

Canberra April 2005

A Coy 3 RAR – Canberra Reunion 2005

These photos are those of the men in A coy 3 RAR celebrating 34 years of a history with their mates and families – as young men they met, fought and survived the Vietnam War.

As blokes, they continue to survive in a society that only now is coming to understand and recognize their sacrifice. Thank you Canberra for making our sacrifice seem worthwhile and making us feel proud as we marched in your Anzac Day Parade 2005.

1971 was a big year for all these men – they were just ‘boys’ then. It was the year that they ‘shared’ a war together – Vietnam. The Vietnam War can’t be forgotten in their minds or their bodies – it has had a lasting impact.

It is hard to recognize some, age and time has taken its toll and even their names are foreign. As young men, we were a ‘nick-name’ and only answered to our nick-name. So many years on, some responded slowly to being called by a mate in the only way they know...families are amused by the myriad of names and the affection of such a greeting.

Vietnam was a war like no other – it was their war. It was a war in 1971 that the majority of Australians – hated. It was a time when soldiers in Vietnam were – loathed, hated, spat upon and condemned, yet half of them were conscripted National Servicemen, they nor the regular soldier deserved such vitriolic verbiage.

Coming home was a very bad experience especially for those National Servicemen who had to somehow ‘disappear’ into the general community, their workplaces, and their pubs and pretend that they were not Vietnam veterans. As Vietnam veterans, they were ‘treated badly’ and completely misunderstood. People wouldn’t ask you questions – how you felt, what you went through - simply condemn and humiliate you with inappropriate and insensitive comments, all because you did the right thing at the time and served your country.

Today some still suffer the ‘torment’ of war and the ‘torment’ of that public humiliation and condemnation – some have left us in the worst possible way – some have died prematurely from the ‘diseases’ of the Vietnam War – some ‘cope’ day to day from the ‘diseases’ of war. Families of veterans have ‘put up’ with their loved ones affected by these ‘diseases’

Some families have split under the pressure; veteran children have suffered a range of illnesses and mental disorders at a greater rate than the non-veteran children of the same age.

The Vietnam War has caused a lot of sadness, health problems, social problems, and young lives wasted – it also ‘wastes’ the lives of many who have ‘soldiered’ on and continue to believe that what they achieved as a young soldier was important and that the

sacrifice then and now is not 'wasted'. For some it was their biggest and most important achievement and they have not been able to find themselves achieving in other areas of life.

Canberra was a time to celebrate and share the good, the bad and the ugly.

It was a time to bring mates and their families together in a solidarity that says - we are proud of what we did and proud to be a Vietnam veteran.

We stand before you in Canberra on Anzac Day 2005 with the support of our wives, partners, kids and mates and celebrate with you being an Australian veteran.

WE are proud Aussies and proud to have served. We will continue to help our mates 'to live through' our experience and meet up again soon to celebrate our service in Vietnam and the achievements since.

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P.S. To those not with us, 'you would have been proud'.