

# CASCABEL

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Exmouth Gulf, Wa. 1943-10-12. Group Portrait Of "A" Troop, 140th Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Battery, 102nd Australian Heavy Anti-Aircraft Regiment, In Front Of Their Gun. Left To Right:- Back Row: Vx77134 Bombardier (Bdr) L. E. Hahn (1); Vx139439 Bdr A. J. Case (2); Vx100827 Lance Sergeant (L/Sgt) L. Jackson (3); Vx86840 Sergeant (Sgt) E. F. Evans (4); Vx86092 L/Sgt W. J. Bygate (5); Vx86793 Sgt A. J. Ramsay (6); Vx86442 Bdr D. M. Annand (7); Front Row: Vx108193 Lieutenant (Lt) K. A. Thomas (8); Vx66961 Captain G. K. Richards (9); Vx26222 Lt S. Haymes (10).

Reprinted from the Australian War Memorial Photo Collection

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# The President Writes

The Gunner Luncheon, which was held on the 4<sup>th</sup> August at the School of Artillery, was a great success for those who attended. I would like to thank the CO/CI LTCOL Ryan, the RSM WO1 Johnson and their staff for a most enjoyable day. The tour of the School at the conclusion of the luncheon was particularly interesting. It was unfortunate that more members could not see their way clear to attend; they missed a great day.

It was a disappointment to the Committee that we had to cancel the Cocktail Party due to lack of interest. In retrospect, Tuesday was probably not a good day. We may try again later this year on a Friday evening.

Some reminders of coming events:

The Annual General Meeting will be held this year on the 8<sup>th</sup> of November at the Caulfield RSL, 4 St Georges Road Elsternwick. A meal will be available prior to the meeting.

The annual golf day at Berwick Montuna Golf Club, as advertised in the July *Cascabel*, will be held on the 9<sup>th</sup> November.

The church parade next year will again be held at St George ext door to the Depot. We have received only three responses to our request for comment on the Church Parade this year, and these were in favour of St Georges for 2008. The date is set for February 10<sup>th</sup>.

We have not heard of any arrangements for St Barbara's Day at this stage. This year it is a Tuesday. When we have any information, it will be disseminated through the e-mail, as it will be too late for this edition of *Cascabel*.

The use of the e-mail to notify members about various activities appears to be working quite well. Among other things it lets us know if an e-mail address is incorrect.

Major Robin Smith has indicated that he intends to stand down as Secretary at the AGM. He would still like to serve on the Committee. Any volunteers??

Regards to all

Neil Hamer  
MAJ (R)

## Membership Report October 2007

### Current Membership

Life Members	210	(210)
Annual Members	62	(63)
Annual Senior Members	20	(19)
Annual Serving Members	26	(1)
Affiliates	38	(39)
Others (CO/CI, Messes, etc.)	11	(11)
RSL	1	(1)
Libraries	<u>5</u>	<u>(5)</u>
<u>Total</u>	<u>373</u>	<u>(349)</u>

### New Members

We welcome GNR Barry Pearce KSJ as a Life Member, and Annual Serving Members MAJ Craig Whitford, CAPT Wendy Luxmoore, WO2 Brett Munford, SGT Gregory Gray, SGT Mark O , SGT Helen Janner, CPL Murray Wilson, LBDR Mark Lewry, GNR Bradley Pedersen, PTE David Jones, PTE Thomas Wilson, PTE Sarah Matthews, PTE Tara-Ann Broad, GNR David Horrath, GNR Anton Golacki, PTE Robert Armstrong, GNR Daniel Jewell, Gnr Michael Hastings, GNR Paul Kleijn, GNR Scott Harman, PTE Benjamin Rowe, GNR Chibak Deng, GNR Jason Hobbs, GNR Benjamin Prior and GNR Matthew Sapuovic.

### Vale

It is with regret that we note the passing of BDR R R Furlonger.

BDR Bob Furlonger joined the Association as a Life Member in 1991.

He served 21 years with 2 FD REGT, 2/15 FD REGT and the Catering Corps in a Q capacity, for which he was awarded the Reserve Force Medal and Clasp.

Bob passed way on Sunday 27<sup>th</sup> May from a cancer related illness. He was aged 58.

**The usual reminder about the proforma on the last page below the Parade Card.**

If you have not already done so, it would be appreciated if you would provide the information requested so that our files can be kept up to date. This proforma should also be used to notify us of any changes in the future. It would also help if you could provide any information about your occupation, achievements and other service to the community.

**Would you also please let me know if you have been awarded an ADM.**



Neil Hamer  
MAJ (R)  
Membership Co-ordinator

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# OPERATION ANODE

## *Regional Assistance Mission to Solomon Islands (RAMSI)*

### *Combined Task Force 635, Rotation 13 (CTF 635, R13)*

*3 August - TBA December 2007*

By: BDR J. Overell Regimental Signaller (22 Fd Bty, 2/10 Fd Regt, Dandenong VIC); 31 August 2007

#### **Timeline:**

- 3 August Advance party depart to Solomon Islands;
- 4 August Farewell Parade at Townsville;
- 5 August CO TAC party depart to Solomon Islands; and
- 7 August Main body depart to Solomon Islands.

CTF 635, R13 arrived (complete) to the Solomon Islands on 7 August 2007. During Force Preparation Training (FPT) and from our countless briefs, the Solomon Islands are an archipelago of approximately 990 islands, of which some 350 are inhabited. Following FPT we were ready to deploy into country, and as a result most of the Reservists were going to experience an operation for the first time.

Upon deplaning we were hit with the intense humidity - standing in the shade we were dripping with sweat. Coming from Melbourne was the first of many changes that we were to encounter, and even after being here a month, we are still working at dealing with the climatic difference to what Victoria has to offer.



*The view of Guadalcanal prior to touchdown*

CTF 635 deployed with three Australian

platoons and a platoon from the Royal Tongan Marines. Upon our arrival we married up with a New Zealand platoon who would complete the Task Force manning. Unfortunately the planned departure date of Rotation 12 (soldiers from 8th Brigade); coincided with a period of potential instabilities, which resulted in their return to Australia being delayed by another week.



*Typical accommodation at FOB Maritime*

As a result, there were no significant problems during this period, and the final departure of Rotation 12 enabled us to assume command at the handover.

My role in the Task Force is Regimental Signaller. I am attached to the Tongan platoon and patrol by day and night. This enables myself and other Australians the opportunity to work in an operational deployment, as well as with soldiers from another nation that is

both challenging and a very rewarding experience. In Townsville I had a few weeks to get to know the Tongan “lads” and we are all working very well together during the patrolling program.

The Task Force is spread into strategic areas throughout the Solomon Islands. Some members are at Headquarters CTF 635 in Guadalcanal, other members are at outer island provinces, and the remainder are at various locations around the nations’ capital of Honiara and Guadalcanal.

Our platoon was to begin its first rotation at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Maritime in Honiara. This location is metres from the beach and is a cool place to be based that allows you to capture the sea breeze. Our role here was to provide military support to the police patrols and assisting with incidents, if required. The Solomon Island Police Force is being re-trained by various police forces from other pacific island nations including Australia, Papua New Guinea, Tonga and New Zealand.

One of the more enjoyable aspects of our job is the ‘winning of hearts and minds’. We often chat and wave to locals and the Tongan platoon greatly understand the local populace and by promoting this we are able to enhance the relationship between Solomon Islanders and RAMSI.

During our patrols we visit villages, talk with the locals and the Tongans conduct various traditional activities the village people. This allows better relationships between us and the locals that are greatly appreciated. Recently, the Tongan platoon conducted a cultural night showcasing a ‘fresh’ pork spit that was locally .prepared. and followed by cultural songs and traditional dances. This provided entertainment for not only the locals but for a number of police and military RAMSI personnel.



*Winning Hearts and Minds at a village in Honiara*



A Tongan fresh feast being served

Another interesting incident this month was an earthquake that rated 6.7 on the Richter Scale. The earthquake occurred 70km south of Honiara and its magnitude was clearly felt by all RAMSI personnel. Fortunately no serious damage was caused as a consequence.

As a gunner member of CTF 635, I am privileged to be given the opportunity to be part of Rotation 13 and deploy to the Solomon Islands. I strongly encourage other gunners to maintain AIRN compliance and render effective part-time service, and in doing so you will give yourself a fantastic start in being eligible to deploy like the soldiers before you.



*Members of 2/10 Fd Regt and 48 Fd Bty*

Gunner unit members representing CTF 635 are from left to right:

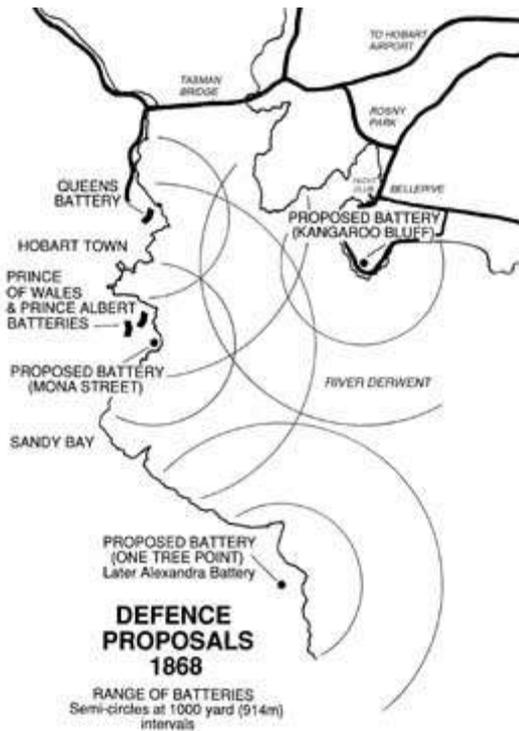
- BDR J. Overell (2/10 Fd Regt, Dandenong, VIC)
- PTE E. Younan (2/10 Fd Regt, St Kilda, VIC) who is a driver.
- PTE B. Wozniak (48 Fd Bty, Keswick, SA) who is a driver.
- CPL I. Burnett (2/10 Fd Regt, Geelong, VIC) who is a Vehicle Mechanic.
- CPL J. Harding (2/10 Fd Regt, St Kilda, VIC) who is the Transport Supervisor.
- WO1 D. Lehr (2/10 Fd Regt, St Kilda, VIC) who is the RSM.



