



Eyes and Ears

No.0006 – 27/06/09



31A, 31B, 31C, 31D, Survey and Radar

Well there goes another month – where the hell did that one get to? As usual heaps of things happened - our data base has grown (now PP), and there are quite a few emails coming and going. We've got contributions from 'Blakey', 'Pappy', 'Brookey', 'Boy Scout' – (look later to see where this name comes from??), and the usual Locator Wizard (author unknown – except to 'Boy Scout' and Ed), Dig's interesting photo and a another photo with some names and activity to be supplied, and **Ed's** getting involved with the Yanks.

So let's get started...

Heard and Seen...

. **Ed wants to** note that Pappy Gault is a feature this month for various reasons. Let's start with an email from his wife Carol –

"Hi Dicko Just thought I would give you an update on Peter (Pappy) things are not going too well at present. We came to Mackay for his check-up and it isn't as good as we had hoped as the cancer has returned to the bladder, they have removed the cancer again but he starts chemo to-day for 5 weeks. If the cancer returns they will remove the bladder so it doesn't travel to his kidney that is left.

We both remain hopeful all will be o.k. and we will go on plenty of trips after all we did promise Shadow our dog a big holiday. Regards Carol"

In a follow up email Carol adds –

"Well believe it or not he is very active with sailing, fishing, walking and gardening and does not look at all sick. He is just the best husband father and Poppy you could meet. Thanks for your concern Carol"

But Pappy is not one to take things lying down (well not too many!!) and earlier had the following to say in emails to me –

"Yeah G-Day Dicko, There's the story about Ernie the 'boy scout' who came over to 31c to give us a hand to find & kill the snake we had, which was eating the rats behind the sandbags in our pit. We could hear them squeaking during the night. So, Ernie turns up armed with a wire coat hanger & a machete & proceeds to poke between the sandbags with the coat hanger after a while a very irate cobra shot out from between the bags. Terry, Bob, Vic & I were on the outside watching, so we all bolted leaving Ernie to demolish the inside of our pit with his F-----n machete.

The final result was a severely destroyed LP & a dead 6ft cobra thanks to Uncle Ernie AOM."

Ed couldn't resist and wants to know what happened to the rats; did anyone get any snake skin boots made and are there any photos??

and here's another -

"I've been down to Coffs in the van; caught up with Jimmy Hogno and his wife Lesley. We are about to head off to Darwin for 3 months. That's about it for now. Regards, Pappy."

Pappy - on behalf of all the crew who knew you or not, we all feel know you more now, and our thoughts are with you and Carol and we'll will be in touch. Regards from the 131 Locators.

Pappy's email address is – gaultcarol@yahoo.com.au

. **Al Adams, Bert Blink and John Blake all report** in that Leigh Hemming is recovering well and is itching to get back to work – good one Hembo! **Ed** even got a full-of-life email – he thanks everyone for their thoughts.

. **John Blake sent** an old roneoed (is that a word still?) E&E's ex SVN – see attached – the things that are hoarded away! I hope they've improved over time??

. **Ed comments** - I've had a sneak preview of John 'Blakey' Blake's Profile and it's another great yarn in the interesting change of life stakes after SVN – it's just so good to fill in gaps!

. **Ernie Newbold reports...**News was released recently that the RAAF will be retiring the Caribou aircraft from the end of this year (2009), most of us will have memories of the Caribous and Luscombe Field whether we were on them or receiving mail that they brought in to Nui Dat each day. There will be a new type of aircraft to replace the

Caribou. The sound of a Caribou and of course the ubiquitous Huey choppers are two of the things that we may always remember. **Ed** comments that he can remember paddy- field hopping in one of those with the back open on his way back to Nui Dat from R&R and not feeling all that well!

. **Master Chef Grahame Dignam** – see photo 1 below – caterer to the stars. What was Denise ‘Ding Dong’ Drysdale doing at a private, Orderly Room Only invitees function? What did happen to our rations that week? If only Dig knew the potential for TV ‘Chefdom’ that was later to be thrust upon us, he could have been in all our lounge rooms along with that pommy Gordon “F...” Ramsay.

