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12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association

INFORMATION BULLETIN No. 58 5th April 2017

1. Anzac Day:

Hard to believe that Anzac Day is just about on us again. It seems such a short time since the last one.

I haven't received any notices to send out regarding your after-march get-togethers, so I assume you're all organised. Anyway, wherever you might be and whoever you march with, I hope you have a good day.

2. Funeral of Neil Weekes:

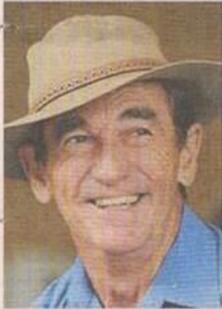
The following report regarding the funeral was sent to us by Jack Parr, 1RAR.

On Wednesday I travelled to Brisbane to attend Neil Weekes's funeral. It was a full Military funeral. ADF support was from the local 6RAR. They supplied the guard of honour, catafalque party and the like. It was impressive. The street was closed off and the guard formed along the road. The Army Band led the procession followed by an F250 truck which looked like an army hearse. It towed a ceremonial gun which carried the casket. Pall Bearers supplied by the ADF.

The funeral was well attended by veterans from a wide range units and associations including our own 1RAR The Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove delivered the eulogy of Neil's career in the Army.

Flood also sent us the following article from the Courier Mail.

62 OBITUARY WEDNESDAY MARCH 15 2017 COURIERMAIL.COM.AU



Career soldier one of our toughest

NEIL Weekes was never known to walk away from a fight, whether on Vietnam's battlefields or battling bureaucracies over veterans' benefits. But he lost the biggest battle of his life last week when an aggressive brain tumour claimed one of Australia's toughest soldiers of the contemporary era at the age of 71.

Neil Weekes was educated in Sarina and at St Brendan's College in Yeppoon before entering Teachers Training College at Kelvin Grove in Brisbane. He was called up for national service on February 1, 1967.

At Kapooka he was selected for officer training and after graduating from the Officer Training Unit Scheyville on July 7, he was posted to 3 Platoon, A Company, 1RAR.

He deployed to Vietnam with the battalion in March 1968, leading his platoon in the Battle of Coral on May 15-16, with his gallantry recognised by the awarding of the Military Cross.

He returned to Australia to be discharged at the end of his national service in December 1968 but was soon back in the army and 1RAR, serving with the battalion in Singapore and Malaysia during 1969-1971. He also served in Papua New Guinea with 2 RPIR at Wewak, and attended the Malaysian Armed Forces Staff College at Kuala Lumpur.

He was a consummate infantryman, leader and instructor, holding many demanding staff, regimental and training postings, including at the Royal Military College, Duntroon.

From July 1985 to December 1987 he commanded NORFORCE, a surveillance unit with sub-units in the Northern Territory and the Kimberley area of Western Australia.

He was appointed a member of the Order of Australia (AM) for his leadership.

He returned to Townsville in December 1990, on promotion to colonel, to command the district support unit, beginning 22 years in the city.

He retired from the regular army in 1993 after 26 years service, but would remain in the Army Reserve for a further five years, being promoted to brigadier and commanding II Brigade, Ares at Jezzine Barracks.

His civil employment was with James Cook University, where he was executive officer to the Vice-Chancellor until he retired in 2003. For Brigadier Weekes retirement was relative as he was Townsville patron to the Vietnam Veterans Association, National Servicemen's Association and the RSL.

For many years he also was the radio voice of Townsville's Anzac Day march.

In recent years the passionate fisherman had lived on Bribe Island.

Brigadier Weekes is survived by his wife Jo, children Marie, Mark and John and six grandchildren.

ROSS EASTGATE

NEIL HARVEY WEEKES, MC, AM
Retd. Brigadier, teacher
Born: September 21, 1945, Mackay
Died: March 6, 2017, Brisbane

DO YOU WANT TO HONOUR SOMEONE? WRITE TO US AT OBITUARY EDITOR, THE COURIER-MAIL, GPO BOX 130, BRISBANE 4001, OR EMAIL OBITUARY@THECOURIERMAIL.COM.AU

3. From the Archives:

Flood sent us this little newspaper report from 1968. Note the reference to his dodgy gambler's past. Hilarious, but these days they'd have PETA breathing down their necks.