# Kangaroo Bluff Fort

## A Brief History

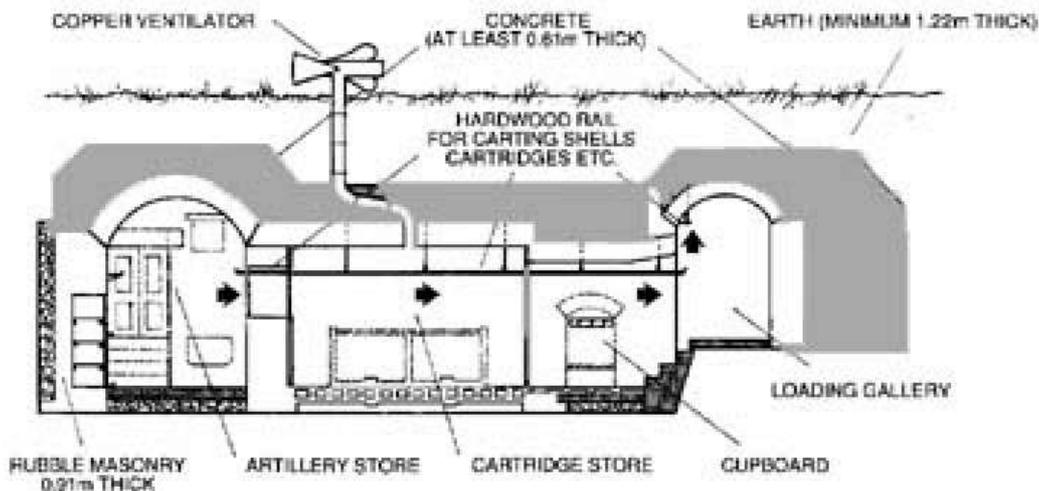
The Kangaroo Bluff Battery was developed to stop any enemy vessels from shelling Hobart Town from just outside the range of the Domain and Battery Point batteries. Although the proposal was mentioned in the early days of settlement, procrastination was the order of the day.



It is thought that the appearance in the River Derwent of two Russian warships in 1873 prompted plans for the construction of the Kangaroo Bluff Battery. Excavations commenced in September 1880 in accord with plans provided by Col. P. H. Scratchley, a British military engineer in charge of defences for the Australasian colonies. Work was brought to a halt in April 1881, due to excessive costs. At the end of May 1883, Patrick Cronly was contracted for the erection of the fortifications in association with the Public Works Department.

The work was supervised by the Staff Officer (Boddam) and completed in October 1884. The cost was approximately \$16,300, at a time when labourers received 50 cents per day. In mid 1885, public trespass resulted in the ditch being deepened, walls raised a further course and broken glass set in mortar on top of the wall. A fence was built around the fort (as a safety measure) after a nine year old boy drowned in the water-filled ditch in November 1885.

## Structure



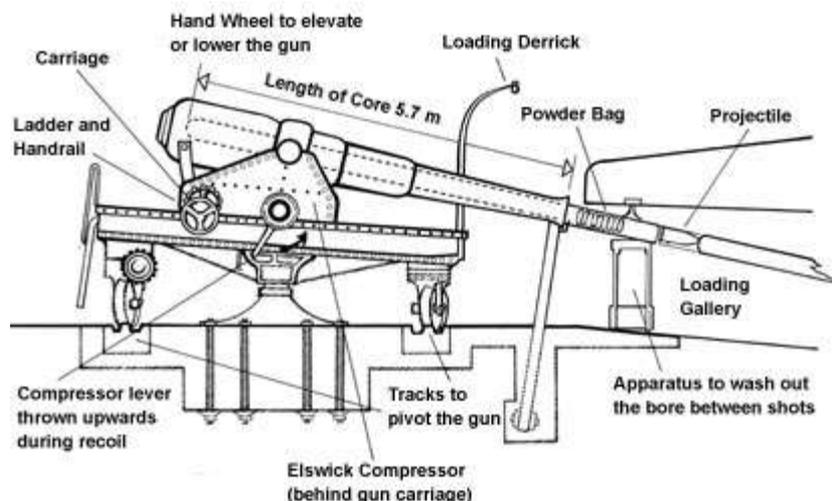
The pentagonal form of the battery fitted snugly into the curvature of the bluff. The ditch, underground passages and chambers were cut out from solid stone and faced with masonry. The excavated stone was cut into 0.6m blocks to build the battery. The fort is at its widest (146 m) where two caponiers project into the ditch.

Several loopholes slit into these stone casements allowed rifle fire along the whole length of the ditch to repel any assault by a land party. Access to caponiers was by iron hatchway. Open passageways were cut into the rock 3m below the ramparts, to connect the gun emplacements on both sides of the fort. These led to underground magazines, stores, lamp room, well and loading galleries. Speaking tubes were set into the walls for communication purposes.

The battery, or fort as it is sometimes known, was covered by a dry mound and surrounded by a wet moat. If the enemy managed to get past these they would encounter prickly hawthorn hedges on top of the moat walls.

### ***Guns of the Battery***

The Tasmanian barque *Lufra* arrived from England on 3 November 1882. On board were two large new muzzle loading rifled Armstrong guns with a total weight of 25.9 tonnes. One gun was lifted from the hold on 25 November and days later taken to Bellerive wharf. It took a team of thirteen horses to transport it to the battery. The other gun followed at the end of the month; however they were not mounted until 1884.

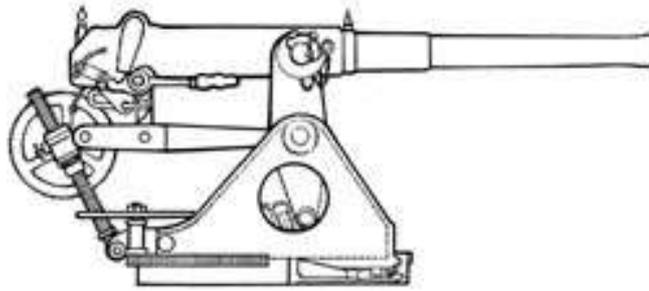


### ***8 Inch Armstrong Gun***

The guns could fire projectiles of 81.7 kg and the powder charge was only half that weight. The size of the bore was 203 mm in diameter (8 inches), hence their designation as 8 inch guns. They are the only original guns of the battery. In 1925, orders were given to bury the guns as obsolete, but they were dug up and placed on new concrete mounts by the Army in 1970.

In April 1885, rifled muzzle loading eighty pounders were placed on each flank of the fort. They were able to fire projectiles of that weight (36.3kg). Both these guns had been converted from old smooth bore sixty four pound cannons and were mounted upon large sliding wooden carriages. A gun once situated on the flank facing Hobart was originally at the Queens Battery near the Domain cenotaph. It was brought to Bellerive from Brighton Army Camp in 1970. Made in 1866, the barrel weighs 4.2 tonnes and it was able to fire a projectile of 31.8 kg. From the early 1900s, it served as a time gun for Hobart Town, carrying on a sixty year tradition (dating from 1863) of a one o'clock gun fired as an accurate check for watch or clock.

On the opposite flank an emplacement was added in 1888. It was for a small quickfire Nordenfelt gun balanced on a pillar. The gun could fire projectiles of 2.7 kg. Provision was also made to mount a Nordenfelt machine gun near the bridge over the protective ditch of the fort.



*6 PDR Rapid Fire Nordenfelt Gun*

### ***Operating the Battery***

One method of loading (that kept the men under cover) was by traversing the gun to the protected loading gallery. The muzzle was lowered onto a wooden rest and the powder charge and shell were placed in a trough and rammed home by a rope haul. Shells and cartridges were brought up from the stores below by means of a suspended hardwood rail with brass "travellers" attached. This slow and difficult method was soon replaced by men standing on the parapet and loading by derrick fitted to the gun carriage. Charge and shell were rammed home separately.

The shells had projecting studs that matched the rifling of the barrel and thereby imparted spin for accuracy. Silk bags holding powder charges were kept in zinc cannisters. A simple "compressor" that worked on friction between interleaved plates (to counteract recoil) was a primitive device.

There were two accidents from excessive recoil. Together, the guns could cover an arc of 227 degrees, ranging from 63 degrees to 290 degrees from true north. Trial shots were fired (two from each large gun) in February 1885, on the occasion of a visit to Hobart by Major-General Scratchley. Hidden beneath the merlon (mound) is the magazine complex for the large Armstrong guns and the artillery store. Adjoining are the cartridge store and shell store, while at the head of this is the lamp room with a well beneath and storage tank above.

