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Deadline for next edition:
TUESDAY, 29th AUGUST 2017
All news on members and interesting articles accepted.
(Subject to editors’ approval.)

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.

Front Cover: Sergeant Peter Cafe, 2nd Commando Regiment
died in service 6th February 2017.
RIP.

Front Cover: Sergeant Peter Cafe, 2nd Commando Regiment
died in service 6th February 2017.
RIP.
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This edition is running late for many reasons and I apologise for my tardiness.

★★★★★
The year started off badly for the Commando family with the death of SGT. Peter Cafe, an excellent soldier much admired by his mates.

Our thoughts go out to his wife Gwen and four children.

See article in this Newsletter. Ed

★★★★★
The relationship between veterans and Department of Veterans Affairs has quite often been of an adversarial nature.

The main complaint is the clerks in DVA don’t understand the nature of the veteran’s service.

However, the good news is that there appears to be a change in the system.

Robyn Collins, the General Manager from Defence-Care, said recently that if veterans are having issues with their claims, they should immediately contact her or her staff at Anzac House in Sydney.

However, the injury or issue, needs to be Defence related, not one of arthritis for example, caused by “old age”.

Most issues are now accepted without having to prove the injury by medical documents.

Many Defence related injuries in the past were never reported to the respective RAP’s or medical staff, and that does cause some delays in the processing of claims.

★★★★★
Earlier this year I was asked to conduct the RSL Funeral service for a Timorese veteran who was enlisted into the Australian Defence Force during WW2.

Alexander da Silva Tilman escaped from East Timor during the Japanese Invasion in 1942 to Darwin where it was discovered he had been piloting vessels and knew the southernmost coastline of his country.

He made several trips, some of them under fire, between Darwin and the coast of Timor.

Interesting, the service was conducted by Gerald Keneally of Keneally’s funerals. His father “Paddy” was with the 2nd/2nd Independent Company until extracted in late 1943.

The entire service, apart from my small part, was conducted in Portuguese.

★★★★★
The Queen’s birthday list acknowledged the work and service of John Kinsela, now OAM.

John was the first Aboriginal man to represent Australia in the Olympic Games.

He competed as a wrestler in Mexico in 1968 and again 1972 at Munich.

Former Vietnam vet and Aboriginal elder has been a mentor to many of the Aboriginal youth in his area.

He was also a Corporal with the 1st Commando Company after his service in Vietnam.

Congratulations John, well deserved.

★★★★
We had a visit from team members from the Australian War Memorial in Canberra last week.

They were borrowing selected items from our collection for a featured display of Australian Special Forces past and present.

This display will run from October this year for 12 months, should be worth a trip to the Nation’s capital just to see it.

★★★★★
The annual Reserve Forces Day will be held on Sunday, 2nd July this year and marches will take place across Australia.

Barry Grant
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News from our National Vice President

COMMANDO COMRADESHP

About 6 weeks ago, I was contacted by Andrew Condon, former CEO of Legacy NSW. His Northern NSW rep indicated there was a ‘former’ member of the 2nd Commando Regiment with a wife and two young daughters doing it hard in her area. Specifically, his daily struggle with physical and other injuries made it hard to keep his yard clean, clear and safe for his children. Legacy were keen to help, however the Commando would not accept assistance. Through some concerted effort, the Legacy rep concluded the only way the Commando would accept assistance was if his brethren were engaged. I put word out to Jack Thurgar and Nick Hill as our two closest reps in terms of proximity and in Nick’s case, service period. Through them, the call went out to all Commandos within 200km. Many responded covering the spectrum of age, unit service and history. In addition, Doug Baird, father of CPL Cameron Baird VC, MG also volunteered. On a near perfect Commando Training Day (it was cold and pissing rain), a Section Strength Element descended on the objective. The job was bigger than first anticipated. However, through predictable courage and determination, a day of toil cracked the back of the problem and the yard was transformed. Legacy provided food and funding for the project and all the Commandos provided the muscle. One email I saw read:

“It was an honour to be able to help out last Friday. As a member of the Commandos Association it is part and parcel of our aims to assist former and serving members in whatever small way we can. I found it personally beneficial to talk to the former members of 2nd Commando to see how they are adjusting to civilian life, and they seem to be coping well. Their work ethics are first class and got stuck into any task they were asked to undertake. I felt humbled in their presence. Lyn (Legacy) does a sterling job and is not afraid to her hands dirty also. Sorry that most of my work was indoors whilst all you guys were out in the rain, knew there was a reason I chose to be an electrician. Look forward to the next working party and the company of some great people.”

Gentlemen, that for me captures the essence of what we are about, what we have always been about, and what we should continue to strive to achieve for our people... that is ‘Commando for Life’ in action. I commend Jack, Nick and all our Members who were involved for coming to the aid of one of our own.

★★★★★

LEADERSHIP

On Thursday 29 Jun 17, Major General Jeffrey Sengelman DSC, AM, CSC will hand over the mantle of Special Operations Commander – Australia to Major General Findlay AM. MAJ GEN Findlay served in SASR as a Troop Commander, commanded the 3rd Battalion, the Royal Australian Regiment, the 7th Combat Brigade and most recently has commanded the Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force in Iraq. He will be a formidable Commander and a worthy successor to MAJ GEN Sengelman. He will also attend the Rimau Ceremony in Brisbane. MAJ GEN Sengelman has quietly and humbly worked to fundamentally change the way in which the Special Operations Community looks after its people and their Families. This will become more apparent in the coming weeks and months as we share emerging material and initiatives that he has been championing. As a snap shot, the SO Community will enjoy unique support and assistance from DVA, a pilot transition support program will be established to ensure all our people are set up for success. An employment placement program is about to be launched and a range of other education and support initiatives are being prepared. On his fourth last day in Command, MAJ GEN Sengelman summoned reps from the Trusts and the Associations of the SAS and the Commando communities to meet with him, MAJ GEN Findlay and DVA to discuss these initiatives and a system that is more integrated. This is a first in my lifetime and reinforces that we must seize the opportunity to consolidate the ACA as a key partner and player in the community. Predictably, MAJ GEN Sengelman intends to (and will no doubt successfully) disappear in to the shadows, eschewing fanfare and recognition. If you happen upon him, make sure you say a simple ‘Thanks’.

★★★★★

AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

There are a number of SO related activities coming up at the AWM around Sep/Oct. I think the first will be the launch of Chris Masters’ book on Special Operations in Afghanistan. He has told the story of all 20 SOTG rotations and from what I have seen, has done an incredible job of it... again. He remains a faithful voice for our community. On 19 Oct 17, there is a book on the life and service of Cam Baird will be launched at the AWM. Once we have details, we will pass them along. Also in October, Dr Brendan Nelson will open a temporary exhibition at the AWM that records the history of Australian Special Operations from WW II to 2014 utilising over 320 artefacts. It is intended that there will be a chance for a private viewing by members of the Special Operations Community and their Families. There may also be other opportunities associated with its. More to follow.

Apologies for the wordy email. However, I hope there is something in there for everyone.

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From the Prolific Pen of Harry Bell

Dear Editors,

The immediate topic is Anzac Day and from the point of view of 2/6 Cavalry (Commando) Regt. Assn (NSW), it went well, though sadly: sadly, because it was the occasion of the last Anzac Day to be commemorated by the Association; as well as for reasons that I shall address shortly.

As many of you know, at an Extraordinary General Meeting last year, the NSW Branch of the above Association resolved to wind up as from 30.6.2017, with appropriate distribution of its accumulated funds.

Many of its members will, of course, join the Victorian Branch which, through the foresight of the late John (“Shorty”) Corbett (2/10) merged with the 2nd Cavalry Regiment, thus ensuring a long life. In NSW, we surviving members of the Regiment, shrunken to about four Financial Members of the Association, decided to let our Branch wither on the vine, rather than see ourselves like Tom Hungerford’s “Old blokes propped up in the transport:

That’s us in a few years! Medals and ribbons, Hair brushed, bums wiped, shoes shined, our teeth in. Wheeled out once a year for the Anzac Day shindig And then carted home!”

I think that it was the right decision, but am heartened by the determination of our next generation, who have vowed to keep on ‘unofficially’ organising a march and a lunch for as long as there are 39/45 vets willing and able to take part.

That last is the key to the part that “went well”, and here’s to the Whiteleys, Martins, Fagans, Hogarth/Quicks, the Buckler/Smiths, Mackays, Ellice-Flints, Davises and other members of our 6 Div Cav “family” - to not mention people like the Waquetaiwaras who are moved only by friendship, not kinship.

Then there was the weather: the rain held off till we were safely indoors, the temperature and the tempo during the march were all that one could ask. I didn’t stay in Martin Place for the ceremony at the Commando Memorial, for the remnants of 2/6 Regiment marched with 6 Div and I was afraid of missing the start. I need not have been; the lag time was less than it used to be but still substantial and Barry Grant tells me that there were some 39/45 Commandos who marched with Corps Troops, just ahead of us. I didn’t see them, so can’t write about them.

2/6 Regiment had a core component of three. Rhys Fagan carried the Australian flag in the lead, right at the head of 6 Div (the Div HQ hasn’t marched for years); the banner was carried and steadied by a team of Mackays and Ellice-Flints (who made up a table for 12 at lunch) - I am sure to have omitted somebody and if so I humbly apologise. Then there were the stretcher-bearers - I mean chair-pushers - not to mention their burdens. Graham Dolton again made the trip from Perth, with son Ross, daughter-in-law Wendy plus grandson and friend. Reg Davis came in from Riverwood with nephew John and sons Jeffrey and Richard, while your correspondent’s grandson, Max came up from Melbourne to push the Old Bloke along. So there we were, the three of us, two signs and a rifle-bomber, all from 2/9! And we all 3 rose from our chairs and marched for a couple of blocks so we could give the “Eyes Left” while on our feet as we passed the saluting base.

Lunch at the Grace Hotel (in the old Grace Building, once the home of Repat, War Service Home Loans etc) was a gastronomic treat with appetisers in the form of Reg Davis’ traditional “Toast to the Regiment” (Reg was so carried away that he nearly forgot to propose the toast after his tremendous build-up) and Ralph Martin’s recitations. We missed the usual dozen Wickhams and, of course, the Workmans – Ted (2/10) wasn’t up to it this year.

As usual, it fell to me to read the names of those who had perished since last Anzac Day. It has been our practice to read only the names of former members of 2/7, 2/9 and 2/10 Squadrons but our Committee has sometimes included the names of members of other squadrons or of units other than Commando Squadrons. This year the list was:

Conrad Bell (2/7) VX107898
Kenneth Walter Buckler (2/10) NX191513
Ben Davies (2/7) NX84208
William Hutchings (2/1 Tank Attack Regt VX67864
Albert Potter (2/9) VX147458
Haldane (“Gidgee”) Holman (2/6) NX83183
Bryan Thomas Bowyer (2/9) VX123982
G. Andrew McGowan, (2/4) NX129507
J.H. Fawkes (Z Special) QX 23040
Lawler, E.R. (2/10) NX112025
Duncan Donald Dennis (2/5) VX77738
J.D. Smith (M Special) NX1110674
William Boyack (2 Cav. Regt)

Most of the above were, almost “by definition” in their nineties but there are exceptions. Bill Hutchings was aged 100 years and six months. His regiment was associated with 2/6 Regt in that they provided Farida Force with artillery support at Dove Bay. Lieutenant Lawler was, I believe, the last surviving officer of 2/9 and 2/10 Commando Squadrons - if you know of any others, PLEASE advise me. 2/6 Regiment is lucky enough to have Ted Byrne M.C., ex 2/7 Sqn, still very much alive and living in the hinterland of Byron Bay.

The remaining exception to the “over 90” rule is Sgt Boyack, a serving soldier and a member of the 2/6 av. (Cdo) Regiment Association.

As usual, the pages of Reveille reveal some additions to our casualty list - I mean our real Casualty List, not the League office-bearers who have taken a
few hits recently. The March/April issue gives us the name of a Sig from 2/9: VALE NX164 073, A.R. Blandford. Neither Reg Davis nor Graham Dolton (both 2/9 Sigs) can remember him and his name does not appear in the Nominal Roll in the Unit History, but as I have pointed out a number of times, this proves nothing. We mourn him whether he is listed or not.

VALE VX64838, J.H. Reid (2/4). Commando; Tidal River to Tarakan tells me that he was a Private in A Platoon, 4 Independent Coy, moving in on 2.11942 and out on 5.4.43, shortly before 2.4 was designated as part of 7 Div. Cav. He had been in East Timor where, amongst other ops he had taken part in a successful ambush at Talo.

VALE NX 49836, R.F. L’Estrange (2/7). The two L’Estrange brother from Condobolin were household names in 2/6 Regiment. The younger brother, Bruce, was a corporal with a military Medal – after the war, he was selected (along with David Hammond, 2/10) and a mere 99 others, to travel to England with the victory Contingent – and he was universally known as “Slugger”. His actual given name was, so Ted Byrne tells me, used generally when addressing either of them. Both were 2/7 men, through and through, serving in the same campaigns and sharing the same hardships. Ted has fond memories of both – as indeed of all his old mates. He recalls an occasion when the brothers warned him that they were coming down from Condo to the Big Smoke, and Ted named a rendezvous at a particular spot on Manly Beach. The Condo Boys were to signal their arrival by chanting their warcry: “CHIMBU WAHGI” (actually the names of two very warlike New Guinea clans). On hearing this challenge, the ambush party rushed out of hiding: Ted Byrne, MC, Fred (“Whiskers”) Evans, Greg Mackenzie, Keith Wakeling and Len (“Fatty”) Osborne – all, in Ted’s opinion (and he should know) first class fighting men. And all, of course, from 2/7. What happened next, I forbore to ask. Ah, memories. If only we had more of our mates to share them with.

