

'In this major work, a defining account of those men and women who served in the Vietnam War and their challenges in its aftermath, Peter Yule has combined empathy, insight and forensic research of the highest order.' GENERAL SIR PETER COSGROVE

THE DEBRIEF LONG SHADOW



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COVER STORY: LONG SHADOW

AUSTRALIA'S VIETNAM
VETERANS SINCE THE WAR
PETER YULE

FOREWORD BY GENERAL SIR PETER COSGROVE

NATIONAL PRESIDENT REPORT

Dear Members,

The year is drawing to a close and I am sure that many of us look forward to that with a sigh of relief. On behalf of the members of the National Council, (your State Branch Presidents), and the members of the National Executive, I send you all, and your families, best wishes for the festive season and for 2021. We hope that Christmas 2020 will be a time when travel restrictions remain lifted and the many families who have been separated can be together again.



In October we looked forward to the launch of the latest Australian War Memorial book regarding the Vietnam War, “The Long Shadow, Australia’s Vietnam Veterans Since the War”, by Dr Peter Yule. During the last four to five years Peter has kindly attended meetings of our National Council and briefed them on some of his observations and progress, often accompanied by Craig Tibbitts from the AWM, who was part of Peter’s team. Attendance at the launch was restricted due to COVID but I was pleased we had a strong representative group present, some from the NSW Branch led by Sam Vecchio and some from the ACT organised by our Debrief Editor. My plan to be present was dashed when my flight was cancelled at short notice but as I had made some other appointments in Canberra, I was able to find a later flight and fill those obligations.

The task faced by Peter Yule in writing and researching this book was substantial, as is the volume itself. To whet your interest, I am also pleased that this edition of Debrief includes a review of “The Long Shadow”, written by Mr Kel Robertson. As many of you are aware, Kel is an independent researcher and writer who is now engaged in research into the history of your association. Kel’s task is significant and I appreciate very much his commitment to writing this review.

In Canberra post the launch I met with the Secretary of DVA, Ms Liz Cosson and Repatriation Commissioner Don Spinks. We covered several topics of importance to Vietnam veterans and their families, and to veterans generally and I enjoyed the frank and open nature of those discussions. Later I also had a valuable meeting with senior staff of Open Arms on our continuing interest in the activities of the Counselling Service and some of our thoughts for its future. The only down side of the week was the lengthy travel time to Perth, via Brisbane, followed by two weeks of home quarantine.

A face to face meeting of the ESO Round Table (ESORT) had been called for late November which allowed me to schedule further meetings in DVA, with Open Arms, the War Memorial and Kel Robertson re his research. I also attended the AGM of the Veterans’ Indemnity and Training Association (VITA), which provides liability insurance cover for our advocates. Notes on all these meetings will be provided to the members of the National Council shortly.

The release of the Brereton Report and subsequent public statements has caused much angst amongst veterans and their families, not only in the special forces community but also amongst all veterans and the broader community. At this time it is appropriate that your association notes these events but refrains from public comment. We are, however, taking a close interest in the arrangements proposed by the government to review the circumstances related to veterans’ suicides since 2001, and recently.

Finally, may I again express my best wishes to all members and their families and thank the many office-bearers of the Association for their work.

Max Ball

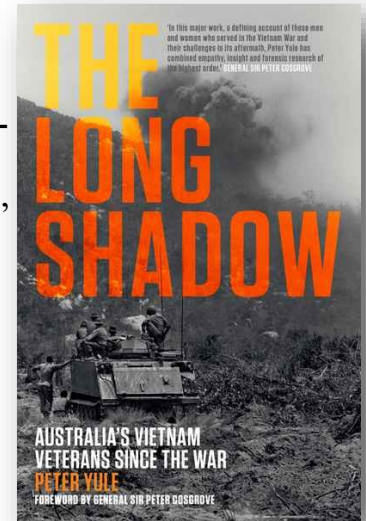
BOOK REVIEW (COVER)

By Kel Robertson

Important New History Does the Right Thing

“The Long Shadow: Australia’s Vietnam Veterans Since The War” by Peter Yule; NewSouth Publishing in association with the Australian War Memorial; 671 pages. RRP Hardback \$49.99

The challenge that confronted Peter Yule in writing “The Long Shadow” was a formidable one: to cover more than four decades of studies and inquiries into the health of Vietnam veterans (as well as agitation for those inquiries, and arguments surrounding their findings), while restoring veterans’ voices to the record, and fitting the veterans’ story into the bigger history of Australian veterans’ health and of the repatriation system. That Yule has met this challenge is undeniable. “The Long Shadow” is a remarkable book and will be the definitive work on Vietnam veterans’ health for decades to come.



More than that, it does the task Vietnam veterans wanted it to do, by discrediting F.B. Smith’s 1992 analysis of the Evatt Royal Commission, correcting his assessment of veterans’ motives for pursuing the chemical issue, and revising his harsh judgement of the conduct of the early VVAA.

It also does the ‘difficult to accomplish’ task of meeting the requirements of readers who are new to the history of Vietnam veterans’ health, as well as the requirements of readers more familiar with the relevant controversies and struggles.

Although Peter Cosgrove claims in his forward to have consumed the book “in one go” – a mighty feat, even though the work is highly readable – the volume rewards a slower, more careful reading and even re-reading. This is not just because it is packed with useful commentary and insightful observations, or because it includes illuminating quotations (mostly from interviews), but because it contains significant new material. Some of that material is based on new interviews: more than 120 with veterans; others with key people from government etc Some of the new materials is from records in DVA’s Melbourne file repository (which this reviewer has been denied access to).

Veterans should not be put off the by the size of the book; it needn’t be read cover to cover and, in any event, there is a voluminous index to assist browsing. However, the narrative is best digested from beginning to end, in the way Yule intended it to be. The chapters on waging war and medical issues in Vietnam, on the Evatt Royal Commission and on the Smith component of the official history are likely to be of particular interest to veterans. The earliest chapters about the health outcomes of earlier wars (with an intermittent focus on psychological difficulties), and about the evolution of the repatriation system – all written in Yule’s highly accessible style – will also interest. The concluding chapter, meanwhile, is vital reading, including, as it does, a useful summing up, a reassessment of the achievements of the early VVAA, and a recommendation, in effect, for further medical research (into the effects of pesticides).

It is the chapters on health studies in the decades after Evatt that veteran readers may find less rewarding, even though Yule and his team do an exemplary job of describing the studies, summing up the findings and working out what (if anything) they contribute to the store of knowledge about veterans’ health. It is not Yule’s fault that the description and analysis of studies in Australia and the US becomes a disheartening blur; there are so many studies and they too often achieve little. The findings, as demonstrated by Yule, are too frequently limited to a specific sub-group, marred by flawed study design or just plain inconsistent. Bearing in mind the improvements in science

Continued page 4

BOOK REVIEW (COVER)

By Kel Robertson

Continued from page 3

over the nearly forty-year period since the last Australian troops came home, and considering the money, hope and effort invested (by various players) in the many, many investigations, a clearer understanding of the causes and incidence of veterans' health problems might reasonably have been expected. The failure of most studies only serves to demonstrate the very real limitations of science.

Also, as Yule points out, quoting an American writer, readers who are looking for clear answers on the causes and incidence of specific health problems will not get much solace from the health studies.

Graham Walker (VVAA Research Officer, for most of the 1980s) observed, in discussing the "Long Shadow" with this reviewer, that the lack of a clear outcome on the herbicide issue (noted by Yule at various points) vindicates the position of the Association in the 1980s. This is because doubt, even then, was enough, under the repatriation legislation in place at the time, to have caused claims for herbicide-related harms to succeed. History shows, of course, that DVA ignored the requirements of legislation by not giving veterans "the benefit of the doubt" (something, ironically, pointed out by Evatt).

Why public servants thought themselves able to ignore the requirements of legislation made by the Australian Parliament has never been explained. If senior public servants or Ministers thought the law was no longer appropriate, it was incumbent on them to put changes to the Parliament. It was not up to them to decide which parts of the *Repatriation Act* they would implement and which parts they would ignore.

Yule's point about the early 'veteran activists' being motivated to struggle for a better deal for their mates because of the poor health they observed around them – because of the activists 'lived experience' – is an equally important one. Yule's rejection of the view held by other historians, that the VVAA's early focus on chemical harms impeded efforts to deal with other health problems, is also important.

But Yule has been brave in numerous other ways. He deals with sensitive issues – like alcohol and tobacco abuse, over-reporting of harms, the problem of distinguishing service from age-related conditions, and "me too-ism" on the part of some veterans – but is, at the same time, not averse to criticising DVA (especially for being slow to deal with veterans' mental health issues).

In such a big and complex work there are, inevitably, going to be at least a couple of mistakes. Adrian Bishop will be surprised to read that he was the president of the ACT Branch of the VVAA. Veterans in states other than Victoria who were pressuring Government for an independent counselling service will be just as surprised to learn that Operation Simpson – mostly a Victorian VVAA initiative – was the only veterans' push for such a service. These are, though, minor issues.

Peter Yule and his team have provided a thorough, comprehensive and veteran-inclusive history of the struggle to understand the range of health difficulties (physical and psychological) that have caused such harm to Vietnam veterans and their families. Yule has corrected the most important mistakes in earlier works, while displaying both compassion and rigour. "The Long Shadow" is, consequently, a volume that deserves a place on all Vietnam veterans' bookshelves.

*Kel Robertson is a Canberra writer.
He is currently researching the history of the VVAA.*

BOOK LAUNCH

28 October 2020—The launch of **The Long Shadow: Australia's Vietnam Veterans: Since the War** was held at the BAE Systems Theatre at the Australian War Memorial, Canberra. Unfortunately, due to COVID19 restrictions Peter Yule (Author), Hon Darren Chester MP and Graham Walker addressed the audience of 35 people via a video link.

Photos below courtesy Australia War Memorial.

Left to right:

Don Spinks, Repatriation Commissioner;

Robynne Mitchell, VVAA Debrief Editor;

Matt Anderson, Director Australian War Memorial



BAE SYSTEMS



Above: Peter Yule, Author

Below: Hon Darren Chester MP Minister for Veterans' Affairs and Minister for Defence Personnel

BAE SYSTEMS



Members VVAA St. Mary's Outpost "The Train" left to right: Sam Vecchio, NSW State President; Tony Mullavey, Sub Branch President; Robynne Mitchell, Debrief Editor; Nancy Cosgrove Education Co-ordinator; Vin Cosgrove Education Director.

MINISTER MATTERS

SATURDAY November 28, 2020

The Canberra Times

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Hero says decision to scrap SOTG unit citation a disgrace

Help is at hand

In the wake of the release of the Inspector-General of the Australian Defence Force's Inquiry into Afghanistan, there has been plenty of media commentary quick to judge our servicemen and women.

We can't allow the alleged actions of a few people to stain the reputations and the service of more than two million Australians who have done their duty with distinction.

They are the first people we turn to when things get difficult or too big for state authorities, such as last summer's bushfires and the respond *to* the OVID-19 pandemic. And they keep us safe in an ever-changing world.

If you know a serving ADF member, or a veteran, please show them your support. If

you are an ADF member, or a veteran, or one of the many families that support them, I would also ask you to please reach out if you need someone to talk to.

For all current ADF members and their families, the Defence all-hours Support Line is a confidential telephone and online service and is available on 1800 628 036. For all current and former ADF members, and their families, Open Arms provides 24-hour free and confidential counselling and support on 1800 011 046.

Open Arms also has support available through SafeZone and when you call, it is up to you how much or how little personal information you share. This is available on 1800 142 072.

Darren Chester MP, Minister Veterans' Affairs and Defence Personnel

EMAILS

From: John Rowan <jrowan@vva.org>
Sent: Thursday, 22 October 2020 2:51 AM
To: secretary@vvaa.org.au;
Subject: RE: DEBRIEF

Good issue. Great job by all. You folks are doing some great things down under. Congratulations.
Thanks,
John

John Rowan, Pres. & CEO
Vietnam Veterans of America

VVAA HISTORY UPDATE

In recent months Kel Robertson has continued working his way through VVAA and RSL records relevant to the early years of the Association.