Towards the front of the battery are two loading galleries. The doorways to these are near the semi-circular aprons of both gun emplacements. Passageways link-up all sections of the magazine. The floors of the artillery, cartridge and shell stores are 6m below the mound surface. The magazine is constructed of rubble masonry together with arched brickwork. It is covered with a minimum thickness of 0.61m of bombproof concrete. On top of this, at least 1.22m of earth provided further protection. A copper ventilator supplied necessary air. There were shelves and cupboards for clothing, side arms (rammers, handspikes, etc.) besides cleaning equipment for the guns.

Protection against accidental sparks that might cause an explosion was of the greatest importance. Hence, the buckets carrying water to wash out the gun bores were made of leather; felt shoes were worn by the men; shovels and other tools were made of wood and no matches, iron or steel were permitted in the powder magazine. Candles were preferred to oil or spirit lamps, as candles usually extinguished themselves if overturned; whereas spilt oil or spirits tended to spread flames.

### ***Manning of the Battery***

For many years, the permanent military forces in Tasmania consisted almost totally of infantry from Great Britain. Imperial troops were withdrawn from Australia from 1870 to 1901 and so each state had to provide its own defence force. Not until 1859 was there a Volunteer Artillery Company constituted for the defence of Hobart Town. A School of Artillery was formed in 1862. Thereafter, a number of inquiries probed the problems of manning the defences.

Although a Handbook for Artillery was produced in 1868, interest lapsed by 1870 and disbandment in the south of the State took place several years later. Flagging interest was re-kindled by Dr E.L.Crowther at the end of 1877 and an inducement of \$5 per year was given to those who

attended sufficient camps and parades to be considered as "effective". The majority of defence volunteers were tradesmen.

The Bluff Battery and Alexandra Battery were usually manned in turns on selected days from 9 am - 4 pm or used on annual training camps for drill purposes or shell practice. There were daylight and night drills on other occasions as well. In 1886 a Permanent Artillery, consisting of twenty men, was formed. The Southern Artillery continued as a volunteer group until it was disbanded in 1904.

By this time, defence matters were clearly in Commonwealth Government hands.

The Kangaroo Bluff Battery was manned until the early 1920s and during this time no shots were fired in anger.

### ***Management of the Site***

In 1901, after Federation, the Kangaroo Bluff Battery was handed over to the Commonwealth. In the 1920s, the large guns were ordered to be buried and doorways bricked up. In 1930 the Clarence Council took over the area for use as a public park.

In 1961 the battery was considered obsolete and the Scenery Preservation Board acquired most of the battery. The site was first reserved in 1961 under the *Scenery Preservation Act*.

The battery was declared as an Historic Site in 1970 under the *National Parks and Wildlife Act 1970* and is now managed by the Parks and Wildlife Service.

Reprinted from the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife Service website

<http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/historic/visguide/kangbluf/hist.html>

Article provided by Capt Peter Wertheimer

## **VALE**

Bombardier Robert (Bob) R. Furlonger,

Bombardier Robert (Bob) R. Furlonger, aged 58 years, died of cancer on the 29<sup>th</sup> of May, 2007, at the Monash Medical Centre, Clayton.

Sometime in 1970, Bob Furlonger enlisted and joined 3 Battery, 2 Field Regiment, at Landcox Street, East Brighton, where he became a signaller. A short time later, he saw the light and transferred into the Q Store, where he worked with me for approximately 5 years. When 3 Bty moved from Landcox Street to Batman Avenue, Bob transferred to the Q Store at 2 Bty, 2/15 Fd Regt. When Batman Avenue Depot closed, Bob moved to Gipps Street Depot (Catering Corps) with WO 2 Geoff Turville for a few years. Bob left the Army Reserve, when Gipps Street Depot closed.

Bob served in the Army Reserve for 21 years and he received the Reserve Force Medal. He was also a member of the RAA Association.

Bob was a good soldier and he very rarely missed a parade during his Army career. He was loyal, reliable and dedicated soldier, who will be sadly missed by his family and those, who know him well. RIP Bob.

Reg Morrell.



## Lt Col Bernie Pearson

26.9.1939 16.5.2007

### VRFBFA STATE PRESIDENT DIES

Members of the VRFBFA were shocked and saddened by the sudden death of State President Bernie Pearson on Saturday, 26<sup>th</sup> May. Bernie was admitted to hospital on 23<sup>rd</sup> May, suffered a massive heart attack on the night of 24<sup>th</sup> May and did not recover. The VRFBFA will miss his leadership, vision, humour and forthrightness.

A great number of members of State Council attended the funeral at Lancefield and were part of a huge crowd of mourners from many walks of life. The funeral service was a fitting tribute to the man and the position he held in the world of volunteer firefighters.

Bernie was known for putting his opinion in a forthright manner and vigorously and tirelessly canvassed his point of view at every opportunity. Whilst a strenuous debater he was never personal in his verbal stoushes with those who held an opposing view. It is already evident that at the meetings, VRFBFA members have attended since Bernie's death his presence is sadly missed.

*Extract from the CFA's "Victorian Rural Fire Brigade Association" news letter.*



Those that attended the service would agree that his service to the CFA was definitely recognised by the large attendance on the day. A further note in the newsletter states that three other volunteers have taken over some of the work commitments that Bernie was currently doing. No small indication of the measure of the man.

Craig Cook





Photos kindly supplied by Lt Col Robert Sealey



## **ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING**

**(Royal Australian Artillery Association (Victoria) Inc.)**

**Thursday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007 at 1930 hours.**

Caulfield RSL

2 St. Georges Road,

Elsternwick.

(Melways 67 G3)

Bistro opens at 1745 hours.

(Contact Reg Morrell on 9562 9552 for bookings by 01 Nov 07)

This is a great opportunity to know what your Association is doing and also to find out the current information on 2/10 Field Regiment's training programme e.g. change over from field guns to mortars.

Light supper will be provided after the meeting.



## The Secret Potshot (Exmouth) Base The Onslow Fuel Tanks



By Bob Glyde

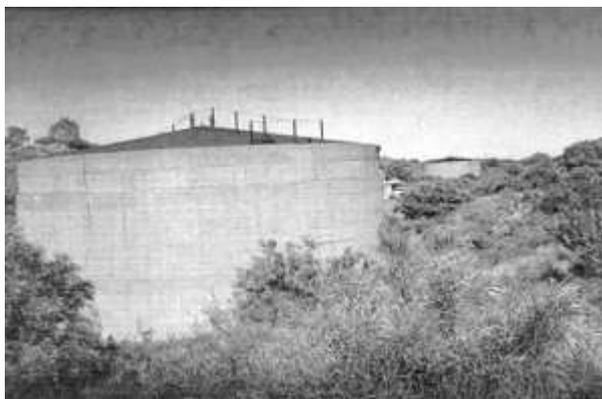
Several issues ago of 'Aiming Post' the subject of the artillery presence at the base was covered.

What is possibly not so well known was that in order to supply the Potshot base with marine fuel oil, marine distillate and aviation fuel, four 2000 ton welded steel tanks were constructed at the port of Onslow. The tank for distillate for the submarines, was in service mid 1943. It may be recalled the tanker my 'Ondina' served as floating storage until the Onslow tank was complete.

Thenceforth the US Navy provided a 500 ton barge to collect the distillate and pump it ashore into shore tanks at Potshot..

A PWD engineer, Ken Kelsall, who was sent to Onslow to supervise the construction of the tanks, states the task was completed in 1944. The work was carried out by members of the Allied Works Council. The steel for the tanks had to be transported by sea from Perth, the lower section being plate of half inch thickness and thinning out to quarter inch plate at the higher levels. The cement, sand and metal for the tank bases, buildings was barged from Perth whilst the blast walls were of rammed earth construction using local clay/sand and gravel mixed with cement.

All tanks were set well down in the dunes, the two fuel oil tanks being situated close to the shore with a large pumping station between them, whilst the distillate tank was further back and further inland again was the aviation fuel tank.



Onslow Fuel Oil Storage 1943-45

The 2 marine fuel oil tanks with the pump house in between

Photo by Glen Potter - 2004

The jetty extended out for three quarters of a kilometre, large vessels, were not able to tie up to the jetty and the tankage was used primarily to bunker vessels, such as corvettes and destroyers. Some units of British Eastern Fleet were believed to have refuelled at Onslow followed by a raid by them on Japanese facilities in the Dutch East Indies (Indonesia) in May 1944.

The aviation fuel tank possibly was to supply filled drums for use at the air force facilities at Exmouth, Yanrey and Onslow. It may also have provided drummed fuel for the secret air base at Corunna Downs, near Marble Bar. The latter would have been transhipped to Port Hedland and sent out on the tramline which then existed between Port Hedland and Marble Bar.

On 15<sup>th</sup> September 1943, Onslow was bombed and according to an article in the *West Australian* 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2004, eight high explosive and eight incendiary bombs were dropped, mostly in the vicinity of the airstrip which was closer in towards Onslow than the present day airfield. It is of interest that this incident did not even warrant a mention in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Aust Corps War Diaries of that date even though unidentified aircraft from time to time over Derby and Wyndham appeared to justify recording. The raid made Onslow as the furthest point south to be attacked by Japanese aircraft. Following this raid, the US Navy provided a number of AA weapons to protect the tank area and remained there until November 1944. Prior to this, during the operation of the Potshot

base, the 2/3<sup>rd</sup> Aust LAA Regiment provided a battery of 40 mm Bofor guns at Onslow. Primarily they were situated to protect the fighter airstrip.

