

SIGNAL NEWS



CERTA CITO
MARCH 2022

Official Journal of the Royal Australian Signals Association (Tas)

(Founded 1945)

**ASSOCIATION DIRTY
(2022)**

SIGNAL NEWS

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Signal News

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Distribution:

March, June, September, December, 2022

2022 "1st Friday" Reunions:

Feb 4th, Mar 4th, Apr 1st, May 6th, Jun 3rd, Jul 1st,
Aug 5th, Sep 2nd, Oct 7th, Nov 4th & Dec 2nd.
From 1615-1815 approx., at RAAF Centre
61 Davey Street, Tpt provided for
physically challenged members.

**Committee Meetings: March 4th, June 3rd,
September 2nd, November 5th - commences 3.15p**

'End of Summer' Lunch:-

Wednesday 9th March 2022.

Venue: "The Globe" Hotel, 12.30p for 12.45p

Anzac Day:- Monday 25th April 2022

Meet: at 'Globe Hotel' carpark by 10.15a for transport to the Hobart March &/or Cenotaph Service. *Medals to be worn*

Lunch: at 'The Globe Hotel' from 12.45p

Mid-Year Dinner:- Friday 24th June 2022

Venue/Time - TBA

Annual General Meeting (75th):- Friday 1st October 2022.

5p at RAAF Memorial Centre, 61 Davey Street

MAJOR REUNION – 35th Anniversary of the Disbandment of 146 Sig Sqn: 7th-9th Oct 2022

Draft Program:-

Friday 7th – Usual First Friday + "Meet & Greet" from 4.15pm at RAAF Centre– Tpt available.

Saturday 8th – Anglesea Barracks & Museum Tour from 11am - Tpt available.

1pm Lunch - Venue TBA - Tpt available.

7pm "Beaumaris Dinner" – Venue TBA.

Tpt Available. Medals to be worn

Commemoration Day - Tpt Available

Service: Sunday 9th

11.45a at Anglesea Barracks, Signals Memorial
Medals to be worn

Reunion Farewell Luncheon:

RAAF Memorial Centre from 12.30p

Remembrance Day Lunch: Friday, November 11th- Timing & Venue TBA.

Printed by: Nic Street , MHA,
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FROM THE PRESIDENTS DESK

Well, the good news is that with the current “loosening” of Covid 19 restrictions it has been decided to conduct a further ‘Milestone Reunion’, marking the 35th anniversary of the Disbandment of our local Signal Squadron in 1987. The Reunion also marks the disbandment of 124 Sig Troop which operated for a few years after the Sqn was “wound-up”. Details of the proposed itinerary are provided in the “Diary” at Page 2. of this newsletter.

We hope to see as many of our members from interstate/intrastate and other former Sqn/Tp members who are able to make the journey. We will do our best to assist with sourcing accommodation, for those who need it, as well as provide transport to and from our venues for those in need such support. Much more detail will be provided over coming months, however, if you would like to indicate your intention to be part of the reunion now, that would be useful for our planners, even if you eventually cannot be part of the gatherings.

Regrettably, we are currently not in a position to publish definitive information yet about our Anzac Day arrangements for 2022. RSL State Branch advises that there is likely to be a 1100 Hobart March and the following Service at the Hobart Cenotaph, as well as the traditional Dawn Service at the Domain, however confirmation is likely to be through the media, closer to April 25th. We hope to make announcements at our March and April “First Friday” social get-together’s as well as at our “End of Summer” luncheon on March 9th.

For those members wishing to attend the March luncheon, please advise Secretary Chris or myself (phone 03 62 296 124), as soon as possible, in order that we can secure our booking with “The Globe Hotel”.

The latest news on the completion of our Archives Preservation project is that we encountered a problem converting some of our video files to a “movie” format which could be viewed on Personal Computers, Laptops and Smart TV’s which could be controlled by “mouse” or TV remote controllers. The ability to stop and restart the files at will, is considered highly desirable to maximise viewer appreciation of our nearly 15 Gb of data/files recorded.

We are hopeful of solving the technical problems with our Archival material recording shortly and intend to make available USB “sticks” at modest cost recovery prices to all RASA and other former Tasmanian Sqn/Tp members. We anticipate prices at around \$20 per “stick” (\$25 including postage/packaging anywhere in Australia).

Its been a long and trying exercise to preserve our Signals records (*going back to 1816*) and we hope all recipients will enjoy the final product. Copies have also been lodged with the Tasmanian Archives Office. Viewing of the original documents, photos and video tapes is available at the Hobart or Launceston State Archives viewing rooms.

Whilst our membership remains at a strong level (*just under 120*), there has been a fall in the number of new members recruited over the past 18 months. While we are hopeful the milestone reunion will provide further opportunities for recruitment, as has been the case during/following the past 3 reunions, if you have contact with former Sqn members, please advise them that we need additional “recruits” (if they aren’t already “on our books”).

Many thanks to the band of Committee folk and partners who ran the February “First Friday” while Chris and I were trying to catch a fish or two, some extra wine and a sin-tan on the East Coast recently. We much appreciate your stepping into the breach.

Yours in Signals,

Dick

4.

104 Signal Squadron -South Vietnam - Operation 'Overlord': 5 - 14 June 1971

For Those Who Never Made It Back

(By: Ken Mackenzie)

(The following commentary is drawn from a précis of Ken's story of "Operation Overlord" in June of 1971. Ed)

Prelude

In late April - early May 1971, the OC 104 Sig Sqn, MAJ Tony Roberts, called me across to his office. He announced that he was upgrading our Detachment at 4RAR/NZ (then in the process of replacing 2RAR/NZ), to a SGT, CPL and two Signalmen. I was to be the SGT.

A major Operation was being planned and it was highly likely that 4RAR/NZ Battalion Headquarters (Bn HQ) would deploy to the field and remain deployed, like 3RAR, following the Operation. SGT Denis Boland would be my replacement in Communications Control (Comms Con). I was to arrange a handover and move across to 4RAR/NZ, without delay.

[Deja Vu - in February, my predecessor in Comms Con, SGT Mike Didsman, had moved across to 3RAR. Now it was my turn to head to an Infantry Battalion.]

Suffice to say, a short time later I became part of the "Fighting Fourth". My association with the Bn went back to 1966, when we'd both been part of the 28th (Commonwealth) Infantry Brigade at Terendak, in Malaya.

104 Sig Sqn's Radio Detachment¹ at 4RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Bn was now: Myself, LCPL Nick Mazzarol (2IC), SIGS Bob (Dustoff) Martin and Don Willis². We were part of Support Company's Signal Platoon. The Bn Regimental Signals Officer (RSO) was the Platoon Commander; Small World.

Within a day or so I'd met two blokes in the SGTs Mess I knew from Malaya, two of my old apprentices who were vehicle mechanics in the 4RAR workshop, and my Company Commander from 1968/69, the remarkable Major Jerry Taylor, now OC Admin Company.

Operation Overlord - Background

Operation Overlord was a "Search and Clear" operation. It took place in southern Long Khanh Province, close to the Phouc Tuy Province border and north-east of the De-Courtenay Rubber Plantation. This area was known as the "TRAC (Third Regional Assistance Command) Special Zone".

