MANSFORD

‘THE WARRIOR POET’

A Digger’s Tribute

BRIGADIER GEORGE LYON MANSFORD AM

From Private to Brigadier: Four Decades of Service, Leadership and Legacy

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Author
Peter Adamis

DEDICATION

George on the veranda of 'Wundurra' overlooking the Bay - Cairns

This book is dedicated to the memory of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford, AM (1934–2026), whose lifelong service embodied the warrior's creed.

It is also dedicated to his wives, Maureen and later Helen, who stood beside him through triumph and hardship; to Peter, the lost son whose memory remained forever cherished in his father's heart; and to Sharon, Vicki, Tracey and Georgina, whose strength, devotion and care sustained their father through loss, grief and unwavering service. To the countless men and women who served alongside 'Warrie' George; the soldiers he trained at the Tully and Canungra jungle warfare camps, the mates who fought beside him in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, the officers he mentored in the field and through inspiring speeches at Officer Training Schools across the nation; your sacrifices and shared bonds are honoured here.

To the Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders of the Northern Surveillance Force, whose unique contributions and partnership with George helped safeguard Australia's borders and whose service has too often gone unrecognised; this book acknowledges your vital role in his legacy. To the widows and families supported through his decades of tireless advocacy with Legacy, to the Vietnam veterans for whom he fought with passion and principle and to the Defence families who knew him as a steadfast advocate, mentor and friend; this book preserves the voice, values and enduring legacy of a man who never forgot his where he came from or his obligations to those who served.

George Mansford was more than a soldier; he was a poet, a philosopher, a leader who understood that true strength lies not only in courage under fire, but in compassion, integrity and the unwavering commitment to lift others. His legacy lives on in every life he touched, every family he supported and every principle he defended.

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MANSFORD 'THE WARRIOR POET': A Digger's Tribute. Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM (1934-2026)

This is a personal tribute and memorial written by a soldier who served under Brigadier Mansford's command and maintained a friendship with him for over four decades. While extensively researched using multiple verified sources, this work prioritises the preservation of memory and honour of service over strict academic standards. The author welcomes corrections and feedback, assumes no liability for unintentional errors and intends no harm to any individual mentioned herein.

Nature of this work. This is a personal tribute and memorial, not an official biography, authoritative military history, or academically rigorous scholarly work. The author, Peter Adamis, served under Brigadier Mansford's command at 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment and maintained a personal friendship with him for over four decades until his death in 2026. This relationship profoundly influences the work's perspective, tone and content, reflecting genuine respect, admiration, loyalty and gratitude. While extensive research and verification efforts have been undertaken using multiple sources, this work prioritises the preservation of memory, honour of service and continuation of legacy over strict academic standards of verification and critical distance.

Primary Sources. This work draws upon verified historical sources, official military records, oral histories, published works and personal testimonies including Australian War Memorial Collection Records (S02869, C1266772), UNSW Australians at War Film Archive interviews, The Royal Australian Regiment Association archives, National Library of Australia catalogue records, Queensland Legislative Assembly Hansard records, Brigadier Mansford's published works, personal interviews conducted 2003-2011, military service records and operational documentation, publicly delivered funeral eulogies and tributes (10th March 2026), voluntary testimonies from family, soldiers', officers and veterans, social media tributes from the military community and oral military tradition and storytelling.

Voluntary contributors and public materials. Named individuals voluntarily provided personal testimonies, stories, photographs and information specifically to honour Brigadier Mansford's memory. All contributors understood their information would be published for this memorial purpose. These include:

Public Funeral Materials: Eulogies and tributes delivered at Brigadier Mansford's funeral (10th March 2026, St Monica's Cathedral, Cairns) were presented at a public service attended by hundreds and broadcast online to a public audience. These tributes have been transcribed from publicly available recordings using voice to text technology and are preserved here to honour both the speakers and the subject.

Social Media Tributes: Public commemorations posted on military association pages, veteran forums and social media platforms following Mansford's death represent the authentic voice of the military community's response to his passing and are included for this memorial purpose.

Mansford's Documented Views and Fair Comment. Criticisms of bureaucracy, 'Canberra Suits' and institutional failures attributed to Brigadier Mansford are drawn from his published poetry (*The Spirit of Australia, Duty and Consequence, The Mad Galahs*), public speeches at The Royal Military College and Staff College, oral history interviews (Australian War Memorial and UNSW Australians at War Film Archive), personal conversations with the author over four decades and testimony from those who knew him. References to 'careerist officers' and bureaucratic 'arrogance and indifference' reflect Mansford's personal opinions; not the author's inventions; and constitute fair comment on matters of public interest. These criticisms address institutional practices and policy failures, not individual character, reflecting Mansford's passionate advocacy for soldiers based on 50 years of service.

Personal Information and Privacy. Personal information about named individuals (including medical conditions, family situations, career experiences and service records) is included only where voluntarily provided to honour Mansford's memory, already publicly available, necessary for understanding his character and impact or where disclosure honours rather than harms the individual.

No Malicious Intent: Personal information is NOT included to embarrass, harm, exploit or invade privacy maliciously. All such information serves the legitimate purpose of illustrating Mansford's profound impact on the lives of those he served with, commanded and supported throughout his career and beyond.

Oral Military Tradition. Chapter 16 (Oral Stories, Fibs, Myths, Legends, Tall Tales But True) explicitly acknowledges military oral tradition, where stories passed between soldiers over decades preserve culture, values and bonds. These stories may contain embellishments, imperfect memories, or unverifiable details and are included to preserve authentic military storytelling, capture how Mansford was remembered by mates, illustrates values and character through narrative and honour bonds between soldiers. Stories involving bar brawls, disciplinary actions, training incidents and personal conduct are presented as remembered within the military community, not as verified historical fact. Where verification was impossible, this limitation is acknowledged. No defamation or harm is intended; these stories honour the individuals mentioned and military cultural traditions.

Honours, Awards and Service Records. Honours and awards listed represent best available information from published obituaries, official tributes, publicly available military records, service entitlements based on documented deployments and information provided by military associations and unit historians. Not all medals have been independently verified against official Department of Defence records. Where verification was incomplete, awards are listed as 'entitled' based on service periods or noted as unverified. Any errors are unintentional and will be corrected upon official verification.

Indigenous Acknowledgement. The author respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Owners and Custodians of the lands on which Brigadier Mansford served, trained and lived, including the Turrbal, Yidinji and Kaurareg peoples. We pay respect to Elders past, present and emerging and acknowledge the deep connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country. George Mansford's childhood among Aboriginal communities at Palm Island, shaped his lifelong respect for Indigenous Australians and advocacy for Indigenous soldiers' recognition and welfare. This aspect of his life is treated with cultural sensitivity and respect. Information about Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people has been handled respectfully according to cultural protocols. Any offence inadvertently caused is sincerely regretted. Concerns regarding portrayal or cultural sensitivity should be directed to the author.