While I was typing this, my phone went: it was Eric Geldard (RAAF & 2/9) from Miles in SW Queensland. Eric was puzzled because DVA had written to him, offering him, at very short notice, a berth on a commemorative mission to celebrate the anniversary of the Milne Bay battle. Eric was going to ring them to advise (sadly) that he didn’t think he was eligible, not having served in that theatre.

Eric led the Anzac Day march in Miles this year, though he reluctantly rode in a jeep that a local vet. had lovingly restored He also mentioned that he occasionally sees VX52718, Vince Collett of Goondiwindi, 6 Div Cav. Vince has passed his century (another Sig, of course: Killen, Davis, Dolton…) but when last seen was still going strong. Eric thinks that he had transferred out before our regiment transformed to 2/6 Cav (Co) Regt.

Another bloke who’s getting on a bit is Roly Good (2/3) – 97 years old and he’s not even a Sig! Roly was an RAP Corporal and a member of his squadron’s Aussie Rules team, well remembered for rendering aid under fire. He still lives independently in his own unit at Traralgon (Vic) but sadly, lost Joan, his wife of 30 years, when she passed away two days after Anzac Day. Joan was Roly’s second wife, whom he married after his first wife died but her acceptance by the family is bespoken by Ian Good, son of the first marriage. In the course of his eulogy he recited this little Haiku: “Wicked Step-mother, Social Justice Activist, Best friend of Roly.”

Roly has remained active in the Commando Assn (Vic) but old friends to share his sorrow are few and far between. Is there anybody else from 2/3 still out there?

I found a number of references to Roly, including photographs, in Ron Garland’s excellent book, Nothing is forever. If only it had an index!

Well, that’s it for now. I’ll send this to Barry and to Bob, with another instalment due in mid-September. Keep on your feet!

Harry Bell (2/9)
2/7TH REQUEST FOR ASSISTANCE

“Information is being gathered on the 2/7th Independent Company / Commando Squadron with a view to publishing a belated unit history.

As the only WW2 Commando unit, never to have had its history published, 2/7th Veterans, family and friends are encouraged to contribute any diaries, letters, photos or other items of interest which may help tell the story of the men who served with its ranks.

The primary researcher, Mr Nick Bracken, is a current serving ADF member who has already commenced the task of gathering historical material from the National Archives, Australian War Memorial and the Commando History & Research Centre at Holsworthy.

Phone: (02) 8782 2850, Mobile: 0431 400 287 or Email: nickbracken5@gmail.com.

All offers of assistance are greatly appreciated and arrangements can be made to make copies of fragile and treasured items in location if necessary.”
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NSW WELFARE OFFICER’S REPORT

APPLIED SUICIDE INTERVENTION SKILLS TRAINING Course
Barry Grant (0414 914 615), Ivan Kelly (0417 042 886), Kevin Mahony (0425 279 111) and I, plus 3 members from 1 Cdo Coy, recently completed this course, at Kings Cross, run by the Veterans & Veterans’ Families Counselling Service through DVA (ph: 1800 011 0460).

INTRODUCTORY PASTORAL CARERS’ COURSE:
I recently completed this multi-faith course run by the Chaplains’ Department of Manly Hospital. I have had a lot of experience talking with the bereaved and those suffering grief. I did these 2 courses to assist me with my welfare work.

DISCLAIMER:
I must stress though, that we are not counsellors, nor do we have any professional qualifications in these areas. However, if we don’t have the answers, we can refer you to other counselling and helpline services in your area.

WELFARE OFFICER’S REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS:
Members, we need your help to inform us of commandos, young and old, who you think may require our assistance.

Keep "Striking Swiftly" - perhaps not as swiftly as we used to - ay!!
Cheers

Brian Dunbar
NSW Welfare Officer
E: dunbar33@bigpond.com
PH: (02) 9452 2589

New Navy
Department of the Navy is now assigning females to quarters in a separate private “OFF LIMITS” area on all aircraft carriers.
Addressing all boat personnel at Pearl, CINCPAC advised, “female sleeping quarters will be "out-of-bounds" for all males. Anyone caught breaking this rule will be fined $50 the first time.”
He continued, “Anyone caught breaking this rule the second time will be fined $150. Being caught a third time will cost you a fine of $500. Are there any questions?”
At this point, a Marine Gunnery Sergeant from the security detail assigned to the ship stood up in the crowd and inquired,
“Sir, how much for a season pass?”
God bless the USMC!

New Navy

Commando News Autumn 17_Layout 1 20/07/2017 9:10 pm Page 11
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VALE

CAPT Don ASTILL
LT Phil JOHNSON
Alexandre da Silva TILMAN
Joan GOOD
William James CAPLE
Claude David BROWN
COL James WOOD
David HUMBLEY
2nd/8th Independent Company
1 Commando Company
East Timorese/Australian soldier/ Master mariner
Wife of Roly Good, 2/3 Ind Coy.
2/7th Independent Company
2nd/7th Independent Coy
1 Commando Coy 1958 –
1 Company 72 - 74

VALE ALEXANDRE DA SILVA TILMAN

Born: 10 October 1921.
Native of Dili, East Timor and formally residing currently at Cabramatta NSW.
He was 95 years old. He suffered a stroke in December 1985 when he was, then, aged 64 which resulted from horrendous psychological and physical torture such as unrelenting beatings, electric shocks, barbaric and inhumane abuses under the hands of the Indonesian military during the occupation. Alexandre da Silva Tilman was incarcerated and imprisoned four times between 1976 until 1985.
Alexandre da Silva Tilman contributed in two historical theatres of war; WWII and Indonesia's invasion and consequent occupation of East Timor. Quite possibly he may be one of the last living East Timorese combatants and veterans of WWII.
During WWII, he was an unofficially recruited civilian who was issued with an Australian military uniform by the Australian forces to navigate the maritime passages from Timor to Australia as well as carry out intelligence operative work (with Groper Party Z Special Unit of the 2/2nd AIF Commando Company). Their operation required that they cross backwards and forwards, in three separate perilous missions across an ocean controlled by fierce Japanese forces. One time while attending to some mechanical incident during one of their naval operations in high seas he lost his left index finger.
During the Indonesian occupation, Alexandre da Silva Tilman sent intelligence back to the guerrillas in Timor's interior; as well as much needed supplies and medicines. Throughout this time of his activities as well as during his regular days he remained suspected by the Indonesian forces and their spies, was under constant surveillance, finally was denounced, accused, detained and tortured with electric shocks, sustaining contusions throughout his entire body, was kicked constantly with steel capped boots, beaten countless times until his ribs were fractured and he eventually became psychologically affected. He was placed in an isolated cell at the Comarca Prison in Balide, Dili, without contact with his family and limited interaction with other people. The cell had a hole which couldn't even be called a latrine; it had minimal lighting; given minimal water, minimal food; and ventilation that was restricted.
Alexandre da Silva Tilman was captured and imprisoned at a local shop building called Sang Tai Ho in Colmera, Dili on 25 February 1976 until 10 June 1978. Two days later (12 June 1978) he was again apprehended and reimprisoned at Comarca Prison in Balide, Dili until 17 August 1979. Again, he was captured and imprisoned at Comarca Prison in Balide, Dili on 10 June 1980 until 24 December 1982. Finally, he was recaptured and imprisoned at Comarca Prison in Balide, Dili on 27 November 1982 until 5 December 1982. Every time, after release from prison, he was required to personally appear before Indonesian military authorities on a regular basis - this continued for three to four years (requiring a minimum appearance before the Indonesians at least three times a week or at the Indonesians' convenience, whether day or night or whenever they chose to torment him).
As a result of the torture endured, Alexandre da Silva Tilman's health deteriorated. He had difficulties in walking; suffered hypertension; respiratory problems; sleeping difficulties; became more introverted; had a very short temperament (no patience), suspicious, little appetite, in the end he suffered a stroke that eventually ended his life.
His funeral was held at Liverpool. President Barry Grant conducted the RSL Funeral service.
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COMMANDO NEWS ~ Edition 10 | June 2017
It is with great sadness that we inform you all that we have lost another Commando.

SGT Peter John Cafe
2nd Commando Regiment
Died In Service 06 February 2017
Sydney, New South Wales

Pete joined the army in 1987 and was posted to 3 RAR where he spent his early years. He discharged in 1995 and re-enlisted in 2000 and was then posted to C Cdo Coy, 4 Cdo. After completing his Cdo reinforcement cycle he was posted to D Coy for their deployment to East Timor in 2001.

In 2002 Pete was one of the founding members of TAG-E and spent many years as the MOE & Demolitions master with in the unit. He discharged again in late 2005 and began contracting in Iraq and Afghanistan. He re-enlisted in 2010 and was posted to Cdo Trg Wing, SFTC and then to D Cdo Coy, 2 Cdo Regt in 2012 where he deployed to Afghanistan in mid-2012 and Iraq in 2016.

Peters honours and awards include the AASM with Cambodia, East Timor & ICAT clasps, Afghan Campaign medal, ASM with Cambodia & CT/SR Clasps, OSM - Middle East, DFLSM with 2 Clasps, ADM, UNTAC & UNTAET Medals and NATO medal with ISAF Clasp, the Infantry Combat Badge, Returned from Active Service Badge and the Operational Service Badge.

Pete leaves behind his wife Gwen and his four children, Ashleigh, Thom, Emily & Lachlan

Pete’s funeral was held at the Holsworthy Barracks Chapel @ 1000 Tuesday 14 Feb 2017.

Commando 4 Life

VALE

NSW Association luncheon held at Carnarvon Golf Club

Photo credit Greg Tyerman
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**EVENTS CALENDAR FOR 2017**

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<th>Date</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>OCTOBER 14th</strong></td>
<td>ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING&lt;br&gt;To be held at:&lt;br&gt;“SIMPSON VC” BBQ AREA&lt;br&gt;RANDWICK BARRACKS&lt;br&gt;1030 hours - Subject to security approval&lt;br&gt;More information to follow.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NOVEMBER 11th</strong></td>
<td>REMEMBRANCE DAY AT DARLING HARBOUR&lt;br&gt;SERVICE HELD AT THE “KRAIT”&lt;br&gt;Service starts 1030 hours</td>
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<td><strong>NOVEMBER 26th</strong></td>
<td>ASSOCIATION XMAS DINNER&lt;br&gt;CARNARVON GOLF CLUB&lt;br&gt;Families always welcome&lt;br&gt;1200 hours for 1230 hours</td>
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*Please direct your enquiries to our Secretary, Ted Hartley<br>Mobile: 0408 647 237 or Email: ted.hartley1948@hotmail.com*

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The old and bold at Reserve Forces Day Sydney
Army Championships: 13 – 20 Aug 17 at Perisher, NSW
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NSW Members attending Long Tan memorial service
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MIDWEEK – WEEKEND – DAILY
I met Ray Simpson VC DCM twice though the circumstances could not have been more different.

As a onetime soldier there are days you do not forget.

Though I never actually spoke to "Simmo" the days remain, especially the last one.

The first time was 1969 having joined 1 Commando Company, a Reserve unit in the middle of 1968. I was sitting in an upstairs classroom at our Middle Head Barracks.

The occasion, a lesson for our platoon on the "M79" grenade launcher.

The instructor was the then SGT Barry Hopkins, "Hoppy" or the "Frog". Captain Hopkins died a few years ago after some 40 years of service to the Army Reserve and Commandos. A friend and mentor to all, Barry was a big man in every way.

At his funeral we were all handed by Tina, his partner of many years, an emerald styled broach in the shape of a small frog.

Back to the lesson, someone had paused at the doorway behind us. Barry invited him in, "Fucking good weapon!" Simpson had a way with the Aussie language.

I barely noticed, we all sat silently and listened. Barry encouraged "Simmo" to tell us something about its use, experience with the M79.

As I recall many years later, his story went something like this.

"Simmo" was taking a break from the war in an upstairs room of a small hotel. His only companion a Special Forces pack with a bit of personal gear including extra clips for his only weapon, a Colt 45 handgun. He was awakened in darkness by the sound of explosions and gunfire.

The TET offensive had begun.

With the 45 and a few clips he went down onto the street to investigate. He found an upturned "Jeep" and from it retrieved a M79 and a quantity of shells. He must have returned to his hotel to get organised. With no effective communication he simply did his own thing.

"Simmo" hit the streets, he had his 45 in his waist band and pockets full of spare magazines.

In his hands he carried the M79, and as "Simmo" would have said, a "fucking pillowcase full of fucking bombs that were the rounds for the M79.

He had roamed and patrolled the streets and alleyways.

Every time he came on one of the groups of bad guys infiltrating the area, he put a few bombs into them and moved on.

With daylight approaching and bombs running out he returned to his hotel to catch up on some sleep.

That was the input we hoped for in our lesson.

He grunted a goodbye and good luck with a knowing grin.

He was smaller than I had imagined, older, leaner with a lined face. He looked more to me like a stockman after a lifetime on the land, rather the soldier he truly was.

