

Dave

Looking over 58 years ago, what memories, your words describing daily recorded Infantry life in a hostile war zone, bought back to me. As D6 Sig to *OC Major I Stewart*, in 1969, I recognised much of what you described. Before my posting to CHQ, I was a rifleman in 12 Platoon, commanded by a *larger-than-life 2<sup>nd</sup> Lt Valentine*.

Thankfully, the FDL's were complete as were the sandbagged 4-man tents when I arrived in the 2<sup>nd</sup> tour advance party. D Coy CP was a large underground 'room', indistinct on the outside vista. *Thanks* to your platoon efforts in 66/67 I was not required to 'dig' in Nui Dat; but elsewhere yes.

Sadly, I never met *Harry Smith*, obviously a great leader who recognised the worth of individuals within his command. His methods of recognition, as you describe, were unique and possessed by only a few. *Lt Col David Butler*, CO of the Sixth second tour, was one of those few.

*POGO's* - I hope some might read your book. *Army Intelligence* (say what?), *Army Hierarchy*, the men in green greens. I was always confident I was supported by whomever was in charge back at the Dat. After Long Tan revelations, maybe I was wrong. The books, the movie indicate TF considered 'sacrificing' Delta to protect the base. The life-saving ammo resupply only occurred because the RAAF Pilots *strongly* disagreed with TF. The APC'S were delayed having to return [2 APCs] to Nui Dat to pick up the battalion CO. I wonder if their Commanding Officers proudly wear their DSO on Vietnam Vets Day or on Anzac Day parades?

Bravery/Gallantry must be recognised irrespective of archaic laws, rules, conventions or numbers. Two unwarranted DSO's (a traditional practice it seems) if made available to others, would have made a positive difference to awards post Long Tan. I followed Harry's battle on behalf of his men with great interest and pride. I was told WO2 Kirby was recommended for the Victoria Cross VC post Long Tan. From what I have read and from what was portrayed in the movie, such recognition was deserved.

Harry's battle on behalf of his men inspired me to continue my own battle with Defence in Canberra. I too won, eventually, as did others I assisted!

Your description, with comprehensive mapping of the Long Tan Battle, has properly explained to me what occurred and how the battle progressed. The books and the movie were somewhat vague in this regard. Thank you for that, Dave.

Your book comprehensively describes the position Australia took in this divisive war. It clearly highlights the difficulties our soldiers faced in a hostile country while also demonstrating the restraint our young soldiers were required to demonstrate. The difficulties of facing an unknown enemy who possessed attacking tactics previously unknown to our forces.

Conscription, two years National Service, was the catalyst for protests and demonstrations against the Government decision to interrupt the lives of young Aussie men. The anger spilt over to involve the soldiers themselves but these soldiers were not asked how they felt about their situation. It was such a shock to be abused by fellow Australians when one was in military uniform. Your book puts the voice of National Servicemen forward.

Thank you for a great, authentic and informative story.

Peter C