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## 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association

### INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 49 9<sup>th</sup> August 2016

This has turned out to be a somewhat sombre edition of our Info Bulletin. Most articles this month are concerned with the death or illness of vets well-known to all our members. I think this quote from Blue Ericsson sums up our situation very well. *“Sadly the next decade will be filled with this type of news.”* I wish it weren't the case, but Blue has hit the nail on the head.....

#### 1. New Member:

We're very happy to welcome Mark Jamieson as an Honorary Member of the Association. Mark has been an energetic supporter of this Association over a number of years, and many of you have had the opportunity to meet him on past occasions. Amongst other accomplishments, Mark is the author of a well-researched thesis on the Battle of Coral, which was circulated to members a couple of years ago. Welcome Mark, and we hope to see you at our reunion in Maroochydore next year.

#### 2. More on the Sad Passing of Garry “Pepe” Prendergast:

Leonie Jones has taken the time to pen a very moving tribute to her mate Pepe. A copy of Leonie's heart-felt comments are attached.

A good number of our members attended Pepe's funeral, representing Artillery and this Regiment.

We have received a number of touching remarks about Pepe. Here are a few of them.

From member Phillip McCormack:

*Hi Trev, Very sad to hear of Pepe's death. While I have had no contact with Garry for many, many years, I knew him quite well when I worked in Deniliquin from 1964-66 and we knocked around together with a bunch of fellows the same ages (17-19 or thereabouts and just about before Nasho days). His dad owned a pub in Deni and I also knew his brother Terry.*

*I rang an old girlfriend from those Deni days to let her know, and she will pass on the sad news to her brother in Deni as well as others who knew him. My old girlfriend Kaylene lives up the far north coast of NSW where Pepe's brother also lives, so she will spread the word and also see if she can attend the funeral.*

*A very, very good man!*

*Phillip*

2.

From former patron Ross Bland:

*Hi Trev. I have worked in support of Pepe and his 1RAR Reunions for a very long time now and only recently in his effort to have CORAL officially recognised. It would be fair to say that he always took the hard jobs or the jobs that no one else would attempt; he loved his "Grunts" and I just now hope that they in turn will appreciate his very loyal efforts. Thanks for letting me know Trev. Much appreciated.*

*Regards, Ross Bland*

### **3. The Passing of Don Donkin MBE:**

During this last month, I had the sad duty to inform members about the passing of yet another Artillery icon. Thank you to those members who responded with their recollections of Don and how he affected them personally.

From member Tom Browne:

*Hi Trevor, I am so sorry to hear of Don Donkin's passing. He was the RSM at the School of Artillery when I was there and I again served with him when he was RSM of 4th Field Regiment in Townsville in 1969. The best RSM ever, a gentleman and a top bloke, I never heard a bad word said against him, everybody respected him very highly. He was a soldier's soldier.*

*RIP D/Maj Don Donkin. I salute you,*

*Tom*

From member John "Blue" Ericsson:

*WO1 Donkin was a fair & reasonable man & put the fear of God into all Baggy Arse Gunners during his term at "The Head ". Highly regarded & soundly respected.*

*Blu. E.*

From member Ian Ryan:

*Hi Trevor*

*I remember Don Donkin well. Top guy! He interviewed me when I arrived at North Head for Corp training, around September/October 1967, after Rookie training at Puckapunyal.*

*Don asked what I wanted to do in Arty. I told him I did get my 1st choice to Arty to be a P.T.I. however, I was not sure that is what I wanted to do. Don encouraged me to do surveying.*

*What astounded me, was, when I transferred to Townsville to finish off my 2 year stint after Vietnam, there was Don as RSM who remembered me from the North Head interview! Don organized me the job as assistant pool manager at Laverack for my last 4 months as I was useless to the unit. They were training for a tour the following year.*

*I was not aware of Don's service history nor to his country and the awarded MBE. Obviously, well regarded and one of the few men I had a great deal of respect for. RIP*

*Regards, Ian Ryan*

### 3.

From member Chris Coape-Smith:

*The Lighter Side of Donny Donkin - His first parade as RSM after Bull had left School of Artillery:*

*Order: "All Sergeants on the road outside the Mess in Banana Formation!"*

*"Not sure what that means, RSM", came a weak reply.*

*"ALL IN A BUNCH!"*

*Great Soldier. Coapey*

### 4. Passing of Colonel John Humphrey:

We have received the following message from our member Arthur Burke.

