doing so.

East Timor Hearts Fund is still very active, having recently flown another two deserving emergency cases to Melbourne for surgery, one of them a 14-year old girl.

VALE NX73110, Corporal E.T. ("Mick") Dennis, M.M. (2/5), Z Special: The funeral took place on 18.11.15 of a very special member of the Commando Association. Yes, they are all special but their deeds are not all as well known as those of Mick Dennis. He was a member of the first draft of 2/5 Independent Coy that left Foster by train on 9.4.42 and he served with them in New Guinea. But by 1944, with no further action looking likely, he volunteered for Z Special. Of course, 2/5 were to go back into action shortly as it turned out, but meanwhile Mick had become involved in what I might

call a heroic tragedy. He was the only survivor of a ten-man force that landed on Muschu Island in April 1945. The story has been told by his nephew Don Dennis, in "The Guns of Muschu" and by Geoff Black, a Fairmile man, with experience in that same area, in "Against the Odds". "Silent Feet", G.B. Courtney's history of Z Special, devotes 6 pages to the story. If you haven't yet read it, get hold of one of those books as a matter of urgency. "Operation Copper" as it was named was in many respects a balls-up, but all ten operatives were heroes and Mick Dennis's role was epic, deserving of a higher award. 6 Div had a tiny role to play in the drama because it was **NX86324, Len Osborn, (2/7)** who found him after he had fought his way through Muschu and back to the mainland, west of Wewak. I won't go into any more detail because I want you all to read the book.

February 2016

NX73110, Cpl Edgar Thomas ("Mick") Dennis was laid to rest at Botany Crematorium on Wednesday, 18th November, in the presence of a large congregation of friends, relatives and people simply paying respects. There was a catafalque party of serving commandos: smartly got up young men, seemingly straight from combat, for every man wore his medals. Major (Ret'd) John Thurgood, SC, MBE, OAM, RFD, spoke the principle eulogy, supported by representatives of his six children and thirteen grandchildren (I don't think the "several" great grandchildren were called upon.) The RSL Presentation was conducted by Barry Collins, President of the Clovelly sub-Branch and, though it was a fairly secular service, the Church was represented by Lt Col Padre Jim Cosgrove.

There was a large contingent of former Commandos, led by Barry Grant. As far as I could see, I was the only 1939-45 representative, but that was only because of a shortage of veterans fit enough to attend. His good mate, Geoff Black, RAN, author of "Against all Odds", was in hospital, but represented by his son.

VALE QX23893, Sergeant J.C. Moller, 2/7 Commando Regiment: This death was reported in *Reveille*, but the informant seems to have been misinformed. He is not listed in the Nominal Roll of 2/7 Commando Squadron, so was probably a member of 2/7 Aust Cavalry (Commando) Regiment. He is not listed in the Unit Histories of 2/3, 2/5 or 2/6 Commando Squadrons, so was probably in RHQ. I am sorry I can't be more specific. Whoever notifies the RSL of these deaths usually omits date of death and often omits the unit – or describes it inaccurately. And the Nominal Rolls in Unit Histories are often incomplete.

VALE NX5027R, Sig B.G. O'Sullivan (2/2): This information comes from *Reveille* also, but he is listed as an original 2/2 man in *All the Bull's Men*.



NX179745, Trooper George Smith (2/9) also features in the November *Reveille*, but George has already been mentioned in these pages.

VALE NX73814, Trooper Charles Vassarotti, (2/9)

1.5.1923 – 14.8 2015: Charlie's death also was noted in *Reveille* – to my surprise. It seems that, in keeping with his habitual modest and unassuming personality, he had left instructions in his will that his death not be publicised and that there be no funeral service. While feeling that he deserved more recognition, his executors very properly observed his wishes, though after a suitable interval they held a small Memorial Service for family and close friends.

As can readily be calculated from his birth-date and his low Regimental Number, Charles had enlisted while well below the requisite age. In fact, he had volunteered for the AIF and the RAN and both call-ups arrived on the same day! He chose the AIF and later volunteered for the Commandos. His Uncle Jack Ellis, who, going by his regimental number was a later enlistment than Charlie, preceded him to The Cav and that was perhaps a factor in Charlie's decision. He served throughout the Aitape-Wewak campaign, including the Dove Bay landing. Her was a quiet man, well-liked by those he was in contact with.

After his discharge in 1946, he studied shorthand and some basic Law and was then accepted into the NSW Court Reporting Service. A court Reporter's job was to keep an accurate, verbatim record of everything said by Judge, witness or counsel during the hearing of a case. His main concern was the evidence, but often just what a judge had said to a jury was vital. Sometimes, much turned on arguments of law, raised by Counsel with the judge. Speed and accuracy were essential and these required a good knowledge of the English language (including Medical and Scientific terms) and a high IQ as well as deft hands – these were the days before mechanical aids to shorthand. That he had all these is shown by the facts that he was a highly regarded staffer in the Supreme Court of NSW and that, after some years in that position he was selected for the staff at Hansard, the official record of parliamentary debates in NSW.

He retired at the early age of 60 and started his own reporting service, providing transcripts of evidence for such bodies as the Medical Tribunal.

His widow, Pat, also a Reporter, with the Commonwealth Reporting Service, has lent me a copy of NSW Hansard, issued on 4.3.1983. Let me quote: Mr Frank Walker, Minister for Housing, Minister for Youth & Community Services, former Attorney General "I wish



to make a few comments on the retirement of Mr Charles Vassarotti of the Parliamentary Reporting Staff. Charles commenced his working life on 5th February 1940

with the Dept of Railways and remained with that Dept until 3rd April 1951. During WW2 he served overseas in the Intelligence Section of 2/9 Commando Squadron, AIF. Following his return from active service, Charles was appointed on 13th August 1951 as a Court Reporter in the Court Reporting Branch of the Dept of the Attorney General & Justice. He continued in that position until 9th April 1971 when he commenced service with the Parliamentary reporting Staff. On 29th October 1980, he was promoted to Sub Editor, a position that he still occupies. Charles will retire on 1.5.1983, his 60th birthday. He has given outstanding service to the Parliament. On behalf of Honourable Members, I thank him and wish him a long and happy retirement. I extend to him my personal thanks also for the assistance he gave me when I was a young solicitor practising in the courts of this state."

He was followed by Mr Leon Punch, Leader of the National Party (and younger brother of Ted Punch (2/7)). He made similar comments, concluding: "Members of the Opposition have always appreciated the assistance he has given to them in his characteristically kind and efficient way."

Mr Durick, MLA for Lakemba, made similar comments. Then Mr Nick Greiner, Leader of the Opposition expressed the gratitude of the Opposition generally for "the service rendered by Mr Vassarotti to all members of this House". Finally the Premier, Nifty Neville Wran QC weighed in, adding: "Mr Vassarotti and I have known one another for at least two decades. He was a brilliant Court Reporter and he brought his professional skills with him to Hansard. During his service with the Parliament, Mr Vassarotti has displayed integrity, objectivity and a capacity to play his important roll fairly and properly in relation to all honourable members. I speak on behalf of the Labor Party and I am sure on behalf of all members of Parliament when I thank Charles Vassarotti for being what he is – a decent man, who has performed his task, whatever it may be, tremendously well. I am surprised that he is retiring; I did not think that he was oiled enough to do so. Perhaps he has a secret to life. If so, it would be worth bottling."

Hear Hear. It is not often that Nick Greiner, Leon Punch and Nifty Wran agreed on anything.

In late years, Charles has had health problems, in particular cardio-vascular disease, culminating with amputation of a lower limb. Our sympathy goes to his widow, Pat, and their son.

Keith Johnston (2/10) is (as at mid-November) complaining of an eye infection. This is particularly upsetting for him, as it is in "the good eye" – the one that is usually about 80% efficient. It didn't stop him from attending Norm Dear's funeral. Norm was one of the few 2/3 men still standing. Keith and Roly Goode were the only veterans present.

Bert Potter (2/9) has had a new heart valve fitted and is feeling well. At 92, he has a restricted driving



licence and gets himself unaided to his various medical appointments

VALE Alexander ("Sandy") McNab, (2/1) and Coast Watchers (New Britain): Sandy was a stalwart of the Victorian branch of the Commando Association and the author of *"We Were the First"*, the history of No.1 Independent Company. In *"We Were the First"*, Sandy gives a thrilling account of the unit's activities in Bougainville after its fragmentation. We are unsure, but fear that Sandy might be "the last of the first." We would love to know of any other survivors.

Eric Geldard (2/9) has come strongly through keyhole surgery to remove some cancerous tissue from his gut. The surgeon is confident that he has got it all and Eric is back on deck full of fight.

VALE VX 1333056 Desmond John (Jack) Wilkinson, (2/7) died on 5.12.2015. He had been living in Queensland but when his wife died in August, he came down to Victoria where he had family.

I could not find Jack's name in *To the Green Fields*, but Dick found the Defence Dept records, which show that he trained at Foster in October 1942, joining 7 Independent Coy in February 1942 and serving in New Guinea until October. He was discharged in April 1944. Our sympathy to his son, Doug.

VALE NX203172, Tpr Edward Thomas (Ted) Punch (2/7), 17.12.1925 – 1.1.2016: Ted died in an aged care facility in Bowral after a fortnight in hospital, where he was being treated for a cerebral haemorrhage and pneumonia. His funeral, at the Northern Suburbs Crematorium on 12.1.16 was attended by Barry Grant, President of the NSW Commando Assn, who conducted the RSL component of the service; by Reg Davis (2/9) and by Ken Curran (2/12) as well as by your correspondent.

His 90th birthday, 17.12.15, was not much like his 21st, which I attended in the Masonic Hall, Inverell on the night after my discharge from the army: a white-tie affair, at which half the population of North-western NSW were present. Ted's father was a well-known Medico in Inverell as well as a successful breeder of racehorses – which explains why Ted could tell you the name, owner and jockey of every Melbourne Cup winner since *The Archer*. We joined the army on the same day (16.2.44) along with my schoolfriend Ted MacMillan (2/9) and had almost consecutive numbers (MacMillan didn't get his X number until a bit later, because his parents had withheld consent). The two Teds and I trained together at Cowra and Bathurst and were inseparable but were split up when MacMillan and I went to Canungra; Punch, being just a little younger, was, to his intense disappointment, sent to a Young Soldiers' Battalion for 6 months. However, he, along with Ced Permezal, Ian Seale, Nev Smith and others joined the 2/6 Cav (Cdo) Regiment a little later. His great schoolfriend, David Hammond was already

an NCO in 2/10 and MacMillan and I were in 2/9 but Punch was sent to 2/7. He was initially disappointed not to be with us or with Dave, despite our efforts to claim him, but he soon became a proud member of 2/7 – and remained so. Though a somewhat arrival, he was credited with a Nip as a "probable."

Post-war, Ted followed a number of callings before finding his niche as a Real Estate Agent with Martin & Punch in Sydney's Eastern Suburbs. He soon established a reputation for complete, transparent honesty and did well in that competitive field. He had one of those sunny personalities that made friends for him wherever he was: at Daisy's Bar in the Carlton, at The Kings School, at Wesley College, or at the AJC. Not to mention the Army. He was widely known in the North-west, the Central-west and the Hunter Valley. He had been a talented schoolboy footballer and a clever boxer though never an aggressor.

After the death of his wife, Elspeth, he eventually moved to the Southern Highlands with his partner, Annie – first a business partner, later a life partner. His brother, Leon (a former Leader of the NSW Country Party) predeceased him but he is survived by Annie (his friend for over 20 years), by his son Peter and daughters Pru and Penny and by numerous grandchildren – and a great-grandchild. We offer them our sympathy.



VALE NX 50062, Charlie Banks (2/6): Janet Drummond emailed me on 13th January that she had just read of Charlie's death. I have no other details at present. I do have a clear recollection, though, of one afternoon on the ferry – Remember when the NSW Commando Assn used to charter a ferry for the Anzac Day reunion? – when, to the consternation of the Master, the cheers of the passengers and in complete defiance of all the applicable rules and regulations governing Sydney Ferries, Charlie took command of the good ship *Kanangra* and drove us round the harbour at top speed. All was well, of course. He knew what he was doing – or seemed to – and the Master didn't dob. Does anybody remember how Charles came by the skill to handle a ferry boat? Or was it just instinct?

