

# Book chronicles life of a digger on tour in Vietnam

WELL-KNOWN Battle of Long Tan platoon commander Dave Sabben's latest book, *Mentions in Despatches*, came about because he wanted to fill a void and tell the often-unrecorded story of infantry diggers on their year-long tour of Vietnam.

Using letters he wrote almost daily to his then wife, Sue, and maps and reports included in those letters for his father-in-law, a former WW2 WO2, Sabben put together a book of sorts.

All he needed to finish it were 10 or 12 photos, which he requested from the then director of the Australian War Memorial, Brendan Nelson.

After Nelson read the draft of the book, he told Sabben it needed to be published and to help himself to up to 250 AWM images if he needed them.

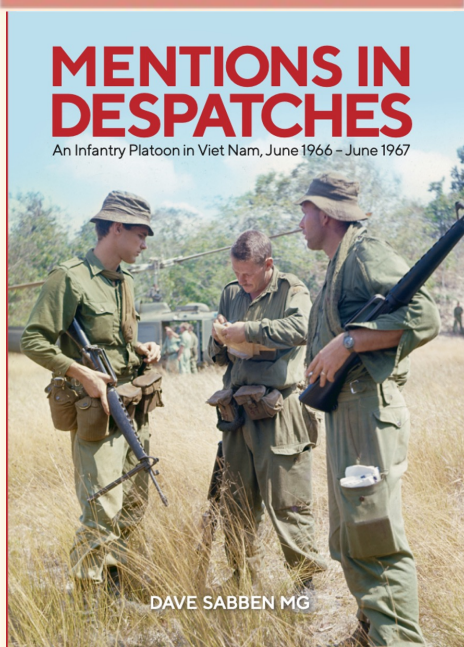
What started as a small paperback book finished up a 400-page hardcover pictorial blockbuster that leaves no stone unturned.

While the Battle of Long Tan itself has been written about in several books, not much has been written about the other 356 days of 6RAR's first tour of Vietnam.

This book goes a long way towards filling those gaps.

When not patrolling out from Nui Dat, Sabben's platoon was also tasked with mundane, but necessary, jobs such as providing

## BOOK REVIEW



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[www.sabbenmidbook.com](http://www.sabbenmidbook.com)

security for a hotel in Saigon and supervising the unloading of the supply ship HMAS *Jeparit* at Vung Tau wharf.

Those tasks were conducted on top of the daily routines of securing the base, clearing the undergrowth, digging in, wiring, setting up latrines and other base facilities,

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and of course, the constant patrol and ambush schedule.

*Mentions in Despatches* features nearly 450 black-and-white and colour photos, as well as several sketches and Rigby cartoons relevant to the era.

More than 30 detailed maps and aerial photos are also included for readers who may not be familiar with the Nui Dat AO.

Former Vietnam platoon commander Sir Peter Cosgrove wrote the foreword for the book, while former D Coy 6RAR OC Harry Smith introduces the author.

This book is a must-read for anyone who aspires to become a worthy leader in the Australian Army, but equally readable for anyone interested in a grassroots picture of what a digger endured during a 1960s tour of Vietnam.

<https://www.armynewspaper.defence.gov.au/army-news/march-14-2024/>