At the end of World War 2, the Shell Company of Australia took over the operation of the fuel depot which supplied fuel to the State Shipping Service, the Blue Funnel Line vessels Charon and Gorgon and naval units involved in the atomic tests at Barrow Island. In 1961 a cyclone destroyed a 300 metre section the jetty and the Government decided the jetty would not be rebuilt. The facility was offered up for tender won by Tom Snyder of Rockingham. He and four others were killed in 1963 when their light aircraft crashed near Marilla Station, west of Onslow whilst flying to Onslow and the second tenderer Midalia and Benn were awarded the tender.



Onslow Naval Fuel Storage 1943-45  
Distillate tank now used for town water supply  
Photo by Glen Potter - 2004

They constructed an underwater pipeline from the end of the jetty and a flexible pipe was winched out of the sea so the remaining oil in the tanks could be pumped from the tanks into a ship standing offshore.. Most of the 12,000 tons of fuel remaining in the tanks was thus recovered however on the second last load a ship fouled the pipeline with its anchor and so damaged it that it was deemed too costly to recover the last remaining 150 tons of fuel oil.

Many of the facilities still exist today. The marine diesel tank was cleaned out and is used for the town water storage, the aviation gasoline tank is used for storage and as a cyclone shelter. The northern most fuel oil tank is used fir storage and the remaining fuel oil tank still contains the fuel oil left in it after the recovery programme ceased.

I am indebted to Glenn Potter, a member of the RAAHSWA, for the resume of what he found out about the facility when he visited the Exmouth/Onslow area in 2004.and for the photos, which accompany the article. He was good enough to give me access to information he obtained from the Onslow Information Centre.

Information Sources:

*Glenn Potters Notes on the Onslow Naval Storage Facility.*

*Ken Kelsall Notes on the Onslow Naval Storage Facility. Handout at the Onslow Information Centre.*

*Ken Kelsall Onslow Revisited . Handout at the Onslow Information Centre.*

*Onslow Onslow Information Centre*

*West Australian Newspaper Cutting, 2<sup>nd</sup> March 2004 Onslow Air Raid Shattered Night Idyll.*

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**EULOGY FOR GENERAL JOHN BAKER, AC, DSM**  
**by**  
**AIR CHIEF MARSHAL ANGUS HOUSTON, AO, AFC**  
**13 July 2007**

As he was approaching his retirement as Chief of the Defence Force in 1998, General John Baker expressed his astonishment at soldiers planning on spending only 10 years or so in the Defence Force. He couldn't understand why on earth they would ever want to leave. He cited his own career as an example of the opportunities provided to you if you devoted your life to serving your nation in uniform. As he said back then: "I was a university student on full pay. I was a young engineer on the frontiers of civilisation, I then had the pleasure of living in Hawaii for 12 months. I've been a teacher, a policy officer, the head of an intelligence organisation, a commander of men. I might even claim to have been a diplomat, then a logistician. I've been a manager of big business....." Of course, when John said this his intention was to express his great delight at the opportunities the Australian Army had offered him. We all hear this quote and realize that it was not what the Army gave to John Baker, but what John Baker gave to the Army a lifetime of exceptional service that went far above and beyond what could reasonably be expected of any one man.

For General John Baker was a commanding, professional, dedicated, determined and courageous military officer. He was humble, he was kind and he was exceedingly intelligent. He possessed a great ability to inspire others. He was a fresh and innovative thinker. He challenged the status quo. He set the bar high and made no apologies for doing so. Though he had high expectations of others, wasn't averse to offering second chances. It was no surprise to those who saw his rise through the ranks, that he eventually held the highest military office in the nation. John's military career began when he joined the Royal Military College Duntroon in 1954. His high school headmaster, in recommending John for a position at Duntroon, said he "excellent moral character, was industrious, thoroughly reliable and well respected by school fellows". These were traits John carried throughout his time at Duntroon, and indeed, throughout his entire career.

It will be no surprise to those aware of John's formidable intellect that he was a good student, proving exceptional at pure mathematics and excelling at the rest of the terribly difficult subjects of physics, chemistry, military law and military engineering.

Early on he demonstrated a great affinity for military life. Major General Campbell, then Commandant of the Royal Military College, said of John, "Hard working cadet in all phases of life at the College. His military work is well above the average. Still rather shy and retiring in his manner. Shows great determination and physical courage".

Of Duntroon, John later remarked that the best thing he got from his time there was his friends. He took great pride in the fact that after 50 years that circle of friends was still intact. And he took even greater pride in reminding people that his class produced six generals quite a remarkable feat. John was also greatly astonished that after 44 years he was the last serving officer of the great class of 1957.

After graduating John was commissioned into the Royal Australian Engineers. He then completed a degree in Civil Engineering at Melbourne University. John attributed engineering as providing him with intellectual discipline that would serve him well his entire career.

John won early regimental experience in a number of Royal Australian Engineer Units. During this time he spent one year in Papua New Guinea. John described his time here as a fantastic opportunity. John and his men worked in the jungle, built roads and extended airfields. For a young man it was an exciting adventure, and this was followed by an exchange posting with the United States Army in Hawaii.

In 1970 he served in Vietnam as a member of the Battle Analysis Team an arduous appointment, though John was never known to shy away from hard work. Later that year and into 1971 he was

project officer in the 1st Australian Civil Affairs Unit, where John was responsible for construction activities in Phuoc Tuy Province.

In recognition of his work on this project, Major Baker was mentioned in dispatches.

His citation reads that "Despite the short planning time, an extended supply system, a mixed workforce and, subsequently, a curtailed completion time, Major Baker by his technical ability and dedication brought the project near to successful completion before his departure from Vietnam. Throughout his management of the complex and difficult task, Major Baker displayed devotion to duty, professional skill and leadership qualities of the highest order which reflected great credit upon himself, his Corps and the Australian Army".

Over the next decade John fulfilled a number of staff and command appointments, consistently excelling at his many and varied tasks and garnering great respect from those in which he came into contact.

In November 1987 the then Brigadier Baker produced the influential internal review 'Report of the Study into ADF Command Arrangements', more commonly known as 'The Baker Report'. John took great pride in this ground-breaking report which initiated the journey to create leading edge command and control arrangements for the ADF.

John's most profound recommendations were to create the integrated joint headquarters at NORCOM and the three Joint Environmental Headquarters of Maritime, Land and Air in Sydney.

Just after this report was published, John was promoted to Major General and took up the duties of Chief of Logistics - Army. A young LTCOL Peter Cosgrove, then Military Advisor to the Chief of Army, fondly recalls witnessing John's great joy and surprise at being told of his promotion to the rank of two star. Ever humble and unassuming John was duly delighted at his elevated rank.

In 1989 John commenced another of his important roles, as Director of Defence's Intelligence Organisation. During his time as Director, John was instrumental in changing the direction of the Organisation.

This appointment coincided with the first Gulf War and as Director, John was required to brief Prime Minister Hawke on a regular basis. John won much admiration for his incisive and insightful assessments and his complete grasp of the tactical and strategic aspects of the Coalition Campaign. I remember being dragged into Admiral Taylor's office to explain to a very determined Major General Baker exactly why we were developing plans that he deemed to be 'high risk' to our people. The strength of his conviction was most impressive.

John was promoted to Lieutenant General in October 1992 and assumed the appointment of Vice Chief of the Defence Force. He was promoted to Companion in the Military Division of the Order of Australia in the 1995 Australia Day Honours List.

Then on 20 April 1995 General Baker assumed the duties of Chief of the Defence Force and was subsequently promoted General. Early in his tenure as CDF John faced one of his most challenging times, with the crash of the Blackhawks in 1996, which resulted in the death of 18 of our servicemen. John was greatly affected by this accident, and flew straight up to Townsville to be with the families that had lost loved ones. John remarked that "it was as though it was your own family", such was his compassionate and caring nature.

John achieved a great deal during his time as CDF. He developed a vision and a concept for fixing the operational level of command and control. This was implemented with the creation of the Australian Theatre with a joint commander and a joint staff. We now had clear separation of the raise and train functions from the command and control of operations functions. As we were to see shortly thereafter, this joint approach dramatically enhanced the ability of the ADF to respond to the challenges of the strategic environment. John had great insight about how our future force would need to operate.

Indeed, John must have foreseen what was coming. With one sole joint operational commander in the Australian Theatre Headquarters our operational tempo immediately took off. Within a few days of its creation Major General Jim Connolly was working closely with John on dealing with the Sandline crisis and its consequences in Papua New Guinea. As Chief of Staff to Jim Connolly, I

recall this time very well. John had remarkable clarity as to how the situation should be handled. He fully grasped the whole strategic problem and this allowed him to provide the government with solutions that enhanced Australia's strategic posture.

In the last eighteen months of John's tenure, we undertook, or prepared to undertake, 20 operations. He took great satisfaction in this, commenting, "There is an excitement and a commitment now in the Defence Force. The members understand that they have a real job to do, and are eager to get on with it". During this time, of particular significance for its slick execution, was the deployment of our C130's to Cambodia on Operation Vista in 1998. The C-130s were used to evacuate Australians from Phnom Pehn.

