



C Company

THE NOMINAL ROLL put us at 130 strong by the time attachments such as gunners, medics, cooks and the like were squeezed in.

But the tour was not a list of statistics. The heart of the matter deals with 12 months of people, personalities and experiences in various shades, shape and size.

Apart from the company's achievements, every soldier took away with him a feeling of having belonged to something; of having taken part in the events which now live on as tales and jokes.

And these tales are endless. Ever watched six feet of bronzed Anzac nuzzling up to nearly 30 lbs of "black fighting metal" (an M60 to the uninitiated) in the wet? Or seen a scruffy little Digger looking for his teeth at 8.45 p.m. (?) in the Grand? Or, perhaps, heard about the officer of field rank who didn't realise formation commanders are sometimes only frustrated traffic cops?

The men changed during the year. To a bewildered newcomer there was nothing more disquieting than a battle-seasoned hero bursting forth with, "She'll be right mate. On-the-job training sorts out the men from the boys."

Wire picquets, RSM's work parties, TAOR patrols, the boozier, red dirt, the concert parties, stand to, those noisy ruddy tanks, that tin hat, the soldier's best mate—a rifle—and even the trip to the Peter Badcoe Club generate stories, though memories of visits to the club are a little hazy.

The company had its ups and downs, and in one way or another every member benefited from the tour and left with a great depth of military and personal experience.

Is it not strange that some of the most humorous events arise from near disasters and terrifying situations? Two such occasions for the company were both with the compliments of the United States Air Force.

First the company was strafed with 20mm cannon, and on the next occasion a plane flying a combat spy spot mission dropped its 750 lb bomb on top of the company.

In the bombing incident one of the FO's party, a certain Gnr Gorrick, was heard, amid a shower of dirt and debris, to scream, "Skip, my God, I'm cut in two." Then, feeling no blood or pain, followed it up with a relieved sigh, "Don't worry, Skip, I'm only crushed." The sitrep from battalion headquarters described it as a near miss. Seven Platoon will assure you it was a direct hit.

Major Brian Lindsay commanded the company until January 1969 and after Operation Goodwood handed over the reins to Major M. C. Morrison. Major Lindsay took over Major Morrison's former position, OC Admin Company.

Major Lindsay had a theory which amused most people in and out of the company. He believed that anywhere you found red, gritty soil you would find an enemy camp. If

tracks were evident or there was water nearby that would be more than enough to convince him.

So sure of his theory was he that once he had an area heavily engaged with artillery without a bunker being seen. He was right. The next day the company walked into a system of 150 bunkers. There's one for JTC training—tread softly when you see red soil.

Major Morrison (sometimes fondly referred to as the "Angry Ant") found himself one day in a situation where he was caught literally with his pants down. The OC had his trousers round his ankles and was having some paint applied to his backside by the company medic, Pte Charlie Sparrow, when the platoon protecting company headquarters engaged a group of VC. By the time the OC had returned his trousers to their normal position all pit space had been taken up!

The CSM, WOII Doug Burke, obtained a souvenir from the bombing incident—a piece of shrapnel about two and a half feet long. Prior to RTA it was rumoured the shrapnel was going home too—to be worn as a bow tie at the local RSL. That worry should be worth a beer or two.

The company was backed up well by Ssgt "Jesse" James, his off-sider, Lcpl Herbie Becke, Sgt Trevor Graham and his cooks, and Cpl Charlie Stewart. They made sure the company was always well looked after in base and in the bush.



No, no, The birds are down here, not up there Uc Dai hoi."

Black Friday

*Twenty young men started that day,
Charlie was active not far away;
They were given the task, "Follow that track,"
Once they got started they didn't look back.
The scout sighted a bunker—a sign to go slow,
There may be trouble—they really don't know.*

*The first one's OK—no Charlie in there,
But men mustn't relax—still walk with care;
Moving with caution to the bunker ahead,
One bad move and some may be dead.
A second one cleared—no VC in there,
But wait, up ahead, are there any up there?*

*A deafening roar shatters the air,
Someone is hit on the flank over there;
The skipper gives orders, "We've got to push on,"
Through this bloody bamboo it's really no fun.
A section is sent around to the right,
These Charlie can really be tough in a fight.*

*The sig has been hit—a round in the chest,
The boss gets him out—they all do their best;
A section starts to come in from the side,
But the gunner is killed—bravely he died.
Another man falls—the skipper is hit,
And that VC keeps firing, safe in his pit.*

*Slowly they advance, firing as one,
But by this time a lot of ammo is gone;
The boss is hit in the leg once again,
But he doesn't bow to the terrible pain.
The sergeant is up there leading them on,
They all know well there's a job to be done.*

*And so, after a well aimed grenade,
The top of the rise is finally made;
Charlie has gone—beaten at last,
But he fought well in the hour that passed.
The firing has stopped, it's time to take stock,
Three dead and six wounded, a terrible shock.*

*Mick, Jock and Mike all fought to the end,
And many a man lost a good friend;
It was a hard fight and tough,
But these boys are men when the going is rough.
There was an omen that some may have seen,
For this patrol on Friday thirteen.*



Eight Platoon

IF DIGGERS were chemicals, Eight Platoon would have been a dangerous and highly explosive mixture. This became obvious whenever the amber catalyst was added.

