



CONTACT !



*Blue Mountains Vietnam Veterans and
Associated Forces Inc.
Newsletter*

*Post Memorial Day Issue
September 2008*

CONTACT !

© JOURNAL OF BLUE MOUNTAINS VIETNAM VETERANS & ASSOCIATED FORCES INC.
incorporating RAAF VIETNAM ASSN. & QANTAS "SKIPPY SQUADRON" ASSN.

ABN 74 645 329 198

CFN 17276

THE ASSOCIATION FOR THOSE WHO SERVED IN ALL POST WORLD WAR II CONFLICTS

Patron: Major General CMI (Sandy) Pearson AO DSO OBE MC (Rtd)
Office address: Allied Services Centre, 108 Macquarie Road, Springwood NSW Australia
(next to Springwood Civic Centre)

Postal address: Post Office Box 55 Springwood NSW Australia 2777
Office: (02)4751 8528, Fax (02)4751 8538,

Email address: secretary@bmvets.com.au

Web site: www.bmvets.com.au

Your Committee

President:	Jack Lake	tel (02) 4754 4771
Vice President:	Glenn Daly	tel (02) 4754 1393
Secretary:	Graham Glasson	tel 04 1851 8538
Treasurer:	Kevin Craven	tel (02) 4736 6692
Welfare Coordinator:	Geoff Raymond	tel (02) 4754 4327
Yard Maintenance	Peter Jones	tel (02) 4751 8833
John Ronan		tel 0405 817 747
John Woolley		tel (02) 4754 3015
Padre Bill Wheeler		tel (02) 4754 4575

2008/09 Committee Meeting Dates
All meetings commence 1000hrs

12 October 2008 9 November 2008

14 Dec 2008

8 February 2009 8 March 2009

19 April 2009

Welfare Officers

John Fenton (L2) - Blue Mountains and Southern Highlands,
Home: 02 4647 9742
Email: johncfenton@bigpond.com

Bob Metcalfe (Advocacy Level)- Mid Nth Coast
Home: 02 6582 6280
Email: bm60@tpg.com.au

Ray Westwell (L2) - Blue Mountains & Lithgow
Home: 02 6352 1945
Mob: 0404 489 734

John Ronan (L1) - Blue Mountains & Penrith
Home: 0405 817 747
Email: harley6@primus.com.au

Kevin Craven (L2) - Blue Mountains & Penrith
Home: 02 4736 6692
Mob 0407 391 761
Email: kfcraven@bigpond.com

John Staal (L2) - Sydney Northern Beaches.
Home: 02 9977 6872
Mob: 0407 003 932
Email: gstaal@bigpond.net.au

Geoff Raymond (L2) - Blue Mountains
Home: 02 4754 4327
Email: welfare@bmvets.com.au

Del Heuke (L2) - NSW Mid North Coast
Home: 02 6557 0779
Email: delInfred@optusnet.com.au

Terry Pracy (L2) - QLD Sunshine Coast
Home: 07 5448 2028
Email: g_gnome@bigpond.com

Rick Anthoney (L2) - Western Sydney
Home: 02 9831 1645
Email: ranthoney@bigpond.com

Robert St John (L3) - Northern Beaches
Home: 9949 3746
Email: benny_76@msn.com

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

This year we were blessed with great weather for our big day in contrast with last year's Memorial Day weather. This was probably brought about by the very comprehensive adverse weather contingency plan we had in place just in case. Isn't this how to ensure good weather?

There were only a few minor hiccups which was surprising, considering all the executive and office staff's families had medical problems for the previous 2-3 months. On the day everything came together and it was a great day.

As usual in this case the success of the day is brought about by the great effort put in by our many willing volunteers from within our association and from the community at large.

I would like to personally extend a big thank you to all the wives who do such a tremendous job behind the scenes doing a large 'chunk' of the computer and clerical work for their husbands. Could you please ensure this thank you is passed on.

