

SIX SIX SIXTY SIX

BY
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Yes six six sixty is important to me the sixth of the sixth nineteen sixty six was my twenty first birthday also the day I landed on the beach at Vung Tau in Vietnam. No twenty first birthday bash just bloody sand in my boots for the rest of the day. My first memory of the inland was the town of Baria nice but worrying where do I move the A.P.C. (Armoured Personnel Carrier) to if we are attacked I have vivid memories of narrow streets. Then we moved to Hoa Long and onto base camp. What base camp we had to bloody well build it and in the end I could have given Mr Australia a run for his money. Once the defences were in place creature comforts were the priority old crates or boxes for side tables and a change from stretchers to hospital beds. All this happened between patrols, road escorts and daily base life.

In August our patrols were noticing more Vientamese in places of light population. While on road guard on the twelfth of August nineteen sixty six Hoa Long was mortared. We moved up a road over a small hill with the machine gun firing. As the lead carrier I needed to be able to see ahead but the setting sun blinded me and I had to drive over it by intercom with the crew commander. It is vivid to me and is the most terrifying thing I have had to do in my life.

On August eighteenth all hell broke loose a company of sixth R.A.R. (Royal Australian Regiment) was contacted by a regiment of North Vietnamese listening to what was happening over the radio was very anxiety building and waiting to move out was overwhelming. Then the order came to move out to relieve the men in battle and three troop and some of two troop were dispatched. The rest is history the battle of Long Tan was won. My unit was there we won two service decorations and two medals of gallantry from the South Vietnamese.

In November I succumbed to Tropical Acne and was medically evacuated home. When I arrived back in Australia there was turmoil over the right or wrong of the Vietnam War. I knew this could happen as on my call-up enlistment day the Save our Sons group was out in full force.

I shut myself away from it I didn't acknowledge I was a Veteran and only came out of my shell ten years ago. I still live with the memory of a twenty first birthday I didn't have all caused by the Vietnam War and heavily reinforced by the D-Days Sixtieth anniversary in Two Thousand and four. Yes, the sixth of the sixth nineteen sixty six is memorable to me, I reached adulthood on a beach in Vietnam the first day of my tour of duty as a "Nasho" and six six zero six is my fortieth anniversary.