The second time I met Ray Simpson VC DCM some 18 months later was different. After seven months and one week in a full leg plaster, I was desperately trying to get fit to join SASR.

It would have been December 1970, living on my own, unable to work, two marvellous Warrant Officers, Gary Holmes and John Sheehan, having cheated the books, put me on Commando Courses which I couldn’t possibly do in plaster with my broken leg, but they got me paid.

I remember to this day what they did for me. Sadly they’re now both gone before their time.

I guess it was a Small Raids Course, I limped into the kitchen/dining area to scrounge a lunchtime feed. At times other units used our facilities to run their own courses.

I noticed three young officers finishing their lunch.

At these times the unit would employ, as I considered them, "down and out winos" from Darlinghurst as kitchen hands.

In the Army and Ambulance Services years later, I learned not to judge others so quickly.

They did the "Dixie bashing", clear the tables, mop the floors, all the menial tasks for a small remuneration, a good feed, hot shower and a clean bunk.

As I sat down, a table away from the young Reserve Officers I glanced towards the kitchen area.

There scrubbing away at the kitchen trough was Ray Simpson. I was confused, what was he doing here?

I chose to pretend not to recognise him. There was no reason he would remember me from a classroom the year before, I realised then he would have left the Army for the last time since the previous year.

(Continued on page 23)
WO Ray Simpson VC DCM... (Continued from page 21)

I thought I had lost my chance for the SAS with my leg, but I hadn’t.

Simpson’s time in the Army had gone, it could never return, so why was he here “dixie bashing”?

It would have been channelled through his great mate WO Gary Holmes. Take from it what you will, to me it became a memory of not only a great warrior, but of the man he truly was.

There would be an ironical end to this meeting. Simpson had walked out from the kitchen area to clean tables including that of the young officers.

The officer at the end of the table looked up at Simpson, saying “Would you clean this up now!” Or words to that effect, I don’t recall the details, I do recall the knowing smirk to his mates that went with it.

I shook my head at this petulant display by a future leader of men.

Leaning back in my chair I waited, this ought to be good, no way I was going to miss it.

Simpson gave no acknowledgement that he had heard anything but simply carried on with his duties. Wiped the tables down, picked up the dishes and walked back to the kitchen.

The officers didn’t know what to do, say something again, let it go or what.

As I stood up to leave, Simpson had gone to the store room behind the kitchen. I stopped and turned to their table saying “Do you know who were talking to there?” They glared up at me, WO Ray Simpson, Victoria Cross and Distinguished Conduct Medals.

I drew the words out, he’s retired now. A moment of disbelief then realisation. The one on the end, the colour drained from his face.

His mates appeared to physically lean away from him. I watched them for a few more seconds then turned to walk away.

Simpson was standing over the kitchen sink, I was not aware of how much he had heard.

He inclined his head slightly towards me, looking down he commenced to wash the dishes again.

Perhaps washing youthful arrogance away with the food scraps from their plates.

Not by what he said, but by what he hadn’t.

I walked out, Simpson had never spoken during this incident.

I left that dining room and was never to see Ray Simpson VC DCM again.

Bill Merchant
1 CDO 1968 - 1971
SASR 1971 - 1980

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Australian Army
The Queen’s Birthday 2017 Honours List
12 Jun 2017
The citation simply does not convey the outstanding contribution this soldier has given to the Regiment over the past 35 years.

He has been an inspiration to all who served with him and those that still serve with him.

Legend!

Reg Davis, 2nd/6th Cavalry Commando Squadron enjoying Anzac Day in Sydney”.

(Photo by Greg Tyeerman)
Knife Making As A Hobby

Knife making can be a rewarding past time, making a chef or outdoor knife to your own design. Some knife makers forge their own blades, others buy the blades ready-made and make their own handle and sheaths. It all depends on how much time and tools you have available.

Kit knife making is where you select a blade shape and customise with handle materials of your choice, then build a knife over a couple of afternoons.

Designing your own handle shape specifically to your own liking, building the knife and field testing it can be a good way to test your creativity and ability to turn an idea into reality.
On the wrestling mat, in the jungles of Vietnam and in his own mind, John Kinsela has fought more than his fair share of battles.

Earlier in his life, his service was recognised with medals and badges. Now he has received another award: The Medal of the Order of Australia.

Mr Kinsela, 67, said he was grateful to receive such a “big honour”.

“It’s all them years that you put into a sport, and it’s good to know you’re getting something back,” he said.

Mr Kinsela’s lifelong passion for wrestling started at Redfern PCYC, or Police Boys’ Club as it was then known, when he was a teenager. He was just 19 when he became the first Aboriginal man to represent Australia at the Olympics for wrestling, at Mexico in 1968.

The following year he was conscripted to fight in the Vietnam War, where he served for two years as a gunner.

The painful memories of the war returned to Mr Kinsela all too soon, when he wrestled again for Australia at the 1972 Munich Olympics. He remembers being in the courtyard of the Olympic Village when the first shots rang out at the start of the deadly Israeli hostage situation.

“All of the sudden you could hear the AK-47s going off, and being in Vietnam the year before I thought, ‘no, not here’,” Mr Kinsela said. “I just put it down as loud firecrackers, not thinking anything like that had happened at the Olympics.

“At the end, there was 11 people killed. Some of them were wrestlers and one of them was the wrestling manager. It kind of hit home because it could’ve been us.”

Mr Kinsela became a courier and moved to Blacktown with his wife Yvonne, where they raised their three children. He also served in the Army Reserve Commando Unit for seven years, reaching the rank of Corporal and being named Commando of the Year in 1981.

Kinsela at Mount Druitt PCYC, which he has lifted to be one of the top wrestling clubs in the State with the help of Stephan Jaeggi, his former protege and now fellow coach.

His service to wrestling includes volunteer work at PCYCs including Burwood, Bankstown, Hornsby, Blacktown and now Mount Druitt. He has trained Olympic wrestlers, and fought his own battles away from the spotlight.

Mr Kinsela speaks frankly about overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder and losing his brother, a fellow Vietnam veteran, to alcoholism.

“From 2001 to 2003 was the worst part of my life, because things weren’t going well,” he said. “I was drinking, smoking, all these things. I didn’t have any self-esteem.”

He said he owes his triumphs in life to good mentors. Through wrestling and his work with Indigenous justice, he has now become a mentor to others.

"John with Sigmund Jablonski OAM, also Vietnam veteran and ex Commando."
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Having been involved with this unique history project since its inception when I was in the SAS in 1996, it was a pleasure to attend the launch of the 11-part documentary at Government House in Canberra in 2016. It is the only TV history ever supported by the Australian SAS using rare, archival and amateur vision and also with photo galleries and many interviews to support the main story. Major credit goes to Major General Mike Hindmarsh for championing Bruce Horsfield’s persistent project and ensuring its fruition twenty years later. While a personal history of the men that have served, the documentary sets the context and background with a focus on the origins of SAS, its ongoing selection process and its metamorphosis from the ugly duckling of the SAS Company in 1957 and the SAS Regiment in 1964, through to the ‘Force of Choice’ within the modern-day Australian Defence Force. The narrative portrays the hard-won triumphs through war and peace by an accumulative total of just over 2,000 political and strategic soldiers with their success based largely upon their selection as individuals and the constant renewal of the SAS through the relentless pursuit of ex-cellence in the Regiment’s ethos of ‘train/prepare hard, operate easy’.

The ‘Confrontation’ border war in Borneo in 1965 was fought by long duration patrols in inhospitable terrain. Shooting and navigation skills were as important as hearts and minds patrols during the covert ‘Claret’ operations. The SAS was mocked for its secrecy by the rest of the Army but such was the price to pay for providing plausible denial for electronic warfare activities. From Borneo the SAS found themselves contiguously deployed into Phuoc Tuy Province for the counter insurgency war in South Vietnam largely to ‘watch the back’ of the Australian Task Force. Recognizing the jungle afforded a guerrilla sanctuary, the SAS used guerrilla tactics to make the jungle unsafe for the Viet Cong so well to the point that the enemy placed a bounty on SAS soldiers, dead or alive. Modifying and having choice in weaponry and equipment was a distinguishing feature of the SAS operations. Among many aspects, the document-ary covers the perennial problem in the delay between SAS reporting of the enemy and the follow-up by the Task Force. The war was the start of the helicopter dependency that exists to this day with patrol insertions by helicopters at tree top level being described as the wildest ride in the world. The SAS would ‘pray to 9 Squadron RAAF, before their thoughts turned to God’. After the Tet Offensive in early 1968 the SAS faced a much more difficult and confident enemy, and there was a US-driven focus on the very high SAS kill ratio largely because of their highly successful but often hair raising direct action patrols. The documentary highlights the intense strain, fear and contained terror of constant patrolling. None the less, the SAS operators felt hamstrung in not being given the opportunity to bring their true strategic value to the battlefield; so much so that they described it as ‘harnessing the winner of a Melbourne Cup to a plough’. For decades, the Australian public would not learn what had been achieved by their SAS.

Post-Vietnam, the peace time doldrums and a focus on the defence of Australia challenged the very existence of the SAS. The huge expanse of northern Australia’s terrain and coastline was seen as vulnerable and the SAS compromised their strategic employment by patrolling as a surveillance screen until they could pass this role off to Regional Force Surveillance Units. A major positive of this time was to be the comprehensive development of the desert-based vehicle mounted tactics and equipment and the long-range strategy which would prove devastatingly effective in Middle East combat operations two decades later. A significant change then occurred when the SAS spearheaded a counter terrorist force in ‘Aid to the Civil Power’ which led to the separation of the black counter-terrorism and terrorist force in ‘Aid to the Civil Power’ which led to the separation of the black counter-terrorism and green war roles. This was a period of incredible change in the early 1980s as SAS sustained the counter-terrorist force at almost immediate readiness while searching for a new strategic purpose. The documentary is studded with human interest stories about developments in parachuting, climbing, survival, vehicle mounted and water operations. This long pe-riod of peace and lack of operational missions was assuaged by overseas training, standby operations in Fiji and Vanuatu and some niche operations and force augmen-tation roles in Bougainville, Somalia, Rwanda, Cambodia and the Solomon Islands. Ultimately through the preparation for the Sydney Olympics and an injection of tech-nology, the green and black roles evolved into a singular capability and it became more obvious that using strategic troops as only a fire brigade simply did not make sense. Still, the SAS struggled to renew itself.

(Continued on page 29)
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and cut free from two decades without major combat operations by anticipating new paradigms, commencing foreign language training and progress in offensive information warfare. However, it was also stymied by the lack of developed strategic force projection and heavily punctuated by the Blackhawk helicopter disaster. Close to home, the documentary records the mag-nificent of SAS wives but also the hell of injuries and the ‘SAS injury checklist’. The SAS were in effect punished by being put back under Army control and saved only by the major deployment to Kuwait in the phoney Gulf War in which SAS served as a political instrument. In the subsequent Tampa refugee crisis, the SAS were also directly commanded by the Prime Minister.

It was its key participation in the International Force in East Timor that led the SAS to being labelled by General Cosgrove as the ‘unit of choice’. Effectively the SAS were the Commander’s successful eyes, ears and voice. The operation reinforced the value of SAS when used appropriately, and especially when vectored onto target by high level information and intelligence. SAS leveraged their guerrilla warfare skills to work with the Falintil group and to also mount high tempo interdiction operations utilizing their developed intimate relationship with the Army’s Blackhawk helicopters. This classic raiding marked the start of two decades of combat operations, but did nothing to significantly reduce the ongoing distrust by the regular infantry who accused the SAS of stealing their battlefield.

The 9/11 event in the USA was a huge catalyst, the SAS being committed within one month to the US global ‘war on terror’ into the Helmund Valley in South West Afghanistan to dislocate Al Qaeda and the Taliban. SAS chose to operate separately from other coalition Special Forces in order to enter Afghanistan and through multiple hearts and minds patrols they achieved a disproportionate effect. The US Force Commanders were impressed with SAS reporting and vehicle mounted capability and the Regiment’s reputation grew quickly. The SAS then relocated to Kandahar just after it fell and operated all over Afghanistan where they experienced their first battle death in over three decades. In one of many significant operations, the SAS operators soon located the enemy stronghold in the Shah-i-Kot Valley leading to their key participation in Operation Anaconda. Initially, they were used to confirm the enemy strength and disposition. However, they soon walked into a Taliban and Al Qaeda ‘hornet’s nest’. The true battle then started with SAS patrols performing a blocking and interdiction role and also working with the Northern Alliance coalition force that was to assault the heavily fortified villages. After the initial assault was blunted, the operation in the Shah-i-Kot Valley was delayed for many days. Incredibly, one patrol spent the entire battle directing the air war over a very complicated battle space, and so contributed significantly to the destruction of the insurgents. Accordingly, the SAS won international recognition, and in the words of US Marine General James ‘Mad Dog’ Mattis, the US would “storm hell with the SAS”. At that point, the US shifted their focus and the SAS joined the punitive invasion of Iraq in 2003 to penetrate deep into Iraq’s western desert on the strategic missions to prevent scud missiles from being launched, along with creating a psychological presence well beyond their numbers. In 2005, the SAS returned to Uruzgan Province in Afghanistan and for the next ten years conducted a significant number of highly effective surgical strike operations against the Taliban and their leadership cadres. During this period, the SAS earned the accolade of the ‘bearded devils’, as well as two Victoria Crosses.