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Living persons. Information about living persons has been handled with sensitivity and respect. Where possible, information has been verified with those individuals or their representatives. Named contributors voluntarily provided their information knowing it would be published to honour Mansford's memory. Any concerns regarding the portrayal or inclusion of living persons should be directed to the author for consideration and if appropriate, correction in future editions.

Deceased Persons and Families. Information about deceased individuals, including Mansford's wives (Maureen and Helen), his son Peter, mates and family members, is included with deep respect to honour their memories and contributions, acknowledge their importance in his life, preserve family history as part of his legacy and recognise the sacrifices of military service on families. No exploitation of grief or loss is intended. Personal family information provides necessary context for understanding his character and relationships. Families may have different recollections and the author respects that memory is personal and varied.

No Defamation, Harm, or Malicious Intent. This work honours Brigadier Mansford's memory and documents his contributions to Australian military history and culture. No defamation, embarrassment, harm, or malicious invasion of privacy is intended toward any individual, living or deceased. Critical assessments of institutions, policies, or practices reflect Mansford's documented views and passionate advocacy, historical analysis and honest opinion on matters of public interest, fair comment on institutional accountability and veteran welfare and the author's genuine beliefs based on stated facts and experiences; not personal attacks or attempts to harm reputations. This work presents an authentic portrayal acknowledging the complexity of military service, leadership and the human experience of war and its aftermath.

Accuracy and Corrections. While this work has been diligently researched using multiple verified sources, the author acknowledges that not all facts have been independently verified against official records, historical accounts may vary based on perspective and available evidence, oral histories and personal memories may contain inaccuracies, some records are incomplete or inaccessible and errors may exist despite best efforts.

The author welcomes corrections, additional documentation, clarifications, photographs, or supplementary information from readers with authoritative knowledge. Future editions will incorporate verified corrections with appropriate acknowledgement. Contact: Peter Adamis – abalinx@gmail. com

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Constructive feedback welcome. The author invites constructive criticism, additional information, corrections and feedback to improve the accuracy and quality of this tribute. This work is intended to honour all those mentioned and to preserve an important legacy of Australian military service.

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PREFACE

In the frozen hills of Korea and steaming jungles of Malaya, George Mansford learned that survival depended on bonds forged in hardship. Years later, he would write: *'The oath to serve your country did not include a contract for normal luxury and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary it implied hardships, loyalty and devotion to duty, regardless of your rank. The battle school is here to remind you of that oath'.* This philosophy defined his military career and shaped countless lives, making him both leader and mentor; the warrior poet who inspired generations.

George Mansford was born on 19th August 1934 in an Aboriginal community in Guildford, Western Australia. His early years unfolded against the backdrop of impending global conflict. At just five, he experienced the emotional turmoil of war. The image of his mother's tears as headlines screamed 'WAR' would resonate throughout his life. From these humble beginnings, his journey took him from the Australian bush to becoming one of Australia's most esteemed military leaders.

Mansford was not only a warrior; he was a poet, author, teacher and philosopher of leadership. His combat experiences infused his writing with authenticity. His influential works, including '*Junior Leadership on the Battlefield'*, became essential reading for generations of officers. His novel '*The Mad Galahs'* offered a candid look at advisory warfare, while his poetry collection '*The Spirit of Australia'* captured the soldier's experience with emotional depth. Even at Eighty-Eight, he published *'Duty and Consequence'*, addressing contemporary challenges facing the Defence Force.

This book chronicles Brigadier Mansford's forty-year military journey through Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, highlighting his evolution from soldier to visionary leader. Known throughout the Defence Force as a soldier's soldier, George Mansford remained connected to his origins. His leadership philosophy centred on three core principles: *'knowing your people, understanding people and valuing people'*. This philosophy informed his approach to military training, mentorship and advocacy for soldiers and their families.

His establishment of Jungle Training at Tully revolutionised military training in Australia, fostering a culture of shared responsibility and preparedness. His methods instilled resilience and mental toughness, equipping soldiers for the brutal realities of jungle warfare. His legacy extends beyond tangible achievements. It lives in the lives saved by the standards he established, in the leaders he mentored and in the culture of honesty and excellence he fostered.

From an Aboriginal mission community to the pinnacle of the Australian Army, this narrative captures the essence of a life dedicated to service, leadership and the enduring legacy of the warrior-poet.

FOREWORD

On the 19th February 2026, Australia lost one of her greatest sons, a family lost a beloved patriarch and The Royal Australian Regiment lost an icon. Brigadier 'Warrie' George Mansford, AM rose from the ranks. His early career saw him embark on active service as a Private soldier in 1 RAR during the latter stages of the Korean War and he progressed through service in Malayan Emergency, Vietnam with the 6 RAR and the AATTV and many other postings that culminated with his retirement as a Brigadier, as Commander 11 Brigade in 1990.

His military achievements were the stuff of legend and the Battle School he founded in the jungles of Tully in 1980 still to this day instils a degree of nervous trepidation on soldiers when they hear that they are earmarked to undertake a training rotation at the notoriously tough Battle School.

But beyond his martial achievements, George Mansford continued to be a man of the people and a man of the community to the very end. An author, a poet; Cairns Citizen of the Year in 1996. A staunch conservationist; the driving force behind myriad community events and developmental programmes. An eloquent orator; a gifted story teller. A veteran advocate; a historian. A proud Australian, a force of nature, a true character. He was a man of the people whose friendships and influence transcended social class, politics, race and religion.

I am indebted to the author of this work for offering me the opportunity to write the foreword to this impressively researched work. Despite his fame and universal popularity, George was always somewhat of an enigma – and his humble, modest nature was such that piecing together such a detailed chronology of 'Warrie' George's life is testament to the author's perseverance and investigative abilities.

I was fortunate to be a small part of the history of a friendship between two families that originated nearly 70 years ago. I am assured that I was first introduced to George shortly after my birth, as he and my father were great friends and had served alongside each other in several Battalions. But I was too young to remember being *'baby sat by the Mansford kids'* and have only fragmented recollections of the raucous celebrations of the grownups in the 6 RAR Officers' Mess following the Queen's Birthday family day that the Battalion delivered in 1974. I consider myself privileged that we reconnected in 1989 and remained in close communications for nearly four decades thereafter.

This book, *Mansford the 'Warrior Poet'* is a wonderful testament to a wonderful Australian. It captures both George's life story and his character. The world is a lesser place without George Mansford. Yet his memory is cherished and his inspiration endures. I consider myself honoured to have known him and I am all the better for it. Vale 'Warrie' George.

Jim Hammett
Colonel (Retired)
25 April 2026

ABSTRACT

THE WARRIOR POET: BRIGADIER GEORGE LYON MANSFORD AM (1934-2026)

This memoir documents the life and military service of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM, whose forty-year career through the wars in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam saw him rise from private soldier to one of Australia's most influential military leaders and educators. Mansford not only embodied the Australian warrior tradition but also gave it a voice, articulating the soldiers experience through five major published works.