“My strategy” he said, “was to make progress with the paper records, in case there were further COVID-19 lockdowns of the National Library and the Australian War Memorial. That there were no big virus outbreaks in the ACT was a good thing, of course, but the end result for me is hundreds of pages of notes that now need to be slotted into the electronic chronology.”

That work will happen, according to Robertson, over the summer. Interviews are also to be resumed in 2021.

The big goal for the year ahead, though, will be researching the Association’s participation in the Evatt Royal Commission, and completing some State visits. A new “Most Wanted” list of people who Robertson would like to speak to, but can’t locate, will appear in the next “Debrief” update.

Editor

CANUNGRA MEMORIAL GROVE

The Cover Story in the last edition of Debrief featured the Canungra Memorial Grove dedicated to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV).

In support of the AATTV Association’s effort in lobbying for public access to these grounds the VVAA has discussed the matter with the Minister for Defence Industry and hope to be able to advise soon as to what arrangements have been made for public access.



Photo courtesy AATTV Assn

Editor

MEDAL OF GALLANTRY (MG)

ANTHONY (TONY) HOWARD JENSEN MG

At Fire Support Base Coral Lieutenant Tony Jensen was the 2ic of the 1 RAR Mortar Platoon.

For Tony’s actions on the mortar line on 13 May 1968, the Governor General, on 4 December 2020, has been pleased to announce the award of the Medal of Gallantry (MG) to Lieutenant Colonel Anthony Howard Jensen (Retd).

Tony served in 1RAR Vietnam 27 MAR 1968—28 JAN 1969



MINISTER MATTERS



Australian Government
Department of Veterans' Affairs

MEDIA RELEASE

DVA WINS AWARD FOR BUSINESS INNOVATION

THE Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) Data and Insights Branch has been selected as the [Winner for Business Innovation](#) in The Australian Business Awards 2020 for its Priority Investment Approach – Veterans (PIA-V) evidence-based platform.

The [Australian Business Awards](#) are an annual awards program which recognises organisations that demonstrate the core values of business innovation. The Business Innovation Award is awarded to organisations that implement business initiatives which demonstrate innovative solutions for new and existing business needs.

The department received the award for its development of the Priority Investment Approach – Veterans (PIA-V) evidence-based platform. The platform supports the transformation of DVA by embedding the use of data and analytics in its day-to-day functions, adopting a proactive approach to knowing as much as we can about our veteran clients and monitoring the services and supports we provide to them.

DVA Secretary, Liz Cosson AM CSC said the achievement is a testament to the department's commitment to improving engagement and outcomes for clients.

"I am delighted with the result and would like to extend my congratulations to our Data and Insights team for their hard work and commitment, which has led to this well-deserved award," Ms Cosson said.

"DVA is committed to providing the best possible outcomes for our veteran community and supporting their health and wellbeing beyond their time in the military. That is what the PIA-V platform is all about – it helps us to know as much as we can about veterans and their families so that we can deliver the best possible support for them."

The PIA-V platform uses anonymised data and advanced analytics techniques to build comprehensive insights about how veterans engage with and use DVA services.

"Since PIA-V's introduction, DVA has been able to better understand and monitor expected outcomes for veterans over the long-term, improving our engagement with them and offering proactive support to clients with complex needs," Ms Cosson said.

"This project allows us to tailor policy development, program design and service delivery based on strong evidence and ensuring a needs-based approach.

"This is a valuable project that will have a positive impact on the health and wellbeing of Australia's veteran community for many years to come and I am pleased that it has been recognised by the Australian Business Awards."

Contact: DVA Media media.team@dva.gov.au

Evaluation of DVA's treatment cycle

Request for survey participants

Dear Terry Roe, National Secretary – **Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia**,

In October 2019, the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) introduced treatment cycle arrangements for referrals from general practitioners (GPs) to allied health providers (AHP). The arrangements are currently being independently evaluated by Queensland University of Technology (QUT) at the request of DVA.

You have received this invitation because **VVAA** represents veterans, and QUT feels it is important for your members to have their say on the changes made to the DVA treatment cycle arrangements.

Engaging veterans

QUT needs to engage with veterans who have received allied health services through the treatment cycle arrangements.

We need your help to reach as many eligible veterans as possible. QUT would like to know if **VVAA** is willing to share the survey with your members. If so, please find the survey at the following link: <https://survey.qut.edu.au/f/195211/2ad4/>.

You may share the survey through your website, newsletter, email lists, apps, social media accounts or display posters on your premises. Please see attached advertising materials including images, videos, posters and suggested wording for social media posts.

What will be involved for veteran participants?

1. The study will involve an online survey which will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Participants cannot be identified in any way and their decision to participate is voluntary.
2. After completing the survey, participants will be invited to discuss their opinions and experiences via an optional follow-up interview to be arranged for a preferred time and date.

Referring

If your organisation would not like to participate but you know of other organisations who support veterans, please feel free to share this email with them.

Questions or concerns

Please respond to this email if you have any questions or concerns and wish to discuss further.

More information

For more information, please visit the evaluation website www.qut-dva-treatmentcycles-evaluation.com

Thank you for your contribution to the evaluation of the treatment cycle.

Kind regards,

QUT evaluation team

Project: DVA allied health treatment cycle evaluation

QUT evaluation team | **Project:** DVA treatment cycle arrangements | School of Public Health and Social Work | Faculty of Health | Queensland University of Technology (QUT) | **email:** evaluationproject@qut.edu.au | **website:** www.qut-dva-treatmentcycles-evaluation.com

FIRST PRIZE WINNER—Jade Washbourne

I'm a 22-year-old from the beautiful Bega Valley Shire in NSW. I grew up in Pambula and after 18 months living in Canberra in my late teens, I found the coast calling me and moved with my dog Muffin to Eden only a 17-minute drive from where I grew up.

In my spare time I'm an avid reader, painter and recently writer. I've always been incredibly passionate about supporting and mentoring others, which has led me to study a Bachelor of Psychological Sciences at Swinburne University via correspondence, of which I am set to finish my final year in 2021.

Outside of my degree I also enjoy volunteering and have recently started a casual role that I can do while at university as a Youth Worker supporting high school students.

My father Glenn, joined the Navy at 15 and was deployed to Vietnam in 1970 as a member of the 135th Royal Australian Navy Helicopter Flight Vietnam and he has been a big supporter of my passion for helping others and his experiences and adversities as a result of his participation in the war have been a driving force for me in achieving this goal.



The 30th of April 1975 by Jade Washbourne

The 30th of April 1975, a distant memory to many but also an unforgettable one, its significance has lingered on despite the decades that have passed because for many it signified the end of an event that the world had never seen before, it signified the end of the Vietnam War. For some individuals however, the 30th of April 1975 holds a different significance, because for some, individuals like me, that historical date does not signify the end of the Vietnam War.

The Vietnam War still rages on, a strong and permanent fixture in our everyday lives, a strong and permanent influence on our families and a strong and permanent impact on many Australian families.

It is difficult to explain quite the depth that the impact of the Vietnam War had and continues to have on the Australian family.

My perspective is in some ways inherently unique as I am the twenty-two-year-old, only daughter to a seventy-three-year-old veteran.

I was born twenty-two years, two hundred and seventy-two months or eight thousand two hundred and seventy-one days after the end of the Vietnam War.

I grew up in the early noughties, a time of Von Dutch hats, flip phones and low-rise jeans. When the prospect of war so heavily televised seemed unfathomable, despite international conflicts being fought in my lifetime at the time I was very unaware of them, however I was always aware of the Vietnam War, and its impact can be seen in every facet of my life.

Growing up without brothers and sisters I was the sole focus of my father's love, but equally the negative symptoms of his post-traumatic stress disorder that he had developed as a result of his participation in the conflict in Vietnam. Unfortunately for me its onset was triggered by my birth so any knowledge of my father before his post-traumatic stress is limited to the anecdotal evidence of others.

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SECOND PRIZE WINNER—Jane Wotherspoon

I grew up in Brisbane with my parents, younger sister, and younger brother. Dad had been called up for national service in a ballot in 1965 at the age of 20, prior to meeting Mum. He was in Vietnam from 1966 to 1967, with the 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment. While growing up, and for much of my adult life, I didn't know any other children of Vietnam veterans. I still live in Brisbane now, with my own family - my partner and two sons.



I had no idea what I wanted to do when I left school and ended up studying a few different things, ranging from ecology to sociology to journalism. I worked for a number of years in media access. When my first child was a baby, I started studying psychology, found it fascinating, and now work in that field. I am particularly interested in developmental psychology and research.

I think providing a platform to talk about the impact of war and trauma on individuals and those close to them is incredibly important, as such an impact is, unfortunately, widespread and ongoing, and therefore I appreciated the opportunity provided by AVCAT and the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia to contribute to the discussion in this way. I look forward to learning about others' experiences and perspectives.

Safe by Jane Wotherspoon

"Posttraumatic stress disorder may be one of the most important explanations for the effects of deployment on the sons and daughters of military personnel reported on here."

"Sons and daughters have been found to constantly monitor and modify their behaviour to protect their father from known triggers for distress."

Vietnam Veterans' Family Study, 2014

The question took me by surprise – did anyone know about outcomes for children of Vietnam veterans? It certainly had its place in a lecture on child psychopathology, but, as always, I needed time to consider - should I say anything? If so, what? Statistics? Personal experience? And to what end? Seconds passed, someone started talking about a distant connection. I listened, looking down, heart racing.

So to a question about the impact on children of Vietnam veterans, my response was to become vigilant, alert, uncomfortable. Would speaking suggest a childhood of anger, alcoholism, and an emotionally distant father? And what did being the child of a Vietnam veteran qualify me to contribute anyway? What did I actually know about outcomes beyond statistics? Because I have never been able to determine exactly how the Vietnam War has impacted myself or my family.

All I have are stories, changing over time. Sometimes it has been hard for me to accept the uncontrolled nature of the experiment, to not be able to say, "Because of *a*, then *b*." "Because *that date* was drawn in that lottery in 1965, our lives have unfolded like *this*." But at other times, I have been intrigued by the uncertainty, the shifts and glimpses and little epiphanies, as we have tried, together and by ourselves, to understand. From my perspective, it seemed at first like I was born into a happy ending.

Once upon a time around 1980, Vietnam was 13 years in Dad's past. He now had a beloved wife and

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THIRD PRIZE WINNER—Jo Hagen

My Dad served in the Vietnam war shortly before I was born. His grandfather, my great-grandfather, was killed in action during the First World War in 1917. Dad was so touched when I visited my great-grandfather's grave in the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery in Belgium during my backpacking adventures in Europe.

Writing this essay has been cathartic and there's definitely been some tears shed in the process.

I live in Adelaide with my partner and daughter in a house with a large backyard, fruit trees, a vegetable garden and lots of birdlife.

I enjoy reading autobiographies, movies, and spending time with my family.



Reflections by Jo Hagen

It seems fitting that I begin this story on 18 August 2020, National Vietnam Veterans' Day.

It's been five years. Five years since Dad's first suicide attempt.

I'd been in a yoga class. Feeling serene, I emerged from class to find several missed calls from my Dad's good friend Gary. Dad was over 2,000 kilometres away from my home in Adelaide. He'd escaped to Queensland over 20 years earlier, after leaving his second marriage.

I immediately called Gary. He informed me he'd done a welfare check on Dad and found him semi responsive in bed, with notes taped on his door not to enter and to call an ambulance. Gary had expressed concerns about Dad's mental health over the preceding months and asked what we could do to help but I'd brushed them off, again. After years of living with not only my Dad's mental health, trauma and PTSD but my brother's, and my own, battles, my self-coping strategy was to bury my head in the sand.