This documentary is a history of a remarkable group of men who continue to run amok. The reasons for it becoming a ‘force of choice’ may not always be obvious to the viewer. In major part, the SAS reason for success is their operators who can work alone, enabling a higher tolerance of risk and a constant focus on pushing beyond skilled competence. At the operational level, there is intensive marketing in peace to Australia’s political centre of gravity and an equal focus when committed in war to working the fight to get into theatre and win meaningful tasking. Operations themselves are characterized by intensive planning, inherent secrecy, asymmetric thinking and speed of action to get inside an enemy’s decision cycle. In a word, surprise. Surprise comes from being able to do what other friendly forces cannot do and surprise also comes from being unexpected from the enemy’s perspective.

Apart from its historical significance, the documentary serves as a high quality, comprehensive record of the SAS Regiment’s history and will further illuminate its significant deterrent effect. History has proven that in some ways the greatest political use of the SAS is the perceived intention to use them and not the actual application of force itself. The documentary is akin to describing a strategic weapon delivering a multi-mission payload with global strike capability. The documentary in its entirety should be mandatory viewing for every aspiring filibuster, commando, operative, secret agent, and generals, admirals and marshals alike. Australian governments and politicians can only benefit from daring to watch and giving due diligence to enhance and maintain the incredible SAS high standard of selection, training, and operations. •
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Krait was slipped on 14th December 2016. Over the Christmas period the hull planking (ie underwater & topsides) was stripped bare of paintwork for access for the Fleet Hull Surveyor to undertake a full survey assessment of the hull's condition.

Whilst the underwater area hull structure was generally in sound condition, the topside planking (ie planking from weather deck to the waterline) was found to be wasted & worn, requiring additional renewal of planking in addition to work outlined in the Slipping & Repair Specification.

As the refit progressed, when some of the defective planking was removed additional work was required on the exposed futtocks (frames) which had rotted away internally (ie approx. 6 No futtocks). These sections of the futtocks were renewed to the original specification.

As of today, the majority of the hull planking & framing has been repaired (a total of approximately 85 linear metres of additional planking to that listed in the original Slipping & Repair Specification, approx. 10 linear metres). Recaulking & puttying up of the plank seams is almost completed. New breasthooks have been fitted at the stem area.

The next stage is for the replacement of the main deck & bulwarks throughout IAW the Slipping & Repair Specification. It is envisaged that there may be additional repairs required to the deck beams etc. on removal of the deck planking.

Apart from the timber repairs, additional repair work has been discovered on the removal of the steel rudder shaft & the propeller tail shaft.

Extensive research as to the layout of MV Krait during the J aywick Raid in 1943 was undertaken by the ANMM resulting in a comprehensive General Arrangement produced by Mr David Payne, the Senior Curator of the Museum. Consequently a 1943 Configuration Specification was produced which included:

A. The fitting of four bulkheads
B. Fitting out the Radio Room in No.3 Hold
C. Fitting out the additional fuel stowage compartment in No. 4 Hold
D. Fitting out the Galley at the aft end of the main deck.

At present there appears to be a shortage of funds to complete this 1943 Configuration, however, it is hoped the fitting of the bulkheads be done when the main deck planking is being renewed at the present slipping period, with the remaining configuration work being undertaken alongside when funds become available. (See attached General Arrangement drawing)

This refit is being carried out at Michael Bartley Shipwrights at Woolwich Marina, Sydney. The young shipwrights & apprentices are gaining considerable experience & knowledge of traditional ship & boatbuilding practice & are producing a high skill level of workmanship.

It must be stressed this refit is to restore & maintain the structural & watertight integrity of this historic vessel.

The 6LW Gardner diesel engine which was installed in Cairns prior to the J aywick raid has been fully restored by the ANMM Fleet Staff Volunteer marine engineers & is in fine working order.

In conclusion, It must be remembered we have an 83 year old historic vessel which requires a fair deal of restoration work in order for her to survive either in or out of the water for many years to come, for the benefit for all to appreciate the significance of her wartime exploits & those who served in her.

Warwick Thomson
Fleet Hull Surveyor (Krait)
ANMM
4th July 2017
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Chief of Army recognised by the US for exemplary service.

Lieutenant General Angus Campbell, AO, DSC, was recently honoured by the United States for exemplary service with the award of the Legion of Merit - Commander.

The United States awards the Legion of Merit for exceptionally meritorious conduct in the performance of outstanding services and achievements to members of the seven uniformed services and also to military and political figures of foreign governments.

The Commandant of the U.S. Marine Corps, General Robert B. Neller, veteran of Operations Restore Hope (Somalia) and Just Cause (Nicuragua), bestowed the honour upon LTGEN Campbell in a ceremony in Washington DC.

The Legion of Merit is awarded in four various classes: Chief Commander (to heads of state); Commander (service chiefs or similar); Officer (star rank to colonel (E)); and Legionnaire (all others). The Legion of Merit - Commander, as awarded to Chief of Army, is the second of only two US ‘neck order’ medals, that is to say they are worn around the neck.

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Ola Sever “Ocker” Stevenson OAM
War Veteran, Military Trainer, Builder
Born March 24 1939 Brisbane
Died April 25 2016 Brisbane

Ola Stevenson grew up in Mount Isa and completed an apprenticeship as a carpenter with Mount Isa Mines. He joined the Army in 1961 and served 30 years, rising from a Private to Warrant Officer Class One.

He initially joined 3RAR before seeking selection to nascent Special Air Service. He passed the unit's rigorous selection and moved his family to Perth.

His first operational service came in 1965 during the confrontation with Indonesia.

In 1968 he went to Vietnam, serving a year as a Patrol Commander with SAS. Most of his time was spent in a world of quiet professionalism and stealthy reconnaissance, but occasionally it was explosively violent as many of his patrols were “recce-ambushes”.

Returning home for a short break he returned to Vietnam in 1970 with the AATTV. He initially served with the American Green Berets, commanding a platoon of Montagnard Hill tribesman, while the second half of his tour was spent as an instructor at the long Range Reconnaissance Patrol Wing of the Van Kiep National Training Centre.

On his return to Australia Ola was posted to Sydney to join 1 Commando Company. Over the next four years he instructed on boating, roping and rappelling, climbing, raid and submarine familiarisation courses.

Many of the skills developed by Australian Commandos were pioneered during this time and Ola was at the forefront.

In 1975 he moved to the Parachute Training School and was eventually appointed RSM of the school.

He was a consummate instructor, teacher and mentor, possessing rare gifts of being able to impart knowledge and build confidence in his students.

In 1984 ha was made a member of the Order of Australia for his services to Parachuting and Special Action Forces training.

Ola left the Regular Army in 1985, finishing his service as RSM of Queensland University Regiment, although, for the following 15 years he continued to return to PTS as a reservist.

During his 35-year military parachuting career he made 2720 descents from the Philippines to Vietnam and Saudi Arabia. In all he completed more than 4000 jumps.

When he left the regular army Ola returned to carpentry. He was known around Brisbane as an “old school” tradesman, doing things the traditional way and people appreciated his craftsmanship. He only put down his tools aged 74.

In his later years he remained intellectually and physically active, reading voraciously and walking his beloved dogs. He died at his home on Anzac Day 2016, survived by three sons and three granddaughters.

WO2 Ola (Ocker) S. Stevenson OAM, RAINF, SAS, AATTV. Ocker served in South Vietnam as a WO2 with AATTV from 27 Aug 1969 to Sep 69 attended 5th SFGA Combat Orientation Course Nha Trang, Sep-Dec 69, platoon commander, 2 MSF, Sub 5th SFGA, Pleiku, Jan-Apr 70, LRRP Wing Van Kiep Training Centre, May-Aug 70, Phuoc Tuy, National Training Centre. Ocker also served in South Vietnam with 3 SAS Sqn 14 Feb 67 to 2 Mar 67, 1 SAS Sqn 3 Mar 67 to 27 Feb 68.

In addition to unit citations awarded to AATTV, Ocker was also awarded the US Silver Star and the US Bronze Star for Service.
Chuuk Lagoon, also known as Truk Lagoon, is a sheltered body of water in the central Pacific about 1,800 kilometres north-east of New Guinea. It is located mid-ocean at 7 degrees north latitude and is part of Chuuk State within the Federated States of Micronesia. The atoll consists of a protective reef, 225 kilometres around, enclosing a natural harbour 79 by 50 kilometres with an area of 2,130 square kilometres. It has a land area of 93.07 square kilometres with a maximal height of 443 metres and it has a population of 36,158 people. Weno city on Weno Island functions as the atoll’s capital and also as the state capital and is the largest city in the Federated States of Micronesia with its 12,000 people. (Google)

In 1914 Imperial Japan acquired control of the Islands of Truk which, with its large Truk Lagoon strategically provided Japan with an excellent natural harbor that could accommodate the largest ships of the Imperial Japanese Navy.

Concentrated fortifications were built throughout the islands that encircled Truk Lagoon with facilities including five airstrips, seaplane bases, a torpedo boat station, submarine repair shops, a radar station all protecting the vital military base from attack by air or sea.

In the latter part of the Second World War “Operation Hailstone”, the code name for the assault on Truk Lagoon, caught the Imperial Japanese Fleet with devastating effect on February 17th & 18th 1944. The American armada included 5 Fleet Carriers and 4 Light Carriers supported by a fleet of seven battleships, numerous cruisers, destroyers, submarines, a variety of support ships, and more than 500 aircraft.

Japanese losses resulting from the U.S Navy attack totalled over 250 aircraft and 45 ships with many other Imperial Japanese Fleet ships damaged. Among the ships sunk were cruisers, destroyers, sub-chasers, tankers, and cargo carrying supply ships.

Our diving expedition was organised and co-ordinated by highly experienced ‘Always Dive’ specialists Geoff & Vanessa Skinner and included in the party were Ken, Shelly, Janet, Robyn, Gillian & Peter, Gail & myself who all meet at Brisbane Airport Saturday 11th February. The flight to Truk from Brisbane took us to Port Moresby where we enjoyed a stopover at Blue Lagoon prior to boarding the Odyssey at 5pm Sunday. There we were joined by an American couple Judy and Sherwood plus two young women from the UK, Rosie and Sharon making fourteen in all.

Our number included three doctors, Vanessa (A Dive Specialist), Robyn and Sherwood plus a nurse, Shelly.

Our dive boat ‘Odyssey’ was a live aboard 132 foot twin screw all steel boat powered by two 330 horsepower Detroit Diesel engines specially fitted out for diving. It was last refitted in 2008 with 7 twin cabins and has the ability to provide both Compressed Air and Nitrox, which all divers used on all dives as Nitrox
has an advantage over Compressed Air with more allowable bottom time and less time spent on ascent decompressing.

Cabins are comfortable and self-contained. The alarm goes off each morning with a start-up of the engines at 6am followed by breakfast at 6.30am and a briefing on the first dive of the day. All divers are in the water by 7.30am and most days consisted of four dives per day, including a twilight or night dive. On the last day there were three dives because the first was a deeper dive of approximately two hundred feet on the San Francisco Maru.

This ship was called the million dollar ship because in 1944 it was carrying over one million dollars' worth of cargo (still on board) consisting of sea mines, detonators and fuses, artillery pieces and shells, torpedos, tanks, Zero aircraft and huge amounts of ammunition. We were advised that the addition of ‘Maru’ after the ships name means a Merchant Ship of the Japanese Imperial Navy.

The last day's dive was inside both forward hatches with a bottom time 15mins, where we experienced only moderate growth, good visibility and relatively clear water (full sun zero wind and no cloud cover). Two decompression stops were made on ascent at 60 foot and 20 foot of approximately 40minutes in total using a single 80 cubic foot aluminium tank which provided a healthy safety margin.

Other dives on this trip included Heian Maru, Yamagiri Maru, Destroyer Fumitzuki, Shinkoku Maru, Hoki Maru, Pizion Reef (a shark dive), Rio De Janiero Maru, Nippo Maru, Fujikawa Maru, Kesen Maru and Sankisan Maru, and a Japanese Mitsubishi G4M Betty Bomber.

Admiral Yamamoto, the mastermind of the attack on Pearl Harbour had had his headquarters aboard the Yamato whilst anchored in Truk Lagoon which, with its sister ship Musashi, were the largest battleships ever built by any navy. He was killed on April 18th 1943 when the Betty Bomber he was flying in was shot down.

The wrecks of the 45 ships destroyed are scattered all over Truk and in the vicinity and the conditions of these wrecks range from upright and almost fully intact, to blasted in half or alternatively blown to bits and scattered across the bottom.

The crew of our dive boat ‘Odyssey’ consisted of Captain Lenny an American, Dive master Dar also American with the remaining crew including an engineer, cook and assistant, five other crew including a night watchman, all locals. All of the crew were divers who have a day of cleaning and maintenance every Sunday before changing to a new crew for the following week. All are hard working with a cheery disposition, the boat is spotless in all areas and maintenance is of a high standard. Food is very good and varied although it would be easy to over eat if you were that way inclined. The bar opened each day after the last dive however with exception of Saturday (when we gave it a nudge), all drinking was of a very moderate nature and all drinks were included in the deal. The Odyssey ticks all the boxes and is a credit to Captain Lenny (also the owner) and the crew.