Key Themes: Mansford's life was defined by three enduring principles: that people are paramount to military effectiveness, that realistic training is essential for combat survival and that the fundamental duty of a leader is to serve those under their command. His philosophy; knowing your people, understanding people, valuing people; shaped Australian military culture and saved countless lives.

Major Contributions: As Commandant of Jungle Training at Tully (1975-1982), Mansford revolutionised Australian military training, forging an institution that prepared thousands of soldiers for the realities of jungle warfare. His published works, including '*Junior Leadership on the Battlefield'* (1983, 1994), educated generations of leaders, while his creat*ion of the Northern Surveillance Force demonstrated innovative thinking by integratin*g the unique skills of Indigenous Australians into national defence.

Methodology: This work is built on primary sources, including oral histories from the Australian War Memorial and UNSW archives, military service records; Mansford's published works and personal interviews. It employs a narrative historical approach, grounded in rigorous documentation and verification.

Significance: Mansford's legacy extends beyond his distinguished military career into a lifetime of advocacy for veterans and their families. His post-retirement service included environmental conservation, mentorship of young officers and practical assistance to military widows through Legacy. His poetry and writings continue to educate and inspire, ensuring that lessons learned through sacrifice are preserved.

Historical Context: Mansford's service spanned pivotal periods in Australian military history: the Korean Wars static phase (1954-1955), the Malayan Emergency's counter-insurgency operations (1955-1957, 1959-1961) and Vietnam War advisory and combat roles (1965-1967). These experiences directly informed his revolutionary approach to training and leadership.

Brigadier Mansford exemplified the warrior-poet: a combat veteran who understood that military effectiveness requires both physical courage and intellectual depth, both tactical competence and genuine care for his soldiers' welfare. His life demonstrates that true leadership transcends rank and that service extends beyond active duty. This tribute preserves his legacy for a new generation of leaders, reminding them that courage, integrity, mateship and an unwavering commitment to duty are timeless.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This book would not have been possible without the invaluable contributions of those dedicated to preserving the legacy of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM. Each person who contributed brought a unique strand; a memory, a perspective, a truth; that helped create the complete tapestry of this remarkable man's life.

To the Family. My deepest gratitude to Sharon, Vicki, Tracey and Georgina Mansford.

To the Mates. My heartfelt thanks to Maurice Barwick, who sat with me in Beaufort, Victoria, just weeks after George's funeral. Still raw with grief, Maurice shared memories that revealed the larrikin Sergeant at Holsworthy and the respected officer who earned, rather than demanded, authority. This was the George his peers knew in that 'little Army' where everyone knew everyone; a mate first, a leader always.

Thank you to Jeannette Bartlett for her invaluable insights, meticulous editing, tireless proofreading and wise counsel throughout this project. Jeannette spent countless hours refining the manuscript with an eye for detail that caught every inconsistency and polished every rough edge. Her patience proved extraordinary as she guided the book through its many metamorphoses, offering gentle guidance that never diminished but always elevated the work.

Through long hours of collaborative effort, she provided not merely editorial expertise but inspirational advice that kept the project moving forward during moments of doubt. Her supportive presence and genuine care transformed what could have been a solitary struggle into a shared journey. Jeannette's collaboration revealed not only her professional skill but the warmth and authentic compassion she brings to every endeavour; qualities that George Mansford himself would have recognised and valued.

George extended to all who served alongside him, while her unwavering dedication to preserving his authentic voice ensured his story would be told with the dignity and accuracy it deserved. Jeannette's commitment to honouring George's memory through precision, truth and compassionate stewardship made this work immeasurably better. Without her steadfast support and editorial excellence, this tribute to a remarkable man would not have been possible.

Thank you to Jim Hammett for invaluable insights that revealed the depth of George's character and for the profound honour of delivering George's final message to the Regiment. Jim, your delivery honoured both your father's memory and George's trust in you, creating a moment of connection across generations that embodied everything George believed about duty and mateship.

Thank you to Warren Payne, and Garry Adams whose humorous anecdotes from 1 RAR and 6 RAR captured the larrikin spirit George embodied, reminding us that laughter and mateship were as essential to soldiering as discipline and duty. While Warren and Garry's stories brought George to life, they were not as distant legends but as the digger's digger; rumpled uniform, brilliant mind and all.

Special thanks to Ron Llewellyn for his thoughtful reflections about George Mansford whilst serving together in 6 RAR. Ron served as Pioneer Platoon Commander with Phillip 'Butch' Buttigieg as his Platoon Sergeant. As a qualified parachutist; a distinction shared with the author; Ron provided a particularly insightful perspective into George Mansford's leadership qualities, revealing the nuances of command.

Thank you to Phillip Buttigieg, who served alongside George across multiple postings spanning decades. Your accounts of his consistency of character; whether in jungle, mess, or retirement; reveal the steadfast leader who never changed his principles regardless of circumstances. Through your memories, we see the man who remained fundamentally himself from Private to Brigadier.

Special mention and thank you to Alistair Pope, Writer, Poet, Author and an extraordinary individual whose advice, additional insights and generous assistance proved invaluable to the enhancement of this book. Alistair's deep understanding of George Mansford's character and service enriched this work immeasurably. Information now identified as originating from George Mansford through other sources is also contained within Alistair's superb unpublished book about George Mansford, 'Soldiering with the Best of the Best', a testament to his own dedication to preserving the legacy of this remarkable soldier. Alistair's contribution represents not merely editorial guidance but a shared commitment to honouring a man we both respected deeply.

Thank you to Stuart and Karen Smith, Don Tate, whose stories revealed dimensions of George's character that official records could never capture, ensuring a complete picture of the man behind the rank. Your willingness to share both the triumphs and the struggles painted an honest portrait of a complex, deeply human leader.

To the late Neil Weekes AM, MC, whose tribute captured George's essence with perfect simplicity: 'In country terms, I would ride the river with George Mansford anytime anyplace.' Neil, those words honour both the man you knew and the code you both lived by. Your voice echoes through these pages. Through your collective memories, George lives on in these pages not as a distant historical figure, but as a mate, mentor and leader whose influence extended far beyond rank or years of service. You have given him the greatest gift; continued life in the hearts and minds of those who follow.

Special thanks to 51 FNQR. To the men and women of the 51st Battalion Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR), my sincere gratitude for your contribution and commentary regarding George Mansford and his profound influence on the Battalion. As Honorary Colonel following his retirement in 1990, George maintained a deep and enduring connection to 51 FNQR; attending exercises, mentoring soldiers and embodying the living link between the Battalion's proud history and its future generations. Particular acknowledgement to Kel Ryan, the first Commanding Officer of 51 FNQR, whose close cooperation with George Mansford made the Battalion a reality and to Colonel Ash Gunder AM, Colonel Commandant 51 FNQR, for his support and to the Adjutant Captain Daniel Cahill for his facilitation.

