



DEBRIEF

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HONOUR THE DEAD, But Fight like Hell for the Living

National President's Report.

During July I have been involved with the Advocacy Training and Development program assisting with the assessment of recognition of prior learning of those that have been working in this field.

Second stage was a two day training session to enhance my personal skills in the advocacy assessment field.

Members of our association have been an active participants in the advocacy and advocacy training areas for many years and while we may not have the same number of active participants I don't feel we are finished yet.

I would encourage any of our current practitioners that have not yet registered for recognition of prior learning assessment to consider the option.

August of course is a significant month for Vietnam veterans and their families, the anniversary of the Battle of Long Tan focusses the thoughts of many on their own service and the service and sacrifice of others, we certainly live to our motto and in that vein we should also be aware of those around us that may struggle at this time of the year.

The next major commemoration related to the Vietnam War is the 50th anniversary of the Battle of Fire Support Bases Coral and Balmoral in May next year, as information, dates and timings are released I will ensure they are distributed, that said now is the time to start planning at the branch and sub branch levels.

10,000 STEPS CHALLENGE. While this is not on until October now is the time to register and start training, as with any activity it is not wise to go in cold, start small, at your comfort zone, and increase the target as you feel stronger, amazing the difference this type of simple activity can make.

Debrief is your magazine, an opportunity for branches, sub branches and members to highlight their achievements and history. I look forward to contributions that you feel may be of interest and alternatively subjects you feel will be of interest to other members.

The V.V.A.A. National Council meet in October in Canberra, make sure your thoughts and concerns are known to your state branch presidents so they can receive the attention they deserve, it is your association, the National Executive and National Council represent your opinions and we cannot do that if we don't know what you really think.

Finally the most important person is you. Stay strong and be proud, you are part of the Vietnam Veteran family.

DISCLAIMER—The material in DEBRIEF is in the nature of general comment only and neither purports nor is intended to be advice on any particular matter. NO persons should act on the basis of any matter contained in DEBRIEF without considering and, if necessary, taking appropriate professional advice upon their own particular circumstances. The VVAA, the authors and editors, expressly disclaim all and any liability in respect of anything done or omitted to be done by any such person in reliance, whether whole or partial, upon the whole or part of the contents of DEBRIEF.

OUR MILITARY HISTORY

Harry Arthur Smith

Lieutenant Colonel Harry Arthur Smith SG, MC (born 25 July 1933) is a former senior officer in the Australian Army, seeing service during the Malayan Emergency and the Vietnam War. He was Officer Commanding of D Company, 6th Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (D Coy, 6RAR) during the Battle of Long Tan on 18 August 1966.

After service as a National Serviceman, Smith joined the Australian Regular Army and graduated as Second Lieutenant from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea. He was subsequently posted to the 2nd Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment in 1955 and later served during the Malayan Emergency between 1955 and 1957.

Battle of Long Tan

From 8 June 1966 to 14 June 1967, Smith, then a major, was Officer Commanding D Coy, 6RAR. On 18 August, after heavy mortar shelling of the Australian base at Nui Dat the previous night, companies from 6RAR were sent out to locate the Vietnamese units involved. Smith led the 105 soldiers of D Coy and the 3 man NZ Artillery Party out on patrol, but at 3.15pm, while patrolling a rubber plantation at Long Tan that afternoon, they encountered a reinforced regiment-sized Vietnamese force (the Viet Cong 275th Regiment, supported by the North Vietnamese Army 806 Battalion and D440 and D445 Battalions) attempting to advance on the base. A monsoon struck at the same time, but Smith organised his forces to successfully hold off the assault, while coordinating support from Australian, New Zealand, and United States artillery units back at Nui Dat. D Coy was reinforced at 6.55pm by a B Company Platoon then A Company in APCs, the Vietnamese having started to withdraw. 18 Australians were killed and 24 wounded during the Battle of Long Tan, but under Smith's command, D Coy had fended off a numerically superior force, with at least 245 Vietnamese confirmed as killed, and another 300 believed wounded. 800 enemy killed or died from wounds were listed in records found in 1969. 9 Delta Company men were given gallantry awards, but many of these had been downgraded from the original nomination: Smith's leadership of his men during the fierce fighting saw him recommended for the Distinguished Service Order, but he instead received the Military Cross

Post-war service

Following service in Vietnam, Smith commanded 1 Commando Company at Georges Heights and was later posted as CO/CI of the first Parachute Training School. Smith left the Army in 1976 after a parachuting injury.