The great naturalist and environmentalist, Harry Butler, died last year. As some of you may know, Kathie worked with him on the "In the Wild" programmes, on the ABC, so we were invited to a Memorial Celebration in Perth. When in Perth, one sees the sights, so we saw



the Sky-diver, **Graham ("Dolly") Dolton (25th Light Horse & 2/9)**. Not only did he look after us, he was able to organise for **Benny Mundy (10th Light Horse & 2/9 &**

2/7) to travel up to his daughter's place for a great lunch. Said daughter, aided by her two sisters, transported Ben and catered; Dolly's next door neighbour, Bonnie, drove Kathie and me. We had a great day entirely.

Dolly's dickie heart (which robbed him of his DVA credentials for the 75th anniversary trip to PNG and disrupted his next overseas trip, is still a matter of concern (hence the need for Bonnie's chauffeuring) but is under control. So well controlled that he is contemplating a third parachute jump this year – to the natural horror of his family. He intends marching in Melbourne this year, if he can find anybody to march with.

Benny shows few signs of his age: he was one of those Light Horsemen who remained "horsed" until 1943, after which many of them did a Commando conversion course and came to 6 Div Cav. He arrived in 9 Squadron in November 1944 and served in A Troop until after our return from Dove Bay, finding life a bit quiet for his liking, he transferred to 2/7 where he served in the closing months of the war. Post war he led a varied life, including time as a Locomotive Fireman, a truck driver, an underground miner at his old home town, Kalgoorlie, a purveyor of pet food and a hotelier. His voice still carries nearly as well as Ken Curran's!

Darryl ("Mickey") McQuade, (24th Light Horse & 2/9) lives at Northam, on his own. He has developed leukemia and was unable to join us for lunch in February, but is still full of fight. Mick, who will be 91 in May, was the baby of 24th Light Horse and also came to 9 Squadron, along with Benny, Sammy Lund, Ray Mason, John ("Skeeter") Nancarrow, "Bull" McKenzie and a score of others. His young age explained his presence post war, with other "low-point" Canungra Cannibals, at 4th Bn, Wewak. There I had the pleasure of his company in my AES English class, together with Stan ("Bull") Hewitt, Kevin ("Dangerous Dan") McManus, Pat McHugh, Jack Smith, and John ("Bluey") Green, all 2/9. None of us became famous authors. And Mick and I are the only ones with any chance of doing so – we have outlived all the others.

The Sydney Morning Herald on Saturday, 13th February reported the death in a Vacluse Nursing Home, of **Betty Perry**, aged 93. Bet was the widow of

Bob: Robert Wentworth Perry, to give him his full name, an officer in 2/8 Squadron, who had fought in Bougainville and had become a Solicitor, qualifying on 3rd May, 1951 – just 3 months ahead of me! He died young, of the Big C. I recall that Bob did his back in on one occasion: manhandling an 18 gallon keg onto the ferry on Anzac day!

Another widow whose death I spotted in the SMH was **Mrs Harry Brittain**. Harry (2/4) was another long-time Treasurer of the NSW Commando Assn.

WARNING to all road (and footpath) users along the Northern Beaches: Stirling Moss – or is it Fangio - aka **Tpr E. Workman (2/10)** has recovered from the stroke that nearly did for him last year and has now got himself a turbo-charged wheelchair. Bring back the man with the red flag! Ted still has a bit of trouble with balance (join the club) but is full of fight as usual.

Spotted in the Herald the other day: the death of **Geoff Black, 15.10.1926 - 18.2.2016, RAN**. Geoff was an A.B. on Fairmile 804 which was one of those busy little patrol boats that gave us covering fire at Dove Bay on and after 11th May, 1945 and after the war he maintained a connection with our regiment. He was close to the late **Ossie Pomroy (2/10)** and kept in touch with him during Ossie's long and sad incarceration in a nursing home at Coffs Harbour, even making the long trip from Sydney to visit him.

Geoff had joined the Navy at 17, and hence was in action at age 18 - which would have been impossible in the Army at that stage in the war (unless, like lots of our friends, you had put your age up). His association with Commandos extended beyond our regiment: he was a friend of the late **Mick Dennis M.M (2/5, Z Special)** and wrote "*Against All Odds*", one of the two fine books on the disastrous Z Special raid on Muschu Island in 1955. Readers of *Cavalry News* may recall Geoff's horror at my reference to the late **Len Osborne (2/7)** by his nick-name "Garbage Guts"!

Geoff was finally carried off by a stroke, after 3 months of illness. He is survived by his widow, June and sons John, Garry, David and Tim, to whom we offer our sympathy.

Harry Bell

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EVENTS CALENDAR FOR 2016

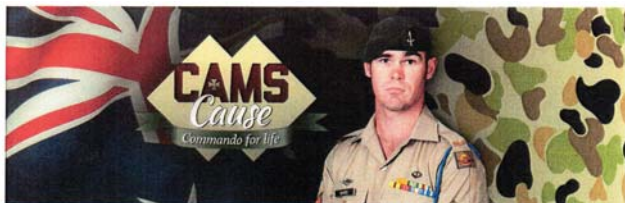
- APRIL 25th** ANZAC DAY
Commando Memorial Seat 0820 hours
After March
Club "99 on York"
99 York Street, Sydney
- MAY 29th (Sun)** CARNARVON GOLF CLUB LUNCH
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Pick up is available
1200 hours for 1230 hours
Three-course luncheon \$50.00 per head
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- JULY 3rd (Sun)** RESERVE FORCES DAY
(More info to follow as received)
- JULY 24th (Sun)** 60th Anniversary of the first beret parade
Victoria Barracks
(More information to follow)
- OCTOBER 15th (Sat)** ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF ASSOCIATION
To be held at HMAS Penguin
1030 hours - Subject to security approval
- NOVEMBER 11th (Tuesday)** REMEMBRANCE DAY AT DARLING HARBOUR
SERVICE HELD AT THE "KRAIT"
Service starts 1030 hours
- NOVEMBER 12th (Sat)** ASSOCIATION XMAS DINNER
CARNARVON GOLF CLUB
Families always welcome
1830 hours for 1900 hours

Please direct your enquiries to our Secretary, Kevin Mahony
Home (02) 9644 8794 or mobile 0425 279 111 or E-mail kevin.mahony1@bigpond.com





Barry Grant at the house where the Balibo 5 were murdered in Timor-Leste (see President's Report, p3).



Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG Bronze Statue Project & 30cm Statuettes

We are pleased to announce that the Cams Cause Team, in partnership with Platatac and The naked Army, have commenced the journey of creating a modern, life size, bronze statue of Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG.

Corporal Cameron Baird will be depicted in bronze, wearing his combat gear. A location for the statue has been determined. Our first statue will proudly stand at Currumbin RSL. We anticipate the completion of the statue to be late 2016. In time we hope to produce three statues to ensure a statue of Cameron stands in Melbourne, Currumbin RSL and at the Holsworthy Barracks in NSW.

In addition to the life size bronze statue we will be producing a limited edition 30cm replica statuette of the full size statue. We will be producing a total of 2000 statuettes. Each will be individually numbered. We expect that the statuettes will be ready for delivery or collection during April 2016.

Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG Statuettes will cost \$195.00. Postage will be an additional charge if delivery is requested/required. From each purchase of a 30cm statuette \$95.00 will go directly to the development and production of the Life Size Statue of Corporal Cameron Baird VC MG.

An order form is also attached. You may wish to order and pay in full now or alternatively confirm your order by placing a non-refundable deposit of \$25.00.

If you have any further queries or questions please make contact with a member of the Cams Cause Team.

You will be able to follow the progress of the statue and statuettes on the Cams Cause Facebook page and our Cams Cause website.

Thanks for your continued support.



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30cm Statuette Order Form



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EXPIRY: ____ / ____

SIGNATURE: _____

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TOTAL:		

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Association Green Jacket Pocket (For new Jacket)	\$3.00		\$80.00	
Association Green Jacket Pocket (Replacement Pocket)	\$3.00		\$15.00	
Association Green Jacket complete with pocket	Nil		\$410.00	
Badge – Cloth – Commando Parachute	\$3.00		\$6.00	
Badge – Beret (new Design)	\$3.00		\$15.00	
Badge – Car Window Decal	\$1.00		\$2.00	
Badge – Lapel – 1st Commando Regiment	\$3.00		\$10.00	
Badge – Lapel – Australian Commando Association	\$3.00		\$10.00	
Badge – Lapel – Para Wings	\$3.00		\$10.00	
Badge – Name (Optional – Years of Service/Nickname)	Nil		\$20.00	
*Beret – Green Qualified Members Only	\$10.00		\$32.00	
Book 'Strike Swiftly' "The Australian Commando Story"	\$18.00		\$70.00	
Caps – Black – Australian Commando Association	\$10.00		\$20.00	
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Jacket – Lined & Waterproof with Aust CDO Assoc logo	\$10.00		\$65.00	
Letter openers – stylised version FS or Stiletto – with/out 'Riccasso'	Nil		\$70.00	
Plaque – 1st Commando Regiment	\$15.00		\$50.00	
Shirt – Grey with Australian Commando Association logo	\$10.00		\$50.00	
Shirt – Grey Polo/Golf with Aust. CDO Assoc. logo	\$10.00		\$40.00	
Tie – 1st Commando Regiment	\$10.00		\$20.00	
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"Their level of swimming ability was really a bit scary," Justin said. "Although I had seen some scary things in the Army too.

"I had always had a passion for swimming but it wasn't until close to the end of my time with USM in 2011 that the opportunity came up to do the AUSTSWIM Teacher of Swimming and Water Safety training."

He has also gained the Teacher of Competitive Strokes and AUSTSWIM Assessor Accreditation, and is currently finishing the AUSTSWIM Infant and Preschool Aquatics Accreditation.

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Justin fits in 15-20 hours of work a week at the pool around his full-time study and another first aid job. It's no wonder the 28-year-old doesn't yet have any children of his own.

And his message to anyone thinking about becoming a swimming and water safety teacher: "Give it a try."

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BOOK REVIEWS

SIMMO A Biography of Ray Simpson, VC, DCM, One of Australia's Greatest Soldiers, Michael Malone OAM and Peter Lutley, Imprimatur Books, Perth, 2015

Reviewed by Jim Truscott

This narrative fills a long overdue gap in Australia's military history. I surprisingly first heard about Simmo in 1982 when the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Special Air Service Regiment presented a bronze bust of Ray Simpson to the Sergeants Mess. By then Ray Simpson has been dead for four years but his legendary status had been well and truly established within Australian Special Forces community and within the army at large. Who else would return as civilian with a Distinguished Conduct Medal to Vietnam and be enlisted in Theatre for his third operational tour where he won his Victoria Cross? There are also very few Australians who fought in WWII, Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.

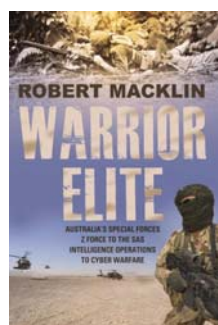
It is a credit to Mick Malone and Peter Lutley that they have tracked down over 100 veterans and civilians who knew the man to record what is really an oral history of this down to earth digger who was renowned for colourful language. In all likelihood Ray Simpson never had much formal schooling and so he wrote down very little himself. Hence his life was difficult to research without the assistance of his former colleagues and acquaintances. For Simmo the army was his home and so it is appropriate that his story is told through his cobbler's stories of him. What stood out for me about this brave Australian in all of the vignettes by his mates was the very practical way in which he passed on his experiences to others, officers and soldiers alike. This is the true measure of a combat soldier.