John and Departmental Secretary Tony Ayers were also responsible for implementing the Defence Reform Program. This program was part of the Government's strategy to transfer support positions to the sharp end. This reform was a necessary change to allow the ADF to position itself for the challenges of the future. John was a great proponent of the need to minimize that part of the force not directly related to combat or combat support roles. However, he once jokingly commented that there would soon be more people watching the North Melbourne versus Carlton game at the MCG on Sunday than defending Australia!

John was well liked and trusted by the Government of the day. Minister Robert Ray had a close relationship with John. And with the change of Government in 1996 John then impressed Prime Minister Howard and Minister Ian McLachlan with his intellect and insight. He was a wise and kind colleague and developed a close friendship with Ian and his wife Janet.

It was also during this time that John was picked up on one of his more intriguing habits. In preparing for speeches John would kick everyone out of his office, shut the door locking it and then not emerge for quite a period of time. Now John was renowned for being a particularly good public speaker. He was engaging, meticulous in his delivery, and he never got caught out by an unexpected question. Eventually his staff got curious about just how John was able to perform so well each and every time he spoke. So they decided to do a bit of recon. Even though they were locked out, the door to CDF's office used to have a peephole in which you could see in. Imagine the staff's great surprise when the General's secret weapon was found to be an affinity for talking to plants! The General would stand in his office, pretending each plant was a different member of his audience. He would speak to them, gesture to them, and get quite worked up and passionate in these practice sessions. But it obviously worked for him. General Baker was inspirational when he was speaking in public. In particular, I recall his moving and beautiful eulogy, delivered without notes, for his great friend and colleague Alan Beaumont.

In June 1998, John was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal. He then retired from the ADF in July 1998.

Following his retirement John continued to serve our community, though he was not well. John was the Vice President of *Australia Day in the National Capital* Committee, a member of the Strategic Defence Studies Centre at ANU, the Chairman of the Australian Defence College and a member of the Board of Directors for Australian Submarine Corporation and the Minister's Defence Council.

General John Baker was, and will remain, greatly respected and admired throughout the entire Australian Defence Force. The presence of so many in uniform here today is testament to the great respect he commanded through his compassion, determination, skill and intellect. He was a giant in the Defence community, and today we mourn one of our greatest Generals, one of our greatest friends.

Just a few short days ago I experienced one of those times I will remember forever. I found John in hospital, alert and ready to engage in conversation. I told him about Reserve Forces Day, which I had just attended in Melbourne. He responded by cajoling me never to forget the importance of our reserves. Not satisfied with that, he then went on to tell me that we simply had to set aside at least an hour to talk about the Army. I enquired about what we might cover, and he responded abruptly, where he was coming from! I will treasure the time I was able to spend with John so late in his life.

Of course, it was not only his professional life in which John Baker was to be admired. John was a family man who revelled in his role as a husband to Margaret, father to Janine, John and Noel,

grandfather to Matt, James, Nick, Elizabeth, Lauren and John and brother to Margaret, Jean and David.

As a team, John and Margaret were renowned as welcoming, kind and thoughtful. Over the last few years many of us recall their warm hospitality at their annual Christmas drinks. An impressive pair and ideally suited, you could not find two more genuine people. When John was still serving, if you were a member of their staff you were considered family. And it was who you were as a person, rather than your rank, that gained their respect. Thoroughly self sufficient, and without airs and graces, John and Margaret were widely admired. Of course, Margaret could also be relied upon to offer John the kind of advice that a junior officer could not. If Margaret was in attendance when John was giving a speech, she would quietly pull on John's jacket when she thought it was well past time for him to sit back down.

John was also a wonderful and loving, father and grandfather. John's family fondly recall how he stayed up all night when his young grandson James was sick with croup. Not surprisingly, he went off to his work as CDF the next morning. His children and grandchildren were also the beneficiaries of his marvellous engineering skills with what they call 'thoroughly over-engineered cubby houses and Lego towers'. He shared a wonderful relationship with his grandchildren. They delighted in dobbing him into Margaret when he did something wrong!

Upon his retirement, John continued to enjoy his gardening and golf. I often partnered him at the 3 Star and 4 Star Golf Day. Despite his fragile health he usually won the highly sought after clock trophy made of shells! Though I am not sure Margaret allowed it to go on display!

He also continued to support the team he described as 'the perennial losers' his beloved North Melbourne Football Club. It is fitting that the North Melbourne Kangaroos are renowned for their "Shinboner Spirit", a reference to their ability to fight back hard with their backs against the wall.

This is a wonderful description of the tenacity with which John fought his long illness. I recall a recent Australia Day in Canberra. John had just left hospital and the effect of his treatment was obvious. He was frail and fatigued, but rather than go home and rest, John was determined to fulfill his responsibility to the Australia Day in the National Capital Committee.

Sadly, eventually he could fight his illness no longer, though we were not ready to say goodbye.

I conclude by returning to where I began. John Baker was sincere and humble. He was always professional, loyal and dedicated. He was exceedingly intelligent. His capacity for hard work was unrivalled, as was his steely resolve. Loving, caring, compassionate and so very close to his wife Margaret and their family, John was a remarkable man. His example is an inspiration to us all.

John: I salute your inspirational leadership; your long and dedicated service to your nation; your unwavering friendship and your devotion to Margaret and your family.

General John Stuart Baker, you were a great Australian.

May you rest in peace.

--ends

Eulogy for General John Baker, AC, DSM, by Air Chief Marshal Angus Houston, AO, AFC 13 July 2007

Reprinted from

<http://www.defence.gov.au/media/download/2007/Jul/20070713/General%20John%20Baker%20AC%20DSM%20Eulogy.pdf>



# ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The Thirtieth Annual General Meeting of the RAA Association (Vic) Inc  
Will be held at the Caulfield RSL  
2 St. Georges Road,  
Elsternwick.

**Thursday, the 8<sup>th</sup> of November, 2007 at 1930 hours.**

## AGENDA

1. Apologies
2. Minutes of previous meeting
3. Business arising
4. Correspondence
5. Treasurer's report
6. Membership report
7. General Business
  - a. President's report
  - b. Regimental reports
  - c. Election of office bearers
8. Other Business

.....  
**NOMINATION FORM**

This form is to reach the Secretary not later than 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2007

<

<

a member of the Association, is hereby nominated for the position of  
President / Vice President / Secretary / Treasurer / Committee member (cross out those positions not  
nominated for) by the undermentioned Proposer and Seconder, who are also members of the Association.

<

<

name)

<

<

Signature of consenting nominee: <

.....

## FORM OF APPOINTMENT OF PROXY

I, <

of <

being a member of the Royal Australian Artillery Association (Victoria) Inc, hereby appoint

<

of <

Association, as my Proxy to vote for me on my behalf at the General Meeting of the Incorporated Association  
to be held on 8<sup>th</sup> of November 2007, and at any adjournment of that meeting.

Signed <

Date <

## Did You Know ?

Peter Badcoe VC was the founding Battery Commander of 107<sup>th</sup> Field Battery RAA in the Vietnam era.

Provided by Barry Pearce KSJ

### The Last Post

'The Last Post' is the trumpet or bugle call sounded in barracks and other military installations at 10.00 pm each night to mark the end of the day's activities. It is also sounded at military funerals and commemorative services to indicate that the soldier's day has drawn to a final close. During the sounding of the last post all members in uniform are to stand to attention and salute. Armed parties are to be given the command to present arms.

'The Last Post' originated in medieval times, about the year 1622 and was known as the 'Retreat'. It was usually played at 2200 hr to call 'the soldiers to retire for the night' at the end of the day. It then became custom over the years to play 'The Last Post' at military funerals and commemorative functions where the closing sounds of the music sounds out the sad farewell to 'Lights Out, Lights Out'.

#### Words to The Last Post

*Come home! Come home! The last post is sounding  
for you to hear. All good soldiers know very well there  
is nothing to fear while they do what is right, and forget  
all the worries they have met in their duties through the  
year. A soldier cannot always be great, but he can be a  
gentleman and he can be a right good pal to his comrades in  
his squad. So all you soldiers listen to this Deal fair by all  
and you'll never be amiss.*

*Be Brave! Be Just! Be Honest and True Men!*

*An extract from the Australian Army Ceremonial Manual Volume 1*

*Reprinted from RAA Association Newcastle Branch Newsletter - Edition 56 (August 2007)*



## Letter to the Editor

Thank you for the inclusion of Chris Coulthard . Clark's assessment of the Tet Offensive of 1968 which was published in the April 2007 Cascabel. Sadly I can find no reference to Australian Gunner units in this article. Surely it is of some interest to gunners in Victoria and elsewhere to know specific units involved in significant actions, rather than simply infantry units (named) "along with supporting armour, artillery and Engineers".

4th Field Regiment RAA consisting of 106 and 108 Field Batteries were deployed on Operation 'COBURG' on 24 January 1968 along with 2 and 7 RAR. Other units deployed under command of 1ATF were 3 RAR, A Sqn 3 Cav Regt, 1 Fd Sqn, 161 (Indep) Recce Flt; in support Bty B 2/35th Arty (US), army aviation companies (US), No. 9 Sqn RAAF. 4th Field Regiment's official history is not available to me. The "record of rounds fired history" of 108 Fd Bty between 24 Jan and return to Nui Dat on 13 Feb .68 shows that the battery fired 8,142 rounds on this operation. 336 missions were fired, 42 of which were in support of infantry units 'in contact' Of particular note, on 4 February '68, the Regiment fired two 'Fire Missions Corps' , which included all artillery units within range of the targets described as a VC HQ and an occupied VC Camp.