"HO", the rat – got the chopper

SAIGON, Sat, - Australian soldiers dug in at fire-support base Concord, turned a plague of rats into racetrack champions rivalling Randwick. However, there was a difference; the penalty for losing was instant death. The Australians took over Concord about a month ago and found it "alive" with rats.

They killed scores in their first few days there, but, later when the rodent population had been reduced to manageable proportions, they caught the rats alive and began to race them.

The racecourse consisted of cylindrical cardboard 105mm shell canisters cut in half and joined together side by side. The diggers roofed the tracks with transparent plastic sheeting and set cages at both ends. The winner was the first rat to scuttle up his track and back again to the starting cage – a distance of about 20 yards.

For his efforts he received the title of "Concord Champion", and a piece of chocolate. The losers were summarily executed.

For a few days the champion was "Ho Chi Minh" – a lean and wiry specimen with long drooping whiskers.

But "Ho Chi Minh" ran his last race the day he was matched against a giant rust-coloured rat named "Pharrat".

"Pharrat" jumped lengths clear at barrier-rise and was never headed. He lapped "Ho", who had apparently been feeling the effects of recent heavy racing, and set a course record.

"Pharrat", owned by Gunner Graham Floyd, 20, of Ouyen, Victoria, went on to win five races in succession, including the Concord Cup.

The fourth Anzac Battalion spent about one month operating out of fire support base Concord – 18 miles north-east of Saigon. They have since returned to the Nui Dat Task Force base in Phuoc Tuy Province.

AAP Special

4. Report from Ken Marsden:

Our member Ken Marsden has sent us this report about his latest success with his projects in Vietnam. Keep up the good work, Ken.

Giday all, just a little update on my activities, " KEN'S A DAD @ 70 "

Clarification..... The first cow I bought for a family in Vietnam has given birth to a healthy female calf, mother and baby are doing well.

This is a GREAT help to the family financially especially being a female because of it's breeding ability therefore more expensive. This is the first calf from this mother so they will keep her for a few years, build the young one up and sell her at about 4-5 months then get mum pregnant again.

I am returning at the end of the month for another stint and do my bit.

Cheers, hope everyone is fit and well (for old people that is) Good Luck to all... Ken

5. Proof That Women Were Also Called Up For National Service:

Pete Geelen has sent us the following copy of a letter that his wife Pat received from The Department of Labour and National Service in January 1967. The letter is clearly querying why Pat (or "Patrick" according to their records) had not registered for National Service and is demanding an immediate reply.

No doubt her reply was something like, "Because I'm a woman you morons!!"

(Mind you, Peter reckons we would have actually won the war in Vietnam if Pat had been conscripted and sent there!)

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA
DEPARTMENT OF LABOUR AND NATIONAL SERVICE
NATIONAL SERVICE ACT

Patrick Turner,
20 Filmer Avenue,
GLYSBURG EAST

National Service
Registration Office
39 Currie Street,
ADELAIDE
12th January, 1967.

Dear Sir,

I am writing to ask about your registration for national service.

Would you be good enough to let me know whether you have registered, and if you have, when you did so and the registration number appearing on your Certificate of Registration.

If you have not registered, would you please let me know the date and place of your birth and the reason why you have not registered.

Please let me have your reply without delay. If more convenient you could call at this office or ring me at 51.3541.

Yours faithfully,


Registrar

NS 29 (Rev 9/65)

Just for interest, in the following year Pat did eventually enlist and became a Private in the 12th WRAAC Coy before being honorably discharged at her request at the end of 1970.

6. A Great Honour For Some of Our Members Who Were ex-102 Battery:

For some time, our group of ex-102 Battery Vietnam 1968 blokes has been liaising with the officers and men of the new 102nd (Coral) Battery. It's part of an initiative set up by the Australian Artillery Association to bring old and new artillery units together for their mutual benefit. We old blokes get a kick out of helping where we can, and the new battery benefits by strengthening its history and traditions.