Gary called an ambulance and advised me he'd found empty pill bottles, and a note to me. It felt so surreal.

After several days Dad woke up in Nambour Hospital in ICU. I was SO relieved to hear his voice. He apologised and said he'd made a mistake. I think the memories and loneliness he felt on National Vietnam Veterans' Day led to a rash decision that day.

Within five months, Dad was gone forever.

My Dad, Mike, was an infantry soldier and machine gunner in the 7th Battalion in Vietnam between April 1967 and April 1968. I remember his years of service easily as his personalised number plates read NAM 678. Unlike many veterans, he was not conscripted. He was in the army and volunteered to go, to serve his country. Dad later quoted Weary Dunlop 'As a young man it is an experience you may pay a million dollars to do, and having done it once you would pay a million dollars never to have to do it again'.

I didn't realise the full impact that the Vietnam War had on Dad, and our family, until my 20s.

I was born in Adelaide in 1969, just over a year after Dad returned from Vietnam. I suffered from bad eczema as a baby and still do today, a possible outcome from Dad's Agent Orange exposure.

Dad missed the birth of my older brother, Anthony, in 1967. I can't imagine what it was like for a young Mum to be raising a newborn alone while her husband was fighting a war in Vietnam. An-

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THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY

A MOST INTERESTING 3 YEAR - PART 2 of 3

Continued from September-October DEBRIEF

My Patrol Commander, Gordon Simpson lost both his legs in most unusual circumstances in July 1968. In the South East of the Province there are two jungle areas called the “Long Green” and the “Light Green”, both south of the small village of Xuyen Moc and between these two jungle clad “greens” was a long un-used rice paddy. It seems other units had encountered the enemy in this paddy and been given a beating. So to even the score the Task Force “bosses” wanted a SAS patrol (14 patrol plus 3) who would act as bait and walk down the middle of this un-used rice paddy, to draw the enemies fire. The sting in the tail - if the enemy did open fire on us, there was a company of infantry from 1 Battalion, who were only minutes behind us in the jungle ready to attack. If our patrol had been attacked we probably could have looked after ourselves for a short time, we had three machine guns (M60s) and plenty of ammunition.

Thank God nothing did happen – we ended the patrol at the end of this long grass paddy and moved into some thick scrub on the left. We hadn’t gone more than a dozen paces when an almighty explosion occurred, I couldn’t see what had happened as my automatic reaction saw me on the ground in a firing position. Then having regained my feet I learned that a mine had exploded and hit our patrol commander Gordon Simpson, the amazing aspect of this incident is our forward scout, Denis Cullen must have stepped over the mine and only caught some small pieces of shrapnel to the back of his head and neck whereas Gaz received the same to his face. Immediately after the explosion I was on the radio arranging cas-e-vac – a “dust-off” chopper was there in no-time and Gordon was on the operating table within 20 minutes. It was believed to be an American M16 “jumping jack” mine, but thankfully it didn’t jump out of the ground and explode – it just exploded in the ground. If it had exploded above the ground there would have been many more damaged troopers.

Following this unfortunate accident to Simmo, the 2 Squadron “boss” (Maj. Brian Wade) sent both Adrian Blacker and myself down to Vung Tau for a couple of days R & C (Rest in Country). Having stored our “clobber” in the REMFs hut, then late in the afternoon, it was into town and the many bars. Yours truly and Adrian certainly hated a beer and whilst in town we met up with Barry Young (ex-Regiment, but then serving with the Training Team), more drinking until we realized the current time, the evening curfew and a closed camp. Barry then suggested a room in the Grand Hotel, case of beer and three young ladies. Adrian and I thought it a great idea, but both of us had very little money, to which Barry loaned both of us a US \$100 note, which by the way took me 30 years to pay him back.

Once in our room, three double-beds, in this bloody long room, a case of beer and three local young ladies. The beer arrived followed by the three young ladies and having been the individual who arranged for their attendance, I selected the best looking of the three (what an error). While the other four got down to making babies, my young lady informed me she was a catholic and had to say her prayers before hitting the sack. There I was sitting at the end of this bed viewing this young lady kneeling on the bed, hands clasped and mumbling her prayers in Vietnamese. Then glancing at the other four, the two ladies were gibbering and Barry and Adrian drinking the booze. Meanwell, I’m still waiting and hoping - then when she did hit the sack, she just laid there as if dead, a hand job (commonly known as Mrs. Palmer and her 5 daughters) would have been much more exciting. And another amazing fact – none of us caught anything that was contagious or crawling.

Kim Pember was sitting on his bed cleaning his rifle or maybe playing with it, he can’t remember which - when Kim McAlear, who shared the tent with Franco (Ian Franklin) appeared holding two bottles of Spirits and asked if I could look after them as he was due to go on patrol that afternoon. Sure I said, just put them under my bed for now and I’ll hide them later. As is well known, be-

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VVAA BRANCH NEWS

ST. MARY'S OUTPOST & VETERANS CENTRE

The Outpost Sub Branch continues to be a lighthouse association within the Vietnam Veteran and Veteran Community.

Over the past 25+ years or so the Outpost Sub Branch has attracted a membership of around 300 (+ or -) and continues to manage and deliver a range of veteran support programs despite the impact and restrictions of COVID 19 across 2020.

While many other VV Sub Branches across Australia struggle to service and maintain veteran support programs due to the passage of time, declining VV members and veterans capable/willing to devote time, energy and expertise to veterans affairs the Outpost soldiers on (50 year anniversary of the end of the Vietnam War commitment for Australia coming up)

Three factors align to support the St Marys Outpost Sub Branch:

1. A willing and committed membership who hold dear to the status of Australian veterans within the community.
2. "The Train" complex and surrounds, a beautiful, functional location and environment for sub branch activities.
3. A strong and supportive relationship with St Marys RSL Sub Branch. In many cases the membership of the Outpost Sub Branch and the RSL Sub Branch are a mirror image of each other.

Veteran and veteran family programs operating out of "The Train" include: advocacy and support, pension and compensation claims, welfare programs involving hospital and home visits, funeral services, a drop in centre for veterans, their family and general community, the "Train Washers" maintenance group including social groups, computer education classes, choir group, veterans wives and partners group base, and the Outpost Education Program.

These individual programs combine to make the VVAA St Marys Outpost Sub Branch and Veterans Centre a vibrant organisation within the veteran community and the St Marys district surrounds.

Spotlighting just one of the above mentioned programs – "The Outpost Education Program (OEP)" may be of interest to Debrief readers.

Across 16 years of operation the OEP, established in 2004, has presented at 106 school/college locations, some as many as 14 times across that period bringing the total number of presentations to date to 858. Further, the total number of senior students who have experienced the OEP presentation across that period now exceeds 75,000. This figure is one that the Outpost membership can be well pleased with. The words "We Will Remember Them" and "Lest We Forget" come to mind across school presentations when honouring the 521 Vietnam service personnel listed on the Roll of Honour at the Australian War Memorial and the 3000 plus veterans bearing the physical scars of the war together with the unknown number of veterans and family continuing to deal with PTSD and health issues.

Worthy of note also is the fact that the OEP, comprising two plus hours of presentation time, is offered to schools with no set fee or charge. However, schools freely make a donation of their choosing to the Outpost as a way of showing their appreciation for the educational value and professionalism of the presentation through bringing primary resource personnel to the classroom who have a depth of knowledge of the Vietnam War topic far beyond the class teachers capacity. The school donations across 16 years cover all program management, delivery costs, travel costs and necessary sundry items.

An accompanying photo with this article showing students dressed in Vietnam War gear is a very

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VVAA BRANCH NEWS

ST. MARY'S OUTPOST & VETERANS CENTRE

Continued from page 14

popular role play/dress up component of the school presentation.

The OEP presents at a broad range of educational settings under the banner and supervision of the NSW Dept of School Education, The Catholic Education Office and The Independent Schools Commission. These administrative bodies cover both government and non-government schools. Notably, the OEP visits a wide range of socio-economic disadvantaged environments operating under these overarching authorities throughout the western and southern districts of Sydney to the perhaps more affluent locations involving some of the most prestigious schools and colleges.

OEP visits to the north (St Josephs College, Aberdeen), south (Monaro High, Cooma), west of the ranges (Gilgandra High), eastern seaboard (Pittwater House School) among others, make up the Outreach connections to the program. Considering these locations along with Sydney and Metropolitan Schools the OEP footprint, emanating from the Outpost covers a significant area of NSW.

A recent review of schools visited across the years show co-educational NSW State Schools, Catholic, Anglican and Christian, as well as Muslim and Jewish schools involving boys only or girls only presentations. This review shows the VVAA St Marys Outpost Education Programs caters to a very diverse mix of students from state schools and prominent religious groups which now involves students from all corners of the world, those with generations of Australian Citizenship to those recently arrived in this country. The faces in today's student audiences, are vastly different to the presentation groups of earlier years.

Vietnam Veterans' service and sacrifice, as mentioned above, now 50 or so years ago, and encapsulated in the recently published tome "The Long Shadow" by Peter Yule, makes it all the more important that today's rich cultural mix of students hear the Vietnam War story and its place in Australia's Military History.

*VIN COSGROVE OAM
Outpost Education Program*



Above: Remembrance Day Service at Our Lady of the Rosary School Students wearing a variety of military headdress.

Right: Students dressed for role playing

*Photos courtesy St. Mary's Outpost Sub Branch
VVAA*



VVAA BRANCH NEWS

ST. MARY'S OUTPOST & VETERANS CENTRE



This Mouse Pad can be purchased using the Order Form on the next page.

Below is the Artist's synopsis of the image printed onto this high-quality locally produced rubber mouse pad.

Australian Task Force Vietnam' Artist's synopsis

The chief architects of Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War are represented at the top left of the painting. Foremost is Prime Minister Robert Menzies in earnest talks with American president Lyndon Baines Johnson. The Capitol building is between them. Behind Menzies is his successor Harold Holt, famous for his declaration "all the way with LBJ" and then to his right the chief public figure to advocate Australia's involvement, Minister for External Affairs. Paul Hasluck. They surmount the old Houses of Parliament in Canberra from where these decisions were made and from where HMAS Sydney, the main carrier of the Task Force being deployed is symbolically shown.

To LBJ's left is his successor Richard Nixon and the principal players of the South Vietnamese regime, General Nguyen Van Thieu and Air Vice-Marshal Nguyen Cao Ky. The earlier, ousted and assassinated president Ngo Dinh Diem is shown somewhat isolated. They, their presidential palace, various towns and cities of Sth Vietnam are depicted being assaulted by the communist Viet Cong of the south and the armies of the National Liberation Front of North Vietnam led by their nationalist/communist leader Ho Chi Minh. Behind him is his chief military strategist General Vo Nguyen Giap, the nemesis of the French.

The respective flags of Australia, USA and SVN flow down into the rubber plantation base camp of Task force operations, Nui Dat, then into a map of their area of operations and responsibility, Phuoc Tuy province. From there it progresses to the jungle, the scene of so much endless and exhaustive patrolling, ending in many a battle.

The lower foreground does not represent a single scene or moment, but merely different elements at different times. the 105mm Artillery Battery in a fire support base, a couple of resting diggers, soldiers under pressure or the burdened figure of the infantryman doggedly pressing on into the damp and threatening gloom of the jungle. Alongside them, always ready to provide close support, even in the thickest scrub, are the Cavalry in their Armoured Personnel Carriers and Armoured Corps Centurion tanks. Providing air support are the 9 Sqn RAAF Bushranger gunships, 2 Sqn RAAF Canberra bombers and the USAF, represented by a flight of F-4 Phantoms, all intent on holding back any enemy advancement or incursions.

Brian Wood, the artist, served with 4RAR in Vietnam, and is responsible for many other wartime paintings including the famous "DUSTOFF".

We acknowledge and thank him for his wonderful work.