Upgrading of award

On 14 August 2008, after years of campaigning for better recognition of Long Tan veterans, Smith's Military Cross was upgraded to the Star of Gallantry. (The Australian honours system replacement for the Commonwealth Distinguished Service Order). On the same day, two others who fought at Long Tan had their bravery awards upgraded to correspond to the original nominations. On 9 March 2011 at the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum, Smith was presented with the Star of Gallantry by local MP Paul Neville. Many of the Long Tan veterans were in attendance for the ceremony.

THE KOKODA TRACK

National 10,000 steps Challenge 2017

INVITATION to walk in the FOOTSTEPS OF HEROES.

All members of the veteran community, including current and former serving ADF personnel and their families, are invited to retrace the steps of our World War II heroes by participating in this National 10,000 steps challenge.

Get a new team together, join an existing team or call up last year's team and get on track for better health as you walk in the steps of heroes.

Counting steps is easy as 1..2..3

1 – Use a fitness tracker

2 – Use a smartphone app

3 – Use a pedometer* - *Some participants may be eligible for a complimentary pedometer.

The challenge

Challenge yourself to reach a new milestone, challenge your colleagues to reach 10,000 steps per day or challenge other teams to improve their best efforts. At the end of the day, it's reaching your personal goals that provides the greatest rewards.

Recording steps

Starting on Saturday 21st October 2017 and finishing on Friday 17th November, teams of five will record their daily steps then log them onto the official 10,000 steps website. Each week the teams' steps are mapped against the significant locations along the Kokoda Track. Steps can be recorded directly through either a smartphone app, the official 10,000 steps website, your team captain or through the DVA national 10k steps coordinator.

Keeping in Touch

Each week we will send out a newsletter with progressive results, stories or photos from participants, and instant challenge quizzes. In addition each week we will send out a postcard that identifies your progress along the track and announces that week's random draw prize winners for each State/Territory.

Category winners

This year there is more opportunity to win, with more group and age categories. Refer to the Fact Sheet on our web page for more information.

Winners at State/Territory and National level will be announced and prizes distributed at the end of the challenge.

Veterans and Veterans Families Counselling Service (VVCS) and Veterans Line

24 hours a day across Australia for crisis support and free and confidential counselling.

Phone **1800 011 046.**

V.V.A.A. TASMANIA BUSH RETREAT.

Assisted by a "Teddy Sheean" Tasmanian Government Grant, the Vietnam Veterans Tasmania State Memorial Bush Retreat received a great improvement in convenience and safety.

The front ramp was built by those photographed. They are: from left - Dennis Camplin, Malcolm Dean, Malcolm Campbell, Allan Cunningham, Jim Jones, David Curbishley, Barrie Curtis and Malcolm Cash behind the camera.

The other photo shows the finished job. Veterans and their families are pleased to be able to wheel the barrow of wood right up to the wood box via the ramp.

Vietnam Veterans and younger Veterans are working hard to improve the already comfortable Bush Retreat. They have a painting program coming up and are even planning to have an Air Conditioner installed for heating mostly.



If you would prefer to have this publication emailed directly to you please forward your email address to the National Secretary at secretary@vvaa.org.au.

Don't forget to advise him if the address changes.

NATIONAL VIETNAM VETERANS MUSEUM

25 VETERANS DRIVE, NEWHAVEN, PHILLIP ISLAND VIC 3925

WWW.VIETNAMVETSMUSEUM.ORG.AU



THE 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 early inception and remains today.

The Kookaburra is also present on all War Widows' Guild Badges.

REUNIONS

REUNION– 30 TERMINAL SQN RAE.