★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Warrior Elite: Australia's Special Forces Z Force to the SAS, intelligence operations to cyber warfare, Robert Macklin, Hachette, Sydney, 2015

Reviewed by Jim Truscott



This book is the broadest history of Australian Special Operations that has ever been published and as such it draws a line in the sand for histories to come. Special Operations are essentially any government activity that requires clandestine measures and the book traces their evolution from WWII up until the present day. Uniquely and arguably correct, it brands the Australian Secret Intelligence Service (ASIS) and the Australian Security Intelligence Organization (ASIO) as Special Forces. It also poses a prognosis for the future with the contention that Special Forces units in this widest sense across government are the future for security preparedness. It is almost as if the Big Army will be just there to train Special Forces! Most of the history is not new, at least not for me, but it is a compilation in a way that has not been done before.

At times it is a colloquial history and indeed the account starts notably with the 2/2 Independent Company refusal (of

an order) to surrender in Timor, along with other operations in Timor, PNG and the Northern Territory by Special Operations Australia (SOA), the Nackeroos and the other Independent companies. In hindsight, the fact that the Australian Special Operations capability was almost completely dismantled at the end of WWII, was quite amazing really. The history moves onto the establishment of the Commandos, SAS, ASIO, ASIS and the Defence Signals Directorate (DSD). It recounts spy scandals, jungle patrols and ambushes in Borneo where Australia developed a pedigree in jungle and covert warfare, five years of patrolling and helicopter operations in Vietnam. It describes targeting with Electronic Warfare support and how SAS sometimes provided plausible cover for Electronic Warfare activities. There are early relationships with US Special Forces and it accurately describes the arguments over the use of SAS in reconnaissance and direct action.

There is the period of the long military peace from 1971 until 1999 with a focus on the ASIO and ASIS mandarins and the Canberra bureaucracy, the two Royal Commissions on Intelligence and Security, ASIS successes and failures in Indonesia, Chile, East Timor and Cambodia, the development of the Counter Terrorist capability and the growth of DSD. The account is made interesting by stories about the Sheraton hotel debacle, Soviet spies in Canberra and economic intelligence gathering by ASIS in support of Australian business. There are a few minor inaccuracies but such is the difficulty of compiling a huge secret history like this. It is not an official history and maybe there will never be one. It is equally difficult to dispassionately review a book about a subject about which I have had a long, close and classified association.

The book describes the formation of Headquarters Special Forces and Headquarters 1st Commando Regiment to support the Counter Terrorism capability, the re-rolling of 4RAR as a commando unit, the Blackhawk helicopter disaster, growth in the Australian satellite system and the involvement of DSD and the Defence Imagery and Geospatial Organization (DIGO) in operations in the Middle East, East Timor, the Sydney Olympics and the Tampa refugee crisis. There is yet another inquiry into ASIS, more operations again in Afghanistan and Iraq, the convergence of Special Forces activities in East Timor and Afghanistan, the direct support of the Australian Signal Directorate (formally DSD) to SAS and Commandos in Afghanistan, and cyberwarfare against Chinese operations. The book concludes with counter people smuggling, other homeland, border security and ongoing cyber operations.

By the necessity of government secrecy, a book like this can never reveal the complete history, and so it is a veritable potted history laced with human interest stories, making it very readable. The book finishes into the future with the prediction of even more convergence of the pillars of Special Forces. While some people in the Big Army may find this book off putting or threatening, this evolution history must be mandatory reading for senior officers in the Military's high command and other Government departments who are responsible for planning and executing Special Operations. One outcome is certain. The jihadists, people smugglers and Chinese cyber agencies will have already read it!







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ACA Victoria President's Report

Welcome all to our first report for 2016. Although the last few months have been relatively quiet for the Association there are a number of key events which are fast approaching.

By the time you read this report the Association will have conducted the annual bushwalk to Oberon Bay in Wilsons Promontory and also the Rip Memorial Service at Shortlands Bluff, Queenscliff to remember PTE Eddie Myer, WO2 Taffy Drakopoulos, Eddie Meyer, PTE Roger Wood who died in 1960 during a training exercise.

Although the ACA is heavily focused on reflection and basic camaraderie – and does extremely well at this – there is some impetus to exploring initiatives including:

- Active measures to improve member numbers, particularly younger members.

- Developing an enhanced national and bespoke State communication strategy with a focus on the website and social media elements.
- Identifying an ACA Chief Advocate to develop an Advocacy and Volunteer Program that formalises the system and expands the liaison and knowledge base.

These are important matters for both the sustainment and expansion of our Association and I would encourage everyone to attend the AGM to contribute to the dialogue and express your views.

I look forward to meeting with you all then and in the meantime.

Strike Swiftly

Marc Preston
February 2016

ACA Victoria Double Diamond Section Reports

INTREPS

By Keith Johnston (2/10 Squadron)

Lloyd Campbell (Z Special Unit, Murrumba Downs, Q'ld). I phoned Lloyd to convey my best wishes for his 92nd birthday (on January 18th) and found him in good spirits, having celebrated the previous day with his family. Lloyd is booked in for a hip replacement on March 18th, that he expects will result in improved mobility.

Bob Fingher (2/6 Squadron, Doncaster, Victoria) has been coping with a serious health condition – prostate cancer – for the past three years. Under doctor's orders Bob was unable to take part in the 2015 Anzac Day march, as his treatment was causing problems. Bob remained in contact with Bernie Crutchfield for many years – they were the banner bearers for the Commando Association on Anzac Day, and at the 2/6 Squadron reunions at Wagga. Sadly Bob passed away after this report was written. A Vale article appears in this issue.

Bernie Crutchfield (2/6 Squadron, Mt Macedon, Victoria). Prior to phoning Bob I had earlier contact with Bernie and we had a pleasant conversation. Hopefully Bernie will join us on Anzac Day for the luncheon and perhaps the march. Bernie has a new dog that brightens up his life, as both are settling in happily together.

Betty Macgregor (2/5 Squadron, Brighton, Victoria). Betty is as bright as usual, despite a skin problem following the removal of a skin cancer that is now under control. We look forward to meeting up with Betty at this year's Anzac Day luncheon.

Jim Muir (2/9 Squadron, Pascoe Vale Sth, Vic). We are in frequent contact and in the past I have neglected to mention my old mate. Jim is going OK, albeit with some mobility problems, and a post-operation issue did not stop him for long. Jim is still living independently and driving locally.

Ted Workman (2/10 Squadron, Dee Why, NSW). I received an Australia Day card from Ted and Lola – a most pleasant surprise, with the good news that Ted was back home after spending six weeks in hospital following a stroke in early December. Ted is mobile with the aid of a "walker". His speech is fine but he has partial loss of sight in both eyes.

Bill Trevena (2/10 Squadron, Streaky Bay, SA) was feeling fine when we spoke. He had a quiet but enjoyable Christmas, and apart from mobility problems Bill has no health issues – a cataract operation was most successful.

Max Drummond (2/6 and 2/9 Squadrons, Lavington, NSW). I called Max to wish him and Janet good luck and better health for 2016. With the aid of a mobile walker Max goes on short walks and local shopping trips most days – a great effort considering his handicap. I think Max was disappointed that a train trip to Albury for a visit is beyond me at present – but I will endeavour to stay in contact by phone.

Roly Good (2/3 Squadron, Traralgon, Victoria). Roly and Joan are still living independently in a delightful precinct, where Roly takes their (much spoiled) dog Monty for a regular walk. Joan and Roly are still involved in community affairs, and enjoy lots of family and neighbourly interaction.



Bert Potter (2/9 Squadron, Box Hill South, Victoria). After a spell in hospital late last year Bert is on his way towards better health, although it may be a long haul.

Jack Johannesen (2/7 Squadron, Reservoir, Victoria). It is always a pleasure to phone Jack – we usually have a long discussion on subjects of mutual interest. Although both he and Sheila have ongoing serious health issues he is most positive in outlook. Fortunately they have close family support and expect to continue living in the family home with no major problems.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VALE ~ VX140546 (V502499) Robert James Fingher
2/6th Australian Commando Squadron
13 September 1924 – 9 February 2016

Robert Fingher passed away peacefully in his sleep on the 9th of February, aged 92 years.

Former WW2 comrades Con Bell (2/7 Squadron) and Keith Johnston (2/10 Squadron) were among those who attended the celebration of Bob's life at the Federation Chapel at the Lilydale Memorial Park. The RSL service was conducted with Bob's Doncaster RSL colleagues.

Bob enlisted in the Army in October 1942, when he turned 18. He discharged after the war ended, in October 1946 after four years of dedicated service to his country.

A keen sportsman, when Bob returned to civilian life to discover there were no sporting clubs in his home suburb he solved the problem by forming a cricket club, and did the same in winter by raising a football team!

Bob leaves his wife Rita, children Joy, Kerri and Geoff, four grandchildren and five great-grandchildren. Bob's colleagues and all Commando Association members offer their sympathy to the family.

With thanks to Con Bell, Keith Johnston and Dick Pelling.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VALE ~ VX5356 Frederick Moon
6th Division Cavalry Regiment – 2/10 Aust Cdo Squadron
25 November 1913 – 28 November 2015

By Keith Johnston



Fred Moon
Photo courtesy
Riverine Herald,
November 25, 2013.

Fred was born on the family farm at Muckleford, a district between Castle-maine and Newstead, and was the third of nine children. Several years later his father bought a larger farm at Restdown, nine miles from Rochester. Fred attended the Restdown school, located near the farm. On reaching the age of 14 Fred worked full-time on the farm until his younger brother turned 14, and then Fred was able to work on farms near Finley, Sealake and Donald, mostly driving teams of horses, with up to 12 in a team. Tractors were yet to replace horses!

During this time Fred joined the 17th Light Horse Regiment and served as a militiaman for six years prior to WW2. When war became evident Fred was called up, and was already in camp at the Bendigo Race Course when WW2 was declared. Volunteers for the 2nd AIF were being enlisted and Fred promptly responded and moved into camp at Seymour to become an original member of B Squadron, 6th

Division Cavalry Regiment, that soon joined the Regiment at Ingleburn Military Camp.

The Regiment comprised men from all states, with many militiamen from Light Horse Regiments. On 4th January 1940 the Regiment – the senior Regiment of the AIF – headed the NSW-raised 16th Brigade on a parade through Sydney before embarking, on 10th January, on the troop ship 'Strathnaver' to join a large convoy of troopships from Melbourne, Sydney and New Zealand, to eventually disembark at El Kantara on the 13th of February.

Fred was now in the early stages of his six years of war service with the Regiment, undergoing combat with "All the King's Enemies" - Italy, Germany in the Western Desert, Vichy French Forces in Syria, and the Japanese for the final campaign in New Guinea with B Troop of the 2/10 Australian Commando Squadron.

In civilian life Fred married Edith; they established their home on a soldier settlement farm near Rochester and raised a family of five children. When deciding to retire Fred and Edith moved home to Echuca to enjoy their well-earned rest playing bowls and having other interests, including several Squadron and Regiment reunions over later years. Fred took part in local services, becoming a well-known veteran in the district. When Edith died about 14 years ago Fred moved to live independently in a retirement village a few kilometres from town, continuing with lawn bowls until recently, when he became an active carpet bowler. He also continued his activities of bird watching in the Murray River bushland, caravanning, and still driving locally up to his 100th year.

Fred was the subject of several newspaper articles, one including a full front-page photo in the Riverine Herald in 2015, with "Fred's Story" inside, titled "First in, and for six bloody years"!

A great life, well spent and forever remembered; a good solid mate and "True Blue Australian".

The exploits of Fred's regiment, the 6th Division Cavalry Commandos, are contained in the book To The Green Fields Beyond, by Shawn O'Leary.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

VALE ~ VX20424 Alexander Smith (Sandy) McNab
1st Independent Company / 'M' Special Unit
6 March 1920 – 23 November 2015

When his mother died shortly after Sandy was born his father ventured with him on a six-week voyage from Scotland to Melbourne to place Sandy in the care of friends, then returned to Scotland.

Sandy not only survived this harsh start in life, but also developed in mind and body from this beginning to become an outstanding soldier who was highly respected among his peers in all walks of life.



A younger Sandy
McNab in his 1st
Independent
Company uniform.