. **Answers please...photo 2** below shows a relaxed group comprising of??...

Ed’s going to have a guess at from left to right – bottom – no idea, then Steve ‘Boots’ Boutlis, dunno, dunno, Bob Bruce, dunno, dunno, Terry Bruce and perhaps Bob Retrot?? Any advances on this and what were they doing? ‘Spider’ looks as though he’s really interested?

. **Picture 3 below** shows WO Royal in a pensive mood. He was such a dry sort of a bloke. Has anyone any info on what happened to him after 1968?



1. Dig’s only got eyes for the snags, but what did Chalky do or say to Ding Dong??

2. What the hell are they doing? Gee Spider Bruce seems excited!

3. Is that really a picture of Chalky’s wife or Ding Dong on the wall??

Ed has a confession...I’m currently in Mexico and thought I’d ask an Aussie friend I have here who’s the editor of the English/Spanish weekly paper to help me get in contact with Vets or ex-service personnel here and the following is my first response from a Yank bloke called Lou – it’s a bloody classic (Berlin Bar and Harry’s are gringo hangouts where 2 for 1 beers, margaritas, whiskies or whatever are the go) – I’ll keep you in touch with how and what develops -

‘Your mate Suzanne gave me a holler, said you served in country. I’m presuming with an Aussie unit. I was attached to the 4th U.S. Army Infantry Division, as a recon scout; connect with the 1st Armor Cav. out of Fort Halloway up in Pleku in early 67. My tour got cut short through a miracle when I got pulled from a line unit and got a job working for a three-star who got his fourth star and new orders to return to the States and took me with him along with the entire command section of III Corps.

I was a draftee, just a two year guy, who couldn’t wait to get out and go back home to make money and buy new car and of course get laid.

There are a number of us here but no real Vietnam Vet connection even though we do have American Legion here which is a veteran organization but I am not much on organizations. I spend a few nights a week having some tastes at the Berlin Bar and I frequent Harry’s. I’m a single guy who refuses to grow up, and well, I’m sure you get the picture. Perhaps we can hook up sometime and lie about our exploits and women we have been with.

Nice to meet you, mate and welcome back! Aloha, Lou’

.**Website** – the committee is having some trouble getting communications working. Bob billiards reports that he’s sent emails and made phone calls to no avail at present. They’re going to persevere.

. **Continuing to be Spooky...**the Locator Wizard has been shown up to be NOT totally infallible as it was discovered that because of low cloud interference he missed a couple of May people such as Warwick Brooker 30/05 and Roger Long (OK – someone has got to know something about Roger??) on the same date – there goes **Ed’s** theory about no one sharing ballot dates, then Brian Killworth 04/05, and to cap it off with Dennis Dye 19/05..now there’s a name – Gunner Dye!! Does anyone know of his whereabouts?? June seems a bit light with only Bruce Irvine having his 64th on the 7th. Now surely someone knows something about Bruce?? Then the 16th is Ralph Pearce who went home in Apr ‘67 along with Gerry Carroll’s 26th date – **Ed** doesn’t know them – can we get someone to fill us in please on these two blokes? And to cap all this off there’s only one bloke born in July – the

Wizard won't tell us till the time. **Ed** can't believe that July was a bad month to conscript 20 year olds - what sort of ballot were they running – the then Minister apparently said "Let's give July a miss it's too cold to put your hand in that drum to pull names out in this weather!!" Maybe the Wizard can do with some help to find other July candidates?

. **Canberra** – There is going to be a Vietnam Veteran's Day Camaraderie Luncheon on at the Hellenic Club of Canberra in Woden on 18th August, 2009. If any ones got an interest or any further information we'll try to let you all know.

. **WIA's** – who were the 8 blokes Wounded In Action?? Barney Erica explains the one accidentally killed and of course there was Jim Menz.

. **Locator Profiles** – we've received 15 and we've sent out 12 so far, and they're proving to be great reads with some interesting characters evolving that we possibly didn't know years ago. So with our reserves, it looks at present, that it'll all be over in about another 3 weeks!! If we can get more it'll keep the ball rolling.