During March, 102nd (Coral) Battery was deployed to the Cultana Training Grounds near Port Augusta in South Australia for a week of live-firing exercises with other batteries and infantry battalions. The BC of the battery extended an invitation to all us ex-102 Field Battery blokes in Adelaide to attend one afternoon and night of the live-firing exercise. We had to pay for our supper by addressing the gunners and grunts out in the field and telling them about Coral and its defenses (or lack thereof....), and answering questions.

It turned out that only one South Australian was available, so an urgent call went out to the eastern states for a few extra blokes who could fly to Adelaide on short notice. We ended up with four of us, picked up in Adelaide by army transport and driven up to Cultana where we were treated like royalty. The live firing was spectacular (seemed to have no budget restraints on training ammo like they did in our day), with hours of 155mm HE shells, Steyr rifles and MGs firing tracer, grenades, recoilless rifles, mortars, all illuminated by constant flares above. Close your eyes and you were immediately back at Coral!!!



Larry Darcy, John Harms, Trevor Bryant and Rob Costello with some of the men of 102nd (Coral) Battery.

7. Welfare Report – 5th April 2017.

Some of our members have not been enjoying the best of health, so if you can, please give them a call to cheer them up.

I spoke with **Mick Ekman (Cptn. HQ Bty/104Bty 1968-69)** after **Arthur Burke OAM (105Bty 1969-70)** advised Trevor that Mick had not been well.

Mick has been recovering over the past 5 weeks from a successful operation to remove a tumor from his liver and other areas and is set to begin Chemo treatment next week.

Mick has had quite a doing and I know that Mick has received many best wishes through Arthur, enquiring as to Mick's condition and wishing him a speedy recovery.

Incidentally, **Arthur** tells me that he is well and is keeping fit with regular golf and gym activities.

Our President **Don Tait (Cptn.102 Bty. 1968-69)** is recovering from a stint in hospital after a colon and small bowel problem which has no doubt, been very painful. Members may be aware that Don had a serious colon and bowel cancer operation a little while ago and does require hospital treatment from time to time. Don tells me that he has lost a fair bit of weight, so Don, we all wish you all the very best.

I had a message from **Cossie** that **David (Thomo) Thomas (102 Bty 1968-69)** is suffering from his yearly dose of Ross River fever but he has not been well for some weeks.

I spoke with Thomo's wife Lynn tonight who has told me that doctors think Thomo may have additional chest or other problems in addition to the Ross River Fever.

He has now been admitted to hospital to undergo further tests and Lynn will keep us up to date with Thomo's condition which I will pass on to members when received.

Lynn also told me that Thomo has unintentionally lost quite a deal of weight, which is also giving doctors some concern.

We are thinking of you Lynn and Thomo and hope all goes well for Thomo.

I have received a message from **Ian Macauley (HQ & 104 Bty 1971)** that he has spoken recently to **Julie Perkin**, wife of **Bob (104 Bty 1971)** who passed away in February after a battle with cancer. Julie advised Ian that she is coping as well as can be expected and that the family were very grateful for the 12 Field representation at Bob's funeral and has asked Ian to pass on her thanks for the flowers sent.

Please keep me updated with any members who are not well so I can keep everyone informed.

Regards, Rick Cranna (Welfare officer).

8. Secretary's Leave:

Members please note that your Secretary (that's me) will be on Easter Leave up near Coff's Harbour from Monday 10th till Thursday 20th April, and will only be contactable by mobile phone. I take this opportunity to wish you all a wonderful Easter holiday with plenty of family around you.

Note also that, as usual, I'll be in Sydney for the Anzac Day march and I look forward to catching up with some of you who will be there.

9. Reunion:

I'm still feeling gutted that there are such a comparatively few members who have registered for this terrific event – 24 actual members (plus their spouses for a total of 43) out of a total membership of nearly 300 – about 8%. It's not good enough.

As I did with the last Bulletin, I attach a copy of the reunion information flyer and the Registration Form in case there are any of you who make a last minute decision to attend. I live in hope!

And for those of you who have already registered, we organisers guarantee you will have a great time.

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.