Intelligence had revealed the 3/33rd North Vietnamese Army (NVA) Regiment, 274th (Main Force) Viet Cong (VC) Regiment, D445 VC Battalion and local VC Units, including: 13 Chau Duc, C36 Sapper Company and the K8 Support Company, were using this area to retrain, re-equip, and reinforce. They were now launching attacks into northern Phouc Tuy Province against local hamlets and villages almost at will. If left unchecked, these forces would quickly threaten the stability and security of Phouc Tuy Province and present a clear and present danger to the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) Base at Nui Dat. In order to counteract this threat, 1ATF and US Army Forces decided to conduct a major operation (Overlord), the aim of which was to destroy and disrupt all enemy elements in this region.

The plan was for the US Army's 2/8th Bn, 3 Brigade 1st US Cavalry Division (Air Mobile) to block north-east and east along the Suoi Luc river. 4RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Bn was deployed to block south and south-east along the Suoi Ran river system, and A Squadron, 3rd Cavalry Regiment (A Sqn, 3 Cav Regt) was to be used as the cordon. 3RAR was to search between the two blocking Battalions and destroy all enemy found in the area. Operational Control was vested in the Commander 1ATF who'd relocated his Headquarters, 1ATF (Forward) from Nui Dat, to the top of Courtenay Hill, an 800ft feature west of Route 2 at Grid YS450905 in southern Long Khanh Province, and within the sprawling De-Courtenay rubber plantation.

Our Battalion's first Operation and preamble to Operation Overlord, was "Operation Bhowani Junction". It took place around the notorious De Courtenay Rubber Plantation from 03 to 04 June 1971. Clear sign of D445 VC Bn's presence was detected. The operation concluded with our 'B, C, D and V' Companies positioned in strategic locations south-east along the Suoi Ran River by late afternoon on the 4th of June.

History would record that Operation Overlord would be the final 1ATF Operation of the Vietnam War.

The following is our deployment story and timeline on Operation Overlord.

Wed through Fri, June 2nd - 4th, 1971

Final Briefings, Issues, Checking, Testing, and Packing.

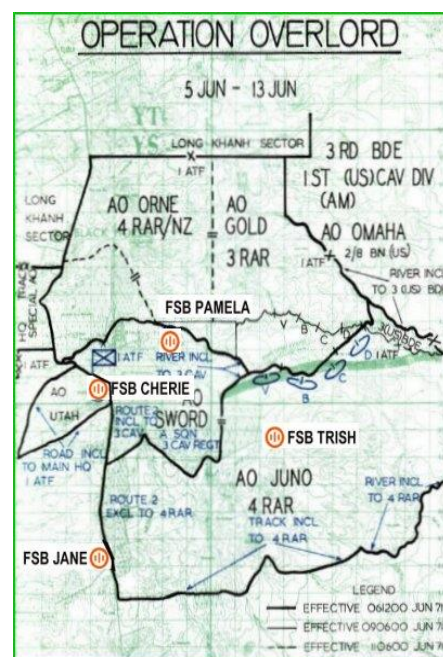
Briefings. There were several of these. In essence, we (Bn HQ), Support Company, Pioneer, Mortar, and Tracker Platoons, supported by a section of 104 Field Artillery Battery (104 Fd Arty Bty) and elements of A Sqn, 3rd Cav Regt, were to deploy by air on June 5th into Area of Operation (AO) Juno in northern Phouc Tuy Province at Grid YS525885, to occupy and develop what would become Fire Support Base (FSB) "Trish". This included a briefing on the layout of the FSB and sequence of occupation. It was also noted that due to the numbers and proximity of VC/NVA forces, the landings may be opposed.

The RSM with an Advance Party would deploy in a section of M113 Armoured Personnel Carriers (APCs) on June 4th to monitor and hold the ground.

In our case, we would be deploying from the Battalion Landing Zone (LZ) at Eagle Farm. The only major issue was the mystical disappearance of my 104 Sig Sqn 'Overlord Operations Order' into Signal Platoon HQ never to re-appear. Fortunately, I'd already made plenty of notes. However, it put me in an extremely awkward position and remained a source of friction.

When we weren't spending time in the Bn Command Post (CP) getting to know how 4RAR/NZ operated, our time was taken up with issues of first-line ammunition, pyrotechnics, rations (5 Days) and batteries.

Checking and testing of all of our radio equipment, erecting and dismantling each of the RC-292 antennas and checking each component. Everything worked.



OPERATION 'OVERLORD' Cont.,

All the equipment was clean, complete and in very good condition. Nick ran a tight ship. He, Bob and Don were a tough, close-knit team who knew their business. Lastly, we double-checked and packed our personal equipment and cleaned our weapons. We finished off with a few quiet beers, went over the next day's deployment activities and timings, discussed various scenarios and solutions; then had an early night.

Saturday, June 5th, 1971 – "Up and Out"

0430 - Battalion reveille. Early breakfast. Woken by the Company picquet. Quickly showered, shaved and dressed, then down to the SGTs Mess. Two mugs of coffee and stuffed myself with food - I didn't know when I'd get the chance to eat again.

0600 - Met up with Nick Mazzarol, Bob Martin and Don Willis and conduct final equipment and personal checks. Lastly, I check that each of our rifles are in the 'Loaded' condition, only. Then like ants pouring from a disturbed nest, we join the streams of soldiers leaving the Battalion's lines - each of us staggering under the weight of our equipment - on the long walks down to Eagle Farm and Kangaroo Pads. Our destination is Eagle Farm.

0625 - Arrived at Eagle Farm LZ to a scene of controlled chaos. Movement controllers are busy allocating everyone into the usual 'Chalks' and 'Lifts'³. They split the four of us into different chalks and lifts. I argued that the four of us need to stay together because we're the Bn Comms Team - no us - no Bn comms. Quickly told that our allocated 'chalks' and 'lifts' wouldn't be changed. Their immediate concern was getting everyone 'up and out'; and they didn't want to lose all of us in one hit should the chopper go down. However, this wasn't mentioned at the previous day's Lifts Briefing - if it had, we'd have split our equipment between the different ships as extra insurance. As it was, all our gear went one ship so if it had gone down... no comms.

0700 - Under the Rubber Trees beside Eagle Farm. Sweating gallons from our trek, waiting. First the air, then the ground, begins to vibrate. Before we know it, there's a sky full of Huey Slicks. I have never seen so many Hueys in the air at one time. A veritable wall of slicks appears from the west; and begin race-tracking over Nui Dat.

Cobras and Huey Gunships are riding shotgun over and around the slicks.

Every two or three minutes, groups of six slicks peel off from the wall of Hueys and land at Eagle Farm. On command of our Movement Controllers, chalks of soldiers stagger out from both sides of the pad, and clamber onto their designated ships. Within a minute, the slicks climb out and rejoin the wall of Hueys above.

Finally, it's my turn. I'm in with a two-tube Mortar Team from the Mortar Platoon. We watch our slicks head into the LZ, flare and touch down. We're on the third one in line. We need to make two frantic trips backwards and forwards to get the tubes, base-plates, ammo and then our own gear into the slick. No sooner than we're onboard, than the slick lifts off.

I take stock of my surroundings - I'm one off the left-hand side door. The door-gunners motion a wave, smile, and hand-sign for us to hold our rifles with the barrels pointed vertically down at the floor.