. **Lost, Found etc...** Warwick Brooker gets a nod this month by rounding up Nick Armstrong at Coffs Harbour. Nick also took photos on that weekend which **Ed** has put a link to below. Nick's also been in touch with some background on himself – we'll get him to do a Profile so we can get to know or re-acquaint ourselves with him. He cracked it for 65 in May and lives in a small town in South Aussie.

. **Coffs Harbour** – Warwick Brooker has a bit to add – an arty surveyor's personal perspective...

The following post-mortem roughly follows the timing of the photos that I uploaded to Windows Live. Let me know if you'd like access to the photos. (You'll need an email address.)

I left Canberra around 10 a.m. Friday. The flight was delayed because of fog in Sydney, but I had time to spare in Sydney; more than I thought, because the afternoon flight to Coffs Harbour was also delayed. Not a problem: the Dash 8 flights were very comfortable and I arrived before many of the other airborne troops and road convoys. Of course, we were all quite happy to delay the *Meet and Greet* a little for the sake of sobriety, which we all agreed was a worthy aspiration.

A good representation of the survey team was accommodated at the Chelsea Motor Inn, still keeping a watchful eye on each other, a la South Vietnam. The *Meet and Greet* went well and I was pleased to see a few faces that I hadn't seen for over 40 years, as well as the more familiar faces with whom I'd been reunited at my first reunion in 2006. Naturally, we all curbed our fluid intake to remain vigilant and be fresh and early for breakfast on Saturday! Saturday's breakfast really set the pace for the weekend's food intake! The mushrooms were delicious, so much so that they weren't served again for the remainder of the weekend, Boots having exhausted the supply on the very first day. (Actually, I saw a few others overindulging on mushrooms too. I meant to ask for the recipe myself.)

I missed the Saturday BBQ lunch, but heard that the steak was melt-in-your-mouth quality and in a way I was sorry that I'd ventured out to the fishing club to eat substandard fare. In fact, my fresh whiting pieces and chips arrived as chips only and I had to filch a few pieces of fish from Peter Hopper's plate. Sorry Peter, but they'd probably put my two pieces on your plate anyway! I hope they have new caterers at the fishing club before 2011, although I suspect that I'll remain at the Ex-Services Club next time and enjoy some prime steak.

Back at the motel we all donned best dress for the Memorial Service at 5 p.m. The troops assembled in an orderly fashion at the club entrance, then marched in column-of-three for a good thirty metres to the Cenotaph. Passersby would have been impressed with the brisk, disciplined marching, the snappy halt, left turn and stand-at-ease performed by these immortals in four-decade flashback mode. The service was well attended by the troops, their families and friends and 2000 screeching parrots in a tree that overhangs the Cenotaph and evidently is protected by the Green Brigade, the most powerful militant force in Australian society today. After the service, we adjourned to the club to escape the parrots and the Greens and enjoy some 'quiet time' before commencement of the formal dinner.

The tables filled rapidly and a lengthy session of chicken, roast lamb and desserts ensued, washed down with a constant flow of the beverage of one's choice. The battlefield slides and movies hit the big screen again to revive both pleasant and uncomfortable memories. Toasts were drunk and fallen comrades remembered. There was much reflection on past events and discussion of life since Vietnam, accompanied by the gentle strains of Gary Lovell's 'Long Boarders', who did a sterling job. Overall, it was a great night: the food, drink, camaraderie and music were just what the doctor ordered!

Sunday began with another delicious breakfast: no mushrooms but the substituted sausages were very acceptable. Breakfast was followed by a mandatory session of barefoot (or sock-foot) bowls, with severe penalties for bowling mishaps, failures or technical errors, proceeds being directed to the Cancer Council for men's prostate cancer research. I can't say much about the bowls, as I spent the bowling session touring the Coffs Coast, with the prospect of moving up that way from the Kangaroo Capital in Dipstick District. However, my tour guides (Bruce and Elizabeth) and I managed to return in time for the charity appeal and the Reunion Committee was able to present \$800 to the Cancer Council's representative at the evening meal.