Bringing the time of Beating the Retreat forward to 1600hrs (4pm) was well received as it made it easy for all the people who had to travel including the Lithgow Highland Pipe Band. As always our old allies the SVN refugee groups were most welcome and added to the day. The poem put to song by Ms Bao Khan was a very touching tribute to our veterans.

At the risk of missing someone or some group out I would like to thank all who made 2008 Memorial Day a great success.

It was with pleasure that we were able to have the Hon Mr Bob Debus, Member for Macquarie present our long serving and much revered Patron Major General CMI (Sandy) Pearson (Rtd) with his additional documents and medals for his 90th birthday. There are a few photos of the presentation in this issue of the newsletter and quite a few more on the website.

The planning for memorial 2009 on the 16 Aug has already commenced.

Cheers

Jack Lake

President

Welfare Waffles

Again all is quiet on the Welfare front, I've had just one new call for assistance.

I believe from all I've heard that this is a cyclical thing and numbers of calls for assistance usually increase around and after the Christmas period.

On a slightly different tack, I've been working at renewing our Web Site which is now 7 years old and think I almost have it done, and I hope you all like the change.

The new site is up and running but there will of course be some items that need redoing, adding subtracting etc. so please bear with me and any corrections or amendments will be made in due course.

Geoff Raymond.

Welfare Co-ordinator

Brian Day continues his series on Australian and other VC winners .

BENAVIDEZ, ROY P.

Rank: Master Sergeant

Organization:, Detachment B-56, 5th Special Forces Group, Republic of Vietnam.

Place and Date: West of Loc Ninh on 2 May 1968.

Entered Service at: Houston, Texas June 1955. Date and Place of Birth: 5 August 1935, DeWitt County, Cuero, Texas. Master Sergeant (then Staff Sergeant) Roy P. Benavidez United States Army, who distinguished himself by a series of daring and extremely valorous actions on 2 May 1968 while assigned to Detachment B56, 5th Special Forces Group (Airborne), 1st Special Forces, Republic of Vietnam.

On the morning of 2 May 1968, a 12-man Special Forces Reconnaissance Team was inserted by helicopters in a dense jungle area west of Loc Ninh, Vietnam to gather intelligence information about confirmed large-scale enemy activity. This area was controlled and routinely patrolled by the North Vietnamese Army. After a short period of time on the ground, the team met heavy enemy resistance, and requested emergency extraction.

Three helicopters attempted extraction, but were unable to land due to intense enemy small arms and anti-aircraft fire. Sergeant Benavidez was at the Forward Operating Base in Loc Ninh monitoring the operation by radio when these helicopters returned to off-load wounded crew members and to assess aircraft damage. Sergeant Benavidez voluntarily boarded a returning aircraft to assist in another extraction attempt. Realizing that all the team members were either dead or wounded and unable to move to the pickup zone, he directed the aircraft to a nearby clearing where he jumped from the hovering helicopter, and ran approximately 75 metres under withering small arms fire to the crippled team.

Prior to reaching the team's position he was wounded in his right leg, face, and head. Despite these painful injuries, he took charge, repositioning the team members and directing their fire to facilitate the landing of an extraction aircraft, and the loading of wounded and dead team members. He then threw smoke canisters to direct the aircraft to the team's position. Despite his severe wounds and under intense enemy fire, he carried and dragged half of the wounded team members to the awaiting aircraft.

He then provided protective fire by running alongside the aircraft as it moved to pick up the remaining team members. As the enemy's fire intensified, he hurried to recover the body and classified documents on the dead team leader. When he reached the leader's body, Sergeant Benavidez was severely wounded by small arms fire in the abdomen and grenade fragments in his back. At nearly the same moment, the aircraft pilot was mortally wounded, and his helicopter crashed. Although in extremely critical condition due to his multiple wounds, Sergeant Benavidez secured the classified documents and made his way back to the wreckage, where he aided the wounded out of the overturned aircraft, and gathered the stunned survivors into a defensive perimeter.

