



THE MIGHTY 12TH

NEWSLETTER OF THE 12TH NATIONAL SERVICE Training Battalion

Volume 3 No 4 June 2009

email lamaher@bigpond.net.au

Editor: Lawrie Maher, PO Box 8160, Koorringal NSW 2650

Phone (02) 69263123

.....
Hello again to all you guys of the Mighty 12th I knew it must be time for our next newsletter when I received a few emails asking me if they had missed the latest edition.

Ok let's get started- I wonder how many 12 Battalion Badges "popped up" on Anzac Day?

I found only one guy that I didn't know wearing our badge. It was the only one he wore (the "fire engine badge" as a friend- not in the 12th of course- calls them.)

If you do not wish to receive the Newsletters will you please let me know either by post or by email. As you can well imagine it takes quite a time to fold and post nearly 160 newsletters. 149 Email is easy of course except when someone changes their email address and forgets to tell me.

A special thanks to Bruce Askew who put a piece in the Daily Telegraph with a photo. As guys contacted him he gave, or sent them a 12Bn registration form I think we got 5 new names for our directory.

It's difficult to find interesting articles to include in these newsletters and previously I have relied on bits and pieces emailed or posted in, here's one

The Bren Gun team 2/54 by Colin Wood

I was in the 2nd intake 1954. We shot with the Lee Enfield 303 rifle "this is your rifle (pointing to your rifle) this is your gun (pointing to your groin) this is for shooting this is for fun" After doing the usual rounds with the 303, I was awarded a marksman.

Then along came the Bren gun, a very effective weapon. I took to it very well, the sights were very similar to my bow which I used in my archery club. After shooting with this weapon I was picked for the battalion Bren gun team.

We went shooting about 3 times per week. We were just supposed to shoot targets, but occasionally a stray bird came across our sites. The case which included a spare barrel and cleaning gear was very heavy, we had to carry it to the range. In the teams shooting we had to, from 300yards shoot lying down at a figure target, then from 200 yards in the kneeling position, then from 100yards from the standing position I was judged the "best shot in the battalion" and subsequently "The best shot in all three battalions".

This story is not so much about me but the way the army looked at things at the time. All the teams, rugby, tennis and the rest of the Battalion teams were awarded trophy's I did not even get a mention in the battalion magazine or any recognition at all except for a 3 pound money order. It just goes to show the army's mind set. *Colin is the keeper of our web page. Have you had a chance to have a look recently- lots of pictures and all of the "old" newsletters.* www.themighty12th.org

Arthur Withers set this bit of information:

Well I was in the 12th Bat 3/55 we were the first lot to be sent to Puckapunyal to learn to operate centurions tanks then sent to 1/15 Royal New Wales Lancers the only Tank regiment in N.S.W. I was put into "C" Squadron which was to become the best Squadron of the armoured corp .Until a few years later the Regular Army obtained full strength The Lancers were having problems as National Service was to cease in 1/1957 so "C" squadron was to be broken up and sent to "A" and "B" squadrons so they could reach full strength In 1966 the Queen was giving new colours to the Australian Army and it was decided that "C" Squadron of the

1/15 R.N.S.W.L would receive them Which was a big honor for Captain Leah our CO.OF and the Squadron. after our exercise

Well we were late reaching our objective so the tanks had to race back to the armored school to get prepared for the parade.. There were only three fire hoses to wash 12 tanks so it was decided by the powers to be that it would take to long so we would wash one side of the tanks and half the front and of the back. We didn't have time to change so we were given a brush to brush our tanks suits and beret depending how much the official party would see. The other side of the tanks had 4 inches of mud all over them.

Subject: Celibacy

Many aspects of human sexuality are very puzzling - for example, take celibacy.

This can be a choice in life, or a condition imposed by environmental factors.

Whilst attending a Marriage Encounter Weekend, Tony and Julie listened to the instructor declare, 'It is essential that husbands and wives know the things that are important to each other.'

He asked the men, 'Can you each name and describe your wife's favourite flower?'

Tony leaned over, touched Julie 's arm gently and whispered,

'Self-raising, isn't it?'

Thus began Tony's life of celibacy.

This next article is taken verbatim from the 1/55 Magazine.

The C.O.'s Message to Out-going Troops. Lt Col E.L. Cook

“At the same time I bid you all farewell from 12NS Trg Bn I want to take the opportunity of reviewing the first intake of 1955 up until the time this journal goes to print.

Whilst we got off to a very good start with 1250 odd recruits, there have been many happenings which have made serious inroads on our numbers and the normally untroubled routine of a 98 day sojourn in the battalion. First our figures were depleted by 91, whose medical classification was not up to standard and had to be discharged.

Within 14 days our numbers increased by a further 100 personnel, the overflow from 13 NS trg Bn.

The fact that 59 University students were to be here for only 77 days called for further variation to the normal syllabi. This is an innovation in the first intake each year. The 21 days missed will, of course have to be made up with their CMF Regiment.

During the intake, serious interference in training has been caused by the rains which have been sufficient to cause one of the greatest floods Australia has known. This battalion, because of its large number of country trainees has been the most heavily affected, as many of our men were given leave to rush to their homes and help in the rehabilitation of homes and property.

Although many of our sporting teams have been seriously affected we have fought hard to maintain our high standard. I want to congratulate all those who readily responded to the urgent appeal for funds to help the distressed flood victims in the North West of the State. We have collected £791. Even before I opened an appeal on Monday morning, 28th February 1955 I found that the Duty Company, which had been in Barracks over the weekend had subscribed £56.