We do a climbing circuit of Nui Dat, join the herd of Hueys and then head north. Route 2 is out to our left. My rolled down sleeves are flapping like crazy in the beautiful cool air.

The assault into what will be FSB Trish in AO Juno is 15 minutes away...

Approx. 0730 - North of Nui Dat. The cool air rushing in the doors has turned cold and I'm shivering. Our Huey is moving around in the rotor-wash turbulence from the ships in front. We are flying nose to tail in ascending order front to rear. From my perspective, we're far too close to the ship in front. There are strings of slicks out to our left and right in the same formation. The left seat pilot turns around to us, motions, and points out to the right front of the ship. Off in the distance is a huge pall of dust/smoke and what appear to be gunships. As I wonder whether dust/smoke is from gunship runs or landing Hueys, the strings of slicks on our right begin to move away towards the pall.

The Door Gunners motion five minutes and continually remind us to keep the barrels of our weapons pointed vertically down at the floor. I look around at the mortar guys. They've all got wide eyes and grim faces. So far, there's no indication that our LZ is hot. Then we're descending and falling back from the slicks in front of us. Up ahead, is a huge open area surrounded by what appears to be a mixture of jungle and rubber trees. The Door Gunners are now hunched over their M60s, looking out and down. The nose of the Huey flares, the rotor thud is deafening, then we're out the doors and hit the ground hard. We grab tubes, base plates, ammo and our gear and drag it all clear of the rotor disc and crouch down facing out. The Door Gunners give us a 'thumbs-up' as the slick 'pulls pitch' and lifts off.

We quickly move forward and off the LZ as more slicks are coming in behind us. I grab my gear and head for where I know Battalion HQ will be. A CH-47 Chinook pushing a billowing cloud of red dust flies low across in front of me. A Bulldozer is slung beneath it. I see other Chinooks bringing in 105mm artillery pieces and slung pallets of 105mm ammunition.

Nick, Bob and Don are already there. Nick's got readable comms on a 10ft whip. Amidst the confusion of noise and movement, we quickly unpack an RC-292 antenna. Connect four mast sections, add a '3 up - 4 down' element configuration, hook it into the '77, hold the '292 up and call the Net Control Station (NCS) on the Task Force Command Net. A 5x5 reply booms in.

We quickly insert the remaining mast sections, erect and stake the antenna. By this time, the Battalion Operations Officer (OPSO) and 2IC of Support Company have appeared. Our Assault Pioneers are finishing off the two parallel slit trenches for our temporary Battalion CP, as others are already well into excavating the Main CP.

Approx. 0900 - RSM arrives to show us our position on the perimeter. Leave Don to man radio and head out where pioneers are laying concertina wire. We're slotted around 60 feet in front of a section of 105mm Howitzers.

And about 40 feet in from the perimeter wire.

Walk along wire with the RSM, WO1 Wally Thompson⁴ He remarked they'd harbored here quietly the previous night, watching NVA movement to the north (Wally was on his third tour of duty in Vietnam). He points out neighbors and our 'left and right of arcs'. We have a good field of fire and view. An M60 Strong Point is at our 3 o'clock. Before he leaves, the RSM advises that we have a Standing Patrol and Listening Posts out to our immediate front. They are due to come in through our wire prior to Stand-To. He reminds us of the "Rules of Engagement"⁵ and reinforces the need for us to remain alert and keep our eyes open.

6.

'OPERATION 'OVERLORD' Cont.,

Three of us get stuck into collecting 12 pieces of heavy, semi-circular steel ARMCO Culvert Channeling from where they've been dropped in the center of "Trish", drag them back to our position, and begin digging 2 x 2 man fighting positions. Standard "square C" design; 6ft long x 18 inches wide by 4 ft 6 inches deep - sleeping bays at each end covered with ARMCO and topped with 18 inches of Over-Head Protection (OHP). Fighting positions get done first - and must be down to 4' 6" before stand-to. Digging is relatively easy - for a change. A dozer is working behind us, pushing up bunds of earth in front of the 105's.

June 7th - 1971 "Mid Afternoon"

Temperatures around the 110-degree mark; digging is dirty, tiring and thirsty work. And shirts have to stay on⁶. We're also filling sandbags with the spoil from the pits for our OHP. Bob goes off to relieve Don at the CP. There's lots of yelling and movement at the 105's. Don arrives and mentions elements of 3 RAR are now in contact to our northwest.

A deafening explosion and concussion make us jump. We turn around towards the guns and there are two more. The 105s are firing a contact mission in support of 3RAR, right over our heads. Within 3 minutes we have splitting headaches and ringing ears, but we can't stop digging. The gunners laugh and poke fun at the way we flinch each time they fire their 105s.

June 7th - 1971 "Late Afternoon"

Don Willis returns to Nui Dat. Spent nearly all day on the radios listening to the Operation unfold. 3/33rd NVA, 274 VC Regt and D445 VC Bn are believed to be in a major bunker system around 6 clicks from us. 3RAR's Callsign(CS) '20' appears to be up against them in heavy contact. And it must be danger-close because US Gunship Pilots want the Ground Commander's initials. Dustoff stood-by then called by 3RAR. Also reported that a Huey has been shot down during resupply/Dustoff for 3RAR and one battalion member wounded in mortar incident.

Other 3RAR elements supported by Tanks, APCs and gunships plan to encircle them. Our 105s now firing almost continual contact missions for 3RAR (they fired over 400 HE shells in this action). Our Bn's task is to provide fire support and to block potential escape routes that enemy troops may use to exfiltrate the area.

"Contact!"

The Standing Patrol and two Listening Posts come back in thru our wire. We start preparing for Stand To. Ten minutes later, our clearing patrol moves quietly out through our wire at 12 o'clock. They will clear an area of two visual distances around to the M60 strong point at 3 o'clock and come in through their wire. At the same time, three other clearing patrols are going out thru the perimeter wire at 3 o'clock, 6 o'clock and 9 o'clock. We sit quietly on the edge of our pits and wait for 9 o'clock's patrol to appear. Mike Jauncey is sitting beside me. He arrived earlier today as a replacement for Don Willis. We chat in whispers, ducking down into our fighting pit to drag on the cigarettes we have carefully concealed in our cupped hands. Suddenly, two single shots boom out from where our clearing patrol should be. A short pause, then sustained bursts of rifle and M60 fire. The M60 gunner to our right burns a 100rd belt through his gun. Then silence. Nothing moves. Eyes straining to penetrate the quickly fading light. I call out twice to the 3 o'clock M60 gunner but he doesn't answer. For a moment I think the clearing patrols have clashed.

The RSM goes running past us heading for the wire. He's yelling out for everybody to hold their fire. I reckon he's crazy - everyone's jumpy as hell - adrenalin is pumping and our hearts are in our mouths. He'll get shot for sure. Mike's eyes are wide as saucers.

I'm sure mine are the same. More silence. Several minutes later, 9 o'clock's patrol comes in through our position followed by the RSM. Nobody speaks.

The rest of the evening, then the night, passes uneventfully. The story we get later is that the forward scout of our clearing patrol spied a guy in camouflage clothing up a tree looking into our area. This guy notices the scout and shinnies down the tree. The scout RSM moves quickly past us towards the 3 o'clock M60. He's swearing and not very happy, takes two shots at him at the same time he sees others near the tree - and the whole patrol opens up on 'em.