Your willingness to honour George's memory through your testimony demonstrates the lasting impact of his leadership and the respect he earned from those who served under his final command. George would be chuffed knowing that his Battalion had something meaningful to add to his story. 51 FNQR cherished Mansford. They embraced him as their elder, named buildings after him, organised and supported his funeral with dignity and pride. The RSM and Padre fought mightily to ensure Defence paid for the funeral rather than George's family having to bear the full cost; a final act of devotion that speaks volumes about the bond between this soldier and his Battalion. To 51 FNQR: you honoured him in life, you honoured him in death and you honour him still through your service. Thank you.

To the Institutions. Sincere thanks to the Australian War Memorial, UNSW Australians at War Film Archive, The Royal Australian Regiment Association and the National Library of Australia for preserving the primary sources that which made this work possible. Your dedication to maintaining Australia's military heritage ensures that stories like George's can be told with accuracy and authenticated by the historical record.

Special recognition to all soldiers who trained at Tully under Brigadier Mansford's command and those who served in 1 RAR, 2 RAR, 6 RAR and AATTV; your testimonies validate his training methods and demonstrate the lasting impact of his leadership. Many of you are not named here, but your service is honoured in these pages. The lives you lived, the standards you maintained and the values you carried forward are Mansford's living legacy.

Thank you to Frank Edwards who kindly contributed to the enhancement of this book with his memories of George in 1 RAR and the Infantry Centre. I first met Frank in 1 RAR and then served alongside him again in 6 RAR. His recollections and insights have added depth and authenticity to the narrative, providing valuable perspectives on George's service and character during those formative years. Frank's willingness to share his experiences has enriched this work and I am grateful for his contribution to preserving these important memories of our shared service.

To the Torres Strait Islander and Indigenous Australian communities who embraced George's vision for the Northern Surveillance Force; your service proves that character transcends background, that competence matters more than origin and that George's childhood lessons about equality and respect shaped policies that changed lives and strengthened the nation.

Personal acknowledgement to George Mansford himself, who granted interviews, shared his writings, corrected my errors and encouraged me to continue writing even during my darkest times. You, like Jack Currie (RSM 1 RAR 1972–1973) and many others, taught me that duty extends beyond the battlefield, that mateship transcends time and that service to the Defence Family is a lifelong commitment.
When cancer threatened to silence my voice, you reminded me that a digger never quits. This work fulfils my promise to write about the military mentors who shaped my life. You were first among them. 'Luvya mate, your blood was worth bottling.'

Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM, the 'Warrior Poet'. For forty years of service spanning three wars, for unwavering commitment to Australian soldiers, for honesty in documenting both successes and failures, for poetry that gave voice to the warrior's experience and for advocacy that continued until your final days.

This book stands as a testament to a life dedicated to duty, honour and the welfare of those you led; a life lived fully as both warrior and poet. The threads you left behind in memories, in writings, in the lives you touched; have been woven together here.

The fabric that emerges is strong, authentic and enduring, just as you were.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

This is a personal tribute, not a critical biography. I served under Brigadier George Mansford in two Infantry Battalions, (1 RAR and 6 RAR) and knew him for over forty years. This work preserves his memory as his soldiers', friends and family remember him; through their own voices, stories and testimonies. I have drawn on oral histories, funeral eulogies, personal correspondence, published works and my own recollections. Where sources conflict or cannot be verified, I have noted this. Where the same stories or themes recur, this reflects how soldiers remember; through repetition, through shared telling, through the oral tradition that keeps our mates alive. This is not the complete story of George Mansford. It is the story his diggers' tell; imperfect, deeply personal and true to the man we knew.

George Mansford was many things to many people. To his family, he was a devoted father and grandfather who carried profound grief with quiet dignity. To the soldiers' he commanded, he was 'Warrie' George; the Officer who slept in the rain rather than accept comfort his troops couldn't share, who pushed them to their limits because he understood that realistic training saved lives in combat. To the veterans and widows he advocated for throughout his retirement, he was 'Mr. Fix It'; the man who fought bureaucracy with the same determination he had once brought to the battlefield. To the Australian Army, he was a legend whose influence extended far beyond his forty years of service.

George touched many people throughout his life and left an indelible mark on those he encountered. I do not claim to have known him as well as those closer to him, yet whenever I sought his support or opinion, he never responded in the negative. The highest praise I can give him is that George was a very intelligent, compassionate and good man.

This manuscript traces George's journey from barefoot childhood at an Aboriginal mission in Western Australia to the rank of Brigadier, from the frozen trenches of Korea to the steaming jungles of Malaya and Vietnam, from the training grounds of Tully to the quiet battles fought on behalf of those the system had forgotten.

His military career was distinguished by any measure. He served in three wars, rose from Private to Brigadier through merit alone, established Jungle Training at Tully and commanded the 11th Brigade. He was awarded the Member of the Order of Australia and authored five significant works that educated leaders and gave voice to the warrior's experience.

At the heart of his leadership was a simple principle: *'know your people, understand your people, value your people'*. This wasn't abstract theory but lived practice, demonstrated through four decades of service and thirty-six years of advocacy. I have drawn upon his own published works, official military records and recollections of soldiers who served under his command and tributes from those whose lives he touched.

Readers will encounter George Mansford's essential complexity: a hard-bitten warrior who wept for fallen mates, a demanding leader who demonstrated genuine compassion, a father figure to countless soldiers while privately grieving his lost son and a legend whose stories remained grounded in truth. This is the story of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM; soldier, leader, mentor, advocate, poet and above all, a digger's digger who happened to wear stars. It is offered in the spirit he lived: with honesty, respect for those who served and understanding that the true measure of a life is found in lives touched, standards upheld and values preserved for those who follow.

Peter Adamis

CHAPTER 1:
BORN IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

1934-1951 CHILDHOOD, COMMUNITY AND THE POST OFFICE YEARS

Birth and early years. George Lyon Mansford was born on 19th August 1934, Western Australia into a world reeling from the Great Depression. His earliest memories began at Beechboro, an Aboriginal mission in Guildford, where his father served as administrator and cook to the Aboriginal community. This work profoundly shaped the values George would carry throughout his life. As far as he could recall, they were the only white people there and most of his playmates were little black fellows.' *I simply used to play with them and there was no difference. We made our own rules, like all children; we made our own laws and I got on well with them; still do to this day.'*

Living in the bush, far from the towns and suburbs, had its advantages. There are rich memories of George's very early days playing with his black fella mates. He can still hear the laughter as they played, skinny dipped and recalls the primitive Gunyas in which they lived, each with a small smoking fire. They were wonderful and carefree days where young George learned the landscape and developed a profound connection to the land that would serve him well in his future military career.