Under increasing enemy automatic weapons and grenade fire, he moved around the perimeter distributing water and ammunition to his weary men, re-instilling in them a will to live and fight. Facing a build-up of enemy opposition with a beleaguered team, Sergeant Benavidez mustered his strength, began calling in tactical air strikes and directed the fire from supporting gunships to suppress the enemy's fire and so permit another extraction attempt. He was wounded again in his thigh by small arms fire while administering first aid to a wounded team member just before

another extraction helicopter was able to land.

His indomitable spirit kept him going as he began to ferry his comrades to the craft. On his second trip with the wounded, he was clubbed from additional wounds to his head and arms before killing his adversary. He then continued under devastating fire to carry the wounded to the helicopter. Upon reaching the aircraft, he spotted and killed two enemy soldiers who were rushing the craft from an angle that prevented the aircraft door gunner from firing upon them. With little strength remaining, he made one last trip to the perimeter to ensure that all classified material had been collected or destroyed, and to bring in the remaining wounded.

Only then, in extremely serious condition from numerous wounds and loss of blood, did he allow himself to be pulled into the extraction aircraft. Sergeant Benavidez' gallant choice to join voluntarily his comrades who were in critical straits, to expose himself constantly to withering enemy fire, and his refusal to be stopped despite numerous severe wounds, saved the lives of at least eight men. His fearless personal leadership, tenacious devotion to duty, and extremely valorous actions in the face of overwhelming odds were in keeping with the highest traditions of the military service, and reflect the utmost credit on him and the United States Army.

The citation for MSG Roy Benavidez does not fully cover the action that took place "West of Loc Ninh, Viet Nam. "East Cambodia" on that day, 2nd of May 1968. MSG Benavidez was a member of MACV SOG. US Special Forces.

MSG Benavidez suffered 7 gunshot wounds, 28 shrapnel wounds, 2 bayonet wounds and a broken jaw. He spent just on 1 year in hospital recovering from his wounds.

He saved 8 US personnel and is credited with killing 8 enemy, the last with a hunting knife he always carried in his belt.

Continued page 7

**ASSOCIATION 20th ANNIVERSARY PORT
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CAPS & STUBBY HOLDERS**

Association port crocks (\$30.00), neckties (\$20.00), caps (navy in colour with matching green association name embroidered or if you wish with an embroidered association logo, one size fits all \$10), screen printed association stubby holders (\$5), all inclusive of GST, are now available from the secretary.

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Association new style quality embroidered poly-cotton polo style shirts with pockets (in 4 colours, white, light blue, navy and bottle green and in 3 sizes L, XL, and XXL \$25 inclusive of GST, are now available from the secretary during normal business hours 8.30am to 4.30pm Monday and Thursday only.

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Your Host, Peter (Dit) Eston

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PADRE'S CORNER

As Australians we generally do not wear our emotions, our feelings or our patriotism 'on our sleeves'. These parts of our make-up are not usually overstated or emphasised except when it comes to sport - then we do, literally, wear our patriotism on our sleeves or anywhere else we can put the flag or the green and gold. We all like victories, whether it is vicarious, when someone else wins in our name, or whether it is on a personal level, our own efforts, it feels good!

It has been said that life is like a race in which we all have to compete, although that analogy does fall down because it is not a case of one person getting the gold.

The great apostle Paul (who wrote a lot of the New Testament part of the Bible) was aware of the Olympic idea of personal striving to win a race, a race for the prize of a laurel wreath. He applied the idea to our lives here on earth. Athletic training in hand, life can be hard and the victory or prize we are looking for is usually happiness, peace and reward or as our Asian friends would say Health, Wealth, Wisdom and Longevity.