I am trying to organise a reunion for current and ex members of **30 terminal Sqn (Termites)**

We are having a reunion in Sydney on the 17-19 Nov 2017 and this is also the 75th anniversary of the trade

And we would like to find any of the boys and pass on this invite

My details are below

Any help will be much appreciated

Craig Ingram 0407173321 craingram@westnet.com.au



LOOKING FOR; Jack "Bluey" Bert.

Friends and adopted family would like to determine that he is Ok, (His mobile connection is failing) and would be really pleased to get him to contact Colin (Dusty) , Hickey or Caveman in Tenterfield

or at least advise us of his location. and condition.

Colin 0415998265 or 02 6737 5400

“MY DOG NUI DAT”

Written by Peter Simpson

Sung by Dale Duncan on his album

BACK TO THE BUSH

To order contact Peter Izod

0418 245 058

Peterizod.ammo6@bigpond.com

VETERAN FRIENDLY RETREATS

Future listing of these facilities should be available on the various VVAA State branch web sites and these can be accessed through the web site www.vvaa.org.au



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: debrief@vvaa.org.au

MAIL BOX

On 24 Jun 2017, at 8:47 AM, Bill Brown <billthewriter51@gmail.com> wrote:

If you can help me make any contacts with a NZ or Australian Vietnam War vet or two, that would be great.

All that my kids and grand kids know about the war is what they saw in the Oliver Stone movie. Good movie. Oliver Stone was in the 25th Division on the Cambodian border, so that was his war, but it wasn't mine, or most guys. My theory is that there was 100 different wars depending on the year you were there, where you were, your rank, and your job. It doesn't matter to me if they were Army, Navy, Marines, Air Force, or whatever. I'm currently fishing around for a few female vets, as well They are all part of they picture, as were the Aussies and New Zealanders -- a different military from ours, which would add to the interest.

I'm not writing a war book. What I'm doing is writing short vignettes, 3-4 page snapshots, of the people who served there and their experiences, where they came from and what they did after, focusing on the people. In our case, and I assume yours, we are all around 70 now, going the way of the dinosaurs and gooney birds, and a huge percentage of them are now -- virtually everyone who was out in the bush -- are suffering from various Agent Orange disabilities from a number of cancers, to diabetes, heart disease, and others.

But everyone who was there has a story or two, or something very memorable that happened. What I tell them is what do you want your grand kids to understand? I have already interviewed 35 US vets and will end up with around 100, or a 350-400 page e-book

The title will be "Our Vietnam Wars -- the experiences of the men and women who served there."

If you can dig a few up, I can phone them on Skype. My interviews usually take around 45 minutes.

Thanks, Bill Brown

Vietnam Veteran Merchandise

Full stock/price lists at www.vietnamvetmerchandise.com.au

sales@vietnamvetmerchandise.com.au or phone 0490 708 373





ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY
VIETNAM WAR HISTORY
H.M.A.S. BRISBANE (D41)



During the mid-1960s, the United States government pressured Australia to increase the resources it was committing to the Vietnam War; one of the requests was for a combat vessel to help the USN meet the demand for naval gunfire support operations. The idea of deploying a RAN combat ship to the Vietnam War was initially hampered by the number of ships available, particularly with commitments to the Far East Strategic Reserve and involvement in the Indonesia-Malaysia Confrontation, along with the difficulty of operating and maintaining British-designed ships with USN resources. On 14 December 1966, the Australian Cabinet approved the deployment of Hobart as part of increases to Australian military commitment to the conflict. Brisbane operated in one of three roles:

Naval gunfire support operations to assist ground forces, particularly the United States Marine Corps units operating closest to the North Vietnam border. Seven ships were usually stationed on the 'gunline', and attacks fell into two categories: 'unspotted' shelling of areas where North Vietnamese or Viet Cong forces and facilities were known or believed to be, and 'spotted' fire missions in direct support of ground troops. In this role, Brisbane operated under the callsign "Flamboyant".

