



6 RAR

C Company Lines



Keighran, VC

A periodical newsletter for C Company 6 RAR Vietnam War veterans, their widows and family, and interested others

Christmas 2016 – New Year 2017

Volume 1

Celebrating mateship and service

Edition 11



Wishing our band of C Company brothers, and their families, a very merry Aussie Christmas and a safe, healthy and prosperous New Year

50 YEARS AGO

Don Campbell wrote this story in an email to Brian McFarlane who passed it on to me and which I now pass on to you. Don told me that he wrote this through the lens of a red wine glass and that he is happy to share it with everyone. The story that is – the red wine he will keep for himself. Ed.

50 years ago today I flew out for South Vietnam and the adventure of a lifetime.

The RSM of 3RAR (my old battalion) said to me: "You'll have a wonderful time. An all-expenses paid 12-month trip courtesy of the Australian Government. What more could a young bloke want?"

Maybe I misheard him, maybe I'd had too much Coopers' Ale, maybe it was the air at Woodside. Anyway, I'll never trust an RSM again.

Instead of gourmet food I got C Rations, or worse, Australian rations and the local delicacy nuoc mam (fermented fish sauce), regarded as the only way to make Aussie rations edible.

Instead of resort-style accommodation I got a leaky hutchie often stretched over a hole in the ground dug furiously just before dusk.

For a vehicle with a driver I got helicopters sans doors and maniacal crewmen with machine guns regularly interrupting peace in the countryside. Instead of a BMW I got a noisy beast called an APC with no known suspension system — but it did have armour, a big plus.

The escorted tours to see the jungle wildlife mentioned in the Nui Dat resort brochure morphed in to non-stop searching for an elusive beast called Charlie Cong (no relation to that giant ape of a similar name).

Charlie, when found, was never welcoming, in fact he was down-right hostile. Maybe it was the way we went about things — and all we ever wanted was to win his heart and mind.

The almond-eyed beauties raved about by the RSM turned out to be toothless hags. Manila was the exception. After six months in Phuoc Tuy Province everyone thought even the rubber trees looked attractive.

The sauna mentioned in the resort brochure was, in fact, the weather. The sauna is open 365 days, folks. No queues.

Some of it I hated, but the mates made and the experience, I wouldn't have missed for quids.



A very fresh-faced Don Campbell with his not-so-happy mother on the morning of departure

Merv and Betty Handley have moved

Hello everyone, just advising you all of our new address and land line number. Our mobiles are unchanged. We have moved into a Transit Centre, last stop before God's or the other fellers waiting room. Cheers to all. Merv.

**Emerald Gardens
Villa 204
70 Hansford Road
COOMBABAH 4216**

07 5577 4817

SICK PARADE

Ray Pyne is progressing with his cancer treatment and would be pleased to receive emails from his mates.

raypyne@hotmail.com

Peter Neate is severely disabled from a massive stroke. He is unable to speak and he is fully paralysed on his right side. Peter is able to hear and he can read short messages which are best typed or written in large font and in capital letters. He will undergo a long rehabilitation process which has already begun with physiotherapy. He is unlikely to return home in the short term.

Peter's wife Marion recently wrote

'Please pass on my thanks to everyone for their kind wishes in Peter's recovery, he is in Rehab now, not sure for how long, then we have the dreadful task of finding him a Nursing Home. Thank you all so much.'

Messages of encouragement and support can be passed on to Peter and Marion by email marionandpeter1@gmail.com or telephone 02 9153 6265. Ed.

DEVONPORT REUNION

27 - 29 October 2017

Hesitate no longer. Register your attendance by contacting

Gerry O'Dea

Phone (03) 6424 1543 / 0418 140 622

gandhodea69@bigpond.com

Don't miss out. C Company reunions are noted for fellowship, camaraderie and a jolly good time.

"The past is so reliable, so delightful and the best place to live."

Barry Humphries

We can all relate to this story supplied by David Beasley

THE TONG MASTER



Davo, Bruce and I were standing at the barbecue; three men standing around a barbecue, sipping beer, staring at sausages, rolling them backwards and forwards, never leaving them alone.

We didn't know why we were at the barbecue; we were just drawn there like moths to a flame. The barbecue was a powerful gravitational force, a man-magnet. Bruce said, "the thin ones could use a turn". I said, "yeah I reckon the thin ones could use a turn". Davo said, "yeah they really need a turn". It was a unanimous turning decision.