St Paul agrees with this and takes it a step further when he sees the final victory or reward being our personal relationship with God and our eternal presence with the Great Creator. Let me conclude with a few extracts from Paul's writings;

"Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever." (1 Corinthians 9:25)

Speaking of himself as an example Paul says;

"Forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 3:13-14)

And the writer to the Hebrews gives this advice:

"Let us know of everything that hinders, and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race worked out for us and let us fix our eyes on Jesus" (Hebrews 12:16-2a).

There we have it, the good Lord has set the path or the course for us to run but he has not just left it at that, he has promised that he will be our support, our coach and our encourager and ultimate success comes from placing our trust in him - and we oldies don't have to get all physical anymore, in this race, age does not weary us and the prize is ours for the asking.

Bill Wheeler : 02 4754 4575



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A LETTER TO GREGORY

Introduction

Gerald (Jerry) Pynt was a journalist with a daily Sydney newspaper and volunteered for the AIF early in WWII. In his own words, 'I must have been one of the very few recruits in any of the world's armed forces actually assigned to an area of his prior knowledge and expertise' – he was posted to HQ Staff (Public Relations). A member of Milne Bay Force in 1941, he returned briefly to Sydney in 1943 and learned of his son Greg's birth while again serving in New Guinea in 1944.

Jerry survived the war and returned to journalism, becoming Sporting Editor of the Daily and Sunday Telegraph for 25 years. He wrote numerous books during his lifetime and dedicated the royalties to Legacy. An avid lawn bowler, he wrote one book for the Royal Blind Society instructing visually-impaired people on how they could play and enjoy the game; the royalties for that volume were dedicated to the Society.

After his death in 1999 a carbon copy of a letter to his as yet unseen son was found among his personal papers; presumably, the original was submitted to an Army newsletter of the time. That carbon copy has been generously donated to the Australian War Memorial by Greg and his younger brother Dennis and a verbatim transcription of it is reproduced here with their kind permission.

Greg Pynt went on to pursue a career in the business world, whilst FLTLT Dennis Pynt flew BAC-111 VIP aircraft, C-7A Caribou and UH-1 Iroquois aircraft with the RAAF before opening an electronics business. **(Please turn to page 8)**

Editors note:

The letter referred to in the above introduction has been reproduced on its own, on the following page eight, the publication of this letter was made possible by our member Don Melvin who thankfully wrote to the Australian War memorial to gain approval to publish this most moving piece. Thank you Don.

Continued from page 5

MSG Benavidez was of mixed Mexican and Yaqui American Indian descent. He was born in Texas, USA, on 5th August 1935. He died on 29th November 1998 age 63 years.

MSG Benavidez was awarded an immediate Distinguished Service Cross, his Commanding Officer believing he would not live long enough to receive the MOH if so recommended.

After finding out MSG Benavidez did survive he then began the process for the award of the MOH.

The Medal Of Honour was awarded to MSG Benavidez on 24th February 1981 by President Ronald Reagan at the White House, some 13 years after the event. MSG Benavidez was also awarded 5 Purple Heart Medals and the Vietnamese Cross Of Gallantry with Palm.

If members wish to read the fullest extent of MSG Benavidez's action on that day, they should go to;
(<http://www.pswarrior.com/benavidez.html>)

Brian Day

A Soldier writes -

A LETTER TO GREGORY -

The son he has not seen

My Dear Son,

I am really sorry to have to begin my very first letter to you with an apology, but since I was not present to welcome you when you were ushered into this strange world, I feel that I owe you some explanation for my absence.

For one so small and young as you are, it is quite a long story, but I shall try to be brief, because I am sure that you must be a little tired now, and just a wee bit strange, too.

Later on, Greg, you will read about fairies and giants and ogres. We grown-ups generally look upon ogres, which is a word we use for those who think and act in evil fashion, as creatures of phantasy.

Just right now, just when you choose to enter this world, we find ourselves in conflict with an ogre who has assumed the human shape and form. We are in the process of proving that like all who sin against society, he and his henchmen will be punished for the evil he has wrought.