Anti-infiltration operations under Operation Market Time, which aimed to stop the logistic supply and reinforcement of Viet Cong units operating in South Vietnam by tracking, intercepting, and searching coastal shipping. RAN destroyers were never formally assigned to Market Time, but the overlap of the gunline and Market Time operational areas meant the ships were often called on to assist by tracking suspicious ships or participating in raids.

Escort of USN aircraft carriers involved in Operation Rolling Thunder airstrikes.

Sister ships Hobart and Perth had also been involved in shipping interdiction patrols along the coast of North Vietnam as part of Operation Sea Dragon, but this operation had ended by the time of Brisbane's first deployment. Although RAN ships on deployment were expected to fulfil all duties of an equivalent American destroyer, they were forbidden by the Australian government from operating outside the Vietnam theatre on unrelated Seventh Fleet duties (such as the Taiwan Patrol Force, guard ship duties at Hong Kong, or the Space Recovery Program). After the invasion of Cambodia in 1970, RAN ships were also prohibited from entering Cambodian waters.

While deployed to Vietnam, the destroyers were placed under the administrative control of Commander Australian Forces Vietnam in addition to that of the Flag Officer Commanding Australian Fleet. Operationally, the RAN vessels were under the command of the United States Seventh Fleet. Arrangements were made to provide logistic support through the United States Pacific Fleet.[19] A USN lieutenant was assigned to each ship during deployments to act as a liaison with the Seventh Fleet. The deployment of HMAS Hobart in March 1967 began a pattern of six-month deployments for RAN destroyers, with a constant RAN presence with the Seventh Fleet.[8] Australia was the only allied nation to provide naval support to the United States Navy during the Vietnam War.

continued

HMAS Brisbane continued

First deployment

After time in Australian waters to prepare for wartime service, Brisbane arrived in Subic on 28 March 1969 to be deployed to the Vietnam War. Responsibility was handed over from Perth on 31 March, and the ship spent the first two weeks of April undergoing familiarisation exercises and having both gun turrets repaired following equipment failures early on. The destroyer was first deployed to naval gunfire support duties, and arrived off the IV Corps operating area on 15 April. During this period, there was a surge in Market Time activity, and although Brisbane was not assigned to that operation, she was asked to provide gunfire assistance on several occasions. On 5 May, Brisbane was ordered to the Gulf of Thailand to provide support for South Vietnamese forces operating near the Cambodian border. The destroyer was relieved on 18 May by USS Waddell, and sailed to Subic for maintenance. On 10 June, the Australian ship relieved USS Rupertus and commenced gunline duties in the II Corps Area. After four days, during which Brisbane and USS Rowan completed a combined 189 fire missions, the Australian ship was ordered north to I Corps to relieve the American cruiser USS Saint Paul. Here, the Australian ship provided support for 3rd Battalion 3rd Marines during Operation Virginia Ridge. Brisbane returned to the II Corps area on 24 June, but only remained in the area for four days; on 29 June, the ship was relieved by USS James E. Kyes, and sailed to Singapore for maintenance and refit. En route to Singapore, the destroyer encountered the merchant vessel MV Sincere, which was on fire. After unsuccessfully attempting to extinguish the fire, Brisbane evacuated Sincere's crew, and remained in the area until the salvage vessel Salvana arrived to take the stricken vessel in tow.

Brisbane returned to operations in II Corps on 15 July. On 22 July, near the end of a shore bombardment operation, a premature explosion occurred in the barrel of the forward gun turret; casualties were limited to one sailor with a fractured wrist, but the turret was unusable. On the ship's return to Subic on 3 August, the damaged turret was removed, but as the replacement turret would not arrive until September, Brisbane would complete the deployment with only a single gun turret. After the completion of maintenance, Brisbane returned to duty on 23 August, but instead of gunline duties, was assigned as the head of the escort screen for the aircraft carrier USS Oriskany. The ships were deployed to Yankee Station, with Brisbane and USS Perkins (plus other destroyers on occasion) performing escort and plane guard duties. On 12 September, Oriskany and Perkins departed, and were replaced by USS Constellation and USS Floyd B. Parks respectively. On 14 September, Brisbane sailed to Subic for maintenance and fitting of the replacement turret, then departed on 1 October for Sydney, having been relieved by the Daring-class destroyer HMAS Vendetta two days earlier. Arriving on 13 October, Brisbane was almost immediately docked for a major refit, which lasted until 15 July 1970.