All in all I would recommend Allways Dive- Geoff and Vanessa Skinner and the team including Prukesh for a very well organised and seamless diving trip.

The location, Truk in Micronesia, would be very hard to beat as an idyllic location with perfect weather conditions. Getting to it is easy from Australia now there is a direct flight from Port Moresby whereas previously flights were through Guam.

All other attendees made for a friendly and cohesive group with plenty of laughs during the day. The only downside was that it ended too soon. This is a must to go again trip!

Bruce Parker

---

UNKNOWN DEPOSITS NSW

The following deposits were made to the NSW Association's accounts recently.

As there was NO NAME on these deposits we are unable to assign the amounts to a members' account.

The bottom 2 appear to be for “Q” Store purchases, however, once again, we don’t know from whom.

Please advise our Treasurer Ivan Kelly if these apply to you.

ikelly@bigpond.net.au

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<td>29 SEPT</td>
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<td>Full-Bore Rifle</td>
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I thought we should share this account of early High Altitude parachuting with you.
Most readers would not have known that this type of activity in Australia was virtually unknown until some
unsung heroes from an Army Reserve Special Forces Unit took the “big step” (literally).

HALO PARACHUTING IN AUSTRALIA
“THE EARLY DAYS”

Nostalgia from Bruce Horsfield

I read with interest and nostalgia an item in a Strike Swiftly sometime ago, on Brian Murphy's high altitude
low opening (HALO) free fall parachuting record back in the 60's. Brian's achievement caught my imagination at
the time and I thought that your readers might like to hear about some other early HALO endeavours by a
member of 1 Commando Company. In setting down my own HALO experiences as I recall them, warts-and-all, I
often shudder at some of the vivid images that come sharply into focus in my memory, stern reminders of the
problems and dangers we were up against and the limitations of our approach. Certainly, we were really
establishing civilian HALO parachuting in Australia and there were critical times when our ignorance caught up
with us. But we were lucky, we were young and somewhat brash, and we had some successes. And now, of
course, with the wisdom of hindsight and middle age, we'd probably not take as many risks as we did in our
three attempts on HALO altitude records.

"High altitude" is an imprecise term but my memory has it that “HALO” jumping is free falling from over
20,000 feet - that height above which the free fall parachutist is required both to use the inboard aircraft
oxygen supply and to carry a separate portable oxygen supply in free fall.

* * * * * * *

Early 1958, at age 17, I was the sole volunteer in D
Company, University of NSW Regiment - the scuffy, university student conscript CMF unit that was the
Newcastle part of UNSWR. I had never heard of 1 Commando Company but after a chance meeting at
Holsworthy with the unassuming and very professional Brian Murphy I was delighted in September ’58 to pass
the medical for 1 Commando Company, transfer from D
Company and get my black beret. On the Taronga Zoo
bus to Georges Heights on the first Tuesday parade
night I met Corporal Mike Wells. Later Mike showed me
some photos of the free falling that he, Brian Murphy,
Barry Evers, Red Harrison and others were pioneering
(and, painfully, without canopy deployment sleeves!) at
Camden, south west of Sydney. This really looked like
absolute lunacy to me at the time, and I mentally
dismissed parachuting as unnecessarily dangerous and
definitely to be avoided. Worse, during my Green Beret
training I was dismayed to learn that the Para course was
the only compulsory course in the unit. I seriously
thought that I would quietly resign from 1 Commando
Company. But as many of us who have been through the
unit have no doubt found, with its effective training and
great esprit de corps, I gradually started to warm to the
idea of parachuting. I had always been air minded and
loved heights and would have enlisted as a pilot in the
Fleet Air Arm in 1957 had my father allowed me. The
older hands in 1 Cdo wearing their Para wings certainly
seemed no worse for the experience (read: if they can
get their wings then so can I!) So, in April 1960 I grasped the nettle and did my first
frightening static line jump from 1200 feet with Sydney
Skydivers at Camden using a 28-foot British X-type ex-
Army static line parachute. The jump platform was a
lumbering but adequate De Havilland Dragon twin-
engine biplane. By the time I did the Para course at
RAAF Williamtown in November 1960 I had already
completed eight static line jumps and two "jump and
pulls" i.e. with ripcord deployment from 2,500 feet.
Barry Clissold had also started jumping at about that
time and we were the only "experienced" jumpers on
our Para course, smugly watching 20 others fearful and
utterly miserable first jumpers on the first long, long
sortie until we started to catch the jitters from them
anyway. Gradually I got hooked on free falling and
bought my own ex-USAF main parachute and reserve,
so that a few of us could go up country on weekends
and make a plane load to get higher altitude jumps.

At Camden in 1960 a free fall of 5-10 seconds was
regarded as pretty sophisticated stuff. While we were
very keen, none of us demonstrated much skill in or
knowledge about free falling. The near blind led the
blind. True skill in free fall - and high altitude air space
so close to Sydney - were both very scarce. Sadly, we
were restricted at Camden to 3,500 feet above terrain
by Air Traffic Control at Mascot. Of course, skydivers
can never get enough altitude and non-bivouac weekends
would often see a few of us in Goulburn or Bathurst for
higher altitudes. By 1962 we were proficient at stabilising and turning in longer free falls of 7,000-8,000 feet above terrain. We knew little of HALO jumping (I don’t think the term had been invented) and we were still a bit timid about altitudes above 10,000- 12,000 feet. HALO jumps from the troposphere (altitudes up to 37,000 feet) and the stratosphere (above 37,000 feet) were remote, fantasies to ponder over a beer. No one that we knew had experienced free falls from either of those levels. Anyway, what would be the requirements for oxygen? We understood that in-board oxygen was required above 10,000 feet AMSL by the then Department of Civil Aviation and there were stories that a personal oxygen supply in free fall was also compulsory above 20,000 feet AMSL. But where could the small personal bottles and oxygen masks to carry in free fall be obtained? Who had that sort of gear? Moreover, suitable aircraft that could make it to higher altitudes were expensive and hard to find. But all this was more in the realm of pub talk, for at this time we were mostly preoccupied with mastering stability and linking up with each other in free fall, and trying to steer our canopies to land dead centre on the DZ marker.

But because of our love of free falling the mystique of high altitude parachuting - prolonging the free fall part of the jump - persisted with many of us. Were there real dangers in a long free fall, we wondered? Could you lose control, and go into an accelerating flat spin that would cause blackout, as we read had happened in the USA? That is, my generation of jumpers in the early ‘60s thought mainly of the free fall part of the jump, and not being skiers or climbers asked few if any questions about the environment of the troposphere. Not having ever been seriously exposed to the frigidity of high altitude, we had no sense of the hazards of hypothermia, exposure, sub-zero temperatures, frostbite, frozen altimeters, and the decline in mental performance, judgement and gross and fine motor skills resulting from hypoxia. (We didn’t of course know that we would soon get first hand experience of these things the hard way!) To us HALO was all just a fantasy fuelled by a frustrating mixture of timidity, ignorance, curiosity and a desire for adventure. Obviously, by this stage I’d come a long way since my dread of the basic Para course. One detail we weren’t worried about though was the chance of missing the drop zone on a HALO sortie. Just getting to the ground in one piece would do nicely. Anyway, the spotting on our sorties was often lousy in the early 60’s and we all knew what it was like to lug our gear a long way back to the strip after a poor spot!

But skydivers elsewhere, free of the altitude restrictions of Camden, pushed ahead. Suddenly, dramatically, higher leaps started happening around us. Laurie Trotter, an early ‘civvie’ skydiver, set an Australian altitude record with a 60 second delay from 12,000 feet. At Camden our parochial little group of skydivers were grudgingly impressed. Then, to our surprise and delight, Brian Murphy made a successful attempt on Trotter’s Australian high altitude free fall record using a Cessna 210. Brian’s free fall from 17,000 feet - astonishing at the time - broke not only Trotter’s 12,000 feet Australian record but also our own psychological and physical resistance to the HALO environment above 12,000 feet. Then a NZ skydiving team using a supercharged Aero Commander 680F attained a remarkable 27,000 feet - a wondrous, absolutely mind-blowing excursion into the upper troposphere even by today’s standards. And, for what it was worth, it was a Southern Hemisphere high altitude free fall record. They exited at 27,000 feet and pulled ricpords at 2,000 feet. To most of us at Camden that sort of operation and altitude seemed out of our league. I remember wondering at the time just how such a jump could be possible.

However, times and people change and in 1965 I decided to give it a go. We - Robin Godwin, a civvie mate, and I - would attack the Kiwi’s Southern Hemisphere HALO record of 27,000 feet. Brian Murphy unselfishly lent us each a portable oxygen cylinder (De Havilland Vampire jet fighter ejection seat cylinders, each with a 7 minute constant flow supply), which was required for jumping above 20,000 feet AMSL by the Australian Parachute Federation. Brian had acquired these little bottles for his own HALO record attempts (deferred indefinitely following a knee injury while parachuting). We were lucky to get cost - free an Aero Commander 680F, in a sponsorship deal with the then Avis Rent-a-Plane. The Avis pilot, Captain Peter Ahrens, assured us that the 680F could beat the Kiwi’s 27,000 feet. At this stage I had done 147 jumps, mostly free falls, the highest being a 45 second delayed opening from 9,500 feet without oxygen equipment.

Our plan was to free fall from the Aero Commander’s absolute ceiling – we had no idea what this would be - to 2000 feet, open parachutes, and land in Lake Illawarra where boats of the Kanahooka Motor Boat Club would retrieve us. Along with us on the sortie as “drifter” (a term used to refer to a device for gauging the wind strength and direction after takeoff but also to justify a free jump) was my younger brother - another Robin, aged 18 - who was doing his 45th jump. (Soon after, in January 1966 during the Vietnam War, Robin “celebrated” being conscripted by doing 40 jumps in one day onto Aero Pelican strip, Newcastle. Rob has very good legs!) As our drifter, Robin was to free-fall from about 16,000 feet to 2000 feet, open parachutes, and land in Lake Illawarra where boats of the Kanahooka Motor Boat Club would retrieve us. Along with us on the sortie as drifter passenger oxygen console for our use on the climb and we would carry the little 7-minute ejection seat oxygen cylinders tied to our reserve chutes. These would be connected to our $5 Army Disposal Store WWII “12 O’clock High” oxygen masks - oldish, but in mint condition, like the candy striped USAF military surplus parachutes that we used. We would change over from the aircraft oxygen console to our portable cylinders on the dropping run, just prior to exit. The air space clearance to all altitudes from Air Traffic Control Mascot was for Sunday 14 February 1965 from first light to 0700 hours. Piece of cake!
We spent an uncomfortable night before the drop on the floor at the Albion Park Aero Club. Next morning, mindful of Brian Murphy's report of the deep cold he had experienced on his own record jump, we ate a hearty meal of steak and eggs thinking it would keep our bodies warm on the sortie. It was a meal we were shortly to regret having eaten. Then, to make it easier to get from our aircraft seats to the rear doorway for exit, we reversed the Aero Commander's seats on their floor mountings so that all of us, except the pilot, Captain Peter Ahrens, faced the rear door, which we removed for our exit under the port wing. This also meant that all of us - pilot included - had our backs to the 680F’s oxygen console, into which we were all plugged. Several days previously we had sought to familiarise ourselves with the aircraft oxygen console and low-pressure connecting lines and fittings but unfortunately - and ominously - we couldn’t organise it with Avis staff. So, as we geared up next to the aircraft for our Southern Hemisphere HALO Record bid, we were full of steak and eggs, rash optimism and the confidence of youth. Not only were we totally unfamiliar with the vital oxygen system on the Aero Commander but we had also ingeniously managed to arrange the seats so that all four of us, pilot included, were sitting with our backs to the all - important oxygen console. Moreover, neither of us had used Brian's Vampire ejection seat bottles before, even in a rehearsal, since once the lanyard was yanked the flow could not be turned off, requiring a time-consuming service by Hawker de Havilland at Banks town. Youthful impatience resisted such extravagant waste of time!

However, the morning was clear and calm and so we geared up in parachutes, life jackets, oxygen cylinders, balaclavas, gloves and ski masks and heaved ourselves on board the Aero Commander. The aircraft's take-off gave us our first discomforting surprise, for to us the speed and rate of climb of the supercharged Aero Commander were simply incredible, and to me as jumpmaster/dispatcher quite disorienting. Accustomed to underpowered Austers, the old De Havilland Dragon and the odd struggling Cessna, where there was ample precensing lines and fittings but unfortunately - had simply dropped out of the oxygen console to the floor under their own meagre weight because of slack bayonet fittings. We did not know we were breathing only the thin inadequate atmosphere. So, there we were, hurtling upwards, dead to the world in a deep hypoxic slumber. In his sleep Robin vomited up his steak and eggs into his oxygen mask and all over his reserve 'chute, clothing, his seat and the carpeted aircraft floor.

Suddenly I woke up, nauseous and very groggy. Where the hell was I? What was going on? As I struggled to gain some awareness I realised that the aircraft was in a steep dive. Fortunately for us all, Peter Ahrens, an experienced pilot, had detected early the symptoms of hypoxia in himself and was descending as quickly as he could to a safe altitude. I was light-headed, sick and weary, but felt even worse when I realised that our precious record attempt was RS. But then Robin woke up and I thought fast. (The inflated arrogance, mindless urgency and insatiable appetite of youth!) I reassured the pilot confidently that we were ok to jump, but at first Peter didn’t want to know. Although I felt dreadful, I was insistent, making me speak briskly and moving purposefully to show him how wonderfully recovered and normal I really was. It was a shameless con. I shudder to think of how we must have looked and sounded. But Peter, sizing us up, finally agreed to give it another go, and called up Air Traffic Control Mascot for an extension of time. I refitted our oxygen leads and held them in their sockets, and the pilot pulled the aircraft's nose back up. We managed to get to 25,200 feet before our extra time ran out. Peter then signalled us to jump. We changed over from the aircraft bottle to our 7-minute
supply portable bottles and crawled into the open doorway.