And the M60 guy to our right says he saw a guy with an AK47 near his wire and opened fire.

But we reckoned the real story was that our scout had an "AD"⁷ and rest of the patrol opened up to cover for him. And we figured that the M60 guy on our right had dozed off at his gun - got startled by the gunfire - and hauled back on the trigger - which accounted for the 100-round belt...

However, this incident was officially logged a Bona Fide enemy contact. So, who knows?

June 8th through 14th - 1971

June 8th. Finished off final OHP layer over sleeping bays. Two of us are working on perimeter defence improvement, two working in the Bn CP. We returned to our position for lunch and find some mongrel had been thru our rucksacks. All lost precious food, personal items, plus my spare bandoleer of M16 magazines. Mightily pissed off over the mags. We have our strong suspicions.

"30 in Contact!" - Charlie Company soldier was wounded (WIA) by NVA squad moving east away from main Soui Nhap bunker system. His platoon was covering a 'Y' track junction from centre of 'Y'. Sentry posted close to track saw two NVA moving quickly along track from the left across his front. He engaged them, but didn't observe other NVA soldiers following close behind; who immediately engaged and wounded him. NVA did not stop and continued east. Maybe vanguard of larger group.

Dustoff stood by. CO leapt into Kiowa then moved to low and slow orbit over the contact location. Charlie Coy Comd exceedingly agitated as helo noise was covering further enemy movement around his position and making his control of contact drills and situation exceedingly dangerous. He directed the Kiowa "...to exit area", "Now!" CO not impressed. Sleep is patchy due to continuing artillery night contact missions. Also had some fun when FSB Trish became a 'malfunction grid'⁸ for 105mm illumination rounds out of FSB Pamela. Had to stay in sleeping bays and bunkers until fire mission ceased. Spent illumination shell casings whooshing loudly as they crash down into our FSB. Miracle no casualties or damage caused.

June 10th - 1971 "Tub Time"

Shower Unit flew into FSB Trish this morning. A Chinook carrying two giant water bladders and several water pumps set-up shop right across from LZ. There are four showerheads at each of four shower points.

And we go across 16 at a time. When my blokes have come back, down I go. Filthy clothes off, 30 seconds under tepid water, out, dry and filthy clothes back on. Red dirt is now so thoroughly ingrained into our skins that it won't come out. Small, Small, World.

7.

'OPERATION 'OVERLORD' Cont.,

As Fate would have it, I run across Bruce Cameron (A Sqn) and Barry Cane (104 Fd Bty), at the same shower point. The three of us were Drill Instructors back in 1968. Now, three years later, we're all Sgts within 300m of each other in different units on the same FSB in Vietnam! And none of us knew the others were here! We swap notes, catch-up on gossip and info. Really great to know we can call on each other in an emergency.

[We would meet again as WO1s at Enoggera in 1984. Bruce was RSM 6 Bde, Barry was RSM of the Arty Regt and I was RSM 1 Sig Regt]

June 12th - 1971 "Mid-Morning to Late Afternoon"

APC CS Tango Alpha came up on the Task Force Command Net calling "Contact!" Explosions / Heavy 50 and 30 Calibre / Small Arms Fire / Yelling over the top of his transmissions. General confusion as Tango Alpha CS is not releasing his 'push to talk' (PTT) and consequently jamming the Net. Tango Alpha CS pleading for help and on verge of panic; apparently many killed (KIA). Says the two APCs preceding him have been destroyed or disabled. NCS is trying to contact the accompanying troops on their frequency without success. Situation sounds dire.

The Task Force Command Net quickly changed to its alternate frequency - Comms are 5x5. Battle now raging close to 1ATF (FWD) at Courtenay Hill? Our US Forward Air Controller (FAC), CS "JADE" is coordinating Gunship and Fast Mover support.⁹ Must be Danger Close situation, as Aircraft Commanders are asking for the Ground Commander's Initials.¹⁰ Distinct possibility that people (2?) captured by enemy.

CO reacts our B Coy and Assault Pioneers into the battle area (during the engagement, one of our B Company diggers was struck on the head by a spent 20mm shell casing fired by an F4 Phantom jet during a strafing run over the enemy bunker system. He picked it up and still has today!).

Passing US Dustoff "Medevac 66" comes up TF Comd Net. Offers to extract friendly casualties from contact area. Medevac 66 asks for confirmation that one WIA missing a leg and Papa Zulu (Pick-Up Zone) is hot. Cannot hear ground transmission(s) to Medevac 66.

Dustoff lands through fire and extracts WIA. Pilot's voice is calm, and 'matter of fact', throughout entire extraction and he advises he's inbound to the US Army's 24th Evacuation Hospital at Long Binh. We're fortunate he was nearby.

Grid references passed in clear indicate that the battle is now concentrated around a bunker system that parallels a creek line within 1500 metres of 1ATF (FWD) at Courtenay Hill and most probably involves 3/33rd NVA Regt or 274 VC Regt.

Confirmation received that no personnel captured by enemy. The two missing personnel have been accounted for.¹¹

We were later briefed that three M113 APC carrying members of the D&E Platoon were sent to an area west of Courtenay Hill to investigate 'Agent' reports of enemy activity. However, no enemy activity was detected and they returned to Courtenay Hill.

Later that same day, further reports were received of enemy activity in the area. The Platoon reboarded the APCs and proceeded back to the area by the same route they'd travelled earlier in the day. During the return journey, a box of M18A1 Claymore Mines fell from the leading APC [each M113 carried a box of six (or more) Claymore Mines. These were used for protection at Halts and Harbours]. The second APC stopped and a soldier retrieved the claymores, which were stowed next to this APC's own box of claymores. At the same time, the last APC slowed to a stop to maintain his tactical distance. In the meantime, the lead APC, which had continued on, rounded a slight bend and was struck by an RPG-7, severely wounding both the Driver and Crew Commander and disabling the APC.

All three APC were immediately engaged by enemy fire. A Satchel Charge was thrown onto the second APC, which detonated both boxes of claymore mines as well as the first-line ammunition also stored on top of the APC. The catastrophic explosion killed or badly wounded all those aboard. It was the Crew Commander of the third APC who'd called in the contact. Maintaining his tactical distance from the second APC had kept him out of the killing zone and allowed him to provide a firm base of fire in support of his leading elements caught in the ambush.

I have also heard that that the explosion on the second APC was caused by an RPG-7 striking the claymore mines. Whatever the cause, it was a terrible and tragic day for the D&E Platoon. And one I have never forgotten.

Warned by OPSO to standby for move to Courtenay Hill at Grid YS 450905, with CO. Mission: Provide Step-up Battalion Command Net for the Battalion Headquarters relocation onto Courtenay Hill.

PM June 13th - 1971 "Courtenay Hill"

Choppered from FSB Trish into LZ below Courtenay Hill, with CO. Trudged up Courtenay Hill with great difficulty, as everybody was trying to get down off it. 1ATF (Fwd) is in the process of moving from Courtenay Hill back to Nui Dat. It gives me the impression of controlled chaos. Manage a quick 'Hello' to a few of the 104 Boys, before they leave.