Davo was the Tong-Master, a true artist, he gave a couple of practice snaps of his long silver tongs, SNAP SNAP, before moving in, prodding, teasing, and with an elegant flick of his wrist, rolling them onto their little backs. A lesser tong-man would've flicked too hard; the sausages would've gone full circle, back to where they started. "Nice", I said. The others went – "yeah".

Dazza was passing us, he heard the siren-song- sizzle of the snags, the barbecue was calling, beckoning, Daaaaazzzaaaaaa ...come iiiinnnnnn. He stuck his head in and said, "any room?" We said, "yeah" and began the barbecue shuffle; Davo shuffled to the left, Bruce shuffled to the left, I shuffled to the left, Dazza slipped in beside me, we sipped our beer. Now there were four of us staring at sausages, and Davo gave me the nod, my cue. I was second-in-command, and I had to take the raw sausages out of the plastic bag and lay them on the barbecue; not too close together, not too far apart, curl them into each other's bodies like lovers -fat ones, thin ones, herbed and continental. The chipolatas were tiny, they could easily slip down between the grill, falling into the molten hot-bead-netherworld below. Carefully I laid them sideways ACROSS the grill, clever thinking.

Davo snapped his tongs with approval; there was no greater barbecue honour. Johnno came along, he said, "looking good, looking good" –the irresistible lure of the barbecue had pulled him in too. We said, "yeah" and did the shuffle, left, left, left, left, he slipped in beside Dazza, we sipped our beer. Five men, lots of sausages. Bruce was the Fork-pronger; he had the fork that pronged the tough hides of the Bavarian bratwursts and he showed a lot of promise. Stabbing away eagerly, leaving perfect little vampire holes up and down the casing. Johnno was shaking his head, he said, "I reckon they cook better if you don't poke them".

There was a long silence, you could have heard a fart drop. This newcomer was obviously a rabble-rouser - bringing in his crazy, unwanted ideas from outside. He didn't understand the hierarchy; first the Tong-master, then the Sausage-layer, then the Fork-pronger -and everyone below was just a watcher.

Maybe eventually they'll move up the ladder, but until then - don't rock the Weber.

Dianne popped her head in; "hmmm, smells good", she said. She was trying to jostle into the circle; we closed ranks, pulling our heads down and our shoulders in, mumbling, "yeah", "yeah", "yeah", but making no room for her. She was keen, going round to the far side of the barbecue, heading for the only available space . . . the gap in the circle where all the smoke and ashes blew. Nobody could survive the gap; but Dianne was going to try. She stood there gamely, stubbornly, smoke blinding her eyes, ashes filling her nostrils, sausage fat splattering all over her arms and face. Until finally she couldn't take it anymore. She gave up, backed off and shuffled resignedly back to the ladies cutting salad at the table.

Dazza waited till she was gone and sipped his beer. We sipped our beer, yeah. Then Davo handed me his tongs. I looked at him and he nodded. I knew what was happening, I'd waited a long time for this moment – the abdication. The tongs weighed heavy in my hands, firm in my grip - was I ready for the responsibility? Yes, I was. I held them up high and they glinted in the sun. "Don't forget to turn the thin ones", Davo said as he walked away from the barbecue, disappearing toward the house. "Yeah", I called back, "I will", "I will". I snapped them twice, SNAP SNAP, before moving in, prodding, teasing, and with an elegant flick of my wrist, rolling them back onto their little bellies.

I was a natural, I was the TONG-MASTER. But only until Davo got back from the toilet.



Celebrity chef Curtis Stone has the last word.

I love how the men stand around cooking the barbie while the women have done all the work beforehand doing the marinade and making the salads and then everybody says, 'what a great barbie' to the guy cooking. A barbecue is just the ultimate blokes' pastime, isn't it? **Curtis Stone**

THE SEAN FLYNN STORY OF 50 YEARS AGO

Excerpt from We Band of Brothers – A true Australian adventure story by Brian McFarlane

At 1015 hours (10.15 am) with 7 Platoon in the lead, C Company approached a well-used VC road at right angles. Our forward scout saw an enemy soldier setting up a command detonated mine alongside the track. A brief encounter saw the enemy soldier flee leaving his semi-automatic rifle and ammunition behind, the idle fellow! The unexploded mine fell into our hands and now we could get a good look at what the previous five bangs were caused by.