Interestingly, the operation is described as "A reconnaissance in force operation in AO Columbus as extended, of 386 sq Km between the Song Dong Nai and Route 1, east of Long Binh. It was intended to deny VC access to suitable sites from which to bring 122 mm rocket fire on to Long Binh or Bien Hoa airbase complex.. It further describes enemy participation as .Main force elements probably in AO Columbus included elements of the 273 Regt, up to battalion group of 274 Regt, up to a battalion of 84A Rocket Regt, and a small element of the Dong Nai Regt. Local force elements included several company and platoon strength units as well as various district village and guerrilla bands".

Records which I have consulted are the "Record of Rounds Fire by 108 Field Battery RAA in Vietnam between 8 June 1967 and 28 May 1968" which I personally compiled as they were fired and "The Official History of Australia's involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1948 – 1975". I commend the second reference to you. Each volume has appended 'Summary of Operations' reports that are of use for sketches of operations undertaken and involved.

I trust that this information will be of some use to you. Keep up the good work you do in producing Cascabel.

Ubique

Warren Barnard



## **Australian MIAs of the Vietnam War "missing in action" or "no known grave"?**

by Ashley Ekins

The term "missing in action" has long brought anguish to the families of servicemen lost in war. Of the 60,000 Australians who died in the First World War, over one-third were recorded as "missing". Almost half the Australians who died on Gallipoli have no known grave. Many bereaved families were haunted for a generation by the memories of sons, brothers, fathers and husbands who had disappeared without trace. The scale of the loss made this a shared national experience, starkly recalled today in scores of overseas war cemeteries with headstones inscribed with Kipling's simple words: "An Australian Soldier of the Great War . . . Known unto God".

There was no such solace for the next of kin of servicemen listed as missing in action during the Vietnam War. Over 500 Australians died in Vietnam. Among them were six Australian servicemen – four Army soldiers and two RAAF airmen – who were initially recorded as "missing in action" (MIA) in four separate incidents. In all six cases their classification was subsequently amended to either "killed in action" or "missing in action - presumed dead". All six servicemen are perhaps more correctly described as having no known graves. These are their stories.

The first Australian combat unit to fight in Vietnam, 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR), was also the first to have soldiers recorded as missing in action. In November 1965 1RAR joined an American battalion of the US 173d Airborne Brigade on Operation Hump, a five-day search-and-destroy operation into the enemy dominated territory of War Zone D, about forty kilometres northeast of Saigon.

This area was known to contain a Viet Cong stronghold and the base for an enemy regiment as well as enemy supply routes linking the communist war zones to the Ho Chi Minh Trail. For the first two days the rifle companies of 1RAR had sporadic enemy contacts as platoons patrolled through swamp and thick jungle. Then, on the afternoon of 8 November, while the soldiers of A Company were pushing through dense rainforest near the top of the Gang Toi hills, they struck a strongly-defended Viet Cong bunker system.

As they crested a ridge, the leading Australian platoon suddenly came under a hail of fire from machine-guns in well-sited bunkers, supported by rifles and grenades. Five men were hit almost immediately at close range. The rest of the platoon quickly went to ground and began returning fire as the wounded men withdrew or were dragged back - all except for Lance Corporal Richard "Tiny" Parker, who had been commanding the point section. Parker had fallen directly in front of the enemy bunkers. He was lying face down and was not moving. He could not be reached and he did not respond to shouts from his comrades.

This was the first time the Australians had encountered a Viet Cong main force unit who fought and stood their ground. They could tell from the sounds of heavy firing that the American battalion across the river from them had also run into trouble. 1/503 Battalion had assaulted an enemy bunker system and was now engaged in fierce close-quarters fighting with a Viet Cong regiment.

With his forward platoon pinned down, Major John Healy, commanding A Company, ordered another of his platoons to assault the enemy bunkers from the flank. As they advanced, this platoon was also caught in a heavy cross-fire from enemy machine-guns concealed in bunkers. Private Peter Gillson, a machine-gunner with the forward section, was hit by a burst of automatic fire as he stepped around the twisted roots of a tree. He fell just fifteen metres from the enemy position, propped against the roots.

Gillson's platoon sergeant, Sergeant Colin Fawcett, crawled forward under fire to help the wounded soldier. Fawcett reached for Gillson's arm but could feel no pulse at the wrist. He saw that Gillson had been hit several times. He attempted several times to drag Gillson's body out of the line of fire but both the soldier and his machine-gun were wedged tightly among the tree roots. He was forced to move back. Fawcett was later awarded the Military Medal for his brave actions.

The assaulting platoon was now at risk of being encircled by the enemy and was compelled to withdraw under enemy fire. Dusk was approaching and Major Healy was forced to order his company to break off contact and withdraw, reluctantly leaving the bodies of Parker and Gillson behind. He had no choice. His company had struck a determined enemy force of equal strength; the Viet Cong were well-armed and their bunkers dominated all approaches. In the judgement of official historian Ian McNeill,

it would have been foolhardy for him to have pressed the attack ... Healy had done all he could and his company had performed creditably [but] the men were depressed at leaving two soldiers behind.

The Australians wanted to return to the Gang Toi hills. A full battalion attack operation was planned later in the month but it was never conducted. Over two years later Australian soldiers returned to the old battleground of Operation Hump when units of the 1st Australian Task Force conducted Operation Coburg during the communist Tet Offensive. But no trace of the missing soldiers was ever found.

Peter Gillson's wife later wrote to his platoon commander with stoic resignation:

I am really proud to be called a soldier's wife, even though it is heart breaking at times, but I suppose we all must expect these things and when it does happen we must be as brave as our men were - but in a way I am very lucky because I have a son which Peter never saw. He is only four months old but he'll never know just how much strength he has given me to go on. I only hope that his son will grow up to be as fine a man as Peter was.

A court of inquiry conducted by 1RAR shortly after the action recommended that Private Gillson be recorded as "killed in action"; and Lance Corporal Parker be recorded as "missing in action, presumed dead". Both soldiers were officially listed as missing in action, however, because their bodies were not recovered.

In 1969 Private David Fisher, a national serviceman serving with 3 Squadron SAS, became the next soldier declared missing in action. In September 1969 Fisher was second-in-command of a five-man, long range SAS patrol searching for signs of enemy activity near the Nui May Tao massif in south-eastern Long Khanh province.

After patrolling for seven days in persistent rain, on 27 September the Australians had a series of sharp contacts with strong groups of Viet Cong. Outnumbered and pursued through the jungle, they called for a helicopter extraction. The helicopters arrived within half an hour, just as the enemy were closing in on the SAS soldiers.

During the hectic moments of the "hot" extraction, while under fire and surrounded by the enemy, the members of the patrol clipped on their karabiners and attached themselves to ropes dangling from a helicopter and were lifted clear of the jungle. As the helicopter gathered speed and helicopter gunships moved in to fire on the enemy on the ground, the patrol members suddenly noticed that Private Fisher was missing. He had fallen from his rope from a height of about 30 metres above the tree canopy. It was later suggested that, under pressure, Fisher may have attached his karabiner to the wrong loop on the rope.

An air search began within ten minutes of the incident and a ground search began within five hours. A ten-man SAS patrol searched the jungle around the site, joined the following day by rifle companies who searched for the next six days. Fisher's body was never found, and he was declared missing in action, presumed dead. He had only two months remaining of his tour of duty.

In 1970 two RAAF airmen were declared missing in action in Vietnam. Flying Officer Michael Herbert and Pilot Officer Robert Carver, both of 2 Squadron, RAAF, were believed killed when their Canberra bomber disappeared while flying a night bombing mission in the northern 1 Corps region of South Vietnam.

On 3 November 1970 Herbert (the pilot and aircraft captain) and Carver (the navigator and bomb aimer) had taken off from Phan Rang at 7.00 p.m., heading for their target in Quang Nam province 65 kilometres south-west of Da Nang. The weather was relatively clear and the flight to the target was without incident. The Australians carried out their bombing run and released their bombs over the target area at 8.22 p.m. After acknowledging a radio message, they switched frequency for the

return flight to Phan Rang. Shortly afterwards, the aircraft disappeared from the radar screen which was tracking it.

American and Australian air units mounted an aerial search the next morning. The extensive search involved 67 sorties over an area of over 16,000 square kilometres but it was hampered by poor weather conditions. The search failed to find any trace of the aircraft or crew and was called off after three days.

Pilot Officer Carver had served for only eight weeks in Vietnam. Flying Officer Herbert, who had qualified as a pilot at the age of 16, had only two months to go to finish his tour.

The cause of the disappearance was never determined. Their aging Canberra bomber was flying well above the maximum range of enemy anti-aircraft artillery and there were no known North Vietnamese surface-to-air missile (SAM) launch sites near the flight path. Although discounted by a RAAF court of inquiry, the most likely explanation of the aircraft's sudden disappearance without trace remains the possibility of a catastrophic mid-air explosion caused by one or more bombs becoming hung up in the rack after release.

For the parents of those lost, the term "missing in action" became increasingly difficult to live with. After years of uncertainty Robert Carver's parents eventually gave up hope that he would be found alive. Mr Sydney Carver had his son's name placed on the Toowoomba War Memorial. Every day he passed the memorial and never failed to look at the inscription.

