

17 CONSTRUCTION SQUADRON WORKSHOPS



VIETNAM ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER

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Foundation Member

Dan Garlin

What a Reunion!!!

Well if you weren't able to attend THE Reunion in Perth, you missed out on a fantastic time. The weather was absolutely glorious the whole weekend. With only a few minor hiccups everything went very well with all those attending having a wonderful time at a minimal cost. The weekend started with the registration on Friday evening where everyone got a few surprises with their registration kit, including a numbered bottle of port with their name on it, Tee shirt and cap, etc. This was followed by the usual fellowship and it was good to some new (or should I say old??) faces of those members who haven't been to a reunion before. Saturday the women had a bus trip to Fremantle, stopping of at Cottesloe for morning tea while the men attended the AGM. This was followed by a BBQ lunch in Kings Park, then the Vietnam Veterans Day service, afterwards it was back to Rigbys Tavern where most people had a few beers etc and caught up with some mates from other units. Sunday was the boat cruise on the old paddle steamer Decoy (in original condition) down the Swan river to Fremantle and return, with a wonderful meal and a few sing along compliments of the DJ and Snowy Whykes and the boys.

Some photos of the weekend are available on our website at www.17construction.org.au unfortunately due to human error (mine) some of the photos were lost from the river cruise.

As a result of the AGM a new committee was elected:

President - Adrian Blackburn

Secretary - Peter Ingrey

Treasurer - Andy Smithett

with Allan Orchard and George Jones assisting.

The next reunion will be held in NSW (not necessarily Sydney) in 2004, most likely August.

Two motions were put at the AGM being;

MOTION NO1 The next two reunions to be held over Anzac Day long weekends 2003/2005 **Rejected.**

To be left to the incoming committee.

MOTION NO2 That George Jones to be elected as Patron. **Carried unanimous.**
Dan Garlin to be elected as Foundation Member. **Carried Unanimous.**

George Jones was elected as Patron and Dan Garlin as Foundation Member.

Outgoing Presidents Report

Well my time is now up, after 2 ½ years the very successful Perth Reunion has finally been and gone. I must thank the members of committee Ray Firth, Merv Flanders, Snowy Whykes, Bill Wadsworth (who was here in spirit but distance made it very hard for him to assist), and our partners for all their assistance. We worked as a team and managed to get things organised early, with only a few hiccups along the way which is to be expected, also thanks must go to George Jones and his secretary Robyn for the use of the office for meetings, producing newsletters etc, also to Dianne Garbin for arranging a lot of the finer things like hire cars, flights, buses, rooms, venues etc. etc.

At the Vietnam Veterans Day service held in Kings Park we had 70 odd members fall in behind the Association banner making us the biggest group to attend the day.

I'm still looking for photos of your time in Viet Nam, I have a few but still need a lot more. Either send me the photo or slide and I will scan them in and return to you or if you have the facilities send them by email. These will all be put on to a CD Rom and be available at the next reunion.

I will continue to maintain the website at www.17construction.org.au if you want to add something or see some changes I can be contacted by email at 17construction@agn.net.au

World Wide Web

Don't forget to visit our website at www.17construction.org.au to keep up to date with what's happening, also some photos from the Perth Reunion, names of all of our members etc are now available.

If you have an email address and we don't have it please let us know at 17construction@agn.net.au we now have 59 members online, will you be number 60?? Get the news updates as they happen. If you change your email address can you let me know, currently mail is being returned from Ken Burton.

Future Visits to Long Tan Cross placed In Jeopardy! **(Submitted by Eddie Tricker)**

Unlike some people, I have a mate whom I served with in D&E platoon, Headquarters Company, 1 ATF, who now lives in the former South Vietnam.

He was a Machine Gunner in the section that I fronted up as forward scout, so we spent a good lot of bush time together.

Following on from previous concerns he had expressed to me about illegal tours and trips to the Long Tan Battle Memorial Site, on 26 November 2001 he sent me a copy of the letter below and asked me for advice as to how and where he could get it published.

I remember the indignation and furore that a party of Japanese tourists caused many years ago when they stood on the front steps of the Shrine of Remembrance in Melbourne and unfolded a Japanese flag so that they could have their photograph taken in this manner by their companions. Fortunately in this case the Shrine guard took appropriate action. Now put yourself in the shoes of the Vietnamese of Baria/Vung Tau province, (Formerly Phuoc Tuy) and you can understand how they must feel.

Originally he sent his letter to the Vietnam Veterans Federation in Granville, asking them to publish it.

His letter reads:

I am very concerned for the future existence of the Long Tan cross and access to the (Nui) Dat area for visiting veterans and interested parties.

People (ex Australians) living in Vung Tau and Saigon have been offering tours to both sites illegally. Tours may only be conducted via the good grace of the Baria/Vung Tau Peoples' Committee. Recently, following many illegal tours, the Baria/Vung Tau Peoples' Committee complained of losing US\$6,000 in revenue to these unlicensed tours.

The main perpetrator has been advised to curtail his activities and, of course, has blamed others for the problems.

I'm asking anyone who wishes to visit the Long Tan Cross (site), please be aware how sensitive that area is. It, and the memorial to the French at Dien Bien Phu are the only memorials to foreign troops in this country. We, who live here, and visit often, will not stand for the cross to be either removed or barred from access due to opportunists. If you plan on a visit to either area, please use a recognised Australian tour company that has dealt with the Vietnamese government previously and successfully.

Make sure that you travel under the auspices of the Baria/Vung Tau Tourist Agency, or Peoples Committee, other means could lead to either the removal of the cross or denial of access to all.

Think about it. It's not our country, we have no undeniable right of access. The cross remains as a revenue raiser for the locals. Deny that revenue and it's gone. Think about the people in that Long Tan area, they don't particularly like us traipsing through their villages in large buses and 4-wheel drives; there would not be a person there over the age of 30 whose life wasn't directly affected by our presence. Give them something back! Do the right thing!

When I first visited the cross in '93, the surrounding area had all the rubber trees removed (due to age) and the cross was surrounded by 40 acres of young, 2foot high corn plants. The cross stood like a beacon in the centre amongst the greenery. Now the rubber has been planted again and I've been told that it's the same size as that fateful day in '66, except for the clearing that encircles it, courtesy of the Peoples Committee.

I'm as guilty as anyone else, my Vietnamese wife and I used to sneak in through the back way to avoid the visitor's payment. Every June or July we'd go there to hold a Bhuddist ceremony for the fallen, both sides. When I became aware of the possible consequences we ceased going in the back way.

Think about it.

*Bud Cramer,
Saigon, Vietnam*