I think it was this incident that inspired the imagination of our war photographer Sean Flynn to write his fantasy about saving us from a fate worse than being lied about. He had been with company headquarters throughout the incident and only went forward to photograph the mine after it was in our hands.

Sean Flynn and his mate Dana Stone had generally accompanied company headquarters. Whenever anything happened he pestered me to be allowed to go forward, he was a fearless seeker of photo opportunities. I could understand his need to make a living but he was already fairly well forward with me, and letting spare bodies wander about in the leading platoon could have caused us problems. After a while I let him have his head a bit more, though I worried for his safety. I was not however about to let him go forward if there was danger of him upsetting or endangering my troops, some of whom already thought him a pest.

As well as the article in Time magazine mentioned by Gordon Steinbrook, articles also appeared in the Australian press giving credit to Sean for having 'saved' us. Like many other news reports of the time they were pure fiction aimed at an audience expected to swallow anything. On 30 November 1966 the Sydney Sun on page three reported as follows:

DIGGERS SAVED BY WARNING FROM ACTOR

Saigon, Wednesday. - A platoon of Australian Diggers today credited Sean Flynn, son of the late actor Errol Flynn, with saving them from heavy casualties.

The 25 year-old actor-photographer, a 6 ft 1 in image of his father, down to the thin, blond moustache, spotted a guerilla claymore-type mine in time for the Aussies to escape the danger.

GUERILLA

In a column, the Aussies cut their way toward a suspected guerilla rice cache, Sean was the third man.

The fourth man suddenly fired at a Viet Cong. The guerilla dropped his rifle and fled.

Sean leapt after him, his camera clicking. Kneeling beside the guerilla's dropped rifle to reload his camera, Flynn spotted the mine 2 ft in front of him.

Sean yelled 'claymore'.

The Australian platoon leader leapt at the mine and began trying to rip off the control wires.

Three other Australians raced into the bush and saw the guerilla about to operate the plunger trigger.

Their bullets killed the guerilla.

I will quote the entry in the coffee-table book of the collected works of the considerable number of war photographers killed in Vietnam and Indochina in those times. The book is titled 'Requiem' and contains pictures taken by photographers from both the Allied and the communist side. They evoke powerful memories. The book was published in 1997 by Jonathan Cape, Random House, London. The entry is as follows:

Sean Flynn. United States. Born May 13, 1941, in Palm Beach, Florida, U.S.A.

Missing: April 6, 1970, on Route 1 in the Parrot's Beak area of Cambodia.

His good looks - he was six foot one with flashing eyes and seemingly sculpted features - and his parentage - he was the son of Hollywood actor Errol Flynn and French actress Lili Damita - always preceded any consideration of his achievement when Sean Flynn was new in town or in a crowd. But in Vietnam, on the job, what mattered was whether you were good enough to get work, and Flynn got work.

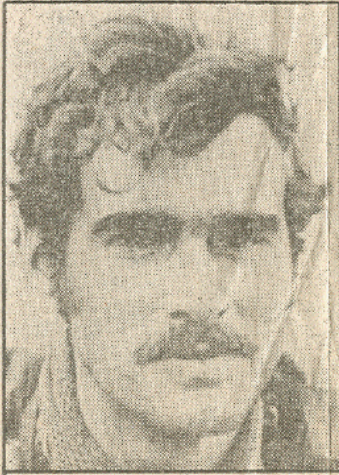
A child of privilege, he dabbled in movies (Where The Boys Are, Son of Captain Blood), lived in Paris, hunted in Africa, and turned up in Saigon as the ringleader of a band of daring freelancers who used motor-cycles to stay ahead of the pack. Flynn sold his photographs to the wire services, weekly news magazines, and television networks. He and his buddy, Dana Stone the pair nicknamed the Easy Riders, disappeared together in Cambodia.

See page 5 for a San Francisco Examiner undated news report on the probable execution of Sean Flynn and Dana Stone

San Francisco Examiner

Missing journalists probably executed

15 years late, a grim report on two American men who disappeared in Cambodia



Dana Stone, left, worked for CBS News; Sean Flynn, above, son of actor Errol Flynn, was a free-lancer working for Time magazine

By John Hanna
and Elizabeth Boyd
PACIFIC NEWS SERVICE

Two American photojournalists who disappeared in Cambodia in 1970 probably were executed in 1971 by an officer of the Khmer Rouge, according to a declassified U.S. Defense Intelligence Agency document.