Poking my head through the doorway I looked down on a vast white floor of thick cloud thousands of feet below us. Where, under all that cloud, was our Lake Illawarra drop zone? Far to what was probably the west of us a mountain peak nosing up through the cloud may possibly have been near Burragorang, but as far as my addled judgement was concerned it could have been any feature at all. Peter was working overtime cranking the RDF handle above his head trying to fix our position within a triangle formed by three terrestrial non-directional radio navigation beacons (NDB’s). He kept nodding vigorously to us that we could jump, but looking down on to the complete cloud cover I hesitated in the doorway. I wondered sluggishly if fixing one’s position by triangulating NDB’s was accurate enough for us, as only one NDB could be lined up at a time, and with the great speed of the Aero Commander it seemed that a large margin of error was likely. It didn’t occur to either of us or to the pilot to abort the sortie but because there is only a thin strip of land between Lake Illawarra and the ocean I was afraid that we might even be out over the Tasman Sea. If we jumped perhaps no one would see us and we might be lost out to sea. Peter continued to put the Aero Commander into a fast, steeply banking orbit - clearly, he thought that we were over the drop zone. I wasn’t as confident as he – I had been on sorties where the pilot had insisted on doing the spotting and it was always very inaccurate. It also crossed my still sluggish mind that we didn’t know whether the base of the cloud cover was right down to ground level or was at our parachute opening height of 2,000 feet, or was higher, or lower. But finding the DZ was our absolute priority and accuracy now depended entirely on the pilot’s navigational skills. As we banked in a continuing 360-degree circle I kept gesticulating to him, “Where are we? Can we go?” But with our seven minute portable bottles starting to run low, pinpoint accuracy became an academic question and despite our dwindling oxygen supply forced the decision. I dived through the horrific slipstream of the port engine into the vast void of space and sky, Robin Godwin following immediately.

As I stabilised in free fall, the sun peeked over the horizon of the cloud floor far below and my amber tinted ski goggles treated me to an enthralling, spectacular display of colour as the eastern sky and the entire terrain of cloud turned rich pink, orange and crimson. Instinctively I did a 90-degree turn and faced the rising sun. (At this stage I had been studying the transcendental nature poetry of the Lake Poets such as Wordsworth and Coleridge for my BA degree and, high on a blend of their pantheistic Naturfilosofie and the drunkenness of hypoxia, I found this solitary splendour of crimson cloud at high altitude total, spiritual and calming. In a crazy, irrational way my orientation to earth and sky inverted, as it were, so that the sky above me seemed solid and the ground below distant, ephemeral and unimportant. The Lake Poets would have approved!) But this transcendental “high” was suddenly interrupted, for as I reached terminal velocity in free fall my 12 O’clock High oxygen mask was blasted off my face and I was forced reluctantly out of my reverie and back to my immediate problems. Holding my oxygen mask firmly on my face with one hand while struggling to maintain free fall stability with the other, I started to wonder how much height I had left, since, still under the influence of the solar psychedelics and still not mentally 100%, I hadn’t noticed whether my 10,000 feet altimeter had wound past zero once or twice. So with the soft surface of the cloud cover below now starting to rush at me, I grappled with my frenzied oxygen mask and with the problem of whether I was at 18,000 feet or 8,000 feet. Dawn suddenly turned to dusk as I plunged into the grey-white gloom of the cloud mass, but my mental clock told me that my altimeter needle had in fact wound past zero twice. I took a punt and pulled at what I hoped was 2,500 feet, and not 12,500 feet, still in the cloud. As I floated down out of the cloud base I saw the ground and could see that I was at 1,800 feet - not above Lake Illawarra or the Tasman Sea, but above the land strip between the lake and the Tasman. Robin Godwin landed nearby. That was good enough. "A big thanks to our able pilot, Peter Ahrens". Spotting with NDB’s is a fine thing, and to be highly recommended! Who wanted water landing anyway?

On the ground I still felt sick from the hypoxia and a bit dazed and weary from the whole experience, but I was glad to be in one piece. It turned out that Robin Godwin had waited until clearing the cloud before pulling his ripcord and I must ask him one day how he knew that the cloud base wasn’t at ground level. Perhaps he was keeping close tabs on his altimeter as he fell. Afterwards we enjoyed a day or two of media hype, but we had had a taste of HALO and promptly started planning to better both our Australian record of 25,000 feet and the Southern Hemisphere Record of 27,000 feet of the New Zealand team. We were feeling quite pleased with ourselves, for our sortie could easily have been a disastrous and embarrassing failure (purists would say that it was anyway!). True, if we hadn’t blacked out we could have possibly made 30,000 feet or better in the time available. But we had gained some invaluable experience with oxygen and with operational planning. We hadn’t been cold at all at 25,000 feet or at any time on the flight, even with the door removed. Perhaps we were too hypoxic to notice, but I don’t think so. I thought at the time that perhaps we stayed warm because the aircraft climbed so quickly that we didn’t have time to lose much body heat. But we were soon to discover the hard way that the time of year affects temperatures “upstairs” a great deal.

Now, how were we going to beat the Kiwi’s 27,000 feet record? Finding a suitable jump aircraft was no easy matter. The Avis Aero Commander was no longer available to us as Avis went out of the rent-a-plane business soon after (but not because of!) our jump. After a very long and frustrating search we managed to find another sponsor when WD and HO Wills agreed to pay
for the Aero Commander 680F of King Ranch Australia. The pilot, John Laffin, assured us that his 680F had an absolute ceiling of over 30,000 feet. So, on 12 September 1965 the two Robins and I flew up to Cowra for the record attempt - but without the steak and eggs breakfast this time. To avoid the pleasures of hypoxia we did good aircraft oxygen and equipment checks before taking off. At 22,000 feet, I despatched brother Rob (with 53 jumps still regarded as too inexperienced for the higher altitude “men’s” stuff) and we continued to climb towards the 680F’s maximum ceiling.

But before long the plummeting temperature in the aircraft became excruciating. The cold was absolutely appalling. The frigid blast from the port propeller was rammed in through the open doorway, icing into opacity our goggles and altimeters, reducing us to sluggishness, numbing our hands and fingers and giving our clothing, faces and parachute rigs a heavy coating of frost. I had never experienced anything like this in my entire life. Pilot John was obviously suffering greatly too and a more wretched trio I couldn’t imagine. Hypothermia was rapidly debilitating us. However, despite the terrible wind chill factor and deep cold, we nevertheless continued the climb. After all, that’s why we were there!

But it wasn’t to be. At 27,000 feet - equal to the height of the New Zealand altitude record - the oil in the port engine thickened from the cold and the pilot had to feather its three bladed propellers. I can’t recall it clearly but my logbook states that for some reason my mate Robin blacked out at about this stage and that he didn't regain consciousness until a lower altitude was reached. On only one engine the Aero Commander dropped rapidly and by the time we changed over from aircraft oxygen to our portable cylinders and exited we were down to 18,000 feet - ironically, an exit height lower than brother Robin’s 22,000 feet only a short while before.

I shall never forget the frigid misery of the free fall that followed. Already hypothermic, I found the cold in free fall unbearable, piercing my thick layers of clothing, gloves, balaclava and helmet. My skull chilled and I felt that my brain was freezing - I might as well have been feathering stark naked. To try to avoid the awful cold I rolled onto my back into the “dead horse” position, so that the main parachute pack might provide a shield from the painfully cold blast of free fall. But to no avail. I was chilled to the marrow. I perhaps should have opened my parachute high to end the pain, but not knowing the wind strengths and directions at all altitudes and not knowing where I might drift off to, it really wasn’t an option. Mercifully the opening height of 2,000 feet finally arrived, and, my fingers being inoperable, I pulled the ripcord with my thumb.

What a forgettable sortie! With a glum sense of anticlimax, we packed up and flew back to Sydney. We had not beaten the Kiwis’ Southern Hemisphere or even our own Lake Illawarra Australian record. To be fair, we had had no warning during the Lake Illawarra record attempt of the perils and difficulties of extreme cold at high altitude, and so had not really given it any serious thought on this second attempt.

But we weren’t yet ready to call it a day, and despite the awful obstacle of hypothermia we still wanted to beat the Kiwis - if possible, without the problems of oxygen and cold, which had detracted from our earlier efforts at Lake Illawarra and Cowra. WD and HO Wills were a bit put off by our Cowra failure but sportingly rallied to meet the costs of a Fokker F27 Mark 1 Friendship turbo prop airliner from the then East West Airlines. An airliner, no less! Yes, thanks! We invited Kenny Bath, an instructor at Sydney Skydivers, to join us for this third attempt on the Southern Hemisphere High Altitude Record. We told Ken about our loss of 10,000 feet of hard earned altitude at Cowra because of the slow changeover from aircraft to personal oxygen. He turned up with male and female couplings for each of us, which, he said, would enable us to do a quicker switch over from the aircraft oxygen, supply to our little personal bottles so that any loss of precious oxygen or altitude would be negligible. I was so reassured by this cunning display of engineering initiative that I didn’t even try out the couplings, but left Kenny to fit a pair to each of our personal cylinder oxygen lines. It all seemed so simple.

East West Airlines shrewdly moved our third record attempt to Grafton in northern NSW for two reasons: a) it was a sea level drop zone, providing “free” altitude compared with higher inland drop zones such as Cowra, and b) there was turbine fuel for refuelling. The Fokker's absolute ceiling would be greater with a partial fuel load. Our inboard aircraft oxygen consisted initially of the pressurised interior of the Fokker, then medical oxygen cylinders from CIG strapped to the seat next to each of us for when the aircraft depressurised above 20,000 feet. The spotting at high altitude was the job of the pilot, Captain Jim Swan, who would fly on a heading at whatever altitude he could attain straight down the Grafton runway and signal us when to jump. Knowing that the oxygen changeover on the dropping run was more important than where we would land I had no problem with this plan. (After the jump, we found ourselves only a forgivable kilometre from the strip.) On the dropping run we would therefore have ample time for an unhurried changeover from aircraft to personal oxygen systems. On the climb, although depressurised, we would keep the Fokker's sliding rear passenger door closed so that the cabin heaters could warm up the interior. This proved to be very successful in keeping us warm before and thus during the free fall. However, after the deep cold of the Cowra jump, I had readily accepted Brian Murphy’s kind offer of his padded USAF aircrew quilted nylon inner suit for the jump (where did he get that, I wondered). Again, because of the previous effect of deep cold on my fingers, I swapped my leather gloves for large leather motorcycle gauntlets, which were mitten-like, without individual fingers - my thumb would have to pull the ripcord. Ken Bath and Robin Godwin had white cotton overalls on and warm clothing and balaclavas. In the quilted USAF suit I looked and felt
like something from outer space, especially as it was too big for me. I had no opportunity to try the suit out in free fall before the big day - if I'd tried it out in free fall I wouldn't have worn it on the record bid. In view of our oxygen problems on the previous HALO sorties the question of whether we should fit barostats (automatic parachute opening devices - "AODs") to our reserve 'chutes came up, but most AOD's were poorly regarded at the time as on several trials they had pulled the ripcord D Ring of the reserve chute after the parachutist had landed! So we didn't take the idea of AOD's seriously for HALO jumping.

To add to the sense of occasion, I invited 30 skydivers at ten dollars a head to come along with us for a rare cheap leap from 10,000 feet from a Fokker Friendship, the money to go the Royal North Shore Hospital Paraplegic Unit. (There was some grumbling from the fraternity about both the money and my restricting their altitude to only 10,000 feet, but I felt that if we went higher for the 30 fun jumpers, there wouldn't be enough time to fully oxygenate the three of us between their exit altitude of 10,000 feet and our proposed exit altitude at whatever the aeroplane could attain. It was simply a matter of priorities.) Two weeks before the jump I asked my older brother David, who had served as an IO in UNSWR, to fly with East West Airlines to a recce of the Grafton drop zone on our behalf and bring back a good field sketch of the environs - terrain, trees, natural and built hazards etc. What could go wrong when everything was so well planned?