Working out of two M577 Armoured Command Vehicles (ACVs) with Tent Annexes deployed. A US Army CH47 Chinook arrives overhead with a large, slung, wire basket of Defence Stores. Desperately try to wave him off but he ignores us and descends anyway. The enormous downdraft from his twin rotors destroys the tent annexes, sucks every piece of paper out of the ACVs and badly kinks two 292 antenna masts. Miracle that nobody was hurt. CH-47 Crew Chiefs' laugh and wave as they depart. They're the only people laughing; it wouldn't have been so funny if we'd had troops in contact. Spend the next half hour picking up our scattered codes, maps, message pads and logbooks from across the top of Courtenay Hill. Do the best we can with the twisted and bent annexes and the 292s.

The rest of Battalion HQ, Support Company HQ, Tracker and Pioneer Platoons begin arriving and are complete on Courtenay Hill by early next morning. Operation Overlord was officially over. A small, sandbagged bunker on the north-western side of Courtenay Hill was to be my home until the 5th October 1971. 4RAR/NZ(ANZAC) Battalion was the last Australian Infantry Battalion to serve in the Vietnam War. They were a great unit and I was proud to have served with them. **Ken**

A HUNGRY CHOOK

A farmer decided he wanted to go to town and see a movie. As he approached, the ticket agent asked, "Sir, what's that on your shoulder?"

The old farmer said, "That's my pet rooster Chuck. Wherever I go, Chuck goes."

"I'm sorry, sir," said the ticket agent. "We can't allow animals in the theatre."

The old farmer went around the corner and stuffed Chuck down his overalls. Then he returned to the booth, bought a ticket, and entered the theatre.

He sat down next to two old widows named Mildred and Marge. The movie started and the rooster began to squirm.

The old farmer unbuttoned his fly so Chuck could stick his head out and watch the movie.

"Marge," whispered Mildred.

"What?" said Marge.

"I think the guy next to me is a pervert."

"What makes you think so?" asked Marge.

"He undid his pants and he has his thing out," whispered Mildred.

"Eh, don't worry about it," said Marge. "At our age we've seen 'em all."

"I thought so too," said Mildred, "but this one's eatin' my popcorn!" (*Kay Pennington*)

AUSSIE BUSH ETIQUETTE HINTS

I know that Aussie Bush Etiquette is recognised throughout the civilised world but we all need to be reminded from time to time.

In General:

1. Never take an open stubby to a job interview.
2. Always identify people in your paddocks before shooting at them.
3. It's tacky to take an Esky to church.
4. If you have to vacuum the bed, it's time to change the sheets.
5. Even if you're certain you're included in the will; it's rude to take your Ute and trailer to the funeral.

Eating Out:

1. When decanting wine from the box, tilt the paper cup and pour slowly so as not to bruise the wine.
2. If drinking directly from the bottle, hold it with only one hand.

Entertaining at Home:

1. A centre-piece for the table should never be anything prepared by a taxidermist.
2. Don't allow the dog to eat at the table, no matter how good his manners.

Personal Hygiene:

1. While ears need to be cleaned regularly, this should be done in private using one's OWN Ute keys.
2. Even if you live alone, deodorant isn't a waste of money.
3. Extensive use of deodorant can only delay bathing by a few days.
4. Dirt and grease under the fingernails is a no-no, it alters the taste of finger foods and if you are a woman, it can draw attention away from your jewellery.

Theatre/Cinema Etiquette:

1. Crying babies should be taken to the lobby and picked up after the movie ends.
2. Refrain from yelling abuse at characters on the screen. Tests have proven they can't hear you.

Weddings:

1. Livestock is a poor choice for a wedding gift.
2. For the groom, at least, rent a tux. A tracksuit with a cummerbund and a clean football jumper can create a tacky appearance.
3. Though uncomfortable, say "yes" to socks and shoes for the occasion.

Driving Etiquette:

1. Dim your headlights for approaching vehicles, even if your gun's loaded and the roo's in your rifle sight.
2. When entering a roundabout, the vehicle with the largest roo bar doesn't always have the right of way.
3. Never tow another car using panty hose and duct tape.
4. When sending your wife down the road with a petrol can, it's impolite to ask to bring back beer too. (*Geeves*)

CONELRAD

Whilst not strictly a Signals matter per se, readers may be interested in this rather intriguing piece from the Cold War era. It came to mind, as many things do, as the result of an interesting conversation with, in this case, a certain still serving ex-Sqn TPT NCO in which the technology of current field radio sets, including frequency hopping, was broached.

The story begins for me when I acquired my first hand-held transistor radio in about 1960, by the simple expedient of my Dad responding on my behalf to a sales gimmick popular in those days in which radio retailers offered a five pounds 'trade-in' for any old valve radio against the purchase of any new transistor radio. As I recall, the 'transistor' I wanted was an AWA 6-transistor set with a shop price of 16 guineas (i.e., 16 pounds, 16 shillings – another sales gimmick of the era – 16 guineas sounded cheaper than £16/16-, but of course, wasn't), leaving me to work for, and pay off, the balance of 11 pounds, 16 shillings.. I was over the moon.

I kept the little radio for many years and duly added its raucous cacophony to the others tuned to the 7HO Top 40 at Sandy Bay beach (when it was a beach, that is) on Saturday and Sunday sun-soaked summer 'arvos'.

But to CONELRAD. I was intrigued by the tuning dial on the little radio which, as well as having station identifiers, 7HO, 7HT etc, had two small red triangles printed thereon, about the location of 7ZR and 7HT. These mystified me and I could find no reason for their inclusion, as there was no transmissions receivable at either point. And nobody I asked seemed to know, either. I suppose I eventually forgot about their significance until many years later when I became interested in early transistor radios (remember germanium transistors?) and their restoration. I noticed that many/most of the examples of transistor sets of the 1960's all had these mysterious triangles printed on their dials. They reminded me of the little radio I had loved so many years ago. So what was their meaning?

Well, it turns out that in the midst of the Cold War crisis of the early 50's to early 60's, the US government was paranoid over the possibility of Russian long-range bombers annihilating the major cities of North America by using the location of commercial AM transmitters as homing beacons for their airborne radio direction finding (RDF) equipment, and thus navigation.

And so, the CONELRAD – CONtrol of ELEctromagnetic RADiation – imminent attack warning system was developed in 1951. The exact implementation of this system is perhaps unimportant now, but basically it was designed such that in the event of an airborne threat, all but a selected few commercial radio stations were to be shut down. These selected few would continuously broadcast civil defense information relating to the possible attack, to the populace at large, on either of two specific emergency frequencies. The transmissions were to be rapidly switched from site to site randomly to confuse enemy RDF.