To destroy this ogre, Greg, and to see that he is smitten before he can lay waste to the land which is your birthright and deprive you of the freedom which is your heritage, many many thousands of men have had to go far away from their loved ones and their homes. I am one of those many many thousands, and that is why I was not able to take your little hand in mine and greet you when you announced your arrival in this topsy-turvy world of ours.

I do not want so much to tell you about this frightful conflict in which we are now engaged, but I do want to talk to you about the splendid opportunity you and your generation will have to build a really fine way of life.

An assurance of a fine way of life to all the unborn sons and daughters of Australia, Greg, would be a fitting memorial to those soldier fathers who will never see their little children again.

Let not ornate buildings mark their sacrifice, for their hallowed memory will perish and lie hidden beneath the crumbling of mortar and stone.

Make their memorial ageless in the life of man, Greg, by helping your generation to be the one which sets man slowly climbing towards the stars.

But before you can help, there are certain qualities you must develop. One of the most important is courage. I do not mean bravery so much as the capacity to surmount the apparently endless hills of life.

I have no doubt that you will find the way hard and wearisome, and each hill more difficult and steeper than the one you just climbed.

But man can attain the heights. Yours is the exciting prospect of helping him do so, son.

If we grown-ups now can make secure your freedom of thought and speech and worship and action, we shall at least create a foundation upon which you and all the other boys and girls who will be growing up with you, can build.

You must go to sleep now, Greg. There will be much for you to do in the years to come.

Father

******* Mailing List *******

At long last we have a working e-mail distribution list for the CONTACT !, currently there are about sixty of our members on that list. We once again ask for your assistance in providing us with your email addresses if you wish to receive the CONTACT ! via e-mail in the pdf format. For those who are unaware the pdf (portable document format) is read by the free download of the "adobe reader" from almost anywhere on the internet.

The greatest pleasure in life is doing what people say you cannot do.

IMPORTANT

Due to Privacy Laws hospitals are not permitted to tell our Welfare Officers if there are any Members or Vets admitted. **PLEASE**, if you know of any Members or Vets ill or admitted to a hospital contact our Office, any of our Committee or Welfare Officers in your area so we can organize visits etc. If you are ill or admitted please have a family member or Service mate contact us for any support that may be required.

**Politicians tell us they are "Doing the best they can"
What if they're right?**

**VOLUNTEER
LAWN MAINTENANCE SERVICE**

We are **desperately** in need of volunteers living within the Blue Mountains / lower Mountains area, who can give about one day a week or fortnight, to **supervise work-for-the-dole participants** with lawn maintenance for needy disabled veterans and war widows.

You won't need to bring any tools as all equipment and transport will be supplied by the Association.

If you are able to help please telephone Peter Jones on (02) 4751 8833.

Requests for lawns to be mowed can be made through the office on (02) 4751 8528, however, if you would like more information please call Peter Jones.

**I'm confused..... No, wait,
maybe I'm not.**

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Our Patron surprised

Memorial Day this year saw not only the commemoration service of Vietnam Veterans Day but it was also a time to celebrate, albeit a little early, the 90th birthday (24 August 1918) of our patron, Major General C.M.I. (Sandy) Pearson. AO. DSO.OBE. MC. (Ret'd)

As part of that celebration, it was arranged that Major General Pearson be presented with the medals listed below, that he had not yet received.

1. Australian Active Service Medal. Malaysia and Vietnam.
2. Australian Service Medal with Clasps. SW Pacific and SE Asia.
3. DFSM with First, Second, Third and Fourth Clasps.
4. Australian Defence Medal.

This was achieved in no small part to the wonderful assistance of Colonel Bruce Murray Commanding Officer: CARO (Central Army Records Office) and Staff Officer 1. Lt Colonel Mary Brandy SCMA (Soldiers Career Management Agency)

Chief of Army: Lieutenant General K.J. Gillespie AO, DSC, CSM sent a letter and certificate of service in recognition of Major General Pearson's 38 years loyal service and passed on his best wishes for his birthday.