So, on a calm and sunny 24th of October 1965, we all flew from Sydney to Grafton, geared up and took off. I insisted on personally despatching each of the three sticks of ten skydivers on three runs at 11,000 feet. The Fokker's sliding rear door and the handy airhostess' phone to the pilot made my jumpmaster's job a dream. No NDB's needed here! I was in form on the day and all three sticks landed very near the white cross on the airfield. I enjoyed that very much ("First stick, stand up!" sort of thing). Then I closed the door, returned to my seat, went on to the CIG oxygen and the aircraft re-pressurised. After we passed through 20,000 feet we depressurised and awaited the climb to the Fokker's absolute ceiling and the pilot's signal - relayed to us by Ron Walesby, the Manager of East West Airlines, which we were soon to commence the dropping run. After the hypothermia of Cowra the Fokker was cosy and warm, and the big medical oxygen cylinders with their clearly calibrated flow meters roped to the seats next to us worked well. At 31,000 feet, with the Fokker's rate of climb right down, Ron signalled to us that we were on the dropping run - time for us to change over to our little cylinders, get quickly down to the back door, slide it open, and jump. Nothing to it. However, my motorcycle gauntlets did not permit a quick, nimble-fingered oxygen changeover using Kenny Bath's male and female fittings. So, to conserve my seven-minute personal supply I removed my gauntlets, activated my portable bang-seat bottle, and disconnected my 12 O'clock High mask from aircraft supply and plugged into the low-pressure line from Murphy's portable bottle. As the male fitting snapped home, I felt an unexpected whoosh of air in my oxygen mask. But I could not pause to investigate this oddity, because Ron was motioning to us to be on our way to the rear doorway. I put on my gauntlets, stood up, plodded down the aisle of the Fokker to the back door and pulled it open. As I did so, I heard a loud sharp bang, like a double banger, followed by another sharp bang. Puzzled, I waited at the open doorway, but neither Ken nor Robin joined me. Then Kenny came down the aircraft to the doorway with the shredded end of his portable bottle's low-pressure line in his mouth. This was probably not what one hopes to see on a well-organised HALO jump. But, recognising there was nothing that could be done; I held my oxygen mask firmly to my face and stepped out of the door into space; Kenny following. Robin Godwin did not join us at the doorway before we jumped.

We worked out later what had gone wrong. We hadn't known that the male and female fittings Kenny had obtained for us had a one-way non-return valve that wouldn't open until the fitting was actually snapped home. Kenny had made no mention of the one-way valves - maybe he did not know about them either. The portable bottles, once activated, had simply built up pressure behind the one-way valve until the lines exploded. With the whoosh into my mask I had escaped by only a few seconds a similar explosion, because, of the three of us, I was the only one who had happened to remove his gloves to affect a quick oxygen changeover. Kenny was lucky in that his line exploded near his mask and was still long enough to simply put in his mouth. Robin Godwin was not so fortunate: his line exploded near his personal bottle lashed to his reserve parachute and so it wasn't long enough to reach his mouth unless he wanted to unhook his reserve 'chute and free fall with it under his arm! At 31,000 feet, with the aircraft depressurised and his free fall personal oxygen supply unusable, Robin looked down the full length of the Fokker to see Kenny and myself departing through the open doorway. Deciding that it was too good a picnic to miss, Robin got up, oxygen or no oxygen, charged down the aircraft and out into space. He reported no ill effects or hypoxia from this, and we thought it must be good value to be well oxygenated at high altitude if you can manage it.

My own free fall of 29,000 feet was a mess. The 12 O'clock High mask was again ripped away from my face by the blast of the free fall. But my quilted nylon jump suit, while warm enough, had such a low coefficient of friction with the air that I found it virtually impossible to stabilise in free fall. I skidded and skated all over the sky like a beginner on a skating rink. Worse, the suit was far too big for me, and unimpeded by the three-point parachute harness the inner suit billowed, concealing my ripcord handle, which totally disappeared into the billowing folds of the inner suit. I spent almost the entire
free fall alternatively looking for the bloody ripcord, wrestling the oxygen mask back onto my face and carefully counting the needle of my 10,000 feet altimeter three times past zero. Interestingly, although it was still only spring and the pilot recorded an outside air temperature of minus 67 degrees Fahrenheit at our exit height of 31,000 feet, I had no sensation of cold whatsoever on this sortie and neither did the others. Being warm in the Fokker on the climb had presumably done the trick. I was also interested to learn from a friend who was a Professor of Physics at UNSW that terminal velocity in free fall from that altitude in the thinner air was probably about 340kph (or, in my slippery nylon tent, probably 400kph!), and that the duration of the fall was over two minutes.

So, third time lucky. We had the title. The media came to the party, WD and HO Wills threw us a big reception and presented us each with a nice trophy, suitably inscribed, and all the cigarettes we could smoke! Our jump had finally beaten the New Zealanders and our record stood for something like six or seven years at least, when I think a Victorian team achieved about 32,000 feet using a Beechcraft King Air. We were later somewhat galled to learn that at Grafton our pilot could have possibly got the Fokker even higher. But as its rate of climb on the dropping run was only 40 feet per minute (very low indeed) it was not clear what extra altitude could really have been achieved on that sortie, short of removing all the seats and stripping the aircraft of everything removable. Had I known in advance, though, I would have taken my spanner with me and assisted in stripping the Fokker.

There was a worthy outcome to our oxygen problems: later the Australian Parachute Federation arranged for its members to accompany QANTAS trainee pilots in the high altitude simulator decompression tank at RAAF Richmond, which I did. Although it came after the event, the RAAF tank was a valuable experience of medically controlled hypoxia that I could heartily recommend to my fellow skydivers. The main message about hypoxia was that you could feel normal and confident but at the same time have seriously impaired judgement and cognition.

Although I subsequently tried hard to break our altitude record with a night free fall from 38,000 - 40,000 feet, we couldn’t find an affordable, adequate aeroplane and Grafton was in fact the last of our HALO jumps. We had learnt a lot about oxygen and its portability, about combating extreme cold, about the psychology of performing arduous physical and mental tasks, and - the hard way - about sound planning and rehearsal, especially with new equipment. The dollar cost of the aircraft is probably still a major factor - if you can afford the right aeroplane then you will be spared the problems of hypothermia and hypoxia.

Now, I wonder what a 747 costs per hour...?

For the record this is impossible due to the door opening mechanism on a Boeing 747.

(Cpl) Bruce Horsfield
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Our services are free of charge, completely confidential and include: assisting you with Department of Veterans’ Affairs Claims, Advocacy at the Veterans’ Review Board, counselling, support during crisis or the death of a loved one and, financial assistance.

The Department of Veterans’ Affairs (DVA) is an Australian Government agency providing information and support for those who serve or have served in the defence of our nation.

DVA administer the following legislations:
- Veterans’ Entitlement Act 1986 (VEA)
- Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004 (MRCA)
- Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988 (SRCA)
- Defence Service Homes Act 1918
- War Graves Act 1980

As you can imagine, the three main Acts of Parliament (VEA, SRCA and MRCA) can be complex (including how these may relate to your individual circumstances).

We encourage anyone who has sustained illness or injury as a result of their service to document and lodge their claims as early as possible with the assistance of an experienced qualified specialist. It is never too late to lodge a claim to DVA. However, early intervention will increase the chance of success.

There is an extremely long list of services and assistance that can be gained through DVA, and the process can change depending on the specific claim being made. If you have any questions on these or how to request assistance please contact RSL DefenceCare or an experienced specialist within the Claims and Advocacy field.

Finally, one of the best initiatives from DVA in recent years to help Veterans is Non-liability health care. All those who have served in the ADF permanent forces; including reservists with any period of continuous full-time service, are now eligible for health care for a range of mental health conditions without needing to prove that the condition has arisen from, or is linked to, their service.

The conditions covered under non-liability health care are PTSD, Depressive disorder, Anxiety disorder, alcohol use disorder and substance use disorder. Provisional approval for treatment can be given without having to obtain an initial diagnosis.

It is easy to apply and applications can be made by phone or email. For more information, phone DVA 133 254 (metro callers) or 1800 555 254 (regional) or email NLHC@dva.gov.au. You can also visit https://www.dva.gov.au/factsheet-hsv109-non-liability-health-care.

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The Positive Relationship between Physical Activity and PTSD

Exercise has a positive clinical effect on depressive symptoms and may be as effective as psychological or pharmaceutical therapies for some individuals with PTSD. Rosebaum et al, 2014 suggests Physical activity/exercise is a highly effective method in reducing symptoms of depression and for people experiencing other mental health disorders.

Evidence demonstrates that an appropriate exercise intervention can achieve significant benefits to symptoms, depression, anxiety and stress, changes in body shape and sedentary time associated with PTSD, and non-significant trends for sleep quality improvement according to Rosenbaum, 2013.

The associated symptoms and the improvements may be related to psychosocial benefits of the intervention, rather than functional capacity, but there is also a strong empirical (observational) link between improvements in functional capacity and psychological status according to the author, 2016.

People with PTSD are four times as likely to have type 2 diabetes (Lukaschek et al, 2013) and rates of overweight and obesity are as high as 92%. To add to these statistics, sufferers of PTSD are shown to be less physically active due to a number of factors including pain, dysfunctional and general lack of desire or both, according Boscarino et al, 2004.

Adding some form of regular physical activity can have a significant effect on a sufferer of PTSD. It’s important to note, the type of activity doesn’t matter, what matters is that the person is moving and also having fun doing it. If you would like to become physically active again and help to combat some of your PTSD related symptoms then please consult your GP and discuss your options for referral to another health care professional (exercise physiologist or physiotherapist) for help with your other associated or co-morbid conditions ie lower back pain, arthritis and or obesity.
# 'COMMANDO FOR LIFE'

**Australian Commando Association New South Wales Inc.**

"Q" Store order form

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Send cheque/money order payable to Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.

Addressed to:
The Treasurer
Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
PO Box 432, TOONGABBIE NSW 2146, AUSTRALIA

**Internet banking details (Australia)**

Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
Police Bank: BSB: 815 000 Account No. 41117 Quote your name and Subs/Qstore etc.

**Internet banking details (Overseas)**

Account with institution/swift code - ANZBAU3M
BSB: 012010 Account No. 777000675
Beneficiary customer – Police Bank
Details of payment – Account No. 41117, Australian Commando Association (NSW) Inc.
Quote name and Subs/Qstore etc.
Your order will be processed by Norm WOOD, Quartermaster, P: (02) 9545-0484, M: 0419-484-541
E: newood@ozemail.com.au

*Nominate Size (beret measurement around head cm)
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I LOOK FORWARD TO THAT DAY

by Wayne Federation

Sitting by a camp fire watching the flames. Relaxing in cool fall night basking in the silence. No worry to be seen nor problem to be tamed. Wondering why my mind remains defiant.

I am in recovery you see. From things beyond my control. Therapy and drugs try to define me. But they are not my heart and soul.

Somewhere within this mess lies the real me. Someone with a future and drive. Not the shell of the person you see. But one who wants to survive.

Despite all the help I have received I remain a veteran on the edge. Before me lay two paths I perceive. One to containment the other over the ledge.

Failure and defeat are not an option. After all the pain of discovery I’ve been through. Counselling, testing, interviews to exhaustion. Multiple pains and anxieties to construe.

Tremors, anger, depression, suicidal thoughts. Numbness, phobias, anxiety, flashbacks as well. The numerous nightmares I have fought. Have made my life a living hell.

My sweetheart and friends say I am getting better. I learning to believe them to a point. If anything I have learned to withhold my actions like a sweater. For all my helpers work I am not one to disappoint.

For every setback I have I fall to a higher plane. My healing is progressive. My despair is never the same. My failures are not regressive.


Multi tasking is not my game. Responsibility is not quite there. My sense of achievement is not the same. My accomplishments are sometimes fair.

Instead of chasing the mighty dollar. I strive to improve each day. My realm of influence is a lot smaller. So I accept what comes my way.

I tackle the troubles I can handle. And ignore the ones I can’t. I won’t dim another’s candle. Because we all have our own slant.

I seek refuge with those who are close. And leave booze and drugs behind. I have no need to overdose. As I use myself to unwind.

My get up and go. Has got up and went. Whenever I want to do something. My energy is already spent.

Exercise is good for depression. So the doctors say. Not doing any is a transgression. So I must get on my way.

We have so many exercise machines. Collecting dust and laundry. Why we bought them is a quandary.

The words “we are going to do better” Resound around the house. My mind is in a fetter. My will’s as weak as a mouse.

If you measure my motivation I won’t make the cut. What I really need is a swift kick in the butt.

As hopeless as it seems It is really not that way. There is healing in my dreams. I look forward to that day.
COMMANDO WIVES POEM

By Renee Boyd

I am a silent soldier, I am a Commando’s wife.
I have no uniform, I wear no rank, yet I live a Commando life.

I may not do a “selection test”, but my challenges are real,
My strength is tested time and again, along with character, resilience and zeal.

I may not carry an “Army” pack, but it’s a pack of a different name,
It may hold children, groceries or rigours of life,
I carry it, and block out the pain.

I may not be part of a Company, and I often must survive alone,
But I hold my dear friends close at heart and their support is my backbone.

I may not have a “Mess” to dine in, or rations to swap with a mate,
The demands that are put upon me mean some dinners are “zapped” on a plate!

I may not run an Exercise, or instruct on the “CQB”,
But I multi task with the best of them, I administer a family.

I may not hold a position, that can be reduced to an acronym,
For I have many hats to wear – more so, in the absence of “him”.

I may not have a “Chain of Command”, to issue a “call out” in the mid of night
But alone I will waken many times, to comfort children or dry tears from a fright.

I may not have a career mapped out, with guidance from peers above,
My career is bent, broken and compromised, sacrifices I make for my love.

I may never receive a payment, for the quiet soldiering that I do,
My work often goes unnoticed, and is appreciated by just a few.

I may never fight an enemy, or return injured or scarred from war,
But I mend ‘his’ heart, I ease ‘his’ mind, and the wounds I dress are raw.

I may never carry a weapon, but I will always protect my own,
I won’t drop my shield or lose my ground, I defend my love, my family and home.