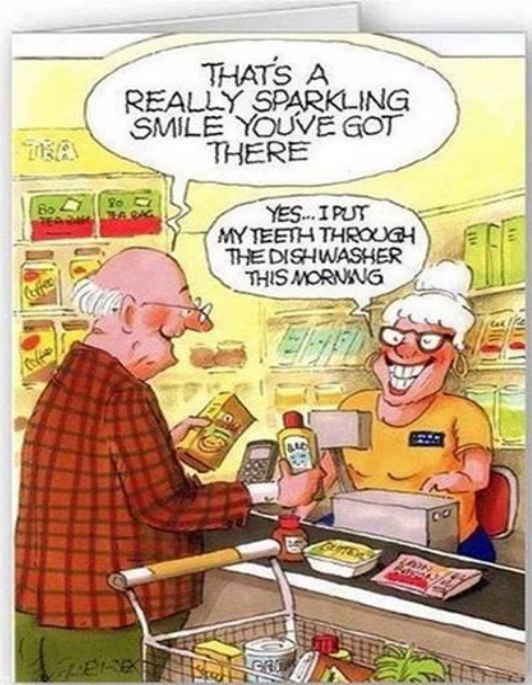
The two frequencies were 640 and 1240 Kc/s (KHz), and by law, all American radios manufactured therein between 1953 and 1963, had to have these two frequencies marked on their dials by a red triangle to aid quick and accurate tuning by the radio set users. With the introduction of ICBM's, the RDF problem disappeared, and the requirement to so mark radio dials, disappeared also.

Whilst I cannot recall any such system being foreshadowed in Australia, perhaps the markings on our own Australian manufactured radios were a precautionary measure in case we did follow the Americans. Anyway, after some 50 odd years, the mystery of the two red triangles was finally solved.

Although pretty basic in the terms of the technology of today, perhaps the CONELRAD system was the beginning of the concept of frequency hopping (and/or, perhaps, site hopping) as discussed in the conversation previously referred to above, and was a method of confusing and denying enemy interception of radio signals, albeit rather crudely and simplistically. (Certa Cito Tas)



A couple more Bob Gray specials



A Hero's Welcome

By Robert Longley

Time to come home dear brother
Your tour of duty through
You've given as much as anyone
Could be expected to do

Just a few steps further
The smoke will start to clear
Others here will guide you
You have no need of fear

You have not failed your brothers
You clearly gave it all
And through your selfless actions
Others will hear the call

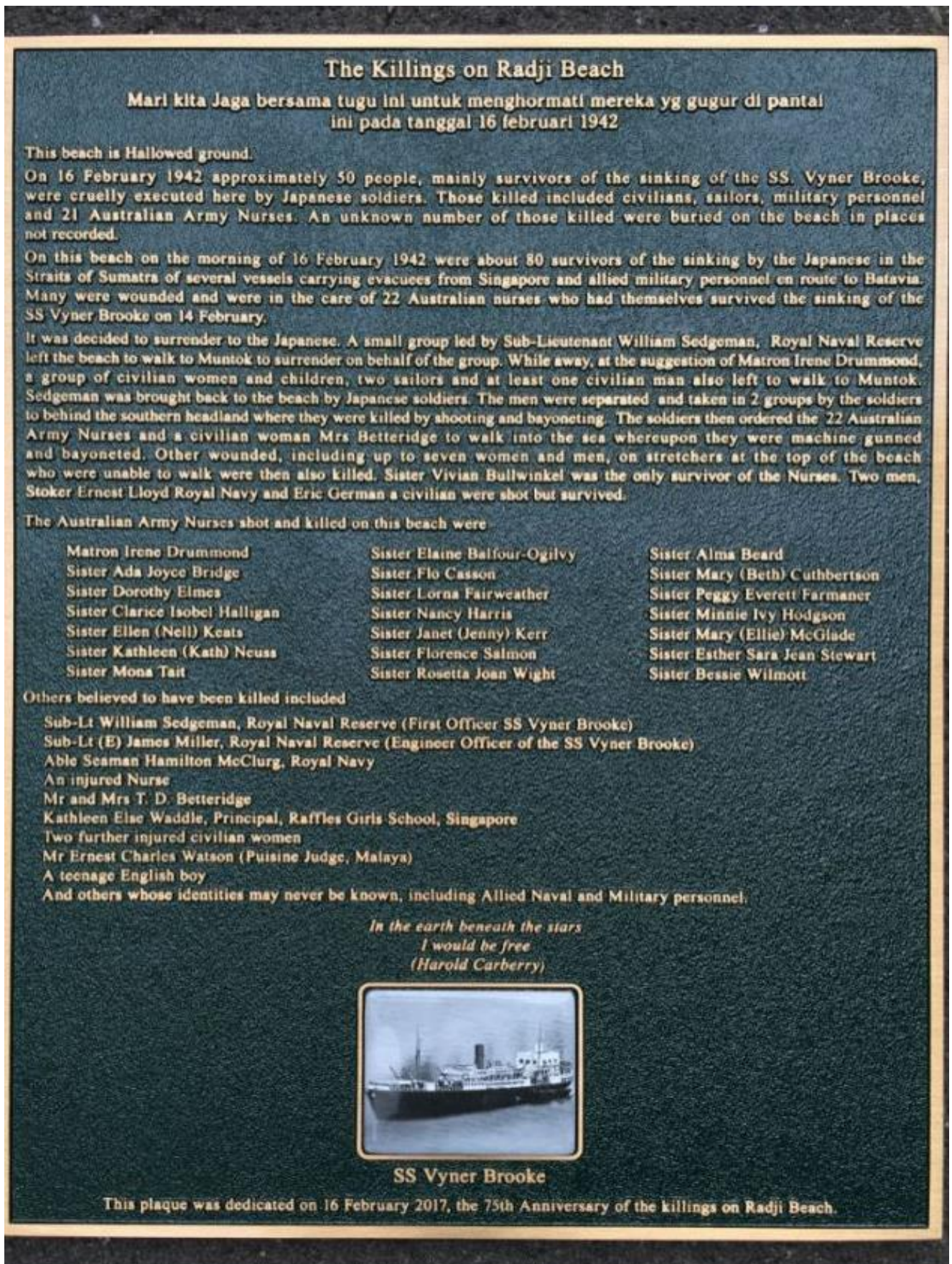
So take your place of honor
Among those who have gone before
And know you will be remembered
For now and evermore

A soldier in full combat gear, including a helmet and a large backpack, walking away from the viewer against a bright, hazy sky. The soldier is wearing a tan uniform and has a rifle slung over his shoulder. The background is a bright, hazy sky with a sun or moon low on the horizon, creating a golden glow.

Most appropriate as our forces come home from their Afghanistan deployments

THE PLAQUE ON RADJI BEACH WHICH MARKS THE ATROCITY IN FEBRUARY 1942

Publication of the plaque below marks the 80th anniversary of the atrocity. A Tasmanian Nursing Sister was aboard the captured ship but survived the atrocity. *(Provided by Brian Watson)*



CAT GOT YOUR TONGUE?

On one recent occasion, I had a valid reason but lied anyway, because the truth was just too darned humiliating. I simply mentioned that I had sustained a head injury, and I hoped I would feel up to coming in the next day. By then, I reasoned, I could think up a doozy to explain the bandage on the top of my head. The accident occurred mainly because I had given in to my wife's wishes to adopt a cute little kitty. Initially, the new acquisition was no problem. Then one morning, I was taking my shower after breakfast when I heard my wife, Deb, call out to me from the kitchen. 'Honey! The garbage disposal is dead again. Please come reset it.' 'You know where the button is,' I protested through the shower pitter-patter and steam. 'Reset it yourself!' 'But I'm scared!' she persisted. 'What if it starts going and sucks me in? C'mon, it'll only take you a second.'