Mrs Joan Herbert continued to dream that her son Michael was alive and roaming the jungles of Vietnam, dreams that eventually became nightmares. Over the next decade she wrote more than 600 letters to Vietnamese and other political leaders enquiring about his fate. The families of both RAAF officers said they could not rest until the truth was known.

The last Australian soldier to be listed as missing in action was Lance Corporal John Francis Gillespie of 8 Field Ambulance. On 17 April 1971 Gillespie was serving as a helicopter medic during a 'dustoff' (helicopter medical evacuation) operation in the Long Hai hills in Phuoc Tuy province.

Four South Vietnamese Regional Force soldiers had been injured by a mine explosion and the difficult terrain demanded a helicopter evacuation. But the Long Hai hills were an insecure landing zone. The caves and dense timber of the Long Hais had long harboured a major Viet Cong base area and the dustoff operation required the protection of helicopter gunships. As the first wounded soldier was being winched up, the hovering helicopter was hit by enemy machine-gun fire. It crashed to the ground and burst into flames. Although the crew escaped, Lance Corporal Gillespie and three other soldiers were engulfed in the fireball. A helicopter crewman, Corporal Robert Stephens, repeatedly entered the burning aircraft and tried in vain to rescue Gillespie, until being forced back by the flames. Stephens was later awarded the British Empire Medal for his courage.

Gillespie's body could not be recovered from the burning wreckage which was reduced to slag by the fire. Private Gillespie was listed as missing in action, apparently on a technicality because his remains could not be found. The classification was subsequently altered to killed in action.

The last Australian combat troops were withdrawn from South Vietnam at the end of 1971. For the next decade the question of Australian servicemen missing in Vietnam received little official attention. Then in May 1984, a joint Foreign Affairs and Defence mission travelled to Vietnam to investigate the Australian missing in action cases with the assistance of Vietnamese government officials. The five-member team visited Quang Nam Da Nang and Dong Nai provinces and walked to the sites of two of the incidents. They were prevented from reaching the other two sites due to uncleared minefields.

The team's investigations were hampered by the time lapse since the incidents, the uncertain nature of much of the information available, and the movement of civilian populations and Vietnamese military units during and since the war. Unfounded media claims that the team had "solved the mystery" of the missing also aroused false hopes and angered some next of kin. Regretably, the team members discovered no further information or traces of the remains of the Australians. They concluded that it was most unlikely that any further information on the whereabouts of the remains of the six Australians would become available in the future.

This article was published (with colour photographs and map) as "No known grave", in *Wartime: the official magazine of the Australian War Memorial* 23 (2003), 14-18.

**AUTHOR**

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**RAA Association (Victoria) Inc  
Corps Shop**

The following items may be purchased by mail, or at selected Association activities.

**PRICE LIST**

<p><b>Badges, etc</b></p> <p>RAA Assn (Vic), members \$5.00          RAA badge cuff links \$9.00          Key ring, RAA badge \$4.00          Key ring, RAA (Pewter) \$4.00</p> <p><b>Ties</b></p> <p>Blue with single red gun \$30.00          RAA Burgundy with gold gun \$43.00          RAA Navy with gold gun \$43.00          St Barbara Stripe \$43.00</p> <p><b>Books</b></p> <p><i>Kookaburra s Cutthroats</i> \$39.00  <i>Aust Military Equip Profiles</i> \$13.50  <i>AMEF Profile Leopard Tank</i> \$17.00</p> <p><b>ENQUIRIES:</b></p> <p>BRIAN CLEEMAN (03) 9560 7116          REG MORRELL (03) 9562 9552</p>	<p><b>Stationery</b></p> <p>Card, RAA badge, with envelope          Christmas message \$0.20          blank inside \$0.20</p> <p>Stickers</p> <p>Bumper: <i>Gunners do it          with a bigger bang</i> \$2.00          Square: gold badge, red          and blue background \$2.00</p> <p><b>ORDERS:</b>          Most orders will require an additional FIVE DOLLARS packing and postage, which will cover one to several small items. If in any doubt concerning this, or availability, please contact one of the enquiries numbers above.</p> <p>Cheques should be made payable to RAA Association (Victoria) Inc, and be crossed <i>Not Negotiable</i>.</p> <p>Orders to: Mr B. Cleeman          28 Samada Street          Notting Hill VIC 3168</p>
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## The Annual Artillery Luncheon



The Annual Artillery Luncheon is to be held at

The Naval & Military Club, 27 Little Collins Street, Melbourne, Vic 3000

On Wednesday the 31<sup>st</sup> of October

1200 for 1230

For Further details Contact Brig. Doug Perry on 0419 355 675

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## HELP

## SECRETARY NEEDED

After many years our Secretary, Robin Smith, has indicated that he does not intend to stand for re-election at the next Annual General Meeting

If you feel that you would like to help out and serve the Association in this capacity, or you know of someone (not necessarily a current member Male or Female) would you please contact:

Neil Hamer: 9702 2100  
0419 533 067  
nhamer@bigpond.net.au

# RAA ASSOCIATION (VIC)

## SOCIAL GOLF DAY



To be held at the Berwick Montuna Golf Club  
**Beaconsfield-Emerald Road, Guy s Hill**

(Melways 212 C4)

On Friday 9<sup>th</sup> November 2007

**Tee Time 0830 Hrs**

**This will be our Sixth Annual Golf Day** and we look forward to an even bigger and better field to compete for the coveted RAA Association Perpetual Trophy.

**A special invitation is extended to all veterans who wish to participate.**

**Golfers at ALL** levels of expertise are invited to attend, including wives, husbands, partners, relatives and friends. Caddies, coaches observers and encouragers are most welcome to attend either, or both, the golf and the lunch.

**Hire clubs, buggies and motorised carts** are available from the Golf-Shop. These items should be booked directly with the Golf shop on 9707 5226 at least ten days prior. Photo ID and a deposit will be required for clubs and carts.

**The cost** for golfers is \$25.00 which covers green fees for 18 holes and trophies.

**Lunch** will be available in the Clubhouse at very reasonable prices.

**The competition of the day** will be a stableford competition. Players who do not have a handicap will be

**Trophies** for the Winner, Runner Up and Nearest the Pin (3) will be awarded in the Clubhouse during lunch.

**So that** tee times and a number for lunch can be booked for this very busy time of the year, would you please indicate if you would like to attend, and the number of people in your group, by telephone, mail or e-mail to:

**Maj Neil Hamer, 12 Marida Court, Berwick 3806;  
Telephone, 9702 2100;  
E-mail, nhamer@bigpond.net.au**

**Not later than 26<sup>th</sup> October 2007.**

**Please include:**

**Your name and handicap, (if you have one).**

**The name and handicap of your guests.**

**The number of non-golfers who will be attending for lunch.**

**The name/s of your preferred group.**

# MY SERVICE CAREER

## By COL Graham Farley, OAM, RFD, ED (Retd)

### Part 29 School Cadets

#### General

Both in Britain and in Australia there is a proud tradition of adolescent youth members having the opportunity to experience service life by joining cadet units. From time to time, Australia has had compulsory training both pre and post the age of 18. The navy in particular has encouraged youth to learn seamanship.

There is plenty of statistical evidence that enlistment into the nation's defence forces has come in many cases from youth members who have been cadets. This does not necessarily mean that a service person will join because of the cadet opportunity, but if they do they are already partly trained and have had a chance to know whether they would like service conditions or not.

From time to time considerable expense is devoted to recruitment through this source. Politically from time to time and from a budget point of view, cadet training has been suspended or at least cut back.

During the Whitlam government, funds for cadets were withdrawn, but units could continue to operate at their own expense. Some church schools took this opportunity to close their units and others to scale back. Now the pendulum has swung back again and funds have become more easily available, both federally and at the state level. 2/10 Fd Regt sponsors army cadets at its depots, as did 10 Mdm Regt when that unit was based in Geelong.

#### ATC

I have already partly described my membership of the Air Training Corps (now the Australian Air Force Cadets) of 1947-51 in the first part of this series.<sup>1</sup>



*Flight-sergeant Farley and No. 9 Flight, Air Training Corps, 1950*

The school that I attended as a student, Malvern Memorial Grammar School, commenced Flight No. 9 in September, 1947, in response from an approach by the RAAF. The age range had just been reduced to "thirteen turning fourteen". This was two years younger than previously. I was less than adequate at sport and this seemed to be a new agreeable avenue of activity, in addition to my studies and close friends.

The flight was commanded by a very able and popular member of the teaching staff, he having been in the RAAF. Our uniforms were of the traditional RAAF navy blue and

were of very good quality. They included shoes, which were even mended at government expense. We wore ties and shirts, with detachable collars!

The first camp was a weekend one at RAAF Point Cook (now RAAF Williams). Here we were impressionable and innocent school boys placed in the same hut as some very (well, according to them) experienced mature apprentices. They claimed that "few got away"!

There were no doors on the toilets. The beds were of the metal wire sort. We were issued with mattress, blankets, sheets and pillow cases. While there was training in rifle firing, service knowledge, communications and aircraft recognition, the instructors knew that they could always fall back on the hardy regular activity of drill or "square bashing".