I may never have the comradeship, to spin “warries” of the past,
But the bonds with friends – shared fears and tears, forge friendships that will last.

I may never receive a medal, or march on ANZAC Day,
But I stand tall in the quiet knowledge, that I too, have a role to play.

I am a silent soldier, I am a Commando’s wife.
No uniform nor rank – just pride in knowing.
#1 Thing ADF Candidates Do to Block Their Own Career Transition

By Next Job Now, ADF Career Transition Experts – 1300 112 114

...When it comes to job interviews, Navy, Army and Air Force candidates just don’t see shades of grey. Ask any of the thousands of Defence members I’ve coached over the years and you’ll almost always get the same response. The answer to one simple question is a major reason why military professionals struggle to transition quickly and effectively.

So here’s the 64,000 dollar question...

'Do you have EXPOSURE to... (DESIRED SKILL)?'

When we hear that little gem of a question our military training kicks into gear. In fact, the preferred answer to this common question is:

'Oh no... I couldn’t claim to be an EXPERT in that... I’d be lying.'

After so long collecting the Queen’s coin and working in an environment where integrity is paramount... we self-impose a rule that we need to be considered a Subject Matter Expert before we can stake a claim to even having ‘exposure’.

Civilians aren’t normally burdened by any such impediment: You can almost picture the worst offenders sitting across from the interviewer explaining, ‘I’ve got a friend who knows someone that can spell that word... so I’ve had some exposure.’ Sure, I’m exaggerating... but not by much if the latest research into resume fraud is to be believed.

So, we have two groups of candidates (military and civilian), each at different ends of the spectrum (black and white). The big question now is ‘How do we get ADF folks to start seeing shades of grey and move them closer toward the other end of the spectrum whilst still holding true to their values.’

Think about the reality of the situation. Even a soldier who graduated Kapooka yesterday has exposure to leading teams, since they can’t graduate without being assessed as a supervisor even for a short period. So rather than say ‘I’m not a supervisor’ that sailor could say ‘I’ve had some exposure to supervising teams in a training environment for specific work activities.’

Similarly, a Sergeant might be slow to claim expertise in human resources (perhaps due to an ADF understanding of what a civilian views as HR) but when prompted they typically agree that they have exposure to specific HR skillsets such as coaching, mentoring, training, counselling and leadership development.

At the end of the day saying that ‘I’ve had some exposure to XYZ’ could be validated by the fact that you’ve seen it done, maybe assisted once, and can read the policy if needed.

Opportunity helps those that help themselves

If you want to give your Defence transition the best possible chance of success, then you need to start seeing shades of grey. ‘Exposure’ is your new best friend.

Stop being your own worst enemy. Never claim what you don’t have, but always claim what you do have... to the degree that you have it!

David Penman is a Certified Professional Resume Writer, ex-Commando and one of Australia’s leading ADF career transition experts. Call 1300 112 114 to enquire about NJN’s ADF resume services.

Nuance is the key

The answer lies in our willingness to accept that it’s okay to be ‘less than an expert’... and that we do indeed have exposure to a great many skills that we can talk about in an honest fashion. Its simple. If you are an expert, then claim expertise. If you are not, then just claim whatever level of skill you possess. Here are a few suggestions for claiming different levels of capability:

- I do have an awareness of...
- I’ve had exposure to...
- I’m okay at...
- I’m good at...
- I’m very good at...
- I’m competent at...

---

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Mike Turner reports that about 45 prospective members attended this year’s Reserve Forces Day Parade in Launceston.

Some attendees travelled from Hobart and Burnie as there was some confusion from the TC advertisements erroneously nominating Hobart as this year’s venue.

Speakers from Canberra included LT COL Andrew Farquhar, the Tasmanian Minister advising the Premier Guy Barnett and SGT Nev Thomas of the Light Horse Historical Corps who gave a 15 minute talk on the Beersheba Charge.

I apologise for my tardy reply which is due to family issues including PTSD.

Here in Tassie we have an issue that all the known ex CDO persons are either a member of 1 or 2 Associations and while the thought is we should have a Tasmanian ACA Association with only 14 eligible members there is not as yet the fiscal adequacy to make it happen.

Our approach to the State Govt for foundation assistance was knocked back so we are really trying to commence from behind the 8 ball.

Nevertheless, we are still looking to move forward with a couple of additional avenues awaiting exploration.

Cheers,

Mike Turner
On Sunday 18 September 2016 Doug Knight, a member of the Australian Commando Association (Victoria) visited the Museum of the Foreign Legion located in Augbane, France to deliver home a relic from the famous battle fields of Dien Bien Phu in northern Vietnam.

In 2008 while participating in an Australian Government funded project with the Vietnamese Government, Doug visited the famous battleground of Dien Bien Phu for a week to study the battleground and in particular the locations where paratroops and legionnaires fought.

He had a great interest in this battle as it involved significant numbers of French Army and Foreign Legion paratroops and he had studied this battle several times during his officer training throughout his career. Also as a static line, freefall and HAHO/HALO parachutist, within the 1st Commando Regiment, he was very keen to visit this historic paratrooper battleground.

While visiting Dien Bien Phu in an area he believed to be the former bastion named Anne-Marie 2, which was the last fighting position of former 1st Battalion of Foreign Legion Paratroops (1 BEP) he recovered one beret badge from the ground in an old fighting pit and another was given to him by local villager who claimed to have found it several years after the battle whilst clearing his fields.

Both of these badges have been retained since in Doug’s extensive collection of French parachute badges.

The purpose of Doug’s visit to the Foreign Legion Museum was to deliver one of the para beret badges to the curator of the Legion Museum, Captain Geraud Seznec as in Doug’s words ‘he was returning the badge to its rightful home’.

Captain Seznec was exceptionally pleased to receive the badge on behalf of the Museum and assured Doug that it would take pride of place in the display cabinet of the Indo-China War.
An anecdote from a 2/5th member who was serving in New Guinea early 1943

A strange way to go home in 1943

There is no doubt about it; the Japanese were desperate to hold the Buna/Sanananda/Gona area after their defeat on the Kokoda track.

My platoon who were over 100 miles away, not very far from Lae, received information on the fighting in this area nightly from our platoon leader.

The night before the final battle ended, our Lieutenant told us to prepare to leave the next morning. He told us that we would be walking from Wampit, our home for the last five months, to the south coast of New Guinea through country frequented by head-hunters. We were told by native police attached to us that as these local people had never seen white people, they were not sure how the locals would receive us? Our lieutenant then went on to tell us to put all rifles and machine guns in a great hole the natives had dug; they were then covered with 2 foot of earth.

One of our guys asked what we would do when we got to the coast, and was told that we needed to fell a large tree and make a canoe out of it, to travel between the small islands to reach North Australia. Everyone seemed happy with that decision. The one thing he did not mention was that these islands were infested with crocodiles. Maybe he did not know that then, but we all know it’s a fact today.

Next morning our Lieutenant flew into our hut to tell us the Japs had retreated and were heading back to the Milne Bay Area, so our walk-about never got to start. He also related that our buried weapons had been stolen overnight.

The police boys got to work, and all weapons were returned in four days perfectly cleaned.

No doubt there would have been plenty of excitement in Port Moresby with the Kokoda and Northern Beaches victories, however one of the Chiefs there must have remembered that the 2/5th Independent Company boys were still watching the Japs on the other side of New Guinea.

Our food supply was non-existent, we had lived off the land for three months, cigarettes were never heard of.

A big surprise happened the following week when up the valley of the Wampit River flew a B25 bomber, at a height of no more than 25 feet. The bomb bay doors came open and a large box was dropped out. The framework of timber exploded in pieces when it hit the ground and left a shiny tin box lying there which contained pulverised dog biscuits, these were used for porridge as we had powdered milk. Two boxes of bully beef landed in a swamp, so they were lost. I believe the bomber would have been doing over 300 mph during the drop as the pilot needed to get out of the Lae area as the Japs had plenty of Zeros there.

Glenn, the spelling might not be the best, but that happens as you near 94 years old. Hope our readers get a chuckle from my recollection.

Regards,

Jim Milgate
2nd/5th Machine Gunner

ACA VICTORIA member Bob McDowell has close ties with Fromelles and Pozieres

This year marks 100 years since the World War I battles of Fromelles and Pozieres - two of the deadliest and most gruesome in Australia’s military history.

ACA member Robert McDowell, brother Ian and nephew Stephen, laid a wreath at the Shrine in Melbourne on behalf of Friends of the 15th Brigade at the Cobbers Statue on 19th July.

Bob was DNA tested to confirm the link with Sgt Athol Halliday McDowell, one of the 1100 who went over the top at Fromelles and paid the supreme sacrifice for his actions.
Captain Don Astill was born on 11th February 1921 to his parents Joseph and Amy. His father served in France during the WW1 and suffered ill-health post war as a result of his service. His Uncle Keith served in the navy on the destroyer HMAS Stuart, and his other brother Roy, too young, helped to keep the home fires burning at home. All the boys and their sons attended Yeronga State School and Brisbane Boys College.

Don enlisted in the Citizens Military Forces in September 1939, serving with the 105th Howitzer Battery, the 101st Anti-Tank Regt. and the 2nd/4th Anti-Tank Regt. as a Lieutenant. He was on pre-embarkation leave, destined for Singapore, but was very fortunate to have missed the suffering, indignity, and brutality of imprisonment.

Together with a few friends, he was given the opportunity of volunteering for Special Forces and, after a short course at RMC Duntroon and a very intense officers’ school, he was posted to Wilsons Promontory, Victoria to assist with the formation of the 2nd/8th Commando Squadron. The unit was destined to be attached to the U.K. Commando units in Europe and had even been issued with the “Pommy” battle dress, when these plans were aborted because of the worsening situation in the Pacific. The unit was then moved to Mudgeeraba, Queensland and spent three month’s training in the Lamington and Springbrook National Park areas. The Squadron was destined to assist the guerrilla forces in Timor but serious flooding in Queensland delayed the move and resulted in 17 months of active patrolling in the Northern Territory, as far as the Kimberley’s and Arnhem Land. Some of this activity was spent in the rescue of pilots who crashed-landed after mechanical failure or enemy action. Don and his 7th Section Officer were selected to attend an officers School in the Northern Territory and it was a feather in the cap for his mate to be awarded first and Don second. The Squadron then served continuously in New Guinea, New Britain and Bougainville for a period of thirteen months, engaged with ambushing, raids and reconnaissance. It was a highly successful period for the loss, sadly enough, of only two officers and six other ranks, whereas the unit was credited with 1,200 enemy casualties. During this time, they worked behind enemy lines, supplied by parachute and free drop, and their success was a direct result of the intense training in Australia. An account of all this has been documented in his book – “Commando –White Diamond”, published in 1990.

At the cessation of hostilities Don returned to civilian life with a wool company, serving for many years as their State accountant. Don has been an active legatee since 1981, including eight years as Treasurer for the Gold Coast Club. In 2011 Don was awarded a Medal of the Order of Australia, mainly as the result of many years working for the development of cricket in Queensland, co-founder of a kindergarten, his role in the formation of the Australian Commando Association (Qld) in 1946 and service as President, Secretary and Treasurer and in 2014 actively supporting and organising the amalgamation of Post-World 2 commando veterans into the ACA Qld
We conducted our second meeting recently at the Eastern Regional RSL, Bassendean. Our host feared a double booking and sent us to the business lounge, outside! Humble beginnings but the woodfire ensured the conversation flowed and we are planning some activities for the next couple of months.

We will be planning social trips to catch up with members that can’t make the journey to us, planning a bushwalking trip and attendance at more formal events later in the year.

If you know of any ex Commando types residing in WA can you please suggest they call Paul Shearer on 0400 522 059 or email at shearerp56@gmail.com to get onboard.

AUSTRALIAN COMMANDO ASSOCIATION WESTERN AUSTRALIA INC. (A1021762P)

The Secretary
PO Box 297
Bassendean WA 6934
Telephone 0400 522 059
Email: shearerp56@gmail.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 Western Australia Inc.
Bendigo Bank
BSB 633000
Account No.160082228
Please indicate name with deposit

L to R: Anthony Lear 4RAR(Cdo), Ian Prothero 1CdoRegt, Whoopi Sanders 1Cdo Regt, Darren Freeman 1 Cdo Regt, Alan Joyce 2Cdo Regt, Paul Shearer 1CdoRegt and David Aiton 1CdoRegt. Our Super Chook Garry White (660 Troop) arrived later.
MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

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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 Associations 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.
You are invited to join the Australian Commando Association Inc. family; Members are encouraged to join with the State Association that is convenient to your circumstance. The State Associations details are as follows:

Please tick the box of your choice.

### Australian Commando Association New South Wales Inc. (INC1400078)

The Secretary  
PO Box 1313  
Sutherland NSW 1499  
Telephone (02) 9644 8794  
0425 279 111  
e-mail: 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 state your 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  
e-mail: secretary@austcdoassocvic.com

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

Banking:  
Australian Commando Association Victoria Inc.  
Bendigo Bank  
BSB 633000 Account No. 155069099  
*Please state your name with Deposit*  

### Australian Commando Association Queensland Inc. (IA40186)

The Secretary  
PO Box 185  
Sherwood QLD 4075  
Mobile 0419 136 772  
e-mail 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 state your name with Deposit*
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WITH THE VETERANS WHO FOUGHT ON THE TRAIL

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