MERCHANDISE—MOUSE PAD

Refer previous page for Artist's Synopsis

VIETNAM VETERANS ASSOCIATION OF AUSTRALIA ST MARYS' OUTPOST SUB-BRANCH



ORDER FORM – MOUSE PADS



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|---|--------------|------------|-----------|
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| DIRECT DEPOSIT - BSB:082799 ACC:799039554 Please add name to Bank Reference | TOTAL | | \$ |
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Orders can be emailed to vietvet@tpg.com.au or posted to Secretary,
VVAA St Marys Outpost PO Box 3049 South St Marys NSW 2760

VVAA BRANCH NEWS

VICTORIA

A SMALL WELFARE ACTIVITY FOR VVAA VICTORIA

The following is a response from one of the four Ex-Service Accommodation residencies that we provided a donation to to purchase items for their community room coming out of COVID.

Hi Bob,

On behalf of all the Vasey Care, Ex Service Accommodation Residents at Frankston South, we would like to thank The Vietnam Vets Assoc for their kind donation of \$500 to be spent on our Hall.

We purchased a hot water Urn, a Ryobi Wet and Dry Vacuum Cleaner and a stainless steel electric Jug. I have attached some photos. Once again, many thanks.

Kind regards

Jan Fraser (on behalf of ESA Residents, Frankston South).



VVAA GRASS ROOTS WELFARE AT WORK

From: Bob Elworthy [mailto:sthelena@bigpond.com]

Sent: Wednesday, 2 December 2020 11:32 AM

To: 'VVAA National Secretary' <secretary@vvaa.org.au>

Cc: 'VVAA NSW President' <sam.vecchio@bigpond.com>

Subject: VVAA GRASS ROOTS WELFARE AT WORK

Terry,

Yesterday I received a call from a very distressed young man, who identified as having been in the Army; he had found my number somehow and was calling from the Wagga Wagga area. He was barely coherent and obviously in need of some help.

I managed to get on to the secretary of the VVAA Wagga Wagga Region Sub-Branch and between the two of us we managed to re-establish contact with the young fellow. Secretary Wagga took over and called me back a short while later to advise that he had arranged for an ambulance to attend.

This is a small but very powerful example of what our association does behind the scenes, no fuss, just getting on with the job of helping vets. Who knows what the final outcome will be, but in a dark moment this fellow reached out for help and VVAA was there.

A special thank you to Sam and the NSW team, especially Wagga Wagga Secretary.

Cheers,

Bob Elworthy

VVAA Victoria State President

VVAA BRANCH NEWS

VICTORIA

TEACHING VIETNAM WAR “LEARNING FIRST HAND”

Below is the link to the “Learning First Hand” education program that has been developed over past 2 years between Vietnam Veterans’ Association Victoria, Victoria Vic Education Team, Deakin University, Victoria History Teachers Association and Department of Premier and Cabinet from the grant provided to VVAA Vic. by Vic Gov.

Follow up visits by veterans to schools will be incorporated into the program, and the package will help to inform the schools visit program to the National Vietnam Veterans’ Museum which has a grant provided to meet the costs of transport and entry fees for government Secondary Schools.

<https://www.vic.gov.au/war-history-educational-resources>

*Bob Elworthy
VVAA Victoria State President*

VVAA BRANCH NEWS

QUEENSLAND

State Branch of VVAA received a cheque for Zac’s Place from Gary Lane of the Vietnam and Veterans Motorcycle Club.



*Left: Gary Lane, Vietnam and Veterans Motor Cycle Club, Townsville.
Right: Peter Hindle, QLD State President*

POEM

Dear Vietnam Vets,

Firstly I would like to provide some background to my reason for contacting your organisation.

I have recently returned from spending time with a digger friend, who resides in Northern NSW. During the time I spent with him he continued to recall frightening events of things he had seen and experienced whilst fighting in such wars as Borneo, Malaya and Vietnam, PTSD being evident. Whilst serving in these wars he was awarded medals for his heroic services and served in the SAS unit.

Anyway, because he spoke so much about the wars that he served in and the atrocities he saw, I decided to write a poem for him. However; after reading it to a couple of people, it was suggested to me that the poem not only represented my friend but probably all the other Vietnam Vets that served our country so well.

Of note, I have only written a couple of poems so excuse the obvious inexperience. It sounds better when I read it, so recite it if interested.

Regards

Kerry



The Wounded Soldier

A young man travelled far and beyond to serve his country well, but little did he realise the sounding of the bell. See the bell is a reminder of the atrocities he saw with the death of his dear comrade's that served our country well.

As the young man grew older and the days grew long, the bell became much louder with the memories now so strong. These awaken him at night with sounds of screaming at his door and the visions of long-lost mates and the horror they endured. He then hears sounds of bombs and gun shots from afar and the cries of innocent victims that like him were pawns in the craziness they call War.

See war does not just stop when the guns are laid to rest as the demons, they now carry leaves them living on knives edge. The war has changed them forever and alcohol numbs their pain but only for a short time until the memories of lost mates rise back up again. He is saddened by the impact that the war has had on him and distraught for his loved ones that were affected by this pain.

But what the old man forgets to remember is the bravery he showed and the medals he was awarded in honour of his dutiful role. He wears these medals proudly, but his apprehension shows as his fallen digger mates keep falling from the senselessness of wars.

Kerry Stubbs

EMAILS

Forwarded by VVAA National Secretary (secretary@vvaa.org.au)

From: Graham J. Christie JP <ryandale31@bigpond.com>

Sent: Saturday, 24 October 2020 11:13 AM

To: rsllqueenscliffe@gmail.com

Subject: NATIONAL NETWORK OF MENTAL HEALTH FIRST AIDERS

AUSTRALIANS who support veterans and their families are being trained as 'Mental Health First Aiders' through free training offered by Open Arms – Veterans & Families Counselling and ex-service organisations around the country.

Minister for Veterans' Affairs Darren Chester said Mental Health First Aid and suicide prevention training offers veterans, and the people who support them, an opportunity to 'square away' their own mental health so they can take care of themselves and those around them.

Whether it's packing your kit or sorting yourself and gear in other ways, 'squared away' is a military concept where once you have yourself sorted, you are then able to help those around you.

"It's not too dissimilar with mental health and I am encouraged that more than 1400 members of the veteran community have participated in mental health and suicide prevention training in the last 12 months," Mr Chester said.

"Family members, friends and colleagues are often the first to notice subtle changes in someone's behaviour and training in Mental Health First Aid or suicide intervention equips them with the skills and confidence to identify signs, start a conversation and encourage them to seek professional help.

"This training, initiated by the Returned and Services League (RSL), is now being delivered in partnership with ex-services organisations across Australia, highlighting the great outcomes we can achieve by working together.

"I would encourage anyone in the ex-service community to become a Mental Health First Aider and join our national network by contacting Open Arms and participating in the training.

"The recent Budget provided an additional \$101.7 million to further increase mental health support services for our veterans and their families, further demonstrating our commitment to supporting the health and wellbeing of our veteran community."

In addition to Mental Health First Aid, Open Arms provides suicide prevention training including the Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training (ASIST), Suicide alertness for everyone (safeTALK), and Suicide Prevention Start, a 60-90 minute self-paced online workshop.

Former Warrant Officer of the Air Force, and now a National Director in Open Arms, Rob Swanwick, said Open Arms is proud to provide training that can save lives.

EMAILS

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“In the same way we are trained in physical first aid, we want to upskill people in mental health first aid. There’s a great sense of camaraderie and mutual support in the veteran community that comes from shared experiences, and being able to strengthen the ethos of covering each other’s back is incredibly important and rewarding,” Mr Swanwick said.

“It reminds me that as a Loadmaster, I gave the brief hundreds of times, and we all know it well; in an emergency, get your own oxygen on and look after yourself first so you can better assist others around you.”

In addition to providing free and confidential support for current and ex-serving ADF personnel and their families, Open Arms offers a variety of free training opportunities to those seeking to help family, friends, co-workers or others in the veteran community: [Suicide intervention and mental health literacy workshops](#). To find out more call 1800 011 046 or visit openarms.gov.au

Graham J. Christie JP

VITA

Veterans' Indemnity and Training Association Inc

Membership of VITA is open to all *bona fide* Ex-Service Organisations providing assistance to veterans and their dependants in relation to claims, welfare and appeals. This assistance must be provided free of charge or with only a minor administrative fee.

The objectives of VITA are to provide member organisations with adequate professional indemnity insurance cover and to promote the professional standards and training of advocates. This latter objective is pursued through the Advocacy Training and Development Program (ATDP) which is a partnership between Ex-Service Organisations and the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

This is not accident or director's insurance, but solely professional indemnity insurance for compensation and wellbeing advocates working under the auspices of organisations which belong to VITA.

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia is a member of VITA, and fully supports its objectives. ATDP trained Pensions/Welfare Officers and Advocates who are authorised by VVAA State and Sub-Branches to represent the VVAA are insured by VITA and bound by the ethical and behavioural standards imposed by the ATDP.

Veterans should verify the qualifications of their advocates to ensure they are covered by VITA.

For further information contact the VVAA National Secretary secretary@vvaa.org.au

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EMAILS

Christian Convert

Dear Reader,

As I sit in front of my TV tonight (Sat 24th October), whilst watching the 2020 AFL Grand Final held in BrizVegas, I am overcome with feelings of melancholy.

Whilst overcoming enormous difficulties with such distractions as travel, the hard WA border, etc The Mighty West Coast Eagles will come back stronger in 2021.

This casts my mind back many years ago to when I became a Christian – I'm sure this recollection will resonate with many of my colleagues. (Note the use of big words).

In 1960, I and 43 other young boys (15-16) entered the RAAF as apprentices – not so long after we were detached from our mothers' respective bosom.

We were posted to a unit at "Frognall" which is included within the Melbourne leafy (snooty) suburb of Camberwell – do a Google search using "RAAF Frognall".

On the first Sunday, the DIs (Drill Instructors) lined us all up to explain the protocol of our individual religious beliefs.

For those younger readers of this article may be surprised to learn that, in the 1950-60's, there was an inherent differentiation between the Left (Catholics) and the Right (Protestants).

One of the most recent extreme and violent examples is the "Troubles in Ireland" – see [here](#).

Oops – I digress so stick with me.

On that first Sunday, the DI yelled out "Awl youse Catholics move to the left of the parade ground."

After much shuffling of feet the DI then yelled "Awl youse Protestants move to the right of the parade ground".

Once a certain order was established, the DI informed us that the rest of us in the middle were obviously not Christians therefore we would spend the rest of Sunday painting rocks in a delicate shade of white.

The following Sunday, I became a Christian.

Ted McEvoy – 35Sqn RAAF (Wallaby Airlines) 1967-68

DVA GOLD CARD FOR ELIGIBLE VETERANS OVER 70 YEARS OLD

Members and readers are reminded that veterans aged 70 years or more who have qualifying service are eligible to receive a DVA Gold card for medical treatment.

To lodge a claim go to the DVA web site and search firstly for Gold card and then "How to get your Gold Card". This will bring up the form "Application for a Gold card for Veterans of Australia's Defence Force" DVA form D3057.

When completing the form you can ignore Question 16. We believe that this question is irrelevant and inappropriate and we have requested the department to remove it.

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I was always incredibly fond of my father, more so than anyone else in my life. Perhaps because his attention and praise were so much harder to receive and yet I spent the majority of my young life looking for them. Unfortunately, he and it never felt quite reachable as if his mind was always somewhere else. Reflecting upon this now I understand that he was in the intense throws of the height of his mental illness often times struggling to get out of bed let alone be a father to a small girl.

My home during this time was not the birthplace of happy memories and warm feelings. Rather, it was an unpredictable environment always loud with voluminous, enthusiastic arguments.

My volatile father had little patience for my antics, his flashbacks and outbursts ostracising not only myself but also driving various and eventually a permanent separation between him and my mother.