Brisbane's tour was considered quieter than those experienced previously by Australian ships. This, combined with the damage to the forward gun turret and other defects, meant that the destroyer only fired 7,891 shells during the six-month deployment. Two officers from the ship were Mentioned in Despatches, while other personnel awards included a British Empire Medal and 25 Naval Board commendations.

continued

HMAS Brisbane continued

Second deployment

On 29 March 1971, Brisbane relieved Perth of Vietnam duties. The ship was assigned to Military Region 3 for gunfire support duties, and arrived on 5 April. Shortly after, the destroyer was moved south to Military Region 4. She returned to Military Region 3 on 15 April.[32] The first period on the gunline during that time concluded on 20 April, during which gunfire support operations had occurred on only 11 of the 16 days. The destroyer returned to the gunline on 15 May, with Brisbane's commanding officer tasked as the overall commander of gunfire operations; the only time the position was held by a RAN officer. Brisbane was assigned to operate near the Demilitarized Zone. The ship was relieved on 31 May and sailed to Danang. The destroyer was then assigned to escort the carrier USS Kitty Hawk. During 3 and 4 May, Brisbane was detached to provide cover for the repatriation of prisoners-of-war to North Vietnam. The operation did not go ahead, as only 13 of the 570 prisoners wanted to return to North Vietnam, and the North Vietnamese government refused to accept them. Brisbane returned to carrier escort duties, where she remained until sailing to Hong Kong for maintenance on 12 June.

On 24 June, Brisbane was assigned back to gunline duties in Military Region 3. Activity was minimal, and the ship was redeployed to Military Region 4 on 26 June. Foul weather prevented gunfire support operations until 30 June, but the rate of activity increased, with 60 fire missions completed by the end of the three-week period. In mid-July, after a short stint back in Region 3, Brisbane sailed to Subic for maintenance and leave. On 15 August, the destroyer commenced gunfire support operations off the Demilitarized Zone. A spike in activity had resulted in the deployment of two gunfire support ships, with Brisbane and USS Berkeley rotating between being the active vessel and being on 15 minutes standby to provide assistance. On 21 August, Berkeley was relieved by USS Shelton. Of the 7,231 shells fired during the second deployment, 2,127 were fired from 15 August onwards, which caused a problem as the rate of fire would cause the gun barrels to come up for replacing a week before the destroyer was due to rotate off the gunline. The amount of wear had yet to compromise accuracy, and the destroyer was instructed to continue gunfire missions, while the cruiser USS Oklahoma City and the destroyer USS Rogers were deployed to the gunline in support of Brisbane; the Australian destroyer only firing if targets were out of the other ships' range or they were otherwise unavailable. Brisbane's second Vietnam deployment concluded on 5 September.

During 1971, the Australian government decided to withdraw all forces from Vietnam by the end of the year; Brisbane was the last ship to make a combat deployment to Vietnam, and was not replaced when the deployment ended. Brisbane received the first of two battle honours, "Vietnam 1969–71", for her Vietnam service. Personnel awards for the deployment included 24 Naval Board commendations, two personnel Mentioned in Despatches, and the appointment of the ship's commanding officer as a Commander of the Order of the British Empire.



ARMY UNITS

VIETNAM WAR HISTORY



6th Battalion Royal Australian Regiment

Formation 1965

6 RAR was raised in Brisbane at the Enoggera Barracks on 6 June 1965 under the command of Lieutenant Colonel C.M. Townsend. The Battalion was formed by dividing 2 RAR (Pentropic) into two Tropical Establishment (TE) Battalions.

The Battalion initially comprised a nucleus command structure of Officers and NCO, two rifle companies and some specialists. The Battalion was brought up to full strength when a large draft of soldiers from the first National Service intake marched-in in September 1965.