So out I came, dripping wet and butt naked, hoping that my silent outraged nudity would make a statement about how I perceived her behaviour as extremely cowardly. Sighing loudly, I squatted down and stuck my head under the sink to find the button. It is the last action I remember performing. It struck without warning, and without any respect to my circumstances. No, it wasn't the hexed disposal, drawing me into its gnashing metal teeth. It was our new kitty, who discovered the fascinating dangling objects she spied hanging between my legs. She had been poised around the corner and stalked me as I reached under the sink. And, at the precise moment when I was most vulnerable, she leapt at the toys I unwittingly offered and snagged them with her needle-like claws.

I lost all rational thought to control orderly bodily movements, blindly rising at a violent rate of speed, with the full weight of a kitten hanging from my masculine region. Wild animals are sometimes faced with a 'fight or flight' syndrome. Men, in this predicament, choose only the 'flight' option. I know this from experience. I was fleeing straight up into the air when the sink and cabinet bluntly and forcefully impeded my ascent. The impact knocked me out cold.

When I awoke, my wife and the paramedics stood over me. Now there are not many things in this life worse than finding oneself lying on the kitchen floor still butt naked in front of a group of 'been-there, done-that' paramedics. Even worse, having been fully briefed by my wife, the paramedics were all snorting loudly as they tried to conduct their work, all the while trying to suppress their hysterical laughter.....and not succeeding.

Somehow, I lived through it all. A few days later I finally made it back in-to the office, where colleagues tried to coax an explanation out of me about my head injury. I kept silent, claiming it was too painful to talk about, which it was. 'What's the matter?' They all asked, 'Cat got your tongue?' If they only knew! (

Why is it that only women laugh at this joke? Geeves)

AUSSIE SENSITIVITY

Three Aussie blokes working up on an outback mobile phone tower: Bruce, Coot and Bluey. As they start their descent, Coot slips, falls off the tower and is killed instantly.

As the ambulance takes the body away, Bluey says, "Well, someone's gotta go and tell Coot's wife.

Bruce says, "OK, I'm pretty good at that sensitive stuff, I'll do it."

Two hours later, he comes back carrying a case of beer.

Bluey says, "Where'd you get the beer, Bruce?"

"Coot's wife gave it to me," Bruce replies.

"That's unbelievable, you told the Missus her husband was dead and she gave you a case of beer?"

"Well, not exactly," Bruce says. "When she answered the door, I said to her, 'You must be Coot's widow.'

She said, 'You must be mistaken. I'm not a widow.' Then I said, 'I'll betcha a case of beer you are.'"

Aussies are good at handling the sensitive stuff.

(Bob Gray)

FRENCH COMEBACKS

Ever wonder what happens when you forget history or are nationally arrogant?

JFK'S Secretary of State, Dean Rusk, was in France in the early 60's when De Gaulle decided to pull out of NATO.

De Gaulle said he wanted all US military out of France as soon as possible. Rusk responded "Does that include those who are buried here?" You could have heard a pin drop

(Bob Gray)

13.

YOUR SECRETARY SAYS

Firstly, to all those of you who have recently taken the trouble to take out multiple years of continuing membership, your Association is grateful for your continued support and the Treasurer is happy you are making his task less onerous too.

On a less pleasant matter, we were sorry to hear that **Brian "Capt Kilowatt" Watson** has again undergone major surgery in Melbourne and is now recovering at home in Launceston. Brian has had far more than his fair share of very challenging medical issues over recent years and we wish him and wife Shirley all the best as he seeks to recover from his latest ordeal.

Our thanks to **Chris & Dave Harcourt** for stepping into the breach and looking after tasks like organizing "Chocolate Wheel" prizes and the snacks for "First Friday" while Richard and I were away on summer holidays. Also to **Denis Hill** and **Denise Geeves** for ensuring Bar Stocks were in place and making the Cab bookings for February "First Friday". Your continuing support is much appreciated.

Richard reports he was pleased to have recent comms with **Laura Hurd** (Koongal Qld), **Tony "Rocky" Johnstone** (Swansea Tas) and **Andrew "Buzz" Burrett** (Sorell). Also Xmas greetings from **Alan & Marg King** (Petrie Qld), **Allan Nunn** (Frankston Vic), **John Druery** (Werribee Vic), **Frank Moore** (Beaconsfield WA), **Alan Turner** (Ormeau Qld), **Denis Brain** (Yarraville Vic), **Peter Polak** (former Sqn Chief Clerk, Qld) & **Bruce Long** (former Training Sgt and RASA President in SA). Also contact again with former RASA Secretary, **Keitha (Keda) Smith** who was a long-time close friend of the late Lyn Chaplin.

Sad to report that former Sqn ARES Tech Elec **Peter Godden** (Qld) is seriously ill. We wish Pete all the best in the battle with his health issues.

Also that **Bob Geeves** is back recovering in his Rosetta retirement suite after a fall and a couple of weeks in the RHH.

Sincere thanks again to former Sqn Officer **John "Fred" Harland**, for another very generous recent donation to the Association. Your continuing substantial support is very much appreciated John.

Sorry to see **Stan Szyzman** (Kings Meadows) leave us for his new home in WA. Our loss is the West's gain.

Only 1 out of the 70 members who had **NOT** lodged a CV form, which allows the Sig News Editor to prepare your VALE notice (without referring to your family members), was received after an appeal was made in our last edition of the newsletter. Thanks Brian. Hopefully, the outcome will be much improved when members read this paragraph! It does make production of a notice for the newsletter much easier and means we don't have to intrude on your relatives to collect your details.

Pleasing to report that after a series of health issues former Vice President, Sqn SSM **Ray "Horizontal" Woolley** is slowly on the mend. Regular attendees at "First Friday's" are looking forward to the 'Deputy Wheel-master' returning to assist **Alf Gravess** with the Chocolate Wheel and Lucky Door prize spins.

"TALK-BACK" AT THE PUB

A man walks into a bar and sits down. He asks the bartender, "Can I have a cigarette?" The bartender replies, "Sure, the cigarette machine is over there." So he walks over to the machine and as he is about to order a cigarette, the machine suddenly says, "Oi, you bloody idiot." The man says with surprise in his voice, "That's not very nice." He returns to his bar stool without a cigarette and asks the bartender for some peanuts. The bartender passes the man a bowl of peanuts and the man hears one of the peanuts speak, "Ooh, I like your hair." The man says to the bartender, "Hey, what's going on here? Your cigarette machine is insulting me and this peanut is coming on to me. Why's this?" The bartender replies, "Oh, that's because the machine is out of order and the peanuts are complementary."

(Paul Nunn Swansea GC)

Changes to SASR command and control A MESSAGE FROM CA LTGEN RICK BURR

AS OUR operations in Afghanistan conclude and the 20th anniversary of the 9/11 attacks approaches, let me begin by specifically acknowledging the SASR's contribution to the defence of Australia over the past two decades.

This includes the regiment's commitment to Afghanistan – the two bookends of the ADF's operations there. These began on the ground there only six weeks after 9/11 and include the most recent contribution to support the evacuation from Kabul.

I know too well that this has been a difficult time for many people. I acknowledge the toll on individuals and families, and thank you all for your support to each other.

I acknowledge the determined efforts to restore confidence and capability in the SASR. Much has been done. There is always more to do.

We must always strengthen our foundations so we can clearly focus on the future.