In saying goodbye to you all through the pages of your Battalion magazine I want to thank you all for your excellent co-operation and to wish you all the best of good fortune in your new CMF unit and your civilian vocations.

This is a fairly long story, but a good one. It could be a good one to try with the grandkids!

One day a teacher asked her students to list the names of the other students in the room on two sheets of paper, leaving a space between each name.

Then she told them to think of the nicest thing they could say about each of their classmates and write it down. It took the remainder of the class period to finish their assignment, and as the students left the room, each one handed in the papers.

That Saturday, the teacher wrote down the name of each student on a separate sheet of paper, and listed what everyone else had said about that individual.

On Monday she gave each student his or her list. Before long, the entire class was smiling. 'Really?' she heard whispered. 'I never knew that I meant anything to anyone!' and, 'I didn't know others liked me so much,' were most of the comments.

No one ever mentioned those papers in class again. She never knew if they discussed them after class or with their parents, but it didn't matter. The exercise had accomplished its purpose. The students were happy with themselves and one another. That group of students moved on.

Several years later, one of the students was killed in Vietnam and his teacher attended the funeral of that special student. She had never seen a serviceman in a military coffin before. He looked so handsome, so mature. The church was packed with his friends. One by one those who loved him took a last walk by the coffin. The teacher was the last one to bless the coffin.

As she stood there, one of the soldiers who acted as pallbearer came up to her. 'Were you Mark's math teacher?' he asked. She nodded: 'yes.' Then he said: 'Mark talked about you a lot.'

After the funeral, most of Mark's former classmates went together to a luncheon. Mark's mother and father were there, obviously waiting to speak with his teacher.

'We want to show you something,' his father said, taking a wallet out of his pocket 'They found this on Mark when he was killed. We thought you might recognize it.'

Opening the billfold, he carefully removed two worn pieces of notebook paper that had obviously been taped, folded and refolded many times. The teacher knew without looking that the papers were the ones on which she had listed all the good things each of Mark's classmates had said about him.

'Thank you so much for doing that,' Mark's mother said. 'As you can see, Mark treasured it.'

All of Mark's former classmates started to gather around.. Charlie smiled rather sheepishly and said, 'I still have my list. It's in the top drawer of my desk at home.'

Chuck's wife said, 'Chuck asked me to put his in our wedding album.'

'I have mine too,' Marilyn said. 'It's in my diary'

Then Vicki, another classmate, reached into her pocketbook, took out her wallet and showed her worn and frazzled list to the group. 'I carry this with me at all times,' Vicki said and without batting an eyelash, she continued: 'I think we all saved our lists'

That's when the teacher finally sat down and cried. She cried for Mark and for all his friends who would never see him again.

Charlie Zarb sent this along for our consideration

The average age of the military man is 19 years. He is a short haired, tight-muscled kid who, under normal circumstances is considered by society as half man, half boy. Not yet dry behind the ears, just old enough to buy a beer, but old enough to die for his country. He never really cared much for work and he would rather wax his own car than wash his father's, but he has never collected unemployment either.

He's a recent High School graduate; he was probably an average student, pursued some form of sport activities, drives a ten year old jalopy, and has a steady girlfriend that either broke up with him when he left, or swears to be waiting when he returns from half a world away. He listens to rock and roll or hip-hop or rap or jazz or swing and a 155mm howitzer.

He is 10 or 15 pounds lighter now than when he was at home because he is working or fighting from before dawn to well after dusk. He has trouble spelling, thus letter writing is a pain for him, but he can field strip a rifle in 30 seconds and



reassemble it in less time in the dark. He can recite to you the nomenclature of a machine gun or grenade launcher and use either one effectively if he must. He digs foxholes and latrines and can apply first aid like a professional. He can march until he is told to stop, or stop until he is told to march.

He obeys orders instantly and without hesitation, but he is not without spirit or individual dignity. He is self-sufficient. He has two sets of fatigues: he washes one and wears the other. He keeps his canteens full and his feet dry. He sometimes forgets to brush his teeth, but never to clean his rifle. He can cook his own meals, mend his own clothes, and fix his own hurts. If you're thirsty, he'll share his water with you; if you are hungry, his food. He'll even split his ammunition with you in the midst of battle when you run low. He has learned to use his hands like weapons and weapons like they were his hands. He can save your life - or take it, because that is his job. He will often do twice the work of a civilian, draw half the pay, and still find ironic humor in it all.

He has seen more suffering and death than he should have in his short lifetime. He has wept in public and in private, for friends who have fallen in combat and is unashamed. He feels every note of the National Anthem vibrate through his body while at rigid attention, while tempering the burning desire to 'square-away' those around him who haven't bothered to stand, remove their hat, or even stop talking. In an odd twist, day in and day out, far from home, he defends their right to be disrespectful. Just as did his Father, Grandfather, and Great-grandfather, he is paying the price for our freedom.

Beardless or not, he is not a boy. He is the AUSTRALIAN Fighting Man that has kept this country free for over 200 years. He has asked nothing in return, except our friendship and understanding. Remember him, always, for he has earned our respect and admiration with his blood.

And now we even have women over there in danger, doing their part in this tradition of going to War when our nation calls us to do so.

A short lull, a little shade and a picture of loved ones in their helmets.

'Lord, hold our troops in your loving hands. Protect them as they protect us. Bless them and their families for the selfless acts they perform for us in our time of need.'" Amen.'



MAY BE OPENED FOR POSTAL INSPECTION

Paid Australia

PP:255003/06708

Australian National Servicemen's Ass'n

Wagga Wagga and District Sub Branch

P.O. Box 1344

Marketplace,

Wagga Wagga NSW 2650

Surface Mail

Postage