Conflict was normality for me and as a result I would strongly invest myself in its resolution, at five years old feeling confident enough to barricade the door and try to stop the screaming.

Often times however I would simply chose to avoid the harsh reality of it all, I would hoist myself up into the high branches of the apple tree in our backyard with a backpack full of novels offering escapism and enough food to last me several hours which it could take before anyone realised I was missing.

At 12 years old in the onset of the awkwardness of my adolescence, my parents separated. Their shared custody arrangement was a large source of anxiety for me. Raising an adolescent girl clashed so sharply with the routine that assisted in alleviating my father's illness symptoms. After only a few days of constant disagreements we would have one particularly turbulent argument that would result in me running away until he calmed down enough to want me back.

Later in life as a young woman, I struggled with various issues such as my own mental illnesses, alcohol and drug dependence and a particular attraction to violent and abusive men in search for the intimacy and male closeness I'd lacked with my father, falling victim to domestic violence from as young as fourteen.

It wasn't until my early twenties that I established some kind of stability in my life, although stability feels unnatural given my upbringing, I started intensive therapy and stopped looking for sanctum in others, began building more appropriate coping skills than substance abuse, changed my living situation and began a university degree.

The most important shift in my lifestyle came from establishing some sort of a relationship with my father, a task which took incredible discipline, compassion, understanding and still requires continual maintenance and upkeep.

Getting to know my father in my twenties, led me to make connections with other men he joined the Navy with and subsequently served alongside in Vietnam and it was through this that I was finally able to understand what he looked like before the war and build a greater picture than the unfeeling man I had perceived him to be thus far.

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My father joined the Navy at fifteen to escape an abusive father and an emotionally immature mother, and he has a deep respect for the armed forces due to the solace it provided it him.

He was mischievous, full of dark humour, positive energy and musical talent and skills, personality traits that brought others comfort particularly during the war. He still has all of these qualities; however, he also has a severe case of post-traumatic stress which overrides many of these qualities. Its intensity and range of symptoms were so unique that he was used as a case study, presented internationally, to study and understand the effects of post-traumatic stress disorder in veterans who fought in Vietnam.

Post-traumatic stress disorder is a disorder developed as a result of sustained exposure to a traumatic event. Its symptoms can involve recurrent reminders of the event, intrusive thoughts, nightmares, flashbacks, hypervigilance, irritability, anger outbursts and changes in personality and behaviour.

My father experiences the full range of symptoms but the most notable are his nightmares, hypervigilance, outbursts, and changes in behaviour. In understanding how this influences his life you need look no further than his daily routine which consists of a rigid schedule, poor sleep, outbursts of agitation, extreme anxiety and agoraphobia, and little patience for the responsibilities of caring for others.

He has good and bad days, and the frequency of them can scarcely be anticipated unless you have an understanding of what events are happening and how they affect him. For example, April is the month I am most concerned about him, with Anzac Day looming he dreams frequently, he is more irritable, and he isolates himself more. This has occurred consistently for as long as I was aware of the shift in his behaviour. Due to the frequent changes in his behaviour, he is inconsistent in how much he can offer you in energy, love and care. He can be a very unstable person to have in your life, a challenge I have struggled with most deeply. This inconsistency also extends to his romantic life and he has significant trouble dating.

I've watched him cycle through a large range of women over the 11 years he and my mother have been separated. Each relationship beginning with a stream of unhealthy infatuation and an unrealistic standard of providing acts of service as a way of expressing love to his partners. I watch him delve fully into each relationship, but my father will never be able to devote the full range of emotional scope necessary for a full-time de facto relationship. A relationship model that would require giving up his carefully constructed routine and accommodating fully the emotional needs of others, a skill he is inept at now due to the consequences of his service in Vietnam.

In addition to the impacts on myself and my father, it is also important to detail the impacts of the Vietnam War on the remaining member of our fractured family: My mother.

Nineteen years younger than my father, a free-spirited, bubbly and vivacious woman, upon meeting my father she took great pride in his war service. Although prior to my arrival in this world and the onset of his post-traumatic stress she had known a very different man to the one who exists now.

At the end of her labour and delivery as they both admired what they had

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created, he turned to her and uttered a sentence riddled with red flags indicating a shift in his mental state.

“But how can I protect you both now?”

The next thirteen years of their relationship were a trying time for her and her mental well-being. He had flashback episodes, struggled with alcoholism, struggled to raise me and care for her after she received an epilepsy diagnosis and three large life-altering seizures, losing her licence for two years as a result and essentially her ability to gain financial and literal freedom outside from his illness and needs.

There was a two-year period in my life when she was asleep when I went to school and when I returned, and my father’s attempt at co-parenting consisted of sending me to school with jam and cheese sandwiches instead of butter, and pig tails that were so tight they gave me tension headaches.

Just as I coped in my own individual way during this time so did she, she turned to me for support which only increased the strain on my small shoulders, and as my father got sicker and our safety grew more into question she reached out to the same psychologist who assessed my father for his case study on post-traumatic stress disorder.

Several years of couples and family therapy were all concluded with the same assessment, my father was not going to return to the man he was before his disorder was triggered, and as a result they had become fundamentally incompatible. What followed was, after a trying seventeen years total of relationship, she left my father despite the close bond they did and still do share.

The previous accounts detail, as concisely as possible the impact the Vietnam War has had on my family, and as for the impacts on others although I cannot speak for them, what I can say is that our perspectives are very similar. Individuals like myself have their own stories to tell but they all share a common theme, a tale of adversity and heartache. Regardless of the age of the families, and the member who speaks, each individual with a connection to the Vietnam War will have a life that shares a common element with a member from a completely different family and it is in this commonality you can understand one part of the impact of the Vietnam War on the Australian family.

In understanding the other part, although it is clearly apparent that I undeniably feel the Vietnam War negatively impacted myself and my family. As I have grown so has my perspective on the Vietnam War. In this growing perspective I have found that there are elements to the impact of the Vietnam War that can be looked at through a different lens.

The war for me has been an enduring adversity and it unquestionably still is. In my own life I have felt the weight of the Vietnam War every single day, but without it I would not have become the person I am today.

It is through the challenges it has posed in my life that I have been forced to grow into the resilient person I am, a young woman who is capable of handling anything life throws at her and has proven this resilience in the challenges I have overcome thus far. I have also learnt

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incredible patience, understanding and genuine empathy, particularly through the facilitation of a strong bond with my father. I have a stronger relationship with my father than most people and this is even more impressive given what I've been through to get there.

In addition to this, the challenges I have faced as a result of the Vietnam War have also inspired me to want to create a positive legacy.

I was inspired to study psychology at university because I want to support others, as I finish my second year of university, I look forward to finishing and gaining accreditation with the Department of Veterans' Affairs in the future so I can assist in the rehabilitation and support of veterans and their families.

I've also gotten to know others as a result of my connection to the Vietnam War, I've been fortunate enough to connect with many children of Vietnam veterans and share my experiences and insights in assisting others within their own impacts and assisting in their emotional rehabilitation, in the process joining amazing communities exclusively for children of Vietnam Veterans and making lasting friends one of whom is even making a documentary about the war of which I've been fortunate enough to be interviewed for the promotional video.

My father, although saddled with the impacts of the Vietnam War far more deeply than either of us, has successfully learnt to manage his mental illness. He has gone from having frequent periods of disassociation and violent behaviour when I was young to being able to self soothe and cope successfully living alone. He is the poster child, for the most impressive effects of cognitive behavioural therapy that I have ever seen and regularly seeks out other veterans to assist them with the symptoms of their own post-traumatic stress.

In summary, it is difficult to explain quite the depth of the impact that the Vietnam War had and continues to have on the Australian family. Although The 30th of April 1975, seems like a distant memory for many, a historical marker of the end of the Vietnam war it is not. The war did not end in 1975. The fire of the Vietnam War still rages on, in the hearts, minds and lives of the men women and children that are impacted by it. The individuals who feel the impact are not only those alive in 1975, but those whose lives started eight thousand two hundred and seventy-one days after, those like me. But it also impacts everyone I am able to help with my experiences, every relationship I successfully navigate as a result of my increased understanding. It will impact every individual I help when I am a clinical psychologist and eventually it will impact my own children as I utilise my knowledge and experiences to try to be the most well-rounded, supportive and emotionally available parent I can.

It is the war that never ended and will never end, its impact will be felt within many families both directly and indirectly connected to the war for many years to come, for many years after 1975.

Jade Washbourne

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little daughters, a public service job, a hard-earned university degree after leaving school at Year 10. The war wasn't spoken of, at least to those daughters, so at five, I had no understanding of it. Although, I'd seen that scar on his leg. Oh, and that time Dad was shut in the lounge room with a strange man, both quiet, serious, drinking beer, as they watched a parade on TV. He didn't seem like Dad that day. Vietnam Veterans' Day didn't exist in 1980, Vietnam veterans didn't march, didn't frequent the RSLs. Dad had tried once, he told us years later, to drink in an RSL after he came back, but was asked to leave – not having fought in a real war.

By the time I was nine, I still didn't know much about Dad's experiences, but it's astonishing how anything war-related I came across caught my attention. I read any war-themed book available in my small school library, mostly War World Two era, mostly The Diary of Anne Frank. It was the human aspect of war that fascinated me – how could it be endured? How could it be survived? Why was it allowed to happen? Everything I read confirmed war to be a terrible thing. And one day in Year Four, I learned that war wasn't just history. I sat with my class on the carpet in the TV room, watching Behind the News. It was 1984. Someone decided the children of Australia should know about the Cold War arms race. I'd never heard of nuclear weapons, but I watched and listened intently at first. Seeing images of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and learning how much more destructive modern weapons were than those used 40 years earlier, I was sickened with horror. I didn't want to watch or listen any more. I put my head down, covered my ears. My teacher asked if I was all right.

I wasn't all right. Afterwards, I feared for everyone. Even before, nothing seemed more dreadful to me than war, but I didn't think it would actually happen, and now nuclear war was a possibility? I would lie in bed with visions of mushroom clouds and searing white lights in my head. Usually, I would find Dad at night when I was scared. My brother and sister and I all knew he would never turn us away if we were frightened - understanding, as he did, night-time terrors. Sometimes late at night, when he was unable to sleep himself, or maybe just wanting to watch the cricket, I'd find him in the lounge room with only the light from the television flickering. Sitting beside him on the couch as he watched TV, nothing felt safer.

Now, though, I kept my fear to myself. Did I decide to do this to protect him? Because I didn't want to add to, or witness, his distress at the mention of war? Did I decide that nothing could make it better, that war was just too much? I started to prowl the house before bed, checking the windows and turning off power points - trying to keep us all safe.

In 2017, over afternoon tea, my younger son says that his friend told him North Korea would be sending a nuclear bomb to Australia. It is his way to quietly speak a few words to me when he's worried. ("Have you heard of global warming, Mum? Do you know about coronavirus?") Despite the drop in my stomach upon hearing 'nuclear' – I can barely read the word 'unclear' without the sensation – I think about how we've mostly survived so far, about sensationalised headlines, and about that small, defiant belief in humanity that got me to the point of even being a parent, and say, "That's not going to happen, buddy. No-one wants that," and he returns to his milkshake. It appears I've come around to the mutually assured destruction as deterrent view. Regardless of my body's fearful reaction to my son's words, I think, "I am grateful he brings his terrors to me," and wish, at his age, I'd done the same, because Dad would not have left me alone with my fear, if he'd known, if I'd told him.

Late '80s, and we started talking about the war at home a little. Now I would liken it to a ghost story, to something that's haunting Dad. He hadn't left the war in the past after all. Jumping out of helicopters has led to physical pain, along with depression and post-traumatic stress disorder. Dad wasn't working at this time. Instead, it was a neck brace, and us sitting in the car with Mum after school, waiting for Dad to finish appointments with his psychiatrist. It was down moods and medication. And for me, a tiny, self-centred, adolescent questioning that would break through the caring sometimes,

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saying (just whispered, or glanced, between siblings, mind you, not to him), “If we are so important, why can’t we just make him better?”