During the celebration of his life at the Frankton RSL on December the 3rd, Sandy's eldest son Rodney gave a eulogy detailing Sandy's life from beginning to end. His was truly a life of many challenges and achievements, that would certainly inspire his younger family members.



Sandy with his family
at last year's Anzac
Day luncheon.

Rodney was supported with a tribute from family member Chelsea, followed by a candle lighting ceremony with other family members.



The RSL service followed, with the placing of poppies by the large gathering of relatives and friends, including many Australian Commando Association members, including Con Bell (2/7 Sqn), Keith Johnston (2/10th Sqn), and post-War members Glenn MacDonald, Bruce Parker, Robert McDowell, Robert Osborne, former MHR Phil Davies (whose father Max was in the 1st Ind Coy), Robert Magee, Stan Polan and Tom Hood.

The service include acknowledgement of Sandy's Scottish heritage, with the bagpipes playing and the background music for the visual reflection Andy Stewart's rendition of "Scottish Soldier".

Sandy McNab was a long- time active member of the (WW2) former Commando Association (Victoria), having represented 1st and 'M' Special Unit for many years, and was the assistant editor of "Double Diamond". He was a proud member of the 1st Independent Company and wrote the history of this ill-fated Unit – "We were the First".

Prior to volunteering for a yet to be formed 'Special Unit' Sandy was already in the 2nd AIF, serving with the 2/29th Australian Infantry Battalion.

With the decision by Army HQ to not re-form the 1st Independent Company the relatively few survivors were given the option to continue serving with "Special Units"; Sandy volunteered for 'M' Special Unit, serving out the war as a Coast Watcher back on Bougainville Island.

Sandy married Lucette, having decided when they first met that she was the one for a life commitment. Lucette had also served in WW2 with the AWAS. Sandy and Lucette had three fine sons – Rodney, Douglas and Derek. In later life the boys and their families gave full support to their parents, particularly ensuring that Sandy was present at Association functions, especially annual reunions and the Tidal River Pilgrimage. Sandy attended the 2015 Anzac Day events even though he was failing in health.

To his friends in the Commando family Sandy will be remembered as a sound, reliable, dependable and friendly good "Old Digger" who contributed largely, leaving his mark on Australia.

Our gain – Scotland's loss!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

**'M' Special veterans' commemorative mission
the trip of a lifetime**

**ACA Victoria member 'Dixie' Lee, M Special,
returns to New Guinea 70 years later**



Ron 'Dixie' Lee, left, with the 'M' Special veterans' party at Bomana Cemetery, the final commemoration of the PNG mission.

Going back to a place you had not seen for 70 years would be an experience for anyone, but for seven veterans who fought in New Guinea during the Second World War it was a memorable and moving trip of a lifetime.

In early September 2015, DVA's Commissioner Major General Mark Kelly AO DSC led a commemorative mission to mark the 70th anniversary of Victory in the Pacific and the Surrender of the Japanese forces in New Guinea.

The seven spritely members of the mission party (including ACA Victoria member Ron 'Dixie' Lee), who are aged between 88 and 92 years, were veterans who served in or directly supported the New Guinea campaigns from the Battle for Wau (January 1943 onwards), in the Royal Australian Navy, the Australian Army or the Royal Australian Air Force.

(Ron's) party was proud to represent all Australians who served in the Pacific region, but also all Australians who served in the Second World War.

For members of the mission party the services or commemorations at Rabaul, the Bita Paka War Cemetery, Lae War Cemetery, Coast Watchers Memorial, Bomana War Cemetery and the main commemorative ceremony to mark the Surrender of the Japanese forces at the Cape Wom Surrender Memorial, were very moving and brought back memories of lost mates.

For example, the service at the Coastwatchers Memorial in Madang was emotional for former coast watcher, Ron 'Dixie' Lee. Mr Lee was one of the incredibly brave civilians and military personnel who continued their work in enemy held territory throughout the war, at extreme risk to them and the local people who assisted them.

Norman Quayle from Ballarat in Victoria said, "It has left us with great memories and we feel we have made new friends."

Article and photograph with the kind permission of the DVA VetAffairs newsletter, Vol 31, Number 4, Summer 2015.

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**Address by Sergeant Jim Burrowes "M" Special Unit
at the Tidal River Commando Pilgrimage in Nov. 2015**

Jim Burrowes was the guest speaker at the annual Tidal River Memorial Service in November 2015. Jim's address was carried over from the December issue of the Victorian Commando/Double Diamond newsletter because of space constraints.



Jim Burrowes addresses the audience at Tidal River with the mountains of Wilsons Promontory in the background.

Good afternoon ladies and gentlemen, children, and members of the Commando Association. As guest speaker on this memorable occasion I would like us to pay homage to the original Commandos who trained here at Tidal River on the 'Prom' 74 years ago.

Before doing so, I wish to record the sincere appreciation of the few of us "as we who are left grow old" from the original Commando Association, for the care and attention given by the second generation Commando Association, and particularly for the commemoration here at the Tidal River Pilgrimage.

I was too young to train here at the Prom - being only 16 when the war started – and having to wait for two years before joining the AIF, I missed the gruelling exercises the troops were put through, but I would now like to dedicate this commemoration to them.



As a prologue - in the late 1940s, based on the British Commandos, the powers that be decided to establish eight Independent Companies, later to become the respective Commando Companies, with their role being to infiltrate, and operate in, enemy held Territory, to report on and attack its movements.

Thus the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Independent Companies were initially formed in early 1941, and they lived and trained as the No. 7 Infantry Centre under Captain 'Mad Mike' Calvert, where our memorial now stands, and also on the Darby River close by. With no roads in those days, access was difficult in the rugged bush, and the troops were told to "dump your kit bags here" - and "there's your tents to pitch".

Exercises were taken out in full battle dress in the very rugged conditions, marching all day without food and water. Night excursions to climb Mount Oberon without warning and blankets were ordered at random readiness.

Lieutenant Mike Sheehan wrote that after a long hard exercise along the length of the Prom, there was a truck waiting a few miles short of the camp, and the troops were asked "if any fellow is a bit knocked up, hop on the truck and we'll take you back to camp". Any takers were foolish, as on arrival at the camp, they were told to pack their kit-bags and they were banished back to where they came from. Any troops who failed to make it to the top of Oberon following surprise night-time orders to do so, also suffered the same fate. When I researched what those troops went through - I think I would have been on that truck!

The gruelling exercises were not without drama.

On rare occasions, a select few were allowed to go by truck into Fish Creek to the pub or pictures. Andy Pirie of the 2/ 5th reported that some NCOs decided to simulate a surprise to scare the returning men by blowing up the convoy with an explosive charge by the side of the road. Unfortunately a trainee sergeant lit the fuse too early and it blew up the group - killing a sergeant and maiming two others.

The story continues with the Independent Companies completing their training in mid-1941, but in the meantime, some ten months before the Japanese bombed Pearl Harbour, the government had formed a 'Malay Barrier' of protection from any Japanese threat, by deploying a series of 'bird' forces, to be located around the islands north of Australia. These contingents were named 'Sparrow Force' at Timor, 'Gull Force' at Ambon and 'Lark Force' in New Britain - to which the Independent Companies, with other Battalions, were transported in troop ships. These events were completely un-heralded, not even in post-war history recording.

Sadly, I now come to an epilogue of disaster.

The strategy proved to be totally futile, as Japanese invasions took place with overwhelming odds, to defeat and capture the token Australian forces. The Japanese landed at Rabaul with 5,000 troops - outnumbering the 1,500 Australian contingent, and literally walked into Rabaul with very few casualties.

They also landed 3,000 troops at Kavieng on New Ireland, at more than 20 to 1 odds against the 1st Independent Company of 140 that had disembarked there in mid-1941. Following some token resistance, the Independent Company was forced to retreat to avoid capture, with a small force remaining at the airfield to blow up supply dumps and facilities.

They were able to obtain a disabled boat, the Indiana Star, which they repaired and set off to reach Port Moresby.

Unfortunately a lone Japanese aircraft spotted them and strafed them with much damage. The plane then contacted a destroyer that captured them and re-directed them to Rabaul, where they joined the other POWs and endured slave conditions un-loading ships and digging tunnels in those early months of captivity.

In the meantime, to the abject shame of the Australian government, it was communicated by Sir Earl Page that the Lark Force at Rabaul would be hostages of fortune (Ref: Anne McCosker, historian "What about Rabaul?") with no rescue nor reinforcements, ordering the force to fight to the end! Following this decree, the commanding officer Colonel Scanlon issued the infamous order of "every man for himself" that would be unique in the annals of warfare history. Thus, the troops were left with the total abandonment of their officers' responsibilities.

400 men of the Lark Force escaped into the jungle but with no caches of food supplies pre-arranged, suffered horrendous difficulties, eventually escaping in 2 boats. 160 were massacred at a Tol plantation after surrendering, and 853 - including the remaining 132 Commandos of Tidal River - were then part of the 1,053 men, including 200 civilians from Rabaul, who were transported in the *Montevideo Maru* prison ship which was sunk by an American submarine off the coast of Luzon on the 1st of July 1942. It was the largest Australian maritime disaster of the war, much larger than the HMAS Sydney's claimed fate of 645 sailors - and Rabaul was the largest military disaster.

One doesn't want to think about the last desperate minutes the prisoners went through before drowning, having suffered no food, no water nor latrines for the previous week, and knowing they were about to die. However, with my brother Bob of the 34th Royal Australian Engineers also on board, I take some solace that they didn't have to suffer three- and- a- half years of misery and torture in the coal mines of Hainan.

A few of the 1st Company were lucky - they had been transferred south to Caledonia and the Solomons, and were repatriated back to Australia - where they joined the Coastwatchers. I got to know some of them, but with the 1st now wiped out, the Company was disbanded.

The other Independent Companies from Tidal River served in Timor, New Guinea at Wau and Salamua, and Borneo - all with distinction.

That completes my story of the Tidal River heroes, and if anyone has a relative or friend who went down on the *Montevideo Maru*, I'll be happy to have a chat over a cup of coffee in the hospitality tent later, as I have a list of all the victims with me.

I have been pleased to be accompanied today by my lovely wife Beryl, who served three years in the Women's Australian Air Force, and our two sons, Bob and Tom, who have carried on the names of their uncles who lost their lives at Rabaul, my twin brother Tom also going down in a Beaufort Bomber on their first mission over Rabaul. Coincidentally, Rabaul was also my destiny as I spent ten months in the Banning Mountains over-looking the Japanese air-strip at Rabaul as a Coastwatcher signaller in the Malcolm English party - but I came home.

The prime role of the Coastwatchers was to signal the details of Japanese bomber flights leaving Rabaul for Guadalcanal and Port Moresby, for the allies to be up in the air ready to repel them. Admiral Halsey, Chief Commander of the USS fleet, declared that "without the coastwatchers the Pacific War would not have been won".



Thank you
 They shall grow not old, as we who are left grow old
 Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn
 At the going down of the sun, and in the morning
 We will remember them – (the ghosts of Tidal River)

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Across the Timor Sea

Report by Jan Roberts, 2/4th family



The plaque at the 2/4th Commando base near Ailalec village, in memory of Captain Norm Nicolay and Domingos Barretto, "Honouring their special bond of friendship and mutual respect".

Jan Roberts is the founder of Across the Timor Sea, the project - in memory of her uncle, 2/4th Officer Norm Nicolay - that provides schooling for children from the village of Ailalec.

In September 2015 for the sixth time I travelled to Timor Leste, visiting St. Francis of Assisi High School and the remote village of Ailalec. The scenery is stunning but the mountainous roads made reaching Ailalec challenging.

I travelled with Judite Mills (Finance Manager for Rotary International, Dili) and the Manager, Daryl Mills, who wanted to see the village of Ailalec, and in particular the plaque I left there in 2012.

Daryl said the plaque was only a short 15-minute trek from Ailalec Village, and was well worth the effort required to get there. It is where the Australian Commandos had a base, before the village was destroyed after the men evacuated, and is close to the grave of Domingos Barretto (also known as Nicolof).