Assistant Defence Minister Andrew Hastie has described the challenges, and they are well known to us. In this less predictable and less stable environment, our Army and ADF has an expanding role to contribute to the defence of Australia's interests.

The SASR has a critical role to support government and ADF efforts to counter grey-zone activities and conduct special operations and other sensitive tasks.

The SASR's unique value proposition in this context is its operating model. An operating model:

- of small and enabled teams operating discretely, and "always on"
- of quiet professionals, humble, intelligent, disciplined and ethical soldiers
- whose effectiveness depends on the highest levels of secrecy, security and scrutiny
- that demands calm, effective and trusted leadership at every level to assure its integrity and capacity for sustained success.

Building on this foundation, and of the many initiatives implemented over recent years, today I am directing measures to further strengthen command and control in the SASR.

I am doing this to ensure that the SASR operating model is assured and future proofed.

Command of the SASR will be elevated to the rank of Colonel. Other internal command arrangements will be strengthened including some positions also being raised in rank or experience.

These arrangements recognise the organisation's span of responsibility and the sensitive nature of its capabilities.

These command and control arrangements assure me as the Chief of Army, on behalf of the Chief of the Defence Force, that there is sufficient capacity, and appropriate oversight, for missions that the SASR is expected to prepare for and perform.

This does not mean the SASR will be more independent or self-contained. Quite the opposite. With more expected of it, these enhancements recognise its geographic location and ensure that the SASR is more connected, more enabled and more accountable as part of Socomd's suite of capabilities.

This is not happening in isolation. Enhanced command and control in SASR complements other command and control changes across our Army, such as in aviation, domestic support, amphibious operations, joint fires, health and information warfare.

Across the board we are proactively organising to ensure that our Army can provide more options, and more effectively support the joint force to deliver against the demands of continuous competition and conflict.

And so, as we recognise the unit birthday, another chapter in the story of the SASR unfolds – one that follows a proud history that holds a pattern – of continuous change, of adapting roles, structures, capabilities and operating methods in response to an ever-evolving strategic environment. The changes I have directed today are another example of this.

Among this change we also see continuity – because people are the unit's strength and foundation of success.

People drawn from across our Army; selected, trained and continually developed, and strengthened by the many corps and trades integral to the unit's capability. Each a vital part of the whole.

This is the story of the SASR. A story of highs and lows, endurance and courage, sustained readiness, intensive training and thorough preparation.

It is a story of an organisation that recognises its mistakes, learns, adapts and reinvents itself to embrace the future and find new ways to sustain a competitive edge.

I need you to continue to do this. The stakes are high. The expectations are clear.

We all have a role. We have a shared responsibility to ensure success. I have every confidence in you.

Who dares wins.

Good soldiering.

GOD SAID TO ADAM

God Said, "Adam, I want you to do something for me." Adam said, "gladly, Lord, what do you want me to do?"
 God Said, "go down into that valley". Adam said, "what's a valley?" God explained it to him.
 Then God said, "cross the river." Adam said, "what's a river?" God explained that to him, and then said,
 "Go over to the hill". Adam said, "what is a hill? So, God explained to Adam what a hill was.

God told Adam, "n the other side of that hill you will find a cave." Adam said, "what's a cave?"
 After God explained, he said, "In the cave you will find a woman." Adam said, "what's a woman?" So God explained that
 to him, too. Then, God said, "I want you to reproduce". Adam said, "how do I do that?"
 God first said (under his breath), "geez....." and then, just like everything else, God explained that to Adam, as well.

So, Adam goes down into the valley, across the river, and over the hill, into the cave, and finds the woman.
 Then, in about five minutes, he was back. God, his patience wearing thin, said angrily, "What is it now?"

And Adam said....**YOU'RE GOING TO LOVE THIS!** "What's a headache?" (*Don Graham, QLD*)

LONELY OLE LADY

An old lady is lonely and decides to get a pet to keep her company. She goes to her local pet store and looks around. A
 frog looked straight at her and winked.

He looks up at her and says "I'm lonely too, so buy me and I promise you won't be disappointed." She thinks, well
 I haven't found anything else, so she buys the frog and takes him to the car. Driving down the road the frog leans over
 and says, "kiss me and I promise you, you won't be sorry for making the purchase.

She kissed him. Immediately and he turned into a most gorgeous handsome sexy young prince. The prince kisses her back
 and do you know what she turned into? **The first motel she could find!** (*Geeves*)

HIGH OCTANE

Barry and Joe are buddies working at Tullamarine airport in Melbourne. One day it is closed due to storms and Barry
 says, "I wish we had something to drink!" Joe replies, "Me too. I heard that jet fuel can give you a buzz, do you want to
 try it?"

So they pour themselves some high-octane fuel and get completely trashed. The next morning Barry wakes up and is
 surprised at how good he feels. No hang over and no other side effects.

The phone rings and it is Joe, he asked Barry how he feels? "I feel great, how about you?" "I feel great too, we should do
 it more often." "Yeh, well there's one more thing....." "What's that?" "Have you farted yet?" "No..." "Well don't
 "because I'm in Canberra." (*Geeves*)

I HAVE JUST QUIT GOLF

Saturday morning I got up early, dressed quietly, made my lunch, grabbed my clubs, slipped quietly into the garage,
 and proceeded to back out into a torrential downpour. The wind was blowing 50 mph.

I pulled back into the garage, turned on the radio, and discovered that the weather would be bad throughout the day. I
 went back into the house, quietly undressed, and slipped back into bed.

There I cuddled up to my wife's back, now with a different anticipation, I whispered, 'The weather out there is terrible.'
 My loving wife of 20 years replied, 'Can you believe my stupid husband is out golfing in that crap?'

I still don't know to this day if she was joking, but I have quit golfing. (*"Huon Bob"*)

16.

RSL TASMANIA PAYS TRIBUTE TO THE NURSES LOST AT BANGKA ISLAND



“Chin up girls, I’m proud of you and I love you all,” called Matron Drummond, moments before 22 Australian nurses were marched into the sea, and the machine guns started firing at them. Today marks 80 years since the day in 1942 that a group of Australian Army nurses were gunned down by Japanese soldiers during the Second World War in what became known as the Bangka Island Massacre.

They were aboard the ‘*Vyner Brook*’ caring for wounded servicemen and civilians when the ship was bombed. Many drowned at sea as planes fired at them from overhead.

A group of 22 nurses, soldiers and civilians washed ashore on Bangka Island. Finding the Indonesian island under Japanese rule, they surrendered. Japanese soldiers then separated the men and women before shooting the men first, followed by the women.

Only one Australian Nurse, Vivian Bullwinkel, survived. She hid in the jungle and was taken as a POW before eventually returning to Australia in 1945. She continued nursing and was an active voice for veterans throughout her life.

Today we honour the memory of the brave women who devoted their lives to serving others until the end.

Image: Group portrait of the nursing staff of 2/13th Australian General Hospital in Singapore, September 1941. Six of these nurses, including Vivian Bullwinkel, were in the group which was massacred. Bullwinkel is standing sixth from the left.



Our member **Brian, “Capt Kilowatt” Watson** has acquired access to a CD which includes the story of these nurses, copies of which will be available for purchase shortly. Further detail to be published in “Sig News” when more information is available.