1991, I was 15, when I told my parents I want to go to the protest against the Gulf War. They allowed it, they allowed me a lot. If I took on responsibilities, I was given rights as well. I gained a small sense of comfort at doing something in the face of fear, and at understanding I wasn’t alone in feeling this way. Because I was terrified at the prospect of an actual war, not realising wars had been fought continuously throughout my life somewhere in the world. The invasion of Iraq began while we were on holidays in St Kilda, with rolling TV coverage. I didn’t have any sense of distance, it was war and it was terrible and people were being killed. We visited Luna Park late one afternoon and, looking up at the sunset sky and the old wooden rollercoaster, I saw missiles and tracer rounds. I thought of the randomness of where we’re born. I thought the world was ending. I still didn’t tell Dad how scared I was.

1996, I was 21. Dad had returned to work, having decided, with Mum’s support, that he wasn’t prepared to be found totally and permanently incapacitated in his 40s. I interviewed him about Vietnam for a uni assignment, and tried to imagine him at my age, spending his 21st in a training camp. One night, at a uni function, I met a friend of a friend who had joined the defence forces. I mentioned that the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan was coming up. Dad had only recently told me that, for him, his worst day was the day after Long Tan, 19th August 1966, when his company of 6RAR was tasked with burying the dead in the rubber plantation. I realised the man I was speaking to knew about Long Tan and it was odd to see not just awareness, but was it respect in his eyes? Looking back, I wonder was this around the time a new story of the bravery of Australian soldiers in yet another battle against the odds started to emerge, and Vietnam started to be seen as a ‘real’ war after all? It unsettles me, because it doesn’t feel new at all, rather it’s the ANZAC myth transposed to a different location. Regardless of my comfort or discomfort with it, this rehabilitation, this welcoming home of veterans was 30 years too late to ameliorate the impact of shame layered upon trauma, for veterans and their families.

The following ten years passed, without anything specific I would tie to Dad’s war experience, to growing up with a parent with depression and PTSD. My sister and I moved out, started work, met partners. My brother finished school. We were still close, even if not under the same roof. I think, if my siblings and I considered Vietnam at all, we might have supposed that we’d all had a lucky escape.

A few more years, and my partner and I started thinking of children. The first pregnancy ended badly, unexpectedly, at 13 weeks. I felt a loss I couldn’t even understand the dimensions of, but also fear. Six weeks later, I couldn’t sleep, couldn’t eat, didn’t want to leave the house. At first, I thought it was physical but it was anxiety - of course. Nothing major, I was told, easy enough to address. I started to wonder about mental health, heritability, modelling. Nature, nurture. The thought that maybe it wasn’t only Dad, but all of us – that certain themes might run through all of our stories, although ‘case study’ might be a more accurate description than story for this particular period. A little later, I started studying psychology – of course.

By the time the Vietnam Veterans Family Study opened to participants in 2008, I had one young son, and was close to having my second. My parents, siblings and I all responded. I ticked boxes and marked scales assessing physical and mental health, social and educational outcomes, parenting. Then I filled the open text boxes with polite rage that the war and conscription had ever happened, and crashed through my father’s life. Years passed and I waited for findings to be published, gradually wondering less about the physical, and more about the psychological outcomes, and how a parent’s PTSD might impact on children.

When the findings were finally released, I was initially disappointed. Not in the study specifically – it

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had achieved its aims, confirming what had been suspected in the veteran community - poorer outcomes for mental and physical health, social and economic well-being in children of Vietnam veterans. My disappointment was with the mechanisms suggested, and what I perceived to be their limited applicability to my family. Two of the three were harsh parenting and school problems. I thought, “This has nothing to say about us, nothing to add to the story.”

Harsh parenting? In 2018, my brother visits and I try to describe an image I have of a house and a family. The father, a Vietnam veteran, comes home and the war comes with him, there’s violence, anger, shame. There’s fear in the house. Watchfulness, vigilance. War – large-scale interpersonal trauma - becomes interpersonal trauma in the family. “But,” I say to Tim, “that wasn’t our house.” Violence was not welcome. No toy weapons. No violent movies. No fighting. No angry speech. Instead it was Dad singing us to sleep with his lullabies, or *Bridge Over Troubled Water*, or *Famous Blue Raincoat*. It was Mum’s quiet love and sacrifice, and Dad’s joy and gratitude for his family. For us, the picture I have is of a house with the doors and windows barred *against* violence. But the act of barring something tells you that it’s there, outside, waiting, and that something has hurt Dad. Harsh parenting was not our experience, but we understood that there are things to fear in the world, that people could do terrible things to each other.

The report mentioned one other mechanism– the serviceman’s posttraumatic stress disorder, with children learning to monitor and modify their behaviour to protect their father from distress. We watched for signs of distress – tension in the back, Dad’s head down, eyes shut. We tried not to make sudden loud noises or to shout or to tell each other you hated them. Not because we’d be in trouble, but to avoid that distress – not wanting to see pain in his eyes. Not scared of Dad, but worried for him. So the war and violence were prohibited, yet awareness was always there.

But this awareness had been so much part of life, that it was hard to clearly see it. Eventually, like the denouement of a mystery, with enough hints and clues, I realised something that had been there all along, for more years than my brother and sister and I had been alive. I’d studiously avoided anything about the topic of trauma for years, thinking I should leave it to the experts, then realised I’d grown up with it. I’ve rewritten my stories about the impact of Vietnam on our family over time, but the theme of trauma runs through them all. The experience of it, the impact of it, intergenerational transmission – colouring my fears, teaching us ways to relate to each other, keeping us vigilant.

Maybe I still can’t say I know anything about the impact beyond the statistics, but over decades, as I’ve been able to add to my stories of our family, I’ve been better able to make sense of how Dad’s war experiences and PTSD might have influenced us, I’ve been able to build an understanding that can not only take into account the effort and determination that my parents put in to give us as joyful and loving a childhood as possible, but one that also recognises the insidious nature of trauma and war. You can try and bar the doors but that won’t make it go away.

Reference

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thony was eight months old by the time Dad met him, home on a four-day visit before returning to Vietnam. I know it is something Dad always felt remorse about and is perhaps one of the reasons they never really formed a close bond.

My childhood was interspersed with moving house a lot. Dad just couldn't settle in one place and always wanted to be on the move—running from his memories perhaps?

I came home from hospital to a modest house in suburban Adelaide. My Mum befriended a lady around the corner who was pregnant at the same time and I became friends with her daughter. We are still close friends to this day, over fifty years later.

When I was in primary school Dad decided to buy a house on stilts in a sleepy Adelaide beachside suburb 65 kilometres away. The house swayed in the wind when there was a storm. We did not stay in this house long, Anthony and I didn't even attend school while we lived there. We were close as siblings at this stage of our childhood, only to drift apart when we were older.

We moved to a big house on a ten-acre fruit block over 290 kilometres away in the Riverland. Dad enrolled in a course at Roseworthy agricultural college and the family's livelihood was selling grapes and oranges grown on the block. My brother and I were enrolled at the local country school, where to my bewilderment I was flashed at in the toilets by an older girl.

Mum was the typical suburban housewife, going along with whatever Dad wanted, to keep him quiet and happy I guess. She had an arts degree and taught home economics. We were always eating delicious home-cooked meals and she sewed me clothes. Dad was moody and withdrawn at home but in the public eye he was confident and charismatic. The whole family often felt we were walking on eggshells.

I was shocked, years later, when an off-the-cuff comment by Mum suggested there was domestic violence when Dad was in one of his 'moods'. I don't recall seeing any violence against my Mum, but I do remember him hitting Anthony with electrical flex cable as punishment for his perceived misbehaviour. I escaped this, but remember being frightened of Dad's angry outbursts. At the time none of us had any idea that he was suffering from PTSD.

Our stay on the fruit block seemed short-lived. The final home we all lived in as a family of four was only 350 metres from my first childhood home. Anthony and I returned to our original primary school and reconnected with old friends from the neighbourhood.

There were quite a few discussions behind closed doors, and it was eventually announced to us kids that Mum and Dad were separating. Mum had endured a lot by this stage and the divorce rate for veterans was high. By this time, I was in the early years of high school, a tomboy, and fiercely independent. I barely reacted to the news and pretended to take it in my stride. Mum moved out to live in a unit and initially Anthony and I didn't see her much.

Anthony left after a month or so and started living in the unit with Mum permanently. They both moved into my Uncle's house in North Adelaide as he'd relocated overseas. Our family was well and truly broken.

Dad bought yet another house south of Adelaide for the two of us to move into and our last family home was sold. The new house was too far to commute to school; I was forced to change schools, which went horribly wrong. I had left a popular group of friends to be 'new girl' part way through the school year. I was bullied relentlessly and cannot remember making one single friend. The catalyst was when I defiantly rode my pushbike around a corner without giving way and collided head-on with an oncoming car.

After the accident I never returned to that school and decided to live with Mum and Anthony in

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North Adelaide and recommence at my old high school.

Neither Anthony nor I ever lived with Dad again. He always said one of his biggest regrets, apart from going to Vietnam, was selling the family home that prompted my move to a different school and culminated in him living alone.

Eventually Dad remarried a young woman he'd met in the Philippines. She wanted a baby, even though he'd told her he did not want any more children. Within only a few years he'd left her, packing up and driving to Queensland in 1993, where he lived for the rest of his life.

It was around this time he sent both of us kids a letter revealing that he was admitted to hospital every ANZAC Day as he just couldn't handle the emotional trauma or the memories. He'd wake often from nightmares in a cold sweat, and once attacked a suit hanging on the back of his bedroom door, thinking it was a Viet Cong soldier. He had been diagnosed with PTSD and was having regular sessions with a psych. I was stunned by this news; I had no idea just how much he was affected by what he had experienced all those years earlier.

The effects became more apparent over time. Dad contracted prostate cancer, caused by Agent Orange, recognised by the Department of Veterans' Affairs. His prostate was removed and I took leave from my job to fly up to Queensland to provide post-operative care. Part of this care involved emptying his colostomy bag each morning and taking a swab from his infected wound to take to the GP to be tested. His cancer diagnosis scared both Anthony and me. The worse thing for Dad was the impotence that it caused, which he openly spoke about to us both, much to my embarrassment.

Dad was on a service pension by this time and was issued with a Gold Card. He used it a lot in the last years of his life to be treated for sleep apnoea, diabetes, early onset dementia, urology problems and many stints in hospital with mental health issues including anxiety and crippling depression. He was given a course of electroconvulsive therapy (ECT), which proved futile as the trauma he experienced in Vietnam was not something that could be cured with ECT. His doctor spoke to me on the phone beforehand with the worrying information that he may lose part of his memory after treatment.

It was heartbreaking watching Anthony sob as he was invited to lay a poppy on my grandfather's coffin on behalf of Dad, as a serviceman. My grandfather was a Rat of Tobruk and Dad was just too unwell to travel from Queensland to Adelaide for his funeral. He also could not attend my grandmother's funeral.

Anthony died suddenly at the age of only 39. It was a huge shock to us all. Once again, Dad was not mentally strong enough to attend his funeral in Adelaide. My partner and I flew up to Queensland with Anthony's ashes and we scattered them in Dad's garden. I don't think he ever really recovered from losing his only son.

We had to wait six months for the coroner's findings to determine the cause of Anthony's death. During this time Dad became convinced it was suicide as Anthony had his problems, like a lot of veterans' children. Dad repeatedly pointed out that the suicide rate for the children of veterans was three times higher than the general community. I tried to stay positive as I'd only had a telephone conversation with Anthony three days before he died where he'd expressed his desire to be healthier. The coroner's findings showed that he died of ischaemic heart disease.

After Anthony's death there was even more pressure on me to provide Dad with the family support, he needed which I struggled with right until the end. I did the best that I could and sought frequent counselling with the Vietnam Veterans' Counselling Service (VVCS) to learn strategies to cope.