This unique upbringing provided formative experiences that later informed Mansford's understanding that, in the Australian military context, differences of race and religion held no significance. The mission community instilled in him the belief that character mattered more than background, that competence transcended origin and that shared hardships forged bonds stronger than any superficial differences. In the military, there was no such thing as differences. It was the great educator in ridding one of bigotry; be you black, white, brown, or brindle; Catholic, Protestant, Jewish, or whatever. You were a soldier and that's what the military cared about. It was a wonderful institution. These lessons, absorbed during childhood, remained with him throughout his military career.

The first memories. George remembers spotting a left-over crust on a table and no matter how much he stretched his arms to grasp it, it remained a left-over crust. Another memory of that time was his mother sitting at the table reading an old newspaper which some rare visitor or passerby had left. He walked in and his mother was crying. He can still see the word in big black letters, 'WAR'. Later, when he had mastered the 'ABC', he came to realise why she had been so sad and what 'WAR' meant. It was 1939 and he had just turned five.

His mother's tears were testament to the fear and anguish gripping families across Australia as men departed for distant battlefields. Newspaper headlines spelling 'WAR' became an indelible image; a stark proclamation that childhood innocence had ended and a new era of fear had just begun. George soon learned an understanding of the cost of war; not only for soldiers but for the families they left behind. His father had served in World War 1, like many of his generation, he answered the call. The war affected many of George's uncles who also donned uniforms. His father, despite his age, was one of them. He was very much a nomad, rarely home and even before George was born, had been wandering far and wide during the Great Depression seeking work. Because of such travels followed by military service and then his death shortly after, George never really got to know him.

The Jam Tin incident. Apart from being wonderful and much loved, George's mother was a true-blue Aussie, tough, devoted, caring and capable of very colourful language. There was a time George slashed his hand and it seemed the blood kept flowing, so they walked over a long and seemingly endless journey via a hot sandy track in the blazing sun to seek medical help in a distant outskirt suburb of Perth. En-route they passed a group of their neighbours sitting around a smouldering fire roasting some bush tucker and from where came the shout '*What happened to Georgie, Missus?*' The answer was immediate and very clear.' *The little bastard has buggered his hand on an old jam tin*.' The term 'bastard' was an introduction to George's limited vocabulary and he was so proud. He was a 'bastard'. In his very first year at school, he discovered, with some pain inflicted by a teacher that 'bastard' was not a badge of honour.

Bassendean

The move to Bassendean. Soon after the war began, the Mansford family relocated from the mission to Guildford and subsequently to Bassendean, a suburb of Perth, where they moved into what to them was a mansion. There were two bedrooms, kitchen with wooden stove, laundry, copper and even electricity instead of hurricane lamps.

The copper had two roles, boiling clothes and then warm water for bathing. They used a kerosene tin as a tub. The copper and stove were fuelled by wood. A far cry from the bush and in a short time they bought a second-hand radio and for the very first time listened to the magic air waves and what was to become their favourite programme, the search for the '*Golden Boomerang*'. Their fortunes had changed.

George's mother established a fish and chip shop called The Fair Dinkum Aussie next to the railway line. This shop became a community fixture, providing income and a gathering place in a neighbourhood soon transformed by war. The street where the Mansfords lived was predominantly populated by women, a demographic reality that became even more pronounced as virtually all the men departed for war. Their home was surrounded by air-raid shelters, silent reminders of the looming global conflict. These shelters, dug into the earth and reinforced against potential bombing raids, stood as sentinels warning of the threat.

The street where the Mansfords lived became a community of women and children. The men had gone to war, leaving mothers, wives and children to manage households and maintain family life in their absence. Young George grew up in this environment, surrounded by women who demonstrated remarkable strength and resilience in the face of hardship and uncertainty. He witnessed his mother and the other women of Bassendean managing households, supporting their families and maintaining community bonds despite the absence of their husbands and the constant fear for their safety.

Mansford Clan late 1940

Wartime childhood.
George's childhood was surrounded by evidence of war. Sandbagged air raid shelters, blackouts, sirens and suddenly in the town there was to be seen many familiar faces in uniform with kitbags over shoulders waving good bye.

It was a time when mothers also became fathers and there were added responsibilities shared within each family.

Meanwhile he was gaining a disrupted style education caused through having to move schools at Eden Hills, Guilford, Bassendean Primaries and then Midland Junction High School. His education difficulties were made worse after being placed in the wrong year level and when receiving Corporal punishment. The war affected continuity of schooling for most students.

At George's school, children dug zigzag trenches for air-raid shelters, their small hands wielding shovels to create protection against a threat they could barely comprehend. George can recall at school, how on order of a whistle blast, they practiced air raid drills. That is, leaving the classroom and crouching in the zigzag trenches with mouths open and wearing ear protectors. Sometimes, the drill was conducted in the classroom and being taught how to crouch beneath the school desks. Such exercises were conducted with the seriousness the times demanded. Teachers and students alike understood that these preparations might mean the difference between life and death.

War Bonds and 'Georgie Jap'. There were war bonds to be bought, urging all to dig deep reinforced by a poster with a goggled pilot with protruding teeth in a biplane about to drop a bomb from the cockpit. Beneath was a poem which George hated with a vengeance. 'Georgie Jap' is flying high, dropping bombs to make us cry. Buy a war bond today and make 'Georgie Jap fly away.' For a while there were many fisticuffs and wrestling with school mates after George was christened with the nickname 'Georgie Jap'. Most of his opponents were older and thus bigger so he didn't win many bouts, however in time they all became weary of the brawls and he became Georgie once more.

Ration cards and community bonds. Ration cards to buy certain foods and essential clothing became the norm. George can still recall visiting the local shop for a packet of tea and watching as the purchase was confirmed with a hole punctured in the appropriate square of the ration card. More often than not, purchases were on 'tick' (Australian term for credit) and placed in the debit column of a shopkeeper's book and to be paid at a later date when the family could pay.

It was one of many signs of a close-knit community, sharing, trusting and caring and where neighbours in the street and beyond were quick to unite in times of need and celebrate as one in times of joy, or share grief when bad news arrived. Such unity was a powerful weapon which the nation could be wise never to discard. The community experienced collective grief when news arrived of casualties from battles like El Alamein, where Western Australian Battalions suffered terrible losses. George recalled the weeping that swept through his neighbourhood, the sound of women crying for husbands, sons and brothers who never returned.

Even distant wars can reach out to peaceful towns. Theirs was no different. A sad young widow here and there, someone's dad missing, another taken prisoner and George recalling his teacher crying in the class room. Later they were told that her fiancé had been killed in a place called New Guinea, wherever that was. There was another time when they had been given a project to draw something which had happened recently. With few exceptions, their Grade Two class of 1942 drew sketches of tanks, planes, bombs and searchlights. Their teacher was crying again. The war was not an abstract concept; it was an immediate tragedy that touched every family, every street and every community across Australia.

