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12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association INFORMATION BULLETIN #14 11th July 2013

1. New Members:

On behalf of all members, we welcome Harold "Bing" Crosbie as an Associate Member. Bing served as a Signalman with 104 Signal Squadron in Vietnam from April 1968 to February 1969. Hopefully we can all get to meet him at next year's reunion.

2. Missing Mates:

Remember the two ex-Gunners – John McDonell and Roderick Parker - we were trying to trace in the last Info Bulletin? Well, thanks to terrific feedback from our members, we have been able to provide the required information. Thanks to all of you who provided input.

3. Yungaburra Memorial to Veterans of the Afghanistan Conflict:

The following moving report is from member Steve Lewis:

"In the 44 years since I returned from active service in South Vietnam, I have had occasion to attend many memorial services, perhaps none more poignant or moving than the 1987 welcome home parade through the streets of Sydney. On that occasion I recall an ageing WWII veteran in the crowd, a chest full of campaign medals and one sleeve pinned as he had no arm with which to fill it. As I passed this man he reached out with his one arm and said "thankyou", and I am not ashamed to say that from that point in the march, tears streamed from my eyes, perhaps made less visible by the fact that I fortuitously had chosen to wear sunglasses for the parade. Until recently, no other service has made quite the same impact on me since.

On Saturday June 22nd, I was holidaying in far north Queensland and had the honour of attending a very special service where a memorial dedicated to veterans of the Afghanistan conflict was to be consecrated. Named The Avenue of Honour, it placed particular emphasis on the 39 soldiers who had paid the supreme sacrifice, honouring each with a flame tree which flanked a pathway overlooking a magnificent park and lake setting on the banks of Lake Tinaroo.

The ceremony began with a skydiver carrying a huge Australian flag leaving a fixed wing aircraft and descending to the amplified music of Dire Straits playing their memorable anthem, Brothers In Arms. The tune sparked spontaneous applause from the crowd, estimated at over 2,000.

This is the first official memorial to veterans of the Afghanistan conflict and the occasion has significance in as much as the entire project has been driven by the parents of a soldier killed on active service in Afghanistan. With only community and local government help, the Chuck family have created a glorious and contemporary point of remembrance for all to share. In spite of non-federal government involvement in the construction of the memorial, the (then) Prime Minister Julia Gillard and Opposition Leader Tony Abbott were present at the ceremony, along with many notable national and local dignitaries including the Chief of the Defence Force and the Chief of the Army.

Perhaps one of the more poignant moments was listening to a senior Army officer reading the list of the 39, stating rank, name, unit and date of death. On several occasions he had to pause, his breathing audible as he composed himself to complete the task at hand. Undoubtedly he was aware of the fact that yet another tree would soon be added to the 39, making his job that much harder.

Equally poignant was the presence of relatives of the 39 men who were invited to place roses at the base of the memorial. My enduring memory of that part of the ceremony was the tender age of our soldiers' widows. May we have no more."

Stephen Lewis

4. Seymour Vietnam Veterans Commemorative Walk – Vietnam Veterans’ Day Service:

We are all invited to attend the first evening service at the Commemorative Walk which will be held on Vietnam Veterans’ Day Sunday 18th August at 6:00pm. Some of our members who attended the opening ceremony of this magnificent memorial may wish to attend or anyone else for that matter. A formal invitation is attached to the email to this Bulletin.

5. Reunion in 2014:

By now all members should have received preliminary notice of the details of the 12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association reunion being held at Maroochydore next year at the time of the National Gunners’ Dinner. On behalf of all members, I thank our “committee-of-two” – John Beer and Neil Mangels – for their hard work in getting it to this stage. And in case you were wondering, Neil wants to clarify that the Regimental Dinner on the reunion program will be formal dress, including jackets, ties and medals for blokes and also formal for the ladies.

It’s a terrific location, and the program these blokes have devised is excellent. Costs are low and the time of year is perfect. It’s the only chance we have to get together as a group before 2016, so it would be great to see as many members as possible in attendance.

6. Reunion Auction:

As in previous reunions, one of the major activities is the Reunion Auction. In the past, these auctions have raised thousands of dollars for the Association which is used to subsidise members’ attendance costs.

We are very keen to have donations of items for us to auction at next year’s reunion, so if you are able to spare any items of sentimental or monetary value which would attract bids at the auction, please let us have them. You can let our quartermaster Lawrie Bird know on lawrie.bird@bigpond.com or by ringing him on (02) 4954 8248.

While we’re on the subject of the reunion, Lawrie reminds us that he has stocks of fine quality polo and Chambray shirts available – perfect for wearing to a reunion!!

7. Flood’s ANZAC Day Photo:

For your interest, President Flood has submitted the attached photo of the 104 Battery Reunion contingent marching in Adelaide last Anzac Day under this caption/description:

“Members of 104 Field Battery from the 1968-9 and 1971 tours of South Vietnam marched in Adelaide on ANZAC day. Members attended the Henley/Grange RSL Dawn Service where Graham Floyd and Brian Armstrong laid a wreath on behalf of the Battery prior to the March. The Battery had 53 members on parade and 110 attended the formal dinner as part of the reunion celebrations.”

What a fine body of men!!

8. Vale Garb Ellis:

Although he wasn’t a member of our Association, many members will remember him as the BSM of HQ Battery. Sadly, Garb passed away on 21st April after a long illness. The Association offers its sincerest condolences to his family.

9. Secretary Trev Bryant’s Leave:

I’ll be away on overseas leave from 24th July until about 10th September, so I won’t be available to handle any Association business over that period. Please address any Association stuff to the acting Secretaries, Neil Mangels or John Beer, whose contact details appear in the letterhead above.

12 Field Regiment (Vietnam) Association is a Branch of RAA (NSW) Association Inc
The Association ABN is 90 248 586 329. However, the Association is not registered for GST and is Tax-exempt