The 1975 document about Sean Flynn and Dana Stone was obtained under the Freedom of Information Act.

"I was never told about this," said Louise Stone, Dana Stone's wife. "It doesn't make any difference if they tell us they're alive or dead; we would still like to know about it. I don't know why I wasn't told about this."

Until the document's release, there was little evidence regarding the fate of the two men, who disappeared on April 6, 1970. Stone, then 31, was on assignment for CBS

News, and Flynn, 28, son of the late actor Errol Flynn, was a free-lance photographer for Time magazine.

The two friends met in the Cambodian capital of Phnom Penh for a planned last reunion before Flynn was to leave and be married. After hearing reports of Viet Cong activity along the Vietnam-Cambodia border, they set off to photograph evidence of the communist infiltration. They were never heard from again.

Unconfirmed reports from peasants said the two had been captured by guerrillas. Efforts to locate the men and negotiate their release were widely publicized, particularly after CBS newsman Walter Cronkite began investigating the situation as head of the American Committee to Free Journalists Held in Southeast Asia.

The declassified document is an intelligence cable that evaluates several field interrogation reports compiled in 1974. It refers to infor-

mation provided by two communist defectors and an "unnamed middle-level civilian official with access to information gathered at the Kampong Cham refugee center."

According to the evaluation, the information "appears to relate to previously received information on (the) execution of two journalists, who are probably Stone and Flynn."

The two sources reported independently that the journalists were executed by order of a Khmer Rouge district chief of security some 14 months after their capture. On the photocopied dispatch, the name of the Khmer Rouge chief is blocked out.

Frank Sieverts, a senior State Department official who was responsible for contacting families of American prisoners and missing men in Southeast Asia from 1965 to 1975, said the State Department made every effort to notify families of possible leads or evidence.

Enjoying the ambience of the new Sandstone Point Hotel (at the Bribie Island Bridge) in October are from left to right

Peter Moore, Patsy Moore, David Beasley, Lyn Beasley, John Winstone, Pam Jones, Geoff Jones, Margaret Wotherspoon and Norm Wotherspoon.



We followed this up with a Christmas get-together hosted by Peter and Patsy in their home at Pelican Waters, Caloundra. You could not meet more generous and welcoming hosts.

What I don't like about office Christmas parties is looking for a job the next day. - Phyllis Diller

OPERATION BRIBIE

50th Anniversary Memorial Service

Vietnam Veterans Association Park

(Opposite Bribie Island RSL)

1500 HOURS

Friday 17 February 2017

ALL WELCOME

Fellowship at the Bribie Island RSL afterwards

A FREAK OF NAVIGATION

An interesting tale supplied by David Beasley who has an abundance of good stories. Ed.

The passenger steamer SS Warrimoo was quietly knifing its way through the waters of the mid-Pacific on its way from Vancouver to Australia. The navigator had just finished working out a star fix and brought the master, Captain John Phillips, the result. The Warrimoo's position was LAT 0° 31' N and LON 179° 30' W. The date was 30 December 1899.



"Know what this means?" First Mate Payton broke in, "We're only a few miles from the intersection of the Equator and the International

Date Line". Captain Phillips was prankish enough to take full advantage of the opportunity for achieving the navigational freak of a lifetime. He called his navigators to the bridge to check and double check the ships position. He changed course slightly so as to bear directly on his mark. Then he adjusted the engine speed.

The calm weather and clear night worked in his favour. At midnight the SS Warrimoo lay on the Equator at exactly the point where it crossed the International Date Line!

The consequences of this bizarre position were many. The forward part (bow) of the ship was in the Southern Hemisphere and the middle of summer. The rear (stern) was in the Northern Hemisphere and in the middle of winter. The date in the aft part of the ship was 31 December 1899. Forward it was 1 January 1900.

This ship was therefore not only in two different days, two different months, two different years, and two different seasons and but in two different centuries – all at the same time!

Keep the stories coming, David. Ed.