Ailalec now has nine water pumps, eliminating the need to walk kilometres to source water to carry back to the village. This was a project of co-operation between the Australian and Timor Leste Governments and built by Australian Aid 'Besick'. A committee of villagers were chosen to oversee the construction and the ongoing maintenance of the system. This policy gives the villagers a sense of ownership and pride. Vegetable gardens are springing up around houses, which augers well for their general health.

Each pump has a fence around it. This project is a shining example to all concerned, demonstrating how Timorese people can improve their lives and prosper.

In 2016 'Across the Timor Sea' will sponsor six Ailalec Primary children to attend St. Francis of Assisi High School, halfway to the goal of twelve students. I was delighted to see just how much the four already there have matured. St. Francis is not as affluent as other Catholic schools in Timor but the children look healthy, confident and happy.

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Rotary and the Commando Family support Timor Leste

By Daryl Mills

On 10 September I travelled with Jan Roberts, the niece of Captain Norman Nicolay 2/4 Commando Company, to Ailalec, up behind Turisca, where (the 2/4th had a headquarters in WW2). It is possible to follow a track to the spot where their encampment was – a bit of a hollow beneath two large Banyan trees that would have obscured them from Japanese planes.

The original village was just below them but after the Aussies left Timor, the Japanese came, once only, and burnt the village to the ground. The locals moved to another location but a couple of hardy souls have rebuilt on the original location. The family of Captain Nicolay's Criado has one of these houses and Domingos Barretto, the Criado, is buried there. Captain Nicolay passed away in 2011.

Jan placed the plaque at the WW2 Commando campsite in memory of both men. It is a remote location and the track is steep, but standing in the hollow beneath the two large Banyan trees gave me goose bumps, thinking of the 2/4th guys living there back in WW2!

You could feel their presence... It was a great trip.

Daryl Mills is the Rotary Liaison Officer for Timor Leste. He manages Rotary projects, including the Rotary Australia World Community Service (RAWCS) program, and sent this report of his meeting with Jan Roberts.

Earlier in 2015 Daryl met former Victorian Commando Association president Bruce Parker, and subsequently arranged for Bruce to be given some magnificent photographs showing the full company of the 2nd/4th Independent Commando Squadron when they deployed to Timor in 1942

The photos were framed and our Association documented, as much as possible, the names of the men involved. One frame was hung in the Drill Hall of 2 Commando Company HQ at Fort Gellibrand and the second frame has pride of place in the Association's meeting room at Bruce's HM-Gem Engines head office.



AATTVA Association best soldier award for 2 Commando Company



From left, Barry Rust, Bruce Davies and Mike Wells from the AATTVA Association of Victoria presented the 2 Commando Coy best soldier award for 2015 to Corporal S. Don Bergman, right, made the excellent awardees' trophy board that can be seen in the drill hall at 2 Coy HQ at Fort Gellibrand.



Honouring our Fallen

Statewide commemoration services honour fallen Vietnam War soldiers

Across Victoria on Sunday the 21st of February, Vietnam veterans, with families and friends and members of the public, honoured the sacrifice of their comrades who lost their lives during the Vietnam War.

In the year of the 50th anniversary since the Battle of Long Tan, now used as the marker of Vietnam Veterans' Day, a series of services were held at the resting places of 98 veterans in 35 locations across Victoria.

Family members were acknowledged, and guests, including Vietnam veterans, local community leaders, Members of Parliament and members of the public, were welcomed. Members of the Victorian Commando Association attended many of the services throughout Victoria

Brief speeches paid homage to the men who lost their lives. Following the traditional tributes, the Ode, Last Post and Rouse, wreaths and poppies were placed, sadly, often on more than one resting place, even in the smaller country cemeteries.

In Australia's longest military engagement of the 20th century, some 60,000 Australians fought in the war, including 10,500 Victorians; tragically, more than 500 soldiers - serving in the Battalions, the AATTV and in many critical supporting roles - did not return home to their families and friends.

Two former post-WW2 Commando Coy men died in the Vietnam War – WO2 John Durrington was killed in action, and WO2 Ron Scott was shot by a sniper and died of his wounds the same day.

Ron Scott is buried at Rookwood in NSW. He was CQMS under the first two OCs at 2 Commando Coy, Peter Seddon and John Hutcheson, in the 1950s and is warmly remembered by many of the early Victorian men. Born in Canada, Ron served in the Atlantic during WW2. At 2 Commando Coy Ron and Victor Kaye were both admitted to the Repatriation Hospital at Heidelberg after a dangerously low parachute exit at Laverton in 1958.

Mike Wells recalls that S/Sgt Ron Scott was CQMS at 1 Commando Coy prior to posting to AATTV. Mike attended Ron's funeral with an Honour Guard from 1 Commando Coy in September 1965, prior to Mike's own posting to AATTV.

The resting place of John Durrington, in the Garden of Remembrance at Springvale was among those honoured. AATTV committee members Barry Rust AM – also a former 2 Commando Coy soldier and CSM – and Bruce Davies MBE attended the Springvale service for John and Sergeant Bill Hacking, also an AATTV member, who died in June 1963 only weeks after his 30th birthday.



The Order of Service for the statewide commemoration services.



Former 2 Commando Coy ARA Sergeant Ron Scott died of his wounds in Chu Lai OSMC Hospital on 10th September 1965.



John Durrington was killed in action on the 30th of May 1968.

Durrington was an ARA cadre-staff member of 2 Commando Company in the 1960s. The order of service for the day showed a photo of John proudly wearing his Commando beret with its iconic Strike Swiftly badge.

Vietnam Veteran David Waterston, an Association member and friend of John, recalled that John wore his Green Beret during his tour of duty with AATTV even though it was against the army dress code. David said, "There is no doubt that had John survived his tour of duty, we would have seen him back at 2 Commando Company on the cadre, with PTS his second choice."

Many other men served in 2 Commando Company before serving in Vietnam in the Battalions or the AATTV, or returned to serve in the Commando Units afterwards. A similar pattern of service occurred with our fellow Unit, 1 Commando Company in Sydney. WO2 Rayene (Ray) Simpson VC was on the cadre staff at 1 Commando Coy, and also served in Melbourne with 2 Commando Coy. Harry Smith was Adjutant at 2 Commando Coy before Long Tan, and was later OC of 1 Commando Coy.

At the conclusion of the services attendees gathered to share refreshments – an opportunity to catch up with friends and family and share precious memories.

At the Traralgon service, Association member and former AATTV officer Mike Wells, who is the Victorian president of the AATTV Association, attended to represent the AATTV, and to meet with the family of his old friend and training team colleague Wayne 'Snowy' Blanck, who died in Vietnam in 1966.

Wayne's daughter Jody and her husband Graeme Andrews (Ex 3RAR Vietnam) drove from Cooktown in Far North Queensland to attend the service. Her father's grave is near the resting places of two other Traralgon men – Allan Lloyd (7 RAR) who died aged 20 in 1970, and Robert Grist (1 RAR) who died in 1968, three weeks before his twentieth birthday.

AATTV member John Vincent OAM attended Fawkner Cemetery to pay his respects to Kenneth Mathieson, who died aged 24, two months after joining the 6th Bn RAR.

Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia Victorian President Bob Elworthy summed up the occasion by saying, "They died young. They did not get the chance to enjoy the life that we have lived or enjoy the wonderful mateship we share. It's right and proper that we honour them."

"The gravesite vigils are an important commemorative event to honour the hardships, difficulties and trauma of the Vietnam War, but also to honour those who fought and lived with determination, resilience, mateship and valour."

Lest We Forget



Strong friendships at the Rip memorial service

The weather was very warm, with a refreshing breeze when family, friends, Association members and a large contingent of supportive 2 Company serving soldiers- thanks, men and women – gathered on Sunday 14 February – St Valentine’s day – this year. All attended the service at Shortland Bluff, Queenscliff, to remember Taffy Drakopoulos, Roger Wood and Eddie Meyer, who died in the Rip exercise in 1960. The empathy and warm friendship between all who attended was tangible.

We again welcomed former 41 Amphibious Platoon members Winston Trood, Will Vicum and Neil Smith, who lost their comrade and friend Eddie Meyer in the 1960 exercise. Sgt Liz MacLaine was an apology as she was in Sydney, and Rita Drakopoulos’ cousin Dennis Kelly, another regular, was absent with the after-effects of pneumonia.

Denis ‘Ned’ Jenkins and Maurie Priestley, both from Queensland, and Neville Birch and Glen Doyle were unable to attend. (Glen and Neville were paddling partners in a kayak, and Neville broke a number of ribs when he was smashed against the hull of the rescue DUKW in 1960, and spent time in the RGH.)

Association president Captain M welcomed the large gathering and led the service. 2 Company OC Major A gave a concise and compelling message.



Rita Drakopoulos with her son David, left, and Don Bergman, a long time friend of Rita and Taffy, at the lunch following the service.
Photograph: Trevor Bergman.

Peter Tierney recited the Commando Collect before the Association and Regiment laid wreaths, followed by Rita Drakopoulos and her extended family: Iain Townsley piped the Lament, then the Last Post; a minute’s silence and the Rouse followed the Ode to the Fallen, spoken by Peter Lynch.

President Marc thanked all who attended, and noted the strong support from serving members, thanking piper Iain for his contribution, and the “behind the scenes” members who made the day run so smoothly. Marc then invited all to the local bowling club for an enjoyable lunch and social occasion.

It was great to have the OC and CSM of 2 Company and other serving members attend the service. Our founding Association president, Roman Stuczynski was an apology, with former presidents Bruce Parker, Dick Pelling, Rob Prior, Peter Beasley, Rob Osborne and Geoff Woodman, as well as so many other members, supporting the occasion, as the ranks of the 1960s men become thinner.

Ian Halliburton, over from Port Hedland in WA, was chaperoned by his brother Hugh, who again caught up with old acquaintances Dick Pelling (yachting) and Bluey McDowell (at school and in Scouts together).

Frank Wheatland showed the ‘old spirit’ by attending with his newly augmented upper-body system, and Gordon McKenzie and Don Bergman also ignored physical problems in order to attend.



Old friends meet. WW2 veterans Keith Johnston (2/10 Squadron), left, and Con Bell (2/7 Squadron) catch up at Shortlands Bluff.
Photograph: Kim Meade.

Joan Hemmings, the wife of the late Roy Hemmings, and their daughter Kim Meade again travelled from Queensland and met a number of Roy’s old friends, including Jim Trainor. Unfortunately Leigh Power was unable to attend this year.



After the service Association members formed ranks for a photograph. Photograph: Sandra Pelling.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

OC’s address at the Rip memorial service

“1959 November... In the last dying days of the 1st National Service Scheme, 18-year-olds called up were serving in the 14th, 15th and 20th National Service Battalions at Puckapunyal and Watsonia and were in the final phase of their 77 days continuous service...

Pattern 37 webbing, Battle Dress, Slouch Hat, Lee Enfield rifles and Bren Guns, all from war stocks left over from WW2... Marching up and down the square was not for them...

So with youthful exuberance they volunteered to serve the completion of their National Service call up with the Commandos of 2 Company. Little did they know that this decision would steer them on a course that would see them, three months later, at Point Lonsdale for the culmination of their Commando Raid Course, to attack the Officer Cadet Barracks at Portsea.

Maj Bennett, Capt Fletcher, Lt Bergman, Lt Malone and experienced Sergeants with service in Korea would teach, guide, mentor and command these men out into the mouth of Port Phillip.

For us here today we pay tribute to those young men who were a generation of service before self.

For over 50 years these men have made the annual pilgrimage to pay their respects to CSM WO2 Taffy Drakopoulos, Pte Roger Wood and Pte Eddie Meyer, who gave their lives so others could live . . .

For those men and others we have lost in war and peace, I believe they would say, from the deep:

*I was that which others did not want to be,
I went where others feared to go and did what others failed to do,
I asked nothing and accepted the thought of eternal loneliness should I fail.*

I have seen the face of terror and have lived times others would say were best forgotten.

But today, like always, I am proud to say I was a Commando from that great body of men and women who served in 2 Company.”

“Strike Swiftly.”