<sup>1</sup> *Cascabel* Issue No. 64, July 2000

On school days there was a weekly parade in the afternoon at first and later this was brought forward to the first period in the morning. Instructors came out from the headquarters in Melbourne. In 1947 the RAAF had an establishment of huts and parade space at the foot of Spencer Street long since gone. Camps at either Point Cook or Laverton were fairly regular, but were cancelled one year because of a polio epidemic.

The activity to which we always looked forward was to go for a 'flip' in a Dakota aircraft. Such chances were continually on' and 'off'. much like any other experience in the services.

Given the opportunity to attend an NCO promotion camp, I was fortunate in becoming a corporal. I rose ultimately to flight-sergeant [FSGT]<sup>2</sup> and got considerable experience in supervising up to two hundred cadets in camp when the officers were not on parade.

My final achievement was to win a flying scholarship in the first group of such awards in 1951 but owing to a characteristic of my eye-sight, despite thirteen hours of dual in Tiger Moth aircraft, the RAAF felt it would be more economical in terms of funerals and replacing aircraft for me to cease trying to kill myself.

### **Wesley College**

From 1959 to 1962 I was a 'resident maste' at Wesley College, while teaching by day at Princes Hill High School. By 1959, I was now a CMF lieutenant in artillery. On two occasions I attended the September annual camp with the Wesley cadets. I had no opportunity to parade on their weekly training ones.

The cadets were under command of MAJ Dick Milne, MBE, whom I also knew through scouts. He was glad of my help as the other school teacher officers might have had even less military experience. I tended to support the Cadet Under (CUO's) in their planning. I also accompanied the unit into the scrub of Puckapunyal. These forays were very enjoyable.

### **Warragul Combined Schools Cadet Unit**

In 1963 I transferred within the teaching profession to Warragul High School, while at the same time taking promotion to major as the battery commander of the Warragul CMF field battery. The High and the Technical Schools were sited back-to-back. The units' officers were drawn mainly from the staff of the technical school, but I was approached as to whether I would help and restore some balance..

The OC was CAPT Merv Norris, a former navy man. He had three other officers: LT Jim Craig, LT Al Head( as QM); and LT Barry Armstrong (as the bandmaster). The technical school component of the unit heavily outnumbered the high school members, but the high school contributed more than its fair share of NCOs.



CAPT Merv Norris, OC,  
Warragul Combined  
Schools Cadet Unit, 1963

I was granted a captain's commission in the cadets with the honorary rank of major. This was primarily for establishment and pay purposes. I had no wish to supplant Merv Norris as the OC and the two of us got on very well.

As with all cadet units, officers and cadets wore their military uniforms to school on cadet day. I was sufficiently senior in the staff room to ward off most ragging comments but since I had a desk next to a Mr. Wally McKenzie, it was too much to avoid the sobriquet, "Wally and the Major," when the two of us were photographed in the local swimming pool!

Being the OC at the local battery, I could use my position to obtain some military support and could offer the training depot for weekend training bivouacs. WO1 Joe Monahan (then a SSGT) was the cadre man at the depot. He trained the Warragul marching girls. The local basket ball team played in the depot on non-parade nights. There was considerable "give and take" under these circumstances.

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<sup>2</sup> To use the parlance of my later army days, I was a substantive corporal and acting flight-sergeant



*A typical camp scene between the tents at a Warragul Combined School Cadet Unit camp, 1965*

Like prefects in a school, the ranks of non-commissioned officers and the CUO's have always given adolescent boys (and now of course girls) wonderful opportunities to develop maturity and leadership. As I have suggested, I recall one night when I was in the ATC when I was obliged to take charge of all cadets in camp and march them to the nearby picture theatre rather than having idle hands finding far from idle work to do.

The Warragul group of CUOs was fine examples. One was in charge of the Assault Platoon. When the unit went to the rifle range for shooting at Drouin it was found that the ground near the firing position was water-logged. It was not long before the CUO concerned had organized his sub-unit into cutting and laying timber to provide a corduroy

foundation for the firing platforms.

I would also invite experienced cadets to come on artillery battery bivouacs. (I do not think I gave much thought to liability and compensation having a sublime faith that the system would look after any who had accidents.)

As with Wesley College, the annual camps provided the best opportunities for worthwhile training and shared experiences. Generally the units had hutted accommodation at Puckapunyal with the chance to go out to Scrub Hill for overnight bivouacs.

The regular army cadre staff provided limited support as it was expected that the cadet unit OC and his officer team would take the same responsibility as they would if they were still teaching back at their school. Transport was generally available. Small arms practice was part of the program. And the leaders could always fall back on the time honoured "time using up" routine of drill!

### **Braemar College**

Even at my interview for the position of headmaster I was asked about cadets. I was then a lieutenant-colonel in the CMF. But the time was not right. Australian forces had by then been withdrawn from Vietnam. I had a number of members of initial 1976 staff who believed that one of the Ten Commandments forbade



The Braemar College Cadet unit on its first parade in March 1992

any activity that could imply training to kill and any promotion of military matters was not encouraged. Over the years I was able to change that attitude and also to be able to freely wear my uniform going or coming from Melbourne parades..

But in 1992 I decided to take the plunge. At a Board of Governors meeting I broached the subject and obtained an "approval in principle". My close friend BRIG Neale Bavington was Honorary Colonel of the cadets. He gave me the green light.

On Mon 17 Feb 92 I held a meeting for parents and students who might be interested in being involved with the proposed cadet unit. The response was positive and sufficient to proceed.

I had presumed the officer leadership for the unit would be me, but I was delighted when three members of staff put up their hands to run it for me. Barry Youl, Ross Pilkington and Margaret Scott were all enthusiastic. The two men received cadet corps commissions for the purpose. Margaret had already been a cadet officer at Geelong Grammar School. I still kept a finger in the pie, honouring the unit with visits from the 'colonel'.

Then WO2 David Waterston, whose daughter, Dana, was very enthusiastic, offered to come and handle the drill and other aspects of instruction. He wore a commando beret. He also conducted a civilian parachute jumping school. Dana packed chutes at it. In return she got free jumps at the end of the day. Each to her own I say.



WO2 David Waterston providing instruction

On Tue 25 Feb 92, which was to be the first parade day, an army vehicle drove into the grounds about midday. An artillery WO1 jumped out and asked me to get students to unload the boxes off his truck as quickly as possible. I assured him I was not signing without counting the stock, only to be told that no signatures were required!

The contents were jungle green uniforms which were now obsolete, the disruptive pattern type having been adopted. By four o'clock that afternoon the potential cadets had scrummed through the stock and presented themselves in a tolerable sort of fashion as if they were soldiers. The green uniforms merged with the foliage of the trees, although Dana's magnificent blond locks

cascaded down her back making any sort of camouflage a difficult task!

The bush that surrounded the school provided perfect facilities for training. Having some skills with ropes and poles through Scouting, I organized stocks of both items for bridge building over the small swimming pool and other constructions.

Cadets attended camps at Puckapunyal, often in association with the cadet units of other schools, who would foster them. On one occasion, two cadets did not return at the end of the day's exercise, but were found over night little the worse for wear.

Each year two or three students, and not necessarily cadets, would apply for entry to ADFA. Some of these now have important postings within the Australian Army. Within the unit, cadets have qualified for the rank of Cadet Under-Officer. The cadet unit cooperates with the Australian Air Force Cadets at Kyneton, some of the members being "double slotted".

The unit regularly provides guards of honour for both school and local RSL functions, such as Anzac Day. Numbers remain steady at about thirty a year. When the first teacher officers retired, the unit was able to find suitably qualified officers in the community to take their place. Disruptive pattern uniforms are now de rigueur. CAPT Guy Hall, ex RAAF, is the current OC of the unit. The current Principal, Mr. Peter Mouritz, himself a former member of the CMF commando unit, has pledged his full support for the unit.

But my story is not yet complete. But it is close to its end and the next chapter should see its culmination, well, for the time being anyway.

COL Graham Farley,



**Parade Card**  
(as at 12 Sept 2007)

**OCT 2007**

5-7 DRA Nat Conf (Syd)  
18 Committee  
31 RAA Lunch

**NOV 2007**

08 A.G.M.  
09 Golf Day  
15 Committee

**DEC 2007**

04 St Barbara's Day  
06 Committee

**JAN 2008**

**FEB 2008**

**MAR 2008**

17 Committee  
25 ANZAC Day

10 Church Parade  
21 Committee

20 Committee  
?? Arty lunch (all ranks)

**APR 2008**

**MAY 2008**

**JUN 2008**

17 Committee  
25 ANZAC Day

?? Grand Arty Ball  
15 Committee

?? 3<sup>rd</sup> DIV lunch (all ranks)  
19 Committee

**CHANGE OF ADDRESS AND DETAILS UP-DATE**

Please forward to:  
RAA Association (Vic) Inc.  
101 Warralong Ave  
GREENSBOROUGH VIC 3088

Rank \_\_\_\_\_ First Names \_\_\_\_\_ DOB \_\_\_\_\_

Surname and Post Nominals \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (Home, Mobile, Work) \_\_\_\_\_

Fax and/or E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Do you wish to receive Association information by E-mail Y/N \_\_\_\_\_

Serving Y/N \_\_\_\_\_ If so, Unit \_\_\_\_\_

Awards, Decorations, Medals, Etc. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Brief Service History \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Additional Information (Committee, Unit Rep, Etc) \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

*Please Use Additional Blank Sheets if Space Insufficient*

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