Wikipedia: A person who goes around the world from east to west (the same direction as Magellan's voyage) would gain or set their clock back one hour for every 15° of longitude crossed, and would gain 24 hours for one circuit of the globe from east to west if they did not compensate by setting their clock forward one day when they crossed the International Date Line. In contrast, a west-to-east circumnavigation of the globe loses an hour for every 15° of longitude crossed but gains back a day when crossing the IDL. The IDL must therefore be observed in conjunction with the Earth's time zones: on crossing it in either direction, the calendar *date* is adjusted by one day. *I hope you can work this out. It's far too complicated for my ageing brain! Ed.*

Brian McFarlane's Message for "the boys" of Charlie Company



Best wishes to you all and to your families for this coming Christmas and the New Year.

In sending this message I am reminded of the two of our fold who did not return from Vietnam, Private Gordon Knight and our attached engineer, Sapper Leslie Prowse of 1st Field Squadron, Royal Australian Engineers. It is hard to imagine the awful distress and sadness their loss must have wrought upon their families and loved ones.

Those many men of Charlie Company who were wounded, have also borne the scars of their service, and we pay tribute to their sacrifice.

But on a less serious note, let us remember all the exciting times we had together, before, during, and after our 1966-67 adventures, in Enoggera, Wide Bay, Canungra, Surfers Paradise, and to top it all off, in South Vietnam.

As Ever,
Brian



Pam joins me in wishing everyone a Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. Ours will be a travelling festive season as it so often is.

We have seven grandchildren aged from 3 years to 25 years living as far apart as Scotland, Myanmar (Burma), Darwin and Melbourne. We will spend Christmas with our Melbourne family and New Year in Yangon, (Rangoon) where we will also celebrate my 70th birthday.

We trust that you all have a wonderful festive season. Ed

MEMORIES OF VIETNAM

7

In 2103 several of us made a pilgrimage to Vietnam and we had the greatest of holidays. Our itinerary took us to Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), the former Phuoc Tuy Province, Bien Hoa, the Cu Chi tunnels, Da Nang, Hue, Hoi An, Hanoi and Ha Long Bay. Accommodation was generally in five star hotels with one notable exception, the Grand Hotel, but we stayed there for old time sake. We travelled in modern jet aircraft, air conditioned coach an ancient Soviet hydrofoil, air conditioned taxis and pedestrian paced cyclos; the pedal pushers being mostly old men.



Vung Tau's refurbished Grand Hotel is clean, comfortable and 3 Star which was good enough for us.



The Grand knew we were coming so they booked entertainment. Here's Winno cutting a rug on the dance floor with Val Giles.

Our intrepid band comprised **Jeff and Margaret Foster**, son **Mark Foster**, daughter-in-law **Melinda** and grandsons **Joel** and **Zach**, **Geoff and Pam Jones**, **Ian and Gloria Rae**, **Reg and Ann Lillywhite**, **John Winstone** and step-son **Ben**, **Peter and Patsy Moore**, **Chris and Kaye Cannin**, **Norm and Margaret Wotherspoon**, **Lyndon and Val Giles** and **Gil and Lesley Mitchell**.

We visited all the old haunts (well, not all of them) including our old C Company Lines at Nui Dat, the Long Tan battlefield, Vung Tau, Long Phuoc, Dat Do, Hoa Long, the Long Hai Hills and the Operation Bribie battlefield.



Standing on the C Company Headquarters position are left to right Ian Rae, John Winstone, Geoff Jones, Gil Mitchell, Peter Moore, Norm Wotherspoon, Lyndon Giles, Chris Cannin, Jeff Foster and Reg Lillywhite. Peter and Jeff are holding the C Coy flag that once flew from the flagpole outside the company headquarters command post. After this photograph was taken we walked the ground and rediscovered the platoon positions.

C Company Lines Publishing Guidelines

C Company Lines is a periodical newsletter for C Company 6 RAR Vietnam War veterans and interested others. It is a medium for members to contribute information, articles, stories and items of interest. It is distributed by email. C Company Lines is a family friendly newsletter. Its object is to foster the comradeship forged in service; to nurture goodwill; and to keep members and their families in touch with each other. Items for publication may be submitted by email or Australia Post. The Editor reserves the right to decide publication of any item, for any edition of the newsletter. *C Company Lines will be issued periodically subject to need or sufficient items being received.* Editor: Geoff 'Doc' Jones, C Coy representative to 6 RAR Association Committee. Email: jones.g@bigpond.net.au; PO Box 511, Albany Creek, Qld, 4035; T: 07 3264 4203 M: 0437 437 099



A time for reflection and paying respect at the Long Tan Cross. The cross is erected at the site where 11 Platoon fell