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Former soldiers remembered comrades at Rip memorial service

The annual service to commemorate three soldiers lost in a Commando exercise at Port Phillip Heads was held at Shortlands Bluff on Sunday, 14 February.

Post-WW2 Commandos and Amphibious Platoon members who took part in the ill-fated exercise attend the service each year to remember their comrades. Supported by current serving members of the 1st Commando Regiment they meet with family and friends of those lost.

72 members of 2 Commando Company, now based at Fort Gellibrand in Williamstown, were swept out to sea on the night of 17 February 1960.

The next day search aircraft and boats scoured the choppy waters outside the Rip in a final search for a Melbourne Commando, Private Roger Wood, missing from the Army exercise the night before.

With a number injured, two other men had already been confirmed dead – Warrant Officer George Taffy Drakopoulos of 2 Commando Company, and the driver of an army DUKW, Eddie Meyer, from 41 Amphibious Platoon, who both drowned when Meyer's vessel sank.

The men of 2 Commando Company had been based at Point Lonsdale for sixteen days of training and military exercises. A couple of hours into the final exercise a fierce eight-knot tide caught the raiding party and swept it out to sea through the Rip, although a number made it to shore inside the Heads.

The turning tide was met head-on by the prevailing southwesterly wind, and huge waves – later estimated at 30 feet (ten metres) – pushed the kayaks



and inflatable craft backwards, and capsized many of them.,

Many of the two-man crews were picked up by larger safety craft, leaving their abandoned kayaks to drift away, only to have their rescue vessel also overturned or swamped by the huge seas.

As the night wore on men were rescued by passing ships and a small flotilla of local vessels, alerted by the vigilant lighthouse keeper and the ringing of the wreck bell on Wharf Street – although many residents thought the bell was heralding the birth of the Queen's much-anticipated baby. (In fact her second son, and third child, Prince Andrew was born two days later.)

A few paddlers reached the Portsea shore in their kayaks, but many were picked up from the water, or from their capsized boats, many kilometres out to sea.

Eight of the commandos were rescued in Bass Strait by the Italian liner Toscana, but Roger Wood was dashed

from the ship's rope ladder by a giant wave after he had helped his comrades to safety. His body was never found.

Local men Geoff Beazley and brothers Colin and Lewis Ferrier were among those manning the Queenscliff lifeboat, searching in Bass Strait for survivors, when the Toscana radioed them to pick up five other men, one badly injured, whose Zodiac had been spotted and was now tied alongside. The ship's captain feared an attempt to get the injured man on to the Toscana would be too dangerous, especially after the loss of Roger Wood earlier.

Early next morning Colin Ferrier, Beazley and local policeman Ernie Porter were aboard Ferrier's boat the Mari Ann, bringing many of the rescued men ashore from the pilot ship Akuna, commanded by Captain Simpson. The Mari Ann crew also sighted an abandoned Army DUKW and one of the men went aboard and switched off its motor and dropped anchor. The DUKW's skipper had lashed the rudder and left it circling under power to minimise danger to other vessels in the area.

The Mari Ann, renamed Maureen M and still berthed at Queenscliff Harbour, now carries tourists into the Bay to swim with the dolphins.

In 2000 the Victorian Commando Association established a memorial at Shortlands Bluff in memory of the soldiers who died, and an open-air service, with lunch afterwards, is held each year on the Sunday nearest to February 17th. Members of the community are always welcome to attend the 11.30am service at Shortlands Bluff.

Article and photo courtesy of Barry Higgins, Australian Commando Association Victoria.■



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Taffy's mess tankard is presented to 2 Company

At the luncheon following the Rip memorial service Taffy Drakopoulos' son David presented his father's Sergeant's Mess traditional drinking tankard to 2 Company. It will be placed on display in the Officers'-



The 2 Commando Company Sergeant's Mess tankard that was left to David Drakopoulos after his father's death.



The 2 Coy OC skols from Taffy's tankard.

Sergeants' mess at Fort Gellibrand.

The 2 Company OC, Major A, accepted the mug and did the traditional 'skol' by drinking its entire contents in one impressive gulp!

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Wilsons Promontory Australia Day hike follows a long tradition

Good weather and enjoyable company make a great weekend

During pre-dinner drinks at this year's walk at the Prom, someone realised that last year marked the 30th anniversary of the very first Australia Day hike and camping weekend at the Prom!



Some of the group who had dinner at the Foster RSL before the Wilsons Prom hiking weekend. From left, Sandy Pelling, Dick Pelling, Perce Brewer (Association member and RSL manager), Keith Reynolds, Phil Brabin, Peter Beasley.

In Commando newsletter No. 7, February 1986, Bruce Parker reported that 15 hikers, namely Sandy, Dick and Leon Pelling, Geoff and Malcom Crabtree, Michael and Anthony Trainor, Cameron Job, Aaron and Barry Rust, Barry Creighton, Phillip Roff and Mick, Dan and Bruce Parker enjoyed a three-day hike around the Sealers Cove-Refuge Cove-Little Waterloo circuit.

The Promontory was chosen because as well as its walking tracks and magnificent scenery it was the birthplace of the original World War Two Commando units; they began their existence at the Prom and trained there throughout 1941 and 1942 before moving to Canungra in Queensland, to adapt to jungle warfare in the South-West Pacific region against the invading Japanese.

Despite a few gaps in the earlier years the annual hike across the Prom became an entrenched tradition, especially as the Australia Day holiday was originally observed on the nearest Monday, ensuring the coveted Aussie long weekend every year!

So last year was the Australian Commando Association Victoria's thirtieth anniversary of the Prom hike!

In a change of routine the group met up at the Foster RSL on Friday evening for a meal, at the invitation of Commando Association member Perce Brewer, who is the RSL secretary and manager.

Perc, local veteran Reg Williams, and current 126 Cdo Sig Squadron member Sgt C, also a Foster resident, made us feel most welcome.

Reg showed us some of his valuable documents, including his father's WW1 and WW2 records. As a teenage

Citizens Forces member during the war years Reg was involved in exercises against the Commandos based at Tidal River when they conducted mock raids against the Foster Railway Station and other local landmarks; he also stood sentry duty on the beaches, on the alert for Japanese submarines, during WW2.

After dinner we continued on to overnight at Tidal River before an early start on Saturday morning. Dick and Sandy Pelling joined us for dinner at Foster, but were unable to be with us for the weekend hike.

With only a two-day weekend this year we hiked to Oberon Bay on Saturday, walking back to Tidal River on Sunday before returning home in time for Monday's work.

Keith Reynolds and Phil Brabin were the advance party, with Phil's 40-kilogram pack containing his 5-person tent and a six-pack of stubbies failing to diminish his energy or deter his enthusiasm.

At Oberon Bay we set up camp and later in the afternoon met up with some interesting new friends. Goyo, a young Spanish man who now lives in Melbourne, and his partner Ineke, a former Gippslander and now Melbourne teacher, shared early drinks. Julian, a German national doing a six-month internship in Melbourne, joined us later.

Over drinks before and after dinner we shared our collective wisdom and solved the world's problems, with the Hutchie erected by Peter Beasley a valuable shelter in case of rain. Fortunately the weekend weather was kind to us.

Goyo was excited to see Barry Higgins' authentic leather Spanish Bota or wineskin bladder – but was disappointed to learn that Barry did not squirt red wine into his mouth from a distance, as the traditionalists do! And next morning Goyo was thrilled when Keith cooked him a Chorizo sausage in Pita bread – another Spanish tradition!

On Sunday we walked back to a jam-packed Tidal River – many campers were in the middle of their four-day long weekend – and enjoyed a late lunch at the very busy Fish Creek hotel before continuing homeward.

Keith Reynolds, who travelled from Healesville to take part, and whose father was a New Zealand Commando who trained at the Prom, said, "The magnificent but rugged landscape of the Prom epitomises the spirit of the original Commandos. We look forward to continuing their tradition by walking to Sealers and Refuge Coves next year."

We hope to see you there!

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CORRECTION

In the last (and final) issue of the stand-alone Victorian Commando newsletter last December I wrote my personal thanks to all members and friends of the Association for their contributions during my time as editor. As it was also an historic milestone, I took the liberty of passing on the thanks of all editors "over the past 50 years"!

My sincere apologies to the early editors and magazine coordinators – Peter Lynch, Peter Tierney, Barry Rust, Rob Prior, Pat Shine, Ian Storey and John Addison. It should have read 32 years – since 1983, the year the Victorian Commando Association was formed and the first Commando newsletter was published.

We know you are not quite that old !

Barry Higgins



1st Commando Regiment jumps into Red Pegasus



A soldier from 1st Commando Regiment jumps from a RAAF C-130J Hercules aircraft during their annual certification parachute jump into the waters off Manly Beach as part of Exercise Red Pegasus.

Personnel from the 1st Commando Regiment conducted parachute training into the waters off Manly Beach on Saturday 5th and Sunday 6th December 2015, as part of Exercise Red Pegasus. The training was conducted to ensure the regular and reserve personnel serving within 1st Commando maintained currency as part of their Commando skills.

The role of the 1st Commando Regiment is to maintain and sustain collective and individual Special Forces, specialist personnel and special operations capabilities to conduct, command, support and reinforce Special Operations.

RAAF C-130J Hercules aircraft and military watercraft supported the training.

Courtesy Defence Media

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

Sheryl's Air Force Cadets aim high

By Emma Watson



Squadron 426's final parade last year with Flight Sergeant Sheryl English, right. Photograph supplied.

Learning to fly solo, how to survive in the bush and gaining basic engineering skills are among the opportunities offered at the Australian Air Force Cadets.

Victorian Association member and former 126 Signals Squadron NCO, Traralgon's Sheryl English, who trains cadets at Latrobe Regional Airport, is hoping to recruit more members into the 426 Squadron.

"The experience of life-time friendships and the travel and the experience you get with the Air Force cadets you just cannot have outside of a defence-orientated environment," Ms English said. Her role at the Traralgon base ranges from administration and finance officer, to unit safety, range control and executive instructor.

Sheryl joined the squadron about 18 years ago due to her military background, when her son decided to join the air force. He moved through the ranks, eventually became a pilot and is now in a specialist flying team, having completed three tours of Afghanistan and flown with the Air Force Roulettes.

"We've got a lot of those, we've got others (who have furthered their career)," Sheryl said.

"The list goes on - a good 20 or 30 have gone into the defence force and done marvellous things."

Although the Traralgon group is small with about 25 members, Ms English said it was among the best in Victoria. It won the state's drill competition in 2013, was crowned the best Victorian squadron in 2013 and 2014 and one of its cadets is among the best of the state's shooters for scoring a perfect 100.

The (regional cadet squadrons) learn bush survival skills, and... aside from flying, abseiling and .22 shooting, community work and supporting the RSL are other focuses of the squadron.

Abridged article by Emma Watson, with the kind permission of the Latrobe Valley Express, November 30, 2015.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★

The Jungle Dark

He was only 19 when he went to war

On 1 July 1969, 3 Platoon, A Company, 6 Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment forced their way through the damp Vietnamese jungle on a patrol as part of Operation Mundingburra. With the insects biting and the humidity sapping their strength, the platoon established a safe harbour and listened as the news came across the radio: Neil Armstrong had become the first man on the moon.

Moments later, their skipper, Platoon Commander Lieutenant Peter Hines, stepped on a mine and exploded in a maelstrom of dirt, smoke and blood. Memories of that fateful day stayed with the members of 3 Platoon for more than a decade before singer-songwriter John Schumann transformed the story into a ballad that would capture the spirit of a generation and become the anthem for the veterans of the Vietnam War.

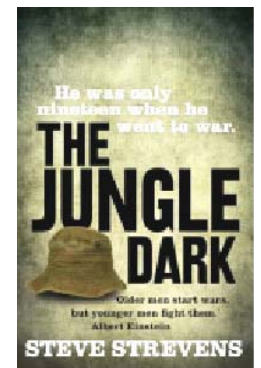
The Jungle Dark is the true story of Frank 'Frankie' Hunt and the other soldiers of 3 Platoon who were the inspiration for Redgum's 1983 hit song I Was Only Nineteen.