While Jim, Peter, Roger and I soberly chose to reconnoiter the surrounds of Coffs Harbour on Sunday afternoon – Peter was after some scenic subject matter to feed his painting habit – many of the diggers took the opportunity to compare and clarify historical data over a few coldies at the club. So for these historians, Sunday night's informal

meal had a wet start. As it turned out, it was so easy to overindulge in the scrumptious evening buffet that for some of us there was insufficient capacity for the anticipated final (for some) wet session. In fact, my closest, most battle-hardened survey colleagues decided to call it a night at some absurdly early hour, probably about 10:30.

I hung in there at the club for an hour or so, but failing to locate another cubic centimetre of stomach space, I made my way back to the motel for an early night before my departure the following morning. As I entered the dimly lit motel courtyard, I immediately sensed that I was not alone. Peering through the gloom towards the far end of the courtyard where my room was located, several shadowy forms (see photo online) emerged in my bloodshot vision and before I knew it I was holding a good shot of Gunners' Port in my motel teacup. (Some claim I scoffed a whole cup, but it's not true!) This short but happy celebration of Bruce's 64th birthday brought his raffle prize and a great day to a fitting close.

Monday's activities included an excursion for the Coral/Balmoral personnel to the Urunga Golf and Sports Club, which is owned by the Coffs Harbour Ex-Services Club, and a bus trip to Ulong for the remainder, with BBQ lunch. I understand that both events were very successful, but I had a plane to catch at midday. So after a coffee at the club with Peter Hopper, I made my way to the airport for the trip home. Unsurprisingly, the flight was delayed considerably, but fortunately I had time to kill in Sydney before the flight to Canberra. I suspect that the Dash 8 that uplifted me from the Coffs Coast was the same that returned to 'dustoff' Peter late in the afternoon. By that time it was so far behind schedule that the airline didn't have time to transfer Peter's luggage to his Sydney-Perth flight. It was delivered to him the following afternoon after some anxious dialogue with Qantas personnel in Melbourne and Perth.

This concluded another memorable LAA Reunion. Allan Harrison and the LAA, Dave Auld, Dave Doyle, Jimmy Hogno, Jane and David (Shorty) Gow, the Ex-Services Club staff and employees, the Catafalque Party and all who were involved in the organisation of the weekend deserve our hearty congratulations and deep gratitude for producing another splendid reunion. Many thanks also to the spouses and partners who attended the event and those who stayed at home but granted us leave to attend! I know that some of us, if not all, are already looking forward to meeting again in 2011 and we hope that some comrades who couldn't make it to this event will appear at the next. Story related by Brookey and proofed by Peter, Kanga and Bruce. Survey Section, Det 131 Div Loc Bty RRAA, 1ATF South Vietnam 1967-68. Ed has put a couple of photos taken from Brookey's online album – see photos the 2 below – all participants look pretty good – some maybe too good! Now however, if you want to see more photos just cut and past the web address following onto your web browser and go – there are some great photos -

<http://cid28feaa4d2ef2bc52.skydrive.live.com/browse.aspx/Locating%20Artillery%20Association%20Reunion%202009%20Coffs%20Harbour?authkey=qjcGaXTz4Ds%24&ct=photos>

There are now more photos to be seen which were sent in by Nick Armstrong, and these can be accessed by copying the following web address and pasting it onto your browser:

<http://cid28feaa4d2ef2bc52.skydrive.live.com/browse.aspx/Nick%7C4s%20Shots?authkey=njfouyaPeh4%24&ct=photos>



Relaxed Group – Irvy, Kanga, Brookey, Peter and Boots



Before the bar – Murray Poustie, Brookey, Kenny McN, Ken 'Longy' Long, Roger McD, Steve 'Boots' Boutlis, John 'Kanga' McFadden, Bruce 'Irvy' Irvine, Peter Hopper

Eyes & Ears 0006 – who said we couldn't do this and more!

It was good to get Brookey's sitrep on Coffs. If there are any other yarns around please keep the input coming.

"Gunners will always fight together, drink together, laugh together, and mourn together."

- Unknown*

*Ernie – how come you don't know this author??