*"Dear Fellow Gunners and our Friends*

*It is with a heavy heart that I advise that John Henry Humphrey passed away today Friday 5 August 2016.*

*John was born at Paddington NSW on 25.09.1928 and graduated from RMC Duntroon on 12.12.1951.*

*He was appointed to Infantry in the Interim Army and served with 3 RAR in Korea 1952-53 (wounded in action but remained on duty - MID), then with HQ British Commonwealth Force Korea 1953-54.*

*On return to Australia John was reappointed to RAA and became the adjutant of 1 Fd. Regt. Then followed his many Regimental and non-corps postings, the key ones of which were:*

- BC 11 LA Bty 60-62*
- Gunnery Staff training in the UK 62-64*
- CO Tropic Trials Unit 66-68*
- Instructor Staff College 69-70*
- CO 1 Fd Regt 71-72*
- Director of Artillery 75-78*

*Colonel Humphrey resigned in 1979 after 31 years devoted, professional service. He had married Olwyn and they both loved their Bridge and golf during their twilight years whilst living in a beautiful old Queenslander in Clayfield, Brisbane. More recently they moved to a retirement village in Yeronga, Brisbane and then to high care nearby.*

*John was one of nature's gentlemen Gunners. He was softly spoken, provided wise council from his vast experience, and to my knowledge never had a bad word about anybody - he could always find a positive in even the most annoying individual. He was technically proficient, professionally astute, and successfully guided many RAA personnel through bumpy patches in their careers. I am proud to say that he was one of my mentors and I am devastated by his passing.*

*I heard that he had been admitted to St Andrews War Memorial Hospital in Brisbane last evening and went to visit him today. Alas, I was too late to say 'goodbye'. Details of the funeral and next-of-kin contacts will be forwarded as soon as available. A full obituary will be published on the RAAHC website in due course.*

*Rest In Peace Colonel John Henry Humphrey - Korea veteran, distinguished Gunner and most of all an officer and a gentleman of the highest order. Retired to the Great Gun Park Up Above at almost 88 years of age.*

*Ubique, Arthur"*

## 5. Health of Neil Weekes:

In the absence of Welfare Officer Rick Cranna who is away on leave, it falls to me to pass on this report regarding Neil Weekes (1RAR, Coral) which was forwarded to us by Jack Parr. The report originates from Greg Decker, Secretary of the RAR Association in Queensland.

*“The Pres of the QLD RAR Association, Neil Weekes, unfortunately has been admitted to hospital with a brain tumour. Neil has had an op and is resting comfortably. He is waiting for the results of the op from doctors. The family has requested privacy and doctors have asked no visitors at this time. I haven't advised which hospital Neil is in until OK from doctors  
I am sure you are all with me in wishing Neil a speedy recovery and our thoughts & prayers are with Jo.  
I will provide any updates as they are received. Regards, Greg”*

## 6. Welfare Report:

As mentioned previously, Welfare Officer Rick is currently away on leave. I know he is planning to send out a full Welfare Report shortly after he returns on 20<sup>th</sup> August, so it's very important that all members pass on any information regarding the welfare of fellow members or other vets, so that Rick can include the details in his report.

We on the committee often hear feedback that most members really appreciate hearing news about their mates and as a result, the Welfare Report is widely read and anticipated. Please take the time to keep us informed. The easiest way is to let us know via return message to this email. Alternatively you can ring Rick (after 20<sup>th</sup> August) directly on 0407 572 048.

## 7. Merchandise:

Our QM Cossie, wants to remind everyone about these great bargains which you were told about last issue.

***Item 1. Regimental Caps..... \$6.00 each. (no-one has enough hats) Less than half price, buy now!!!!***

***Item 2. Regimental Ties..... \$18.00 each. After all these years the beer and food stains must be building. Buy a new one now and attend your own funeral in a fresh new tie.***

***Item 3. All-weather Jackets..... I have only, 2 x XL and 2 x 2XL Jackets left in stock!!!! These warm good quality Jackets to clear at \$25.00 each!!!! Buy now.***

***Item 4. Short and Long sleeve Chambray Shirts..... Limited numbers and sizes. Who can buy a quality shirt like this for \$15.00 each!!!!!! Sizes and quantities are **Medium** 3 long sleeve, **Large** 2 short sleeve and 1 long sleeve, **XXL** 2 short sleeve 1 long sleeve, **XXXL** 3 Short sleeve, **5XL** 2 short sleeve.***

**All quoted prices are plus postage**

To order please contact Cossie on email at [cossie0102@bigpond.com](mailto:cossie0102@bigpond.com) or ring him on (02) 4930 3359.

**The Association acknowledges the ongoing support of the Ingleburn sub-Branch of the RSL in the publication of these Bulletins, and thanks them for their assistance.**