Using first-hand accounts, it is both a fascinating Australian yarn and enthralling military history. Vividly told, informative and poignant, it also traverses the deep unhealed wounds left in the minds and hearts of Vietnam soldiers long after they had left the battlefield.

The famous song written by John Schumann was a positive thing to come out of this tragedy. John Schumann's brother-in-law Mike Storey was a member of 3 Platoon. The "Frankie" who "kicked the mine" was Frank Hunt, the radio operator, but he actually hadn't tripped the mine, it was Lt. Peter Hines, but at the time of writing the song it was felt this was best left unsaid.

Available from most booksellers. No eBook available.

★ ★ ★ ★ ★



Report from Mt Evelyn RSL

We are sad to report the passing of member Henrik Zimmermann, aged 68, on December 29th, 2015 after a long illness.

Henrik immigrated to Australia from Denmark with his family when he was nine years old in 1956. His brother Claus served in the *Australian Army* in Vietnam.

Henrik had a long career in the Australian Army, joining 2 Commando Company in May 1966. During his time here, he had a great collection of mates. They all went overseas together and in the years that following all took it in turns of being best man at each other's weddings.

One remembers a party at Henrik's place on a hot day when the ice ran out in the bath and one of them bought in a CO2 fire extinguisher to cool them off with a spray.

In 1973 he transferred to the 4/19th Prince of Wales's Light Horse Regiment and he served here until 1982, finishing up with the rank of Warrant Officer Class Two. During this period he also spent time with 3 Training Group at the Officer Cadet Training Unit.

Our thoughts are with his children – Steen, Dayle and Terri and grandchildren Noah and Eva.

Henrik was a stalwart of the Club about 10 years ago and did much to assist the membership, however, illness has kept him away in recent times. He was also



a member of the Mt Evelyn CFA for a number of years.

AND... Recollections from a mate.

Yes, Zim was in the group that went overseas. I remember when they returned, totally unfit after a year's debauchery.

Like Dave, our vintage included Zim, Guff and Doug Jenkins who all joined before Steve Healey and me amongst others, followed by Kevin Beasley and Addo ~ six months later. We went to one another's weddings, alternating as best man, almost like "Four Weddings and a Funeral".

Those of us in the climbing section got charged together for being late on parade (after Beas' bucks night (I think?), courtesy of Eddie Nic. Needed to swap beret's and belts, and find the same rank's for guards as several Sgts and other NCOs were on the carpet, fronting the Boss (Bill Billet).

I particularly remember several weekends of parties (8/9 nights), one of which was at Zim and Kay's (?) on a stinking night; one of our brethren (?), finding that there was no room in the bath for his dozen long necks, stacked them in the shower with others getting warmer, proceeded to his car, and returned with his CO2 fire extinguisher. Zim's wife was not amused by the subsequent cloud and its deposits (everywhere!).

Those were the days.

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FRANK PARTRIDGE V.C.

A visit to the Museum takes in from World War I to modern day technology warfare.

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MILITARY MUSEUM BOWRAVILLE



Soldier died 'saving mates'

The 23rd of November has just passed. For some it's just another day. Unfortunately for others it is not. I was there on the ground that day when one of our finest, Luke Worsley from 4 RAR Commando, was knocked. We were out in the middle of the Afghanistan Dasht and a long way from Australia. This story from within the SF community needs to be told to the Australian public but most of all the parents, wives, sons, daughters and family.

What the boys from Bravo Company 4 RAR (now 2 Commando Regiment), Special Operations Task Group (SOTG) rotation V (Roman numeral for 5), did for one of their own over an 18-hour plus period is something I will never forget. His mates did everything they could for him and then some.

We harboured up the vehicles, created the Vehicle Drop off Point (VDO) and the decision was made to move in on foot. Harboursing the vehicles was no easy feat as there were Land Rover SRVs, 4 and 6 wheel All-terrain Vehicles, Bushmasters and the Mother Ship. The Mother Ship was an up armoured 4 x 4 Mercedes Unimog that looks like something out of Mad Max. It had a pintle mounted 50cal HMG mounted on top and a 7.62 Mag58 LMG mounted for the passenger.

The boys took off around dusk and started the stomp of about 3km (3.5hrs) over the mountainous terrain to the objective. Overwatch was established over the village, and the boys went in. All seemed to be going well until the call of TIC (Troops in Contact) came over the radio. Echoes of rifle and intense machine gun fire could be heard across the valley.

Then we heard the words that no one wants to hear. Just after midnight on the 22nd and going in to the early morning of 23rd November, I can remember hearing over the radio that we had a man down. All of us who were listening to the contact over the radio couldn't believe it, we were waiting to hear who it was. The call sign of the soldier was sent over the radio and eventually we worked out it was Luke.

We were in our harbour securing the vehicles, a few of us started to prepare to roll in and give them a hand. We could still hear the heavy fighting going on. Thankfully the boss made the call not to send us forward as we found out later on that the vehicle route in to the village had been mined with IEDs.

The boys had been on target for about 8 plus hours and dawn was not that far away. So the call was made to move out and that they would have to stretcher carry Luke back to the VDO some 3km away.

This paragraph I'm trying to give you some idea of the mind set and some of the setbacks the boys faced and overcame.

We also had Close Air Support, more commonly known as CAS. The boom and the shock wave from the explosion was massive. It broke the silence and even lit up our valley. When the CAS was called in we were in



Died fighting Taliban ... Private Luke Worsley's casket is carried into St Andrews Cathedral, Sydney.

Photo: Department of Defence

the VDO 3km away and we thought the boom and the shock wave from the explosion was massive. The main group were still in the vicinity of the village, they were only 700m to 900m away when the missile hit the target.

Choppers were called in to come and pick up Luke. The Chinook, along with Gunship support, had to come from TK Airfield and were provided by the Dutch. They were requested to pick Luke from the village and take them back to TK Airfield for processing. As it turned out, we were told the chopper was on its way from TK. Then the call came over the radio informing us it was being diverted to Forward Operating Base (FOB) Anaconda for another task. We were then told it was not coming directly to us from FOB Anaconda but now diverted to Kandahar. Once again we were then informed that the chopper did not have enough fuel to come to us from Kandahar, so it returned to TK airfield then finally on to our location.

Back to the story: I can remember standing there listening to the Company who were coming back, calling in and updating their position. Once we knew they were about 20 to 30 minutes out from the VDO, I told every spare body to go around to the vehicles, dig out the gas bottles and stove and boil some water. This was so they would have hot water for a brew when they returned.



Then I saw the first of two things that day that I wish every Australian could have seen.

I can remember looking up and seeing the first member of the Company coming over the hill, then another and another. Then the rest of the boys who were carrying Luke on the stretcher.

Every man wanted to carry Luke. They had been at it for over 12 hours by now, they were all tired and they were hurt, but in true Grunt fashion they were not bloody beaten and at no time would they give up. At that very moment I was thinking, how proud I was to be there. I just witnessed something un-bloody believable.

Before Luke was to be taken off the battlefield by chopper, he was placed in one of the Bushmasters. Everyone from the Company had the opportunity to go in, pay their respects and say goodbye, which they all did. Me personally, I held his hand and said a prayer Psalm 23:4 (Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for you are with me; your rod and your staff, they comfort me). I also told him that one day we will all be reunited in Valhalla and that he would not be forgotten.

In addition to this there was a young Mortarman. He was one of the boys that had just been out all night. He helped carry and was good friends with Luke. Unfortunately he could not bring himself to go in to the Bushmaster and say good bye. I tried to convince him at the time that it was the right thing to do; however, he still could not bring himself to do it. I said to him that I completely understand. 30 minutes later at around 9 or 10ish we received the call that the evac chopper was inbound.

Finally, we could hear the sound of the Chinook off in the distance. At this point I picked myself up and went over to where the Mortars were. As I approached him I said, mate this is the last chance you will get to say good bye. He was also religious man so I told him, this is the last chance to go in and say a prayer for him. To his credit we both walked to the Bushmaster together and I told him I would be right outside. He went in and farewelled his mate. Once we were back in Camp Russell, he came up to me and thanked me for what I had done.

So we loaded Luke on to the chinook and made sure everything was good to go. This is where I saw the second thing that the Australian public should know about.

I was facing the chinook with the company spread out behind me in the defensive position. The position was spread out over approximately 500m on a slight hill that was running up from where we were. The CSM pointed behind me and said "hey DAZZ have a look at that." I turned around and this is what I saw.

I looked up and I could see the whole company, all standing to attention. They were next to their cars, some were standing by themselves, some were standing on Bushmasters, this was truly an amazing site. These boys were paying their respect to a mate

that they would never see again but would live on in their memories.

On our return to Camp Russell we had a service and we were allowed a few beers. We were all in the building which is normally used as a recreation room and one of the blokes, whose name I cannot recall, played the Dire Straits song Brothers In Arms. Every one stopped what they were doing and there was complete silence. Everyone banded together and paid their respect to Luke in their own way.

Once the Dire Straits song was finished a young man grabbed his guitar and went up the front of the recreation room. He was a strapping young lad who was already a legend within Bravo Company and 4RAR (2 Commando Regiment).

Now you have to remember that this is in November of 2007.

This man and his guitar started to play a song, a song that, funnily enough, still haunts me today. The song was "I hope you had the time of your life", by Green Day. It was a pretty good rendition of the song that would give any musician a run for their money.

A few months after the events of the 22nd – 23rd this man with his guitar was awarded the Medal For Gallantry for his actions on that fateful night. A few years after that in 2013 this man went on to become a legend. He went on to become forever immortal.

The man with the guitar was Cameron Baird VC MG and he is the 100th recipient of the Victoria Cross. A man truly worthy of this honour.

The same spirit that the ANZACs took with them to the shores of Gallipoli is still alive and well today. Up until now this story of the boys was just a personal memory that now will be hopefully told to the Australian public, but most of all the parents of these brave young lads.

Darren Peters SOTG V

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION VICTORIA Inc.



**AUST CDO VICTORIA
RECRUITMENT DRIVE**

Commencing this year, 2 Company will be focusing heavily on recruiting, with Victorian Reserve Units being targeted in the first instance.

Initially candidates will be invited to see if they are suited to Commando and supporting roles by way of a screening weekend, where their fitness level and military skills will be assessed.

Successful candidates will then undergo several months of training in a variety of skills with the intention being they participate in Commando selection to be run at a later date by the SFTC (Special Forces Training Centre).





Australian Commando Association Queensland Inc.

Incorporated in Queensland IA40186

www.austcdoassocqld.com

PO Box 185 Sherwood, Queensland 4075

Commando for life

1941 - 1946

Keith Long RFD President

president@austcdoassocqld.com

0403 582 920

Tony Mills Secretary

secretary@austcdoassocqld.com

0419 136 772



1955 -

Dr. Chris Tucker Treasurer

treasurer@austcdoassocqld.com

0413 393 874

ACAQ Reports

ACAQ has, this last year, had some significant activities and upheavals, from the 70th Anniversary of the Rimau Mission at the Queensland Maritime Museum attended by the Queensland Governor with also representation from all States, which fortunately coincided with the National Executive Meeting, to the death of our President, founding member and inaugural President, Keith Long, ex-member of 2 Commando Company. You could say that our year starts with the commemoration.

ACAQ has had an eventful year, commencing with a good celebration of Commando/ Special Forces Day at Canungra. We followed that up with our representation and support of the WW2 Veterans in the Anzac Day Parade in Brisbane, and we were joined by the Royal Marine Association Queensland, at our post Parade Luncheon.



We followed this up with 70 Anniversary RIMAU, at the Queensland Maritime Museum. In attendance were, Full title:- *His Excellency The Honourable Paul de Jersey, Companion of the Order of Australia, Queen's Counsel, Governor of the State of Queensland in the Commonwealth of Australia*, you can view his speech on the website "office of the governor Qld".