After the first 6 months a 'State of the Battalion' was given.

Vietnam 1966 - 1967

Following an intensive period of collective training for war, the Battalion flew by Qantas 707 aircraft from Amberley for South Vietnam in May 1966. The Battalion arrived in time to celebrate its first birthday at Vung Tau before moving forward to join 5 RAR at Nui Dat in Phouc Tuy Province and commencing operational service as part of 1 ATF.

During the period June to August 1966, 6 RAR conducted two major operations. Operation ENOGGERA was the search and clearance of the previously unsettled village of Long Phouc, and Operation HOBART was a five-day search and destroy mission. The two operations accounted for 36 enemy casualties and the destruction of several camp installations and caches.

Operation HOBART also saw the Battalion come in contact with the enemy provincial Mobile Battalion D445 which was subsequently met and defeated at Long Tan. Long Tan 18 Aug

18 August 1966 – The Battle of Long Tan.

A mortar and recoilless rifle attack on the Task Force area on the night of 16/17 August 1966 triggered a series of events that culminated in the Battle of Long Tan and Operation SMITHFIELD.

Continued

6RAR Continued.

Early morning of 17 August, B Company was dispatched to locate enemy base-plate positions and to follow up enemy withdrawal routes. Operation VENDETTA commenced as D Company took over from B Company on 18 August and shortly thereafter made contact with an enemy force. The contact quickly escalated into a full battle as the enemy heavily committed more and more of the 275 Main Force Regiment. Soon D Company was under sustained attack on three flanks.

Supported only by Task Force artillery because of torrential rain and a blanket of mist, D Company held its ground for three hours with grim determination and much heroism, and inflicted enormous casualties on a tenacious and determined enemy.

The remainder of the Battalion deployed to aid the beleaguered Delta Company.

A Company and CO 6 RAR deployed in the APC of 3 Troop, 1 APC Squadron and arrived on the battlefield just on dusk and in time to interdict a large enemy force in the process of surrounding D Company, inflicting further enemy casualties and forcing him to withdraw.

A United States Presidential Unit Citation was awarded to D Company by the President of the United States, Lyndon B. Johnson. 18 August is now solemnly commemorated each year as Long Tan Day, in memory of the eighteen soldiers who gave their lives during this significant and iconic battle of the Vietnam War.

Between August 1966 and its departure to Australia in June 1967, 6 RAR took part in seventeen additional Battalion operations and supported a number of 5 RAR operations. These operations along with the routine patrolling around the Task Force area gradually wrestled control of the province away from the Viet Cong.

During this first tour of Vietnam, 37 members of the Battalion were killed and 23 members of the Battalion received individual gallantry awards.

YOUR ACTIVITIES REPORTED IN DEBRIEF

States and sub branches are encouraged to contribute reports on their activities, particularly an opportunity to let others know what is happening in your area.

Email text in Word or photos in JPG to the editor at www.debrief@vva.org.au



ROYAL AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE

VIETNAM WAR HISTORY

NO 2 SQUADRON



No 2 Squadron deployed from Butterworth, Malaysia to Phan Rang air base, 35 kilometres south of Cam Ranh Bay, a large USAF base in the far east of South Vietnam, on 19 April 1967. 2 SQN 'Magpies' were part of the 35th Tactical Fighter Wing and were tasked by HQ 7th Air Force in Saigon, for eight sorties per day for seven days a week, in all areas of South Vietnam from 23 April 1967 until return to Australia in 1971.

The Canberra filled a gap in the USAF inventory as it was the only tactical aircraft in South Vietnam which bombed, visually, from straight and level flight, albeit at 350knots. Often, the Canberra could fly below the cloud while the dive attack aircraft could not see the ground to acquire the target because of the low cloud base. The USN and USMC operated the A6 Intruder in all-weather attack modes, usually straight and level, using radar bombing systems. USAF F-111As operated in similar modes in 1968, undergoing combat evaluation, but were withdrawn after three were lost. The F-111s returned in 1972 and achieved outstanding results.