Community resilience and social order. Despite the hardships imposed by war, there was no breakdown in social order. The generation that survived World War I and the Great Depression maintained discipline and dignity in the face of adversity. This resilience was not passive acceptance but an active determination to preserve normalcy and humanity in abnormal circumstances. Saturday night sing-songs became an escape ritual that helped maintain community solidarity. Families gathered and sang *'It is a Lovely Day Tomorrow,'* even though disasters mounted and the world grew scarier. London was bombed, Singapore fell, Darwin was attacked and HMAS *Sydney* was lost with all hands, yet the community continued to function.

The school system, police, shopkeepers and milkmen provided stability and discipline that helped children cope with their father's absence. These small acts of normalcy reassured children that despite the war, despite the fear and despite the uncertainty, the fundamental structures of society remained intact. The milkman still delivered milk each morning. The shopkeeper still opened his store. The police still patrolled the streets. The teacher still conducted lessons.

School days - discipline and learning. George attended school at a time when there was a parade each morning which included the raising of the National Flag and then marched to the classroom. There was always an air of authority and the development of personal and collective discipline reinforced at times with the use of the cane and regular daily rituals which became the norm, such as standing and greeting the teacher early in the morning at the beginning of class. Chalk board, ink wells and copy books were constant companions and being kept behind after school was a familiar form of punishment for misbehaviour. The teacher was God, no matter where, at school, at home and within the general community. Woe beheld any student who received the cane and if Mother heard such shameful news there would be a further round of punishment plus a grim warning, '*just wait until your father hears about this*.'

One of the most effective deterrents to both poor scholarship and bad behaviour was to fail the yearly exams and be compelled to remain in the same class for the following year. Consequently, as each year's final exams approached, there was more interest in home work and increased efforts to succeed. In sport, there were only three prizes, first, second and third and a pat on the shoulder for all competitors; trees were to be climbed; rivers and creeks to be swam and if you fell over, be it physically or in some other effort to achieve, you were told to get up and try again.

Learning to fight. An uncle taught George to box, leading to a formative schoolyard fight in 1946.' *I just went in on the attack. I can always remember my uncle saying, it is an Army maxim: the best form of defence is attack. I beat him like a dinner and became the school hero because I was much smaller.'* This incident taught George truths about conflict that remained with him throughout his military career; that aggression and initiative could overcome physical disadvantage, that courage was action despite fear and that decisive action often determined outcomes more than size or strength.

The tide turns. As the war progressed, there was more good news than bad. Their fourth-grade teacher had chalked a map on the blackboard with a huge arrow pointing from the waves to the land. It was June 6th 1944 and they were told that the Allied Forces had landed in France. However, each night, their radio told them that V2 Buzz Bombs launched from across the English Channel were destroying London and its surrounds. It was, George thinks, the first time he became scared of the war. However, the bad news was short lived.

The following year, World War 2 ended when two Atomic Bombs were dropped over Japan. It was the first time they had ever heard of Atomic Bombs. The nuclear age had arrived and George will never forget the subsequent celebrations which seemed to go on and on. Bands playing, National Flags flying, hooting factory sirens, dancing in the main street and it seemed a magician had waved a wand and created magic sunshine where everyone but everyone was laughing, smiling and singing.

Soon after, the first troop trains covered in streamers rattled by from the Eastern States on the way to Perth with constant blasts of cock-a-doodle-doo from the train's Puffing-Billy. Peace had arrived and normality was just around the corner. It also signalled the beginning of the end for ration cards which had been used during the war to control consumption of essential items such as meat, butter, tea, sugar and clothing.

Post-war consequences. The consequences of war became more evident within the community. George's sister, now 18 was for a while being courted by an ex-prisoner of war with one leg. One ex-soldier working at the local Post Office had constant tremors and suddenly was no longer there. There were whispers of shell shock which became an increasingly used term within the community; however, their generation did not comprehend the causes. In reflection, it was all around them.

The aged cleaner (well to George he was old) a World War One veteran taught George the skills of bayonet fighting as they parried and thrust with two broom sticks. George's father was more fortunate than most, however his long absence from home seeking work in the last years of the depression followed by military service had made him a stranger to George and his younger siblings and before they really got to know him again, he passed on.

New Australians. Soon after the war they became familiar with the term *'New Australians'* which was used to describe migrants from war ravaged Europe seeking a new life Down Under. George can still see his mother and other ladies waiting at the local railway station to welcome three migrant families. Part of the welcome was to introduce them to their shopping locations, then off to meet their new neighbours. One such couple camped behind their home and in a short time began building. George was a regular visitor and helped the husband to make cement bricks for the house. In return he learnt some of the German language which today is limited to several words.

It was a very effective form of integration. In today's Space Age society, it seems government with much expensive huffing and puffing has been ambushed by political correctness, thus in George's view, producing social fragmentation with destructive hype in mothering minority groups which indirectly creates an attitude of *'them and us.'* It seems we never did really learn the lessons of successful integration of *'New Australians'* from the late Forties and early Fifties.

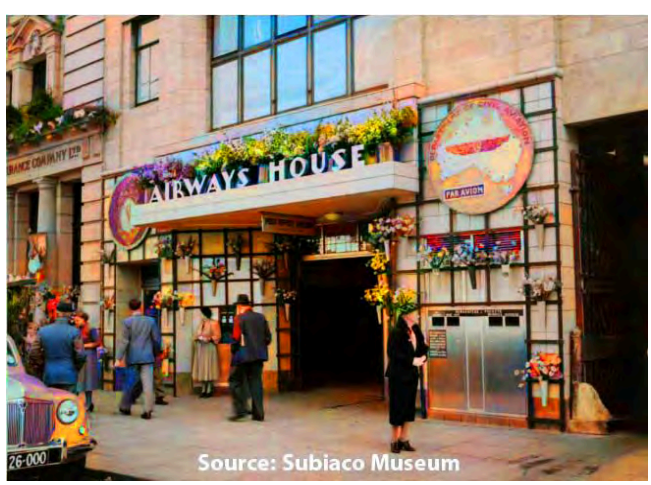
The dual identity and the evolving Australian Nation. Young George was exposed to both British imperial identity and emerging Australian Nationalism during these formative years. He identified as Australian first, though his father, a British immigrant, maintained strong ties to the old country. This dual identity, simultaneously Australian and British, reflected the transitional nature of Australian national consciousness during the war years. The conflict forced Australians to define themselves not merely as loyal subjects of the British Empire but as citizens of a nation with its own character, values and destiny.

The war brought the world to Bassendean in ways that peacetime never could. News from distant battlefields, reports of Australian troops fighting in North Africa and the Pacific, stories of heroism and sacrifice; all filtered into the consciousness of a young boy growing up in a working-class neighbourhood. The war began shaping George's understanding of duty, service and sacrifice long before he donned a uniform himself.