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AVCAT ESSAY COMPETITION

THIRD PRIZE WINNER—Jo Hagen

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While I was pregnant Dad was admitted to a psychiatric hospital with delusional disorder. He told me that I had to secure all of his money as someone was trying to rob him. He warned me of higher incidents of cleft palate in grandchildren of veterans. Thankfully I gave birth to a beautiful healthy daughter, although she too suffers from eczema.

Before becoming parents, my partner and I travelled to Queensland several times a year to spend time with Dad. These weren't always relaxing visits as I felt on edge around him, even though we had a close relationship. Dad was jumpy, we had to make sure we didn't slam any doors by accident, or appear out of nowhere. He was always very generous, loaning us his car, taking us out to lunch and showing us around when he was feeling well enough. He was taking a lot of medication and at one stage was addicted to opiates.

Once our daughter was born I was unable to visit as often as I was struggling with the demands of caring for a young child coupled with postnatal and generalised anxiety. Dad found this hard to accept and asked often when we were going to visit. I went up a few times on my own once my daughter was older but sadly the last time I had seen him in person was over a year before his death.

Dad did manage to travel to Adelaide for my daughter's 1st birthday. Unfortunately, he missed her party as his mental health deteriorated and he was admitted to Adelaide's repatriation hospital for a month. I visited daily, my one year old in tow. I have wonderful memories of him attending her 2nd birthday party a year later.

On Christmas day 2015 I could not reach Dad by phone. I left several messages and was worried. We were in the country with my partner's family for Christmas, where I received a call from one of Dad's friends to advise he was in hospital. He had been found delirious and dehydrated by a neighbour. After arriving at hospital by ambulance it was discovered his kidneys were failing. Dad was put on dialysis for the first time in his life and hated it. He waited until the weekend to discharge himself, knowing there would be fewer senior doctors around to talk him out of it.

Our last phone conversation was on the night of Monday 6 January 2016. We'd spoken daily since Christmas which was unusual for us and something I am so grateful for now. Dad told me I had been a wonderful daughter and that he loved me.

The next morning a police officer appeared at my door to break the devastating news that Dad had passed away from a self-inflicted gunshot wound. He left a note stating that after living with the nightmares of Vietnam for 50 years - the physical pain with more ahead, he'd had enough. I miss him terribly.

I can definitively say the impact of the Vietnam War fractured our family. Dad returned from Vietnam a different man, and I know his experience affected everything he did and the way he acted for the rest of his life. He blamed himself for his marriage with Mum breaking down. Mum hasn't lived with another partner since their divorce and never mentions the past.

Dad often said having children was his greatest achievement and felt he failed us kids. By the end of his life Dad was a broken man with many regrets. He asked me later in life whether we needed to speak to a VVCS counsellor together, but I declined. On reflection now, I wish I did have the counselling with him to ease his perceived failure as a father.

Despite the psychological trauma Dad experienced as a young man in Vietnam, he achieved a lot in his life. He ran a marathon in his 40s, learnt how to fly a plane, and won the ABC Gardener of the year in 2003. He had wisdom and insight and taught me a lot about life, dealing with difficult people and how to use humour as a coping mechanism. I'm proud to be the daughter of a Vietnam Veteran.

Jo Hagen

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A MOST INTERESTING 3 YEAR - PART 2 of 3

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cause of unruly behavior by others the Task Force Commander had put a restriction on the consumption of spirits. It was two cans per man per day and strictly no spirits for the diggers. Not that that bothered us much as we had our ways of getting as much as we wanted.

Anyway back to Kim's two bottles of spirits. Well, I completely forgot all about them and as was his doing our esteemed SSM (Squadron Sergeant Major) Jim McFadzean, an old warrior of past wars would at times do tent inspections and just my luck, the very next morning he did just that and discovered the bottles of booze. Well I was charged for unauthorized possession of spirits. So I fronted the OC (Officer Commander) who gave me a stern talking too and fined me \$40 and instructed the SSM to pour the contents of the offending bottles out in front of me.

Dismissed I followed Jim down to his tent (which I thought was strange that he would have the bottles with him). He told me to wait outside as he disappeared into his tent to retrieve the offending bottles, he then proceeded to open the bottles and pour the contents onto the ground. As he did so I glanced at his face and the expression on it said it all "what a waste" – our SSM was known to like a drop. At that moment I could not help but wonder who was worse out of all this. Me, who was charged and copped a \$40 fine, Kim Pember who lost two bottles of fine grog or our SSM who probably thought the contraband would be his, only to see it disappear into the dry red dirt of Vietnam – what a waste! – Kim Pember.

Normally a SAS patrol is inserted by helicopters, the plan is to arrange it so if an enemy is listening in the surrounding jungle below, hopefully they will believe it is just a flight of choppers flying in a straight line from A to B. To arrange this deception, the chopper with the patrol on board is second in a line of four and they are flying basically at tree-top level with the fifth chopper much higher-up directing the four on which course to take. As the lead chopper passes over the drop off point the second one with the patrol peels off, does a "U" turn drops down to ground level, the troops jump off, this manoeuvre certainly gives the impression of a straight line of choppers, allowing the patrol chopper to tag behind the last chopper in the line.

The insertion for the patrol where Gordon Simpson lost his legs was totally different – all noise was needed - the plan was to try and let the enemy know/think we were in the area and planning something. A company from 1RAR were sneaked into the area the previous day by APCs. A sad aspect of this patrol was the damn "mine" – we believed it was an American M16 "jumping-jack" mine probably pinched from the Australian laid mine-field. Gordon was a rather "gung-ho" type of patrol commander, if there was a dangerous but interesting job on the offering, he would take it and Terry Nolan wasn't too far behind him in this scramble for being gung-ho and interesting jobs.

Australian Newspaper 1996 – Letters to the Editor. A. P. Bowden

"Mines in Vietnam"

One aspect of the Vietnam War has always intrigued me: who was responsible for the idea and implementation of the minefield from the horse-shoe feature to the coast? Major-General John Whitelaw, certainly dubs in Major-General Stuart Graham. The statement that the concept was "militarily sound" may have been correct in a European War (the Maginot Line?) but it certainly wasn't in jungle fighting. I remember the scuttlebutt around at the time: the "ginger-beers" were laying them during the day and the VC were digging them up at night. It is probably true that more Australian diggers and Vietnamese civilians were killed and maimed by Australian/American mines than the VC. If US Commander Westmoreland called the minefield an "ingenious project" and General Graham did initiate and plan the

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project, no wonder we didn't have a chance. (PS: Q: Which was the most decorated Australian unit in Vietnam? A: the AATTV – (Dasher Wheatley VC etc). Q: Which was the second most decorated unit in Vietnam? A: HQ Saigon.)

One curious patrol was when two SAS patrols (both E troop) were combined to insert a pair of experimental listening devices, these devices were around the size of a square loaf of bread but with a very fine wire pointing skywards. They had to be dug in beside a well-worn track about 3 feet from it. After doing our duty digging, the ten of us sat just off the track having a rest when in a very short time along came two VC, fully armed but having no idea we were in the vicinity. The first VC got the shock of his life seeing a horde of rifles pointing in his direction, as the first bullet hit him it pushed him backwards into the front of the second VC who attempted to shoot at us, this first VC was hit four plus times and after staggering backwards for at least 15 feet our first VC fell to the ground riddled with bullets. The second VC after seeing what happened to his comrade turned tail and ran back the way he had come, he's probably still running.

2 Squadron did two tours of Vietnam, 1968 and 1971 – my troop was E troop and without “gilding the lily” too much, 2 Squadron's first tour was the better Squadron and E Troop the best of any troop to leave Australia and I'm certainly not biased (maybe just a little) being a tea-totaling Christian. I base this on the time we had to train before leaving Australia. Nearly everyone had completed and fully understood at least two courses be they signals, medical, diving, roping, patrolling or driving. In contrast, most American infantry did their jungle training in-country while SAS spent a month in the jungles around Lae in PNG doing theirs, I well remember visiting the American base Bear Cat and watching soldiers just out of rookies going out and learning about jungle tactics.

Some patrols lasted one day whilst others could last seven days – the length of stay depended upon two important points, one, you never ran into the enemy and two, the amount of water you carried, especially in the dry season. SAS patrols rarely wanted a re-supply, we relied on remaining invisible to the enemy – we never moved along tracks while the enemy always did. The general public and some veterans believe the VC were great jungle fighters, they were not, they travelled everywhere that were all over the country.

One patrol with Terry Nolan our new Patrol Commander, which consisted of the usual four plus another E trooper Barry Spollen. The patrol was into its fourth day with the jungle exceptionally quiet, tall primary trees, tropical birds, lots of secondary growth and sparse ground cover and no sounds of the enemy. Your ears listen not for the usual sounds but those sounds that are out of place, and whilst we were resting and listening we heard faint voices to our front. We were resting on a slight rise with a small creek off to our left and from what we could visualize it was a base camp for troops moving through the area. The next morning Terry Nolan and our forward scout Denis Cullen took most of the day to recce the camp and while they were away we sat on this slight rise watching the camp and to our surprise two VC walked down to the creek carrying AK47s and talking rather loudly – the story Terry and Denis came back with - a large base camp with just a skeleton staff looking after the place. Terry then decided to infiltrate the camp, the perimeter was protected by prickly bushes that were interlaced with just small crawl spaces for entrances or exit. We left our packs and commenced to crawl into the camp, the first thing we encountered was a hammock under a covered lean-to filled with what we thought were old clothes, but hanging on an end pole was an AK47 and a leather pouch. As we started to crawl past the hammock an oldish man rose from the hammock and as he stared at five dirty smelly enemy I pulled out my dagger and whispered “dong loi” which I think now means “stop”. At the same

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time the VC started to feel for his rifle, I've got my knife at his throat but Denis Cullen opens up with his rifle.

The poor bloke was history, I'm covered in blood splatter and our surprise factor has gone out the window. Terry Nolan then gives the order "let's go" what he should have said was "let's go get them" needless to say Terry charged the enemy that had gone to ground once the shooting started and the rest of the patrol scrambled back to our packs. Terry had only charged a few paces and when he looked around, his patrol had vanished, needless to say there were a few harsh words spoken when he returned to the packs. The weapon we took from beside the hammock was not an ordinary AK47 but a machined one, with the leather wallet containing lots of paperwork – it seems the dead VC was a high ranking VC or NVA officer and if we had captured him alive it would have been a real feather in our caps. But knowing the South and how they hated the Northerners they would have killed him anyway. The patrol or the Unit was never informed as to who he was or what his role in this war was.

I suggest it was probably February 1969, not far from going back to Aussie, because each member of G troop had just received a shiny new pewter mug. I was in the tent in G Troop lines with Woody, Jeff Kidner, the Kiwi Sam Petti and his little mate "Bro". Sam (he was one hell of a large Kiwi) had never drank from a pewter mug so Woody loaned him his – we were pretty pissed and an argument broke out. It became a bit heated and Sam said "don't say that Woody, or I'll crush you like this". To Woody's horror, Sam's huge hand crushed his pewter mug beyond recognition. I could see Woody was furious, but his outlook was staying calm although he did say "you c. t.". Two nights later Sam staggered out of the digger's boozier on his own and someone laid him out with a star picket. Of course, nobody claimed responsibility and Woody refused to take credit for it.