The Hon. Bob Debus M.P. Member for Macquarie and Minister for Home Affairs, assisted by Jack Lake and Brian Day presented the medals to Major General C.M.I (Sandy) Pearson, AO. DSO. OBE. MC. (Ret'd) at the post Memorial Day march and commemoration service reception.

Please turn to page eleven for some photographs of the occasion, and there are more photos on our website.

Greg Meek has just passed on the pleasant information that one of the photographs of our new Lawn Mowing equipment has been sent to the National Grants Committee and will be used by that body to demonstrate to others, some of the voluntary welfare work that our association carries out.

***** **ATTENTION PLEASE** *****

Please remember, due to recent changes to committee and office procedures would all members please ring the office before visiting to ensure the office is open.....

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Presentation of Certificate of Service and medals to
Major General C.M.I (Sandy) Pearson AO. DSO. OBE. MC. Ret'd)

Left:



Brian Day presenting our Patron with a letter and certificate of service outlining 38 years of loyal service with the Australian Army, from Lt. General K.J. Gillespie, AO.DSC.CSM. the Chief of Army

Right and below:

The Hon. Bob Debus M.P.
Minister for Home Affairs
presenting the medals.



Below: President Jack Lake and
'Sandy' with the newly presented
medals.



Left:

Maurice Green our MC for the day with 'Sandy' who will have to add a few things to the already impressive medal bar.

Welcome home Ray Ashton

Ray Ashton (Life Member) is home after a lengthy stay in Hospital after some quite serious surgery and it was quite a worrying time. He was discharged from hospital on the fifteenth of this month and is now recuperating at home. I've spoken to Ray and he is in good spirits and says "Hi" to all.

Get well soon Ray and make sure you make contact if you need anything.

Here's Ray below taking it easy on Memorial Day, with a driver at his beck and call.



Warrant Officer Class 2 William Swan Dickey

Warrant Officer Class 2 William Swan Dickey, 28643, was born in Belfast IRELAND on 16 November 1931. After migrating to Australia he joined the Australian Regular Army.

WO2 Dickey was allocated to the Corp of Infantry. WO2 Dickey served in Vietnam with the AATTV as a military Advisor completing 3 tours of duty, May 1965 to November 1966, from July 1968 to July 1969 and from July 1971 to July 1972. In all he served a total of 1263 days in country. During his second tour of duty, 1968-1969, he served with MSG Roy Benavidez MOH who's citation is shown in this issue of CONTACT ! starting on page 4.

WO2 Dickey was a renowned soldier who served with distinction in Vietnam and was held in high esteem by his Allies. WO2 Dickey was awarded the following Awards and Decorations during his service in Vietnam:

Bronze Star for Valor. US Army, Bronze Star for Service. US Army, Army Commendation Medal for Service. US Army, Meritorious Unit Commendation Unit Citation. US Army, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Medal with Bronze Star Cluster. (Twice) Army Republic of Vietnam, Vietnamese Cross of Gallantry Unit Citation with Palm. Army Republic of Vietnam.

WO2 William Swan Dickey died on 28 March 1996, aged 64 years.

Lest we Forget

DISCLAIMER: This newsletter is produced for the membership of the Blue Mountains Vietnam Veterans & Associated Forces Inc., complimentary copies are distributed to interested parties. **Contact !** is written with care, in good faith and from sources believed to be accurate at the time of writing. Readers should not, however, act nor refrain from acting, solely on the basis of information in this newsletter about financial, taxation or any other matter. Readers, having regard to their own particular circumstances, should consult the relevant authorities or other advisers with expertise in the particular field. Neither the Blue Mountains Vietnam Veterans & Associated Forces Inc., nor the management committee or editor, accept any responsibility for actions taken by readers.