Preparation for working life. In preparation for High School, George was given his first pair of shoes which he wore, only to and from school. High school was the next challenge for three years and then for a fortunate few, matriculation followed by University if a family could afford the expenses. For most of them, further studies past Year Nine was out of the question and by the age of 15 or even younger, they had joined the work force.

The Post Office years. The end of World War II brought profound changes to Australia. For a fifteen-year-old boy who had grown up in the shadow of war, the path forward was not immediately clear. Yet the years between leaving school and enlisting in the Army proved formative, teaching discipline, technical skill and the value of dedication; qualities that defined his military career. In 1949, at age fifteen George left school.

This was not unusual for working-class Australian boys of his generation. The decision reflected both practical necessity and the norms of the era. George's father had returned home from the war but carried the scars of conflict. His mother had managed the family's fish and chip shop throughout the war years, working long hours to keep the family fed and housed. Now, with the war over and George approaching working age, it was time for him to contribute.



Thus at 15, George began working in the local Post Office training to be a telegraphist, mastering Morse Code by night and delivering telegrams by day. On weekends he sold football programmes by day and ice creams at the Tivoli Theatre in Perth at night.

Sundays after church he helped the local woodman chop and deliver the end product to the households as a major source of energy for stoves, coppers and fireplaces used to warm homes in winter.

The opportunity that presented itself was employment with the Post Office as a Junior Postal Officer. Postmaster-General's Department was one of Australia's largest employers, offering stable, respectable work with clear paths for advancement. More importantly, it provided training in technical skills increasingly valuable in the modern world.

The most significant aspect of George's Post Office training was learning Morse Code and wireless operation. In an era before widespread telephone service, Morse Code remained the primary method for rapid long-distance communication. George proved to have a natural aptitude for this demanding work, travelling regularly to Perth for training. The discipline required; hours of practice, absolute accuracy; speed through repetition; prepared him for military training. He achieved proficiency at twenty to twenty-three words per minute, demonstrating both technical competence and dedication.

A Post Office scholarship validated his skills and demonstrated qualities that would serve him well in the military: disciplined practice, reliability and intelligence. He learned to follow procedures precisely, maintain equipment and accept responsibility. The technical competence and reliability gained through consistent performance proved directly applicable to his future military service.'*Mum was very proud of all of this and her eldest was about to become somebody in the Post Office. So, what did I do, I shattered all of that on my seventeenth birthday by joining the Army*'.

Citizens Military Forces. Shortly after, in 1950, the Korean War began and now just 16, George was suddenly transformed to 18 by a simple alteration on his birth certificate and became a raw recruit in the Citizens Military Forces, now known today as the Army Reserve. It was a time when there were Reds under every bed and a general fear that communism was on the march to conquer all. Thus, a very naïve and ill-disciplined adolescent who had been seeking a white horse and armour was issued with an oversized khaki uniform, an already used slouch hat, large red Army boots which he was told he would grow into and a bolt action 303 rifle made during WW1 in 1916 as was clearly seen on the metal.

Enlistment - Regular Army. The following year on his 17th birthday and after having successfully passed telegraphy examinations, George handed in his equipment and World War One rifle, swore another oath along with five other school mates and enlisted in the Regular Army. At Karrakatta Army depot, he was issued with a similar aged rifle and equipment which he swears was created and stored at the same time as his previous military issue. The white horse and shiny armour were soon forgotten.

Reflections on childhood. George is of the view his childhood taught him respect, particularly for women, personal discipline, resilience and a set of social rules which in the following years could be slowly mastered and understood. Punished with the cane, sometimes hungry, patched clothes, bare footed and yet like most of their generation, they readily accepted such rigors as part of life. It unquestionably helped to prepare him for many unexpected challenges ahead. Above all, he had been given a free gift of personal pride, acceptance of responsibility, a base for self-confidence and a dawning of love of country and flag. Then the time came for him to shoulder his kitbag, wave hooray to a tearful mother and begin another phase of his very young life and always will be the fond reflections of his childhood.

A house of fond memories. It was a tiny house, rusting roof and need of paint. In a luckless street perhaps forgotten by a busy saint, but for me as time went by it became a treasure chest, bursting with rich and precious lessons of life never to be forgotten in good times or terrible strife. We all had chores and they never seemed to stop. Chop tomorrow's wood, errands to the local shop. Light the copper to boil clothes or for a hot bath.

Weed the widow's garden and carry her shopping bags. Wash and clean windows with those very special rags. Mother with frayed apron and her many duties too. The familiar smell of simmering, tasty rabbit stew and sometimes, fresh baked bread soon to be cut. The youngest setting the plates and other tableware under a watchful eye ensuring detail and care. *'We always said grace and thankful for what we had.'* There was much talk and laughter; no reason to be sad. Mother's stern look if table manners went astray.

Questions on life; the war and why was our dad there? Soon he would be home with us and many gifts to share. The crowded bedroom where all four kids slept at night. Being allowed to read for a while by a dim flickering light. Behind the thin wall, hearing her softly cry late into the night. Dad's leave had been cancelled and we would have to wait again. Falling asleep to drum beats on the roof from the summer rain. Some say we had it tough and yes, I would agree; but today as I study the world of 'what's in it for me', TV dinners, lies, violence, 'not my fault,' drugs and greed, flashing TV screens, mobile phones and electronic mouse I was surely lucky to learn life's values in that little house.

CHAPTER 2:
THE FORGING OF A SOLDIER

1951-1952 CITIZENS MILITARY FORCES

In 1950, at age sixteen, George joined the Citizens Military Forces (CMF); the part-time reserve component of the Australian Army. This was not full-time military service, but it represented significant commitment and a clear indication of his intentions for the future. The outbreak of the Korean War, which began that year, intensified his considerations, making military service immediate and real rather than an abstract thought.

The CMF provided part-time military training for young Australians who maintained civilian employment while developing military skills. Training sessions were held on weekends and during annual camps, offering basic infantry training and introducing soldiers to military discipline, weapons handling and field operations. For George, the CMF provided his first direct experience of military life and his first opportunity to determine whether military service suited him.

The training was demanding yet part-time. Soldiers learned basic drill, weapons handling, fieldcraft and tactics. They practised marching, learned to maintain and fire rifles, conducted field exercises and absorbed the fundamentals of military discipline. This rigorous training instilled not only technical skills but also the values of teamwork and camaraderie among the young recruits. For George, these early lessons in discipline and combat prepared him for the challenges he would face in Malaya, where the complexities of jungle warfare demanded not only skill but also the adaptability honed during his formative years. The CMF experience allowed George to test his interest in military service without fully committing to enlisting in the Regular Army.

