Tall Tales and True A TEAM 1969/70

Corporal Next

Officer commanding Vung Tau Air base had a penance for speed bumps on the Vung Tau Base.

They were made of bitumen. Some people did not like speed bumps and set about destroying them. The method they used was to pour Diesel on the bitumen then, drive over them with a truck, apply brakes. The speed bump disintegrated. The yanks then got inventive using tank tracks covered with bitumen.

Again, more diesel to bust up the bitumen, lift tank tracks, short Caribou ride, splash into the south China Sea – no more speed bumps. After this happened a few times the O/C was slightly pissed off. He ordered the FBI CIA MP to investigate how his speed bumps were disappearing. Finally, he found out who was destroying his speed bumps.

He visited the Officer commanding RAAF Base Vung Tau saying, “I have the name of the person who is destroying my speed bumps.” He told the O/C his name was CPL Next. I believe our O/C tried not to laugh out loud while he tactility explained when the RAAF personnel that were RTA they wore the ‘Next’ badge.

After this the speed bumps stayed in place.

Infantry visit Ettamogah Pub

Whenever infantry visited in our boozer it was free beer. The army would do six weeks search and destroy in Viet Nam and on the third week they would supply them with a clean uniform because the old uniforms had mud and blood, sweat etc. The old uniform would disintegrate when they Returned them to Base to wash. They would have four days off. Day 1 assemble to depart for Vung Tau on their R and C leave. As the army do, they hurry up and wait. They would arrive at Back Beach, after being trucked from Nui Dat in time for lunch. Then told they would be visiting Vung Tau and told to be good Australians. Do not upset the locals etc.

They would get to the bars 3pm to 4pm. Day 2 more of the same. We would meet the army men in the bars, and they asked us if they could come back to our mess for a meal and a beer. Then to the Ettamogah Pub for a big drink. They would say” if you see me sleeping slap me and put a can in my hand.” Day 3 more of the same Day 4 assemble at Back Beach to depart for Nui Dat. So, I guess they got two actual day’s leave then back to more of the same. A big mistake was made when a kiwi battalion visited the Ettamogah Pub. Some shouted out “no beer for the kiwi if they don’t sing.” 10 hours later they were still bloody singing.

Squadron BBQ

We would have a sqn bbq once a month. It was great to all get together. We would have Kangaroo courts.

If an officer gave you a hard time you would hold a Kangaroo court at the bbq and find him guilty. If he wished, he could have a lawyer fellow officer and he would also be deemed to be guilty and receive twice the punishment which was normally scull a beer. (We would have the beer in a box trailer full of ice and as the ice melted it became very cold water). Part of the punishment was to throw the guilty ones into the trailer. At one bbq a pilot had a few too many and with a lot of prompting they threw the C/O in. When he was picked up, he told them “Cease and desist”. Too late in he went. After getting out he said the ground staff can continue with the bbq but he would see all the air crew in his office in one hour. With seven missions per day, he could not ground them, so he put them on the dry for seven days. I never had so many aircrew friends asking me to get them two/three cans of beer.

A few of us would visit American supply ships in Vung Tau Harbour to swap Aussie beer for Australian steaks for the bbq. On one visit we were late departing, and we caught the last Chopper from the ship back to Vung Tau. It was overloaded with passengers and our three boxes of steak. The pilot said, “a few of you get off then when I get airborne jump on”. We lifted off but we were heading for the water quick. Slowly but surely, we gained height. Another day in paradise.

Update on the Kero Kid/King

I am still waiting for Dept Air for clearance to finish this story. It is being held up by red tape.

As all of you will remember it was not a good time after the war in Viet Nam finished for all Viet Nam veterans.

It is a very difficult time for all our Afghanistan Veterans now. Our hearts and our thoughts are with them. I am sure we are all now proud Viet Nam veterans but if you see an Afghan Veteran let him know that you are proud of his service to our country.

Cricket Match at NUI DAT

One Sunday we went to NUI DAT to play cricket against the Army. We had two teams. The bloody Army had an ex-Sheffield player in their team, and they thrashed us. At the time we had met a yank. His name was Ralph. He told us it was Mordecai. To cut a long story short he came with us to Nui Dat.

He wanted to open the bowling so with a quick coaching lesson we told him he had to bowl with a straight arm. A few practices run ups all good. He measured out his run up then set off on his run up then pegged the ball. The batman ducked. Threw his bat and said a few Aussie words “FXXk off”. “What the FXXk are you doing?” That was the end of Ralph’s cricket career.

Viet Nam Missions

I went on a couple of missions whilst serving in Viet Nam. On one mission we were buzzed by a yank Phantom. I had the earphones on, and could hear him say “Hi Wallaby, I have completed my mission and I have spent all my ordinance. With that he flew over the top of us than underneath and the Caribou shook as he flew close to us.

Another time a yank Caribou called “You are dead Wallaby. I am right behind you”. We opened our Cargo doors and sure enough there he was. With that our pilot pushed the nose down we just went into reverse the yank Caribou had no choice but to fly over us. We came up behind him and the pilot said, “Who is dead now Yank?”

Sambo