In a war zone whether it's a Company or a Squadron, they all needed staff to perform a variety of camp activities – eg. cooks, sigs, drivers and especially an in-house medic, with ours being Cpl. "Boots" Bercene. He had his own tent with an attached section for patients. Our OC allowed "Boots" to attend the local Vung-Tau orphanage every Tuesday to tend the children. And on a particular Tuesday when he was on his way to Vung Tau, the boss ordered me to assume his role – what a hoot. "Boots" had the largest stack of the latest Playboy magazines and the idea of sitting around perusing them all day was mind-blowing. Whilst enjoying this free time and his array of Playboys – Bernie Considine walked in with a large cut on the front of his lower leg. It seems he had walked into a small star-picket, then in perusing this cut I suggested four stitches. Pants down, clean the wound, lignocaine injections to deaden the area around the wound, then time to stitch-up the wound. I attempted to use our smallest suture needle first, but to no avail, so then I used the next size up, but when I tried to push it into his skin the curved needle straightened, his skin was like old leather. Bernie was sitting on a chair and I'm down in front of him attempting to stitch-up his wound – after many attempts and straightened needles, Bernie had had enough. His fist to my head was totally unexpected, I was on the ground unconscious seeing stars and when I came too Bernie was nowhere to be seen. I never went back to "Boot's" tent nor looking after ratbags. But Bernie had a much rougher time, he attempted to suture his wound, but it became infected, broke open and a week later the poor lad was in intensive care in the Vung Tau hospital with Dengue Fever and Malaria – probably deserved it?

Continued next edition of Debrief

Tony Bowden OAM JP—July 2020—Service No. 3411809

VALE



PASSING OF 3788467 COLIN GEORGE SMITH

It is with sadness we join with Noble Park Sub-Branch in announcing the passing of
3788467 Colin George SMITH on 23rd October 2020 Aged 75years

'May He Rest In Peace'

Colin served in Vietnam with 21 Engineer Support Group 11AUG67-12MAR68

The Funeral of Colin SMITH was streamed on Friday 30, October 2020 at 10.00am

The recording can be viewed on <http://tobin.5stream.com/webcast/61114>

Walter (Wally) CHARLWOOD

Passed away peacefully at a private hospital on the Sunshine Coast QLD 22 October 2020

Wally's family held a private funeral and cremation in Queensland.

Wally's wish was to be interred at Pine Grove Cemetery Minchinbury will be granted with a memorial service on Monday 14th December at 11:00am where his ashes will be laid to rest.

Wally was a member of the St Marys RSL Sub-Branch since 02 February 2001 and volunteered at the Governor King Day club for over 12 years of which he was co-ordinator for approximately 5 years before moving to QLD.

Wally was a very proud railwayman of many decades and one of God's true gentlemen.

A Veteran has passed we Honour him for his Service to the Nation.

May he Rest in Peace.



John Francis KINSELA

27 May 1949—8 November 2020.

John served in Vietnam with 4th Field Regiment of the Royal Australian Artillery.

A Veteran has passed we Honour him for his Service to the Nation.

May he Rest in Peace.

REUNIONS



HEADQUARTERS 1ST AUSTRALIAN TASK FORCE SOUTH VIETNAM 1966 - 1972

HQ1ATF ASSOCIATION REUNION

In Memory of our D&E losses at Long Khanh (12 June 1971)

CANBERRA 18-22 NOVEMBER 2021

RESCHEDULED DATES

Capital Country Holiday Park

47 Bidges Road, SUTTON NSW 2620 Ph:(02) 6230 3433

Email: bookings@capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au

Web: www.capitalcountryholidaypark.com.au

Due to the ongoing Corona Virus situation our 2020 Reunion of Headquarters 1st Australian Task Force / D & E Platoon (Nui Dat, South Vietnam 1966-1972) has now been rescheduled to 18-22 November 2021 and will still be held at the Capital Country Holiday Park which is located just off the Federal Highway, some eight km north east of Canberra.

Australia's involvement in the Vietnam war from 1965 – 1972 has had a lasting impact on all the servicemen and women who served there. HQ1ATF and its sub-unit Defence and Employment (D&E) Platoon, the longest continually serving Infantry Platoon in South Vietnam, served from 1966 – 1972 and encountered much enemy action during those years.

Each two years HQ1ATF Association holds a reunion and the rescheduled 2021 event will remember 50 years since we closed the gates of Nui Dat. It is anticipated that some 70 Veterans and 60 wives/partners (a total of 130 people) will participate in the four day event. The reunion is an important part of the Association's efforts in the healing process which is achieved through the continual networking of members and also importantly their partners and carers. With objectives to improve health and well-being and to reduce social isolation, the reunion plays a significant role.

The Commemorative Dinner will be held on Saturday 20 November 2021 at the Old Parliament House (Museum of Australian Democracy). The dinner will be preceded by a Memorial Service at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial on Anzac Ave, Canberra.

For details contact: John Verhelst: 0437212121 or jeverhelst@gmail.com www.hq1atf.org

HAVE YOUR SAY— LETTERS TO DEBRIEF ARE WELCOME

The subject matter should be generally of interest to Vietnam Veterans and their families. Brief, to the point letters have a better chance of publication. Photographs should be of good colour, quality and subject matter, in JPG or similar format. Text should be submitted in Word format with minimum formatting. Vietnam Veteran writers must identify themselves by name, state, Vietnam Unit and Tour dates. Email: debriefeditor@gmail.com

REUNIONS

1ALSG EX-VIETNAM - 8-13 NOVEMBER 2021 HEADQUARTERS AND HEADQUARTERS COMPANY

1st Australian Logistic Support Group—*Ex-Vietnam*

The reunion will be from November 8, till November 13, 2021 and will be held at:

**Lake Hume Discovery Park,
33 Boathaven Road, Ebdon VIC 3691 via Albury/Wodonga**

For details of the Reunion and Accommodation Bookings

Contact Tony Brown on:

Mobile: 0428 852 736

Email: tr4950@optusnet.com.au

21 Engineer Support Troop Reunion

The Troop Reunion is to be held from 30 August to 3 September 2021 at Forster—Tuncurry on the NSW coast.

All accommodation, venues and activities will remain prior to the change of date due to COVID19. Any changes will be posted on the website and sent out by email. Please make sure that we have your current email address. For further information contact Ian (below), Phil Hicks 0414 761932 phil.hicks@gmail.com or Stan Monkley 0411 506787 stan21est@gmail.com.

Contact Ian McLean (0412 431297)

jaim@hotmail.com.au

Website: www.21est.org

2 RAR B Coy, 67-68 Reunion



B Company Reunion



Plans are underway for the Reunion to be held in Gympie Queensland, mid-August 2021. Exact dates haven't been decided but would incorporate Vietnam Veterans' Day, the 18th August.

Please ensure your email address is up to date and if you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact Leonie Millard (Schwarz) 0408015815, leonieschwarz@bigpond.com or Ros Kirkpatrick (daughter) 0429 942528 ros.acugympie@gmail.com

104 Sig Sqn National Reunion 2021

20-22 July 2021, Twin Towns Service Club, Gold Coast.



55th Anniversary Reunion for all ex members and families of 104 Sig Sqn, SVN and later. Other RASigs most welcome. Meet and Greet, Dinner, Memorial Service and Farewell Lunch.

Contact: Denis Hare—0419334535

reunion@au104.org <http://2021.au104.org>

Facebook Page: 104 Sig Sqn National Reunion 2021

RETREATS

THE VIETNAMESE MUSEUM-AUSTRALIA



For more information and to see a visual concept of the project go to:

www.vietnamesemuseum.com.au

VETERAN FRIENDLY RETREATS



Some VVAA State branches have retreats on their websites.

Under the current COVID restrictions, check before you travel



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**SAFE ZONE
SUPPORT**

**FREE ANONYMOUS
COUNSELLING LINE
CALL 1800 142 072**

Safe Zone Support is a free and anonymous counselling line, for veterans and their families – call 1800 142 072 (available 24/7).

This service provides access to specialised counsellors, with an understanding of military culture and experience.

The service offers care without the need for individuals to identify themselves or be concerned that their call will be recorded.

This line has been created for vulnerable cohorts of veterans and their families which might not otherwise seek mental health care.



THE INSPIRATION FOR THE NAME



OPEN
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Veterans and their Families
1800 011 046



AUSTRALIAN VETERANS'
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AVCAT scholarships are for the
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SUPPORTING VETERANS AND THEIR FAMILIES

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confidential counselling for individuals, couples
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1800 011 046 | OpenArms.gov.au

OPEN ARMS

Veterans & Families Counselling

A service founded by Vietnam veterans,
now for all veterans and families

OUR HISTORY

Recent research has identified a loss of records from our associations past. If anyone has
copies of VVAA. National Congress minutes prior to 1996 please forward to:
president@vvaa.org.au or secretary@vvaa.org.au

TELL OTHERS ABOUT YOUR ACTIVITIES

States and sub branches are encouraged to contribute reports on their local activities for
publication in Debrief.

Don't miss this opportunity promote your group; it may give others ideas of what they can
do for, and with, their members and families.

The preferred method is to attach to an email the article in Word format and photographs in
JPG format for better quality, to debriefeditor@gmail.com

DEBRIEF NEXT EDITION IS JANUARY—FEBRUARY 2021

Deadline for material is 1st February 2021

When submitting an article for publication in DEBRIEF, attach photographs in email in
JPG or similar format. Also identify each photo i.e., Photo 1 – SA President laying a
wreath; Photo 2 – Cenotaph gates etc.

If your email address has changed please notify secretary@vvaa.org.au with your new
email address.

Debrief Editor

debriefeditor@gmail.com

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC 3925

www.vietnamvetmuseum.org.au



Museum membership form on next page, enquiries welcome



AUSTRALIAN WAR WIDOWS INC.

(formally War Widows Guild of Australia)

*“We all belong to each other.
We all need each other.
It is in serving each other
and in sacrificing for our common good
that we are finding our true life.”*

A strong part of the Guilds History is the origins of its Logo. The kookaburra was adopted as the Guilds Logo from its inception and remains today.

The **kookaburra** was the mascot of the 7th Division of the 2nd AIF, commanded by Mrs Jessie Vasey's husband, Major-General Vasey.

More information on www.warwidows.org.au

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

Become a Friend of NVVM



The Friends of NVVM program unites people committed to supporting the mission of this unique museum: to remember, interpret and understand the experience of Vietnam War veterans and the enduring impact of the war on society.

As well as demonstrating your high regard for NVVM and its work, Friendship brings you:

- ♥ Free admission on all visits to the museum.
- ♥ 2 free guest passes per year.
- ♥ 10% discount on admission cost for immediate family.
- ♥ 10% discount in NVVM shop & Nui Dat Cafe.
- ♥ Exclusive "Friends" only private viewing & events.
- ♥ Regular newsletters.
- ♥ Discounts for guest lectures, film nights, conference and other special events.
- ♥ Single vote at AGM.

| Payment: | 1 Year | 2 Year | 3 Year |
|-------------------------|---------------------------------|---|--------------------------------|
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| Concession | \$25 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$45 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$65 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Family | \$70 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$130 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$190 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Corporate | \$200 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$350 <input type="checkbox"/> | \$500 <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Life: Aged 60 yrs+ | | | |
| Individual | \$800 <input type="checkbox"/> | Concession \$600 <input type="checkbox"/> | |
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| Individual | \$1200 <input type="checkbox"/> | Concession \$800 <input type="checkbox"/> | |

Direct payments can be made to:
NVVM Ltd Trading Acct
Bendigo Bank BSB 633 000
Account: 149738577

Primary Members Details (please print)

Company name:

Title: Surname

First Name/s:

Address:

State: Postcode:

Email address:

@

Phone:

Signature:

Date:/...../.....

Immediate family in Friend's household.
(Please provide given name and surname).

.....

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Concession applies to veteran card holders, full time students & pensioners, does NOT include Senior Card. Benefits as per individual member.

Family allows for 2 adults and up to 4 children. Benefits as per individual member.

Corporate allows for four adults and up to 10 children. Benefits as per individual member.

Post: Friends of NVVM Association
PO Box 318
San Remo VIC 3925

Email: office@vietnamvetsmuseum.org

phone: 03 5956 6400

Website: www.vietnamvetsmuseum.org

25 Veterans Drive, Newhaven, Phillip Island VIC

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Card holder's name:

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