The tally of sick and wounded at the company aid post was never as high as on the morning after the first night back in Nui Dat after an operation.

It may have been the trail of empty beer cans. Or the broken heads. Or, possibly, the exuberant sing-along that led Zero Alpha to speak with the platoon commander on "that gang of yours."

And speaking of platoon commanders, they came and went. For a while Eight Platoon appeared to be a training ground for ex-Papua-New Guinea rifle company officers. It may have been that the powers that be considered only men experienced in handling headhunters and cannibals were capable of handling us.

First love is usually the best love, and Eight Platoon's original leader, 2Lt Tom Cootes, was held in high esteem by his Diggers, who lost him to Transport Platoon after eight months. Next was Lt R. Graham, who left the untamed interior of Papua-New Guinea for the wilds of Eight Platoon lines. He was replaced by Lt B. Parkin, who took the platoon on to final victory—and took most of its money while he was at it.

At this stage Sgt Jock Scott rates a mention. Though difficult to decipher at times, his Scots accent was a welcome and cool one during a few hectic contacts. Missing from the going home party was Sgt Graham Stevens, who was wounded on Operation Goodwood and sent home. "Stevy" was, indeed, an old hand, dating back to the unit's Malaysian days.

The title of section commander fell on many shoulders during the tour. Danny Seaton, a vintage two-hooker, begged, cajoled and coerced his section for all but the last month in country. He was kept on the sidelines during that time with a broken bone, so his protege, Doug Elsum, took the helm. Platoon tactician was Cpl Robinson, who, if he had the chance, would willingly play Charlie at his own game. The games of chance were another of Robbo's specialities.

Six Section's fearless leader, "Doc" Savage, a dry taciturn lad, had a real "thing" with transistors. He eventually obtained a 6ft by 4ft monstrosity which he claimed could pick up the most feeble signal.

"Gollywog," or Maurice Shaw, as he was christened, spent some time with the mobile advisory team at Dat Do, returning late in the tour to add to the general confusion.

The platoon pug, Des Mayo, who was also renowned for his native dancing, left to assist the ARVN—possibly with their boomerang lessons.

The rest of the conglomeration comprised people like veteran Jack Campbell, who detached to company headquarters, Kev Bell, a person the ants relished, and Phil Anderson, a great believer in flower power.

A budding MP with a long record and a bad memory for buying them on R and R was Dick Appleby. Graham Bayley was always on the pill in the bush, and more so at cards. "Mooka", or Terry Berrick, reportedly revelled in the water shortage, and Jim Bluzer, another of the international set, had an interesting trunk of photographs.

Nine Platoon

IF NINE PLATOON had any claim to fame during its tour in South Vietnam, it had to be that it was one of the few platoons in the battalion which did not have a single soldier wounded or killed by the enemy.

But don't get the wrong idea. We had our fair share of action and excitement. We think the fact that nobody was hurt is significant, especially when the facts, figures, percentages and achievements are added up.

Another claim to fame could be that it was the only Australian platoon to go home with the platoon commander and platoon sergeant with which it arrived. Lt K. R. Benier and Sgt B. J. Morris, better known as "Buttons and Bows", were together for a long time. Two years, in fact, and by Vietnam standards that was a long time.

Our most colourful character was easy to pick. Pte "Weasel" Ilsley got the unanimous vote. Who except Weasel could lose a set of false teeth every time he went to Vung Tau? It was rumoured the dentist kept a permanent mould of Weasel's choppers to save time when our favourite soldier fronted up for his regular visit.

For those who wondered what Pte "Gabbo" Gabelish was going to do when he got back to Australia, here's a clue. He assured us he would still carry an M60. His only

worry was that he couldn't find anything to simulate the belts of ammunition, and he was sore because the police wouldn't allow him to walk the streets with a 7.62mm linked belt dangling from him. We suggested Gabbo made up a belt of old links and spent cases.

Then there was our "Jet Set." In Australia, every spare weekend was spent wenching and drinking at the Gold Coast. They tried the latter a couple of times in Vietnam. One occasion which comes to mind was at the Horseshoe. The bamboo thicket at the trig point between Eight and Nine Platoons, wasn't it, Jet Set? How embarrassing when Lt Benier and Sgt Morris executed their left flanking silent attack. Caught all concerned with their pants down, or should we say with their bottoms up? One thing, fellows, you have to admit you were dealt with very fairly in return for your confiscated grog. Your very own AAF A4.

We hope the members of Nine Platoon, C Company, 4RAR/NZ(Anzac)Bn remember 9/C/4RAR after they go their separate ways.

And we also hope that when they pick up this book they remember their friends with whom they shared so many good times as well as tense ones.

NINE PLATOON



Before R and R

After.....