For the first few months, the Squadron carried out night Combat Skyspot missions where aircraft were guided on the bombing run by ground based precision radar. The first low level day missions started in September 1967, with forward air controllers marking the targets with smoke. Most sorties were in support of the Australian Task Force in the IV Corps area. Flying at about 3000 feet (915 metres) AGL to avoid ground fire, the crews achieved accuracies of about 45 metres. On a number of occasions, aircraft released their bombs from as low as 800 ft (245 metres), followed by a rapid pull-up to a height outside the fragmentation envelope. However, a number of aircraft were damaged by bomb fragments (shrapnel) and some navigators suffered minor injuries as a result.

HQ Seventh Air Force was impressed with the bombing accuracies of the Canberras when operating with FACs in close support of ground troops and by November 1967, were being tasked with four day low level sorties. However, greater accuracy was necessary to achieve the required damage levels on the targets being attacked. Bombing accuracies were improved to 20 metres CEP.

The Canberra achieved the transition over many years from a high level bomber with poor accuracy to a very accurate low level tactical bomber in support of ground troops. Most of the day low level operations in Vietnam were in IV Corps where the low and flat terrain resulted in the Canberra achieving very good bombing accuracy.

Flying about 5% of the Wing's sorties, 2SQN was credited with 16% of the bomb damage assessment.

continued

No 2 Squadron RAAF Continued

Bomb Loads

Initially, bombs released were ex-WW2 war stocks. Typical aircraft loads varied from 10 x 500lb bombs to 6 x 1000 lb bombs. All stocks were exhausted in 15 months and 2SQN changed over to the USAF M117 bombs; 4 in the bomb bay and two on the wing tips. More reliable fuses in these bombs resulted in few of the problems experienced with the earlier British designed bombs.

2SQN aircraft serviceability was high. Eight aircraft were kept on-line and maintenance personnel worked 2 x 12 hour shifts to meet the daily tasking rate of eight sorties. The Squadron achieved a 97% serviceability rate.

North Vietnamese troops unleashed a heavy mortar, artillery and rocket attack on the Marine base at Khe Sanh on 21 January 1968, before the Tet offensive. Khe Sanh was an important strategic post and its capture would give the North Vietnamese an almost unobstructed invasion route in the northernmost provinces, from where they could outflank American positions south of the DMZ.

Operation Niagara was launched to defend Khe Sanh. On the first day of the attack, nearly 600 tactical sorties (including 49 by the B-52's) were launched against enemy positions.

2SQN Canberras were involved in day and night operations, usually in pairs, and carried out visual bombing (daylight) and Skyspot missions in support of the siege. The most dangerous missions to the Khe Sanh area were flown at night when aircraft were often held in racetrack holding patterns at 20-25 000 ft with numerous (up to 30 or 40) USAF, USN and Marine Corps aircraft.

2SQN operations continued in all Military Regions (MR), including the DMZ, the Cambodian/Laos border, the A Shau Valley and Khe Sanh from 1969 to 1970. In all operations, the Canberras achieved excellent bombing results.

On 3 November 1970, the first Canberra (A84-231) was lost during a Skyspot mission in the Danang area. The aircraft was not found until February 2009 - see the article on Magpie 91. The cause of the loss has not been determined .

Another aircraft, A84-228, was lost in March 1971 in the Khe Sanh area. The crew, WGDCR John Downing and FLTLT Al Pinches, ejected and following their rescue the next day by a 'dustoff' UH-1H rescue chopper, confirmed they had been hit by a SA-2 missile, which blew the right wing off.

Last Mission

The last Canberra mission in Vietnam was 31 May 1971 and was tasked in support of the US 101st Airborne Division in the A Shau Valley, an area frequented by the squadron many times over the last two years. 2SQN released a total of 76389 bombs in its time in Vietnam.

The squadron departed Phan Rang on 4 June 1971, arriving back in Amberley on 5 June, 13 years since it deployed to Malaya in 1958.

No 2 Squadron air and ground crews performed exceptionally well in the air war in South Vietnam and carried on the fine traditions of strike squadrons in the RAAF.