Also attending were the National Executive of the Australian Commando Association. Wreath Laying was led by His Excellency, Paul De Jersey AC, Z Special

Unit, 1 Commando Regiment, 2 Commando Regiment, Australian Commando Association, British Embassy, Brisbane City Council, Australian Commando Association Queensland, Royal Marines Association Queensland, Special Air Service Association Queensland, Australian Commando Association New South Wales and Australian Commando Association Victoria.

"Going Home" was played by Band 2 of 1 Regt RAA.

Crosses for each of the lost by students from Ambrose-Treacy College, Indooroopilly, Queensland.

Presided over by Chaplin William Pearson RFD MMSC RANR.

We had representation 15 Aug 2015 WW2 Leyburn RAAF 200 Special Duties Flight Memorial dedication, to which there was a good turn out from Army Aviation, Police and the local population.



Jim Banks Z-Force Association, second from left.



Our Inaugural President of ACAQ, November 2015 passed away unexpectedly just after his visit to Wilsons Promontory to the Memorial Cairn there.



Here he is photographed with some of our Rogue mates from the mid 70's. Left to Right: Glenn MacDonald, Bruno Saul, Jack Ripper, Keith Long and Ozzie Osbourne 2015, RIP Keith!



Our next occurrence record was the procurement of a New Banner, which represents the involvements of the WW2 Commandos, and the post 1955 Reformation of the Commandos. It will have its first outing this ANZAC Day Parade in Brisbane, hopefully with a good turn out of some of our more recent recruits from 4 RAR (CDO) and 2 CDO REGT.

★★★★★

From the President ACAQ, Nick Hill

Well 2016 kicked off running at full steam ahead after the sudden shock loss of our inaugural President, Major Keith Long, RFD (Retd). Keith passed very suddenly at the end of November just after returning from the ACA meeting and memorial service in Tidal River. Keith was an integral and very important part of the Qld Branch. He will be sorely missed by us all. "Commando For Life".

We held our AGM on Saturday, 20 February and some new members were elected to the Committee. Congrats to Nick Hill - President (ex 2 Cdo Regt), Craig Shaw - Vice President (ex 1 Cdo Regt), Tony Mills - Secretary (ex 1 Cdo Regt), George Mialkowski - Treasurer/Membership (ex 1 Cdo Regt), Committee members - Keith Buck (ex 2/6 Ind Cdo Coy), Don Astill OAM (ex 2/8 Ind Cdo Coy), John Butler - Website Admin (ex 1 Cdo Coy), Chris Townley - Social Member (ex 1 Cdo Regt), Dennis Jenkins (ex 1 Cdo Regt) and Dr Kieran McCarthy (ex RMO 2 Cdo Regt).

Our Association has a large emphasis on the welfare and physical and mental health of our members. Our DVA Welfare & Pensions Officer is Glenn Cochrane, OAM (ex 4 RAR Cdo), DVA Advocacy Officer is Yorky Joyce, MM (ex 2 Cdo Coy), Physical Health is Dr Kieran McCarthy, a former RMO of 2 Cdo Regt who is focused on the health and wellbeing of our Association members, and we now have Dr Megan Fry, formally of 2 Cdo Regt who is our resident Psychologist who has extensive experiences in dealing with the mental health of our members, especially those of our current conflicts. Having these members of the Association is encouraging some of the younger Cdo veterans to join the Association.

If you need help you can contact these members on the following:-

- Dr Kieran McCarthy - (07) 3355 5540
- Dr Megan Fry - (07) 3205 9759
- Glenn Cochrane - glenn.cochrane@rslqld.org
- Yorky Joyce - yorkyj@bigpond.com

We are more focused on our social activities to help bring back former Cdo Regt members into the fold so to speak. It's not about BBQs and beer drinking (well not always) but having a purpose and desire for our younger members to want to be involved. Our social member Chris is putting together a social calendar involving activities from kayaking to camping trips to shooting competitions with other like-minded associations.

Our memorial events for the year is about to commence with:-

- Cdo/SF Day on Wednesday, 06 April @ 1200 at Kokoda Barracks, Canungra. Luncheon to be held in the Kokoda Barracks Sgts Mess.
- ANZAC Day on Monday, 25 April: - After parade get together with the Royal Marines Association at the Qld Maritime Museum.
- OP RIMAU Commemoration Service on Sunday, 10 July at the Qld Maritime Museum. Luncheon held after the service in the Board Room, and the
- 70th Anniversary of the formation of the Qld Cdo Assoc to be held in October. Date to be confirmed however the event will be a black tie affair and we expect some significant guests to attend and most importantly our WW2 Cdo's.

Overall our membership is increasing and we are becoming more relevant to our younger members. We are "Commandos For Life"

Commando 4 Life

Nick Hill
President
ACA Qld
0430 747 788
acaq.org.au



VETERAN'S HEALTH @ GO2

One of our Queensland Branch members has some expertise that may be of assistance to our members.

Dr. Kieran McCarthy is not only a committee member, but he was for 3 years the Regimental Medical Officer of the 2nd Commando Regiment at Holsworthy in NSW.

GO2 Human Performance is an established integrated health centre in the inner northern suburbs of Brisbane, close to the Enoggera Army Barracks.

For the past seven years, GO2 has been developing its unique model of health, which is patient centred and aimed at wrapping people up. Its basis is the elite sports model of rehabilitation. We work closely with DVA and other ESOs.

His fully integrated model of wellness and 'one stop shop' is unique, and provides our veterans with a high degree of satisfaction and positive outcomes. Being outcome and



solution focused, he works closely with the veteran and their families to guide them towards the next step in their journey. Care for the often socially isolated partners is a critical niche, which we hope to address with structured support groups, education and exercise sessions.

His expertise is in the following fields:-

Doctor, Physiotherapy, exercise Physiology (with an onsite rehab gym) Remedial Massage, Acupuncture, Nutrition, Psychology and Occupational Therapy.

His contact details are:-

468 South Pine Road

Everton Park QLD

P: 07 3355 5540

E: ask@go2humanperformance.com.au

W: go2humanperformance.com.au

SELECTION FOR SERVICE WITH SRD (Z SPECIAL UNIT)

This is an interesting insight into how prospective operatives were selected for service with SRD.

Bill Turnbull (sadly now deceased) was a friend of mine and is mentioned in a book called "War by Stealth".

Bill was a young sailor on a RAN Ketch near Goodenough Island off the Queensland Coast.

This is a transcript from the book;

"The challenge of selecting field operatives for the other sections of AIB (Allied Intelligence Bureau) was much greater.

All were volunteers, and because of the secrecy surrounding AIB were never told what they were volunteering for. They were told that the service would be dangerous. This in itself constituted a winnowing process, since only the bolder spirits were likely to go for such a prospect. Some like Russell Eeg, were flippant on looking back.

As a young Signals Officer at Richmond, Eeg met SRD people doing parachute training and, he said, "being young and no brains" volunteered to join them and ended up on Morotai. But beneath his comments and those of most of the others interviewed about their reasons for joining AIB is a common thread of enterprise, impatience with conventional military life and need for action.

Some fitted the Australian term "hard cases", like Bill Turnbull and Harry Tribble who served together in the 21 meter RAN ketch Lauriana. While at Goodenough Island they

ran short of fresh food, but said Turnbull, they could see fresh sides of beef being unloaded into trucks nearby for an American staging camp - so they decided to liberate one.

The beef trucks had to climb a steep hill away from the wharf. They lay in wait, ran for a truck as it went past and Turnbull leapt into the back. Tribble missed his footing and fell into the gutter. Turnbull struggled to heave out one of the massive sides of beef. By the time he succeeded the truck had gathered speed and he couldn't get out.

Several kilometres later, the truck slowed for a turn, Turnbull jumped down and walked back to where Tribble had manhandled the carcass to the side of the road.

Together they got it to the ship where it fed them, the crews of other small ships and nurses at the hospital on the hill, for a week or two.

SRD's D.M.N. Davidson was there at the time, heard of the episode and invited them to join the organisation.

They said they accepted because he promised them two weeks home leave, which they never got. (Surprise, surprise)

They were shipped straight to Fraser Island for training and, as ended up as part of RAN 's Grass Snake's crew".

Bill Turnbull and Harry Tribble would later serve with SRD on operation code named "Sun Charlie" on "RAN Riversnake".

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*Membership is open to all serving and former members of Special Forces.
 The Committee will also consider applications for affiliate membership from other
 persons who identify with aims and objectives of the Association.*

MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

SURNAME		RANK & GIVEN NAMES	
DATE OF BIRTH		REGIMENTAL NUMBER or PM KEYS	
ADDRESS (For Correspondence)			Post Code <input type="text"/>
CONTACT DETAILS	(Home) ()	(Business) ()	
	(Mobile) ()	(E-mail)@	

NEW MEMBERS TO COMPLETE THIS SECTION

UNIT DETAILS Served With From To	ENLISTMENT DATE	DISCHARGED/CURRENT
Served With From To	Signature	Verifying Unit: e.g Commando Unit
Served With From To	Signature	Position/contact details e.g RXO
Date	Signature of Applicant	Signature of verifying officer

It is up to the individual to provide proof of their service and membership may be refused if the Committee are unable to verify this service vide Central Army Records Office (CARO) or other Government authorities.

By Signing this Application you agree to be bound by the Constitution of the Australian Commando Association Inc. of the State Branch that you have nominated to join. (See Reverse side).



Note: The State Branches of the Australian Commando Association Incorporated are autonomous entities and comply with respective State Incorporations Act and Regulations. The President and Secretary of the State Branches are members of the National Committee of the Australian Commando Association Inc.





Australian Commando Association Inc.

State Incorporated Branches

You are invited to join the Australian Commando Association Inc family;
most members join with the State Branch that is convenient to your circumstance.

The State Branch Details are as follows: Please tick the box of your choice.

Australian Commando Association New South Wales Inc. (Y0204417)

The Secretary
PO Box 1313
Sutherland NSW 1499
Telephone (02) 9644 8794
0425 279 111
email: starlightcdo@gmail.com

Financial Year 1st January to 31st December
Annual Fee \$30.00 + \$25.00 Joining fee for new members
The Annual fee is subject to review by committee.

Banking:
Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
Police Bank BSB 815 000 Account No. 41117 *Please indicate name with Deposit.*

Australian Commando Association Victoria Inc. (A00114983Z)

The Secretary
1/48 Karnak Road
Ashburton, Vic 3147
Telephone (03) 9886 9825 Mobile 0414 311 093
email: gmac1950@gmail.com

Financial Year 1st January to 31st December
Annual Fee \$45.00 subject to review by committee.

Banking:
Australian Commando Association Victoria Inc.
Commonwealth Bank
BSB 063239 Account No. 10492290 *Please indicate name with Deposit*

Australian Commando Association Queensland Inc. (IA40186)

The Secretary
PO Box 185
Sherwood QLD 4075
Mobile 0419 136 772
email info@austcdoassocqld.com

Financial Year 1st January to 31st December
Annual Fee \$45.00
The Annual fee is subject to review by committee.

Banking:
Australian Commando Association Queensland Inc.
Heritage Bank
BSB 638070 Account No. 12906174 *Please indicate name with Deposit*



MAX FORCE TACTICAL

maxforcetactical.com
Unit 17-254 South Pine Rd, Enoggera QLD
Ph: 07 3855 2574

The advertisement features a soldier in full tactical gear, including a helmet with a skull face paint and a rifle. In the background, there are barbed wire fences and a large, textured dome structure. A logo in the top left shows a skull inside a red circle with 'MFT' written below it. The text 'MAX FORCE TACTICAL' is prominently displayed in a bold, black font with a red shadow effect. Below the soldier, there are several pieces of military equipment, including a backpack and a sleeping bag with 'RECON 3 II' written on it.

G-SHOCK
MUDMASTER

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The advertisement features a close-up of a G-Shock Mudmaster watch. The watch has a black dial with white hour markers and hands. It includes various sensors and indicators: 'VIBE RESIST' at the top, 'G-SHOCK' and 'CASIO' on the bezel, 'BARO' and 'TEMP' on the left side, 'TOUGH MVT.' and 'MULTI SENSORS' on the right side, and 'MUD RESIST' at the bottom. The watch is set against a background of brown, muddy splatters.

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