

LINDSAY BENNETT

President 1991 to 1993



Lindsay receiving 'The Ode' from Frank Hamilton

Initially Lindsay was called up during 1968 for National Service for a period of two years. He served with the 4th Royal Australian Regiment in South Vietnam during 1968-69. Lindsay was in a Rifle Company, generally conducting patrols and stints at Company strength, some lasting up to six weeks.

On completion of National Service, he signed on for a period of three years, as a regular, ending in 1974. During 1971 he returned to South Vietnam with 2 Squadron, Special Air Service Regiment. The principal role of the Squadron, operating in five man patrols, was reconnaissance, and ambushing to gain information for the task force intelligence section. That section, on gaining the information, was able to manoeuvre the infantry battalions. All members of the five man patrols were cross trained in many specialised skills, such as signalling (morse code), demolition, medics, free fall parachuting, diving, etc. Lindsay's particular facet in his patrol was forward scouting.

The wet season in South Vietnam was quite extra-ordinary, for there was a huge amount of rain falling each afternoon and evening. For an infantryman in particular it meant NOT having to be burdened with water, for only enough was necessary to be carried for a day or two, whereas in the dry season, sufficient water had to be carried for a seven day patrol, and that was a big burden.

Although there are many rivers in South Vietnam, to have to go near them during the dry season meant possibly compromising the patrol, especially a reconnaissance patrol. Naturally during the wet season there were plenty of mosquitoes, leeches and mud, the patrolmen being constantly wet through by the rain and humidity. Monkeys, being inquisitive and noisy, at times made the patrols feel insecure. On one occasion, particularly during the night, elephants were most disturbing. While the patrol huddled under a bush, not more than a hundred metres away, the animals were heard to be stamping and pushing over everything in their way. Previously bombed areas were also a hazard, as the craters left from 500 pound bombs, are quite large and inhibited movement. Napalmed areas, which killed the vegetation, made movement noisy through the crackling of the dead timber and sticks. Patrolling in the wet weather meant that you slept wet.

Back in camp at Nui Dat, the task force base location, accommodation was quite good, there being proper beds. There were only two or three men allocated to a large tent, with flooring and sand bags around the edges. There was a wet mess with a limited amount of beer available. Mail was received on a regular basis. Some troops received parcels supplied by various RSL Sub-Branched and the Women's Auxiliaries.

Morale generally was not a problem. The malaria carrying mosquito was ever present. Although troops were supplied daily with paludrine and dapson, which suppressed the problem, many troops contracted the disease. Heat rashes, tinea and bronchial infections were some of the more prevalent ailments suffered.

It is common knowledge now that the reception of troops on their return from Vietnam to Australia was markedly different to that experienced by personnel returning from other theatres of previous wars. Public attitude, which was against this war, eventually convinced the Americans to pull out of South Vietnam. At times, unfortunately, the home coming troops were treated with hostility. Everyone having a different personal, physical and mental make-up some troops were very adversely affected.