The Korean War, which erupted in June of 1950, created a palpable urgency around military service. Australian Forces were deployed to Korea as part of the United Nations response to North Korean aggression and news of their experiences reached home through newspapers and radio broadcasts. Young men across Australia watched as soldiers departed for a war that was real, immediate and dangerous.

The news from Korea; reports of fierce fighting, casualty lists and accounts of Australian soldiers in combat; transformed military service from an abstract notion into a pressing reality. George's year in the CMF allowed him to seriously consider this possibility. He observed military life, experienced military training and determined whether he was suited to the demands and challenges of service. The CMF provided a testing ground, a way to explore military service before making the irrevocable commitment of enlisting in the Regular Army.

The decision to enlist. In 1951, at age seventeen; having just celebrated his birthday on 19th August; George made the decision to enlist in the Australian Regular Army. This was not an impulsive choice but the culmination of a year's consideration and preparation through the CMF. The Korean War had escalated and six school friends decided to enlist together.' *We made the local headlines in the West Australian.'*

On 17th September 1951, George and five schoolmates from Bassendean enlisted together; less than one month after he turned seventeen. This decision devastated his mother. She had watched her son develop valuable Post Office skills, win a scholarship and secure stable employment with advancement prospects.' *Mum was very proud of all of this and her eldest was about to become somebody in the Post Office. So, what did I do, I shattered all of that on my seventeenth birthday by joining the Army'.*

Now he was abandoning that promising career to join the Army while Australian soldiers fought and died in Korea. Yet she signed the required authorisation papers, heartbroken but understanding. At seventeen, George needed parental consent to enlist. Despite her fear, his mother recognised this was his decision to make. She had raised him to be independent and responsible. If he believed military service was his duty, she would not stand in his way.

Being sworn into the Regular Army

The decision reflected values instilled during George's wartime childhood. He had watched his father serve in two world wars, experienced the community's grief, sacrifices and absorbed the understanding that service to country transcended personal comfort. George chose service over peacetime prosperity, reflecting the culture of duty and mateship that defined his generation.

The Post Office had taught him discipline and technical skill. The CMF had given him a taste of military life. Now, in 1951, he was ready to commit fully. He was assigned enlisted Service Number 52028 and commenced his journey from Private soldier to Brigadier; a journey spanning four decades and three wars. Upon commissioning in 1964, he received officer service number 2/3593. George was assigned to the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment.

This assignment to 2 RAR was significant, as The Royal Australian Regiment had been created in 1948 to provide a permanent, professional infantry force. Before the Regiment's formation, Australia's infantry had primarily consisted of part-time militia supplemented by temporary wartime formations. The Battalions of The Royal Australian Regiment represented Australia's commitment to maintaining professional, deployable infantry forces capable of sustained operations.

1951 - A RECRUIT REPORTS FOR DUTY

Arrival at 6 Recruit Training Centre. George was transported to what had once been a WW1 Military depot for the Light Horse and now reactivated as 6 Recruit Training Centre where all recruits enlisted in WA were trained before moving inter-state to be part of regular units. The recruits were both Regular Army and K Force. The latter being those who had enlisted for just two years, specifically to serve in Korea. In the main they were much older than the regular Army recruits and among them was a sprinkling of WW2 veterans who knew all the tricks of the soldiering trade and had volunteered for war again.

The Old Veteran's Advice. The very first and never to be forgotten inhabitant in the camp George met on arrival was an old WW1 Veteran from the Light Horse and as he recalls was employed as the local gardener. In a very short conversation, he gave George such rich and precious advice never to be forgotten as a soldier. It was a message George was still passing on as a visiting lecturer to Officer Cadets at The Royal Military College in Canberra, some 65 years later.' *Look after your mates, never dob, watch out for Sergeants and always duty, honour and love of country.'*

The Sergeant Said. The Sergeant said *'So you are off to war my son, be warned there's much learning to be done Never forget the sacred oath you did swear Duty and Honour to nation no matter when or where, there are standards you must meet to help survive any war. When the bugle calls there is no second chance to ask what for? Always take care of your mates in thick and thin To let the team down will always be a terrible sin. No matter who, how or why, any error and its pack drill for all You do as you're told whenever your leader calls Now get ready for hell, grit your teeth and follow me You miserable lot, if I am lucky, proud tough soldiers you will soon be'*

Barracks Life. The new sleeping quarters in barracks were long metal clad buildings, each holding some thirty recruits, sleeping inches apart on rickety camp stretchers. Kit bags were the main source of storage for clothing. Uniform was the only source of dress in the barracks and on leave. Mufti was a dress of the past. Each building had one small room at the entrance. It was where the junior instructor slept. As a Corporal, he wielded immense power, which included dispensing minor and lingering punishment.

It was he who ordered lights out each night, a split second after the bugle call. Forever a sadist, he woke them with constant bellows minutes before the official bugle call of reveille. He was a tyrant with sound attention to detail and could find specks of dust they could never see and wrinkles in their uniforms they never knew existed. He was God in their living quarters and each and every morning handed his flock over to even more senior and harsher, very stern unforgiving Gods with three stripes who were to be obeyed without question.

Learning to be Soldiers. With strong guidance from the NCO Corp, they learnt very quickly and in a short time began operating as a team, helping those who were slower or could not master attention to detail. George was one of those requiring constant assistance. In time they were as one; disciplined, eager, confident and proud of whom they were. They did not know it but they had been conned into becoming a team and they just loved being part of it. They learnt the rules of the tribe, sometimes painfully.

The Soldiers' Code. In the Platoon there was no room for slackers and smart alecks, because there were occasions when all paid the penalty for one man's idleness or neglect. One of the most sacred commandments was that despite threats of mass punishment, never to inform on any one, no matter whom. The soldiers used the term dobbing and, on many occasions, there would be a parade as the hierarchy attempted to find the culprit or culprits.
There was a sense of justice within the ranks that if the crime neither was of a serious nature nor necessarily related to military regulations, the offender/s found themselves shortly after the parade, stepping forward to authorities and confessing. Stealing from mates was an un-forgiveable sin. George has seen naked thieves late at night run a gauntlet of soldiers, armed with thick military belts and at the end of the journey were often seeking sanctuary in the guard house. Organised fist fights to resolve personal differences at the back of the latrines were common and the rules were simple. They included no head butting, eye gouging or using the boot when the opponent was down.

At the end of the fight, both were required to shake hands. All the above was part of the soldiers' code and respected by all who sought a safe and comfortable tomorrow. It was their bible forever and a day. This arena was also used on paydays for illegal gambling with the favourite game of Two Up, where two pennies were spun into the air and good fortune or otherwise depended on which side of the coins landed face up. More often than not, because of his youth George was tasked as the cockatoo and positioned to provide warning if any Duty Officer or Sergeant approached.

Sergeant Wally Ogilvie. Perhaps George's survival in training was due to the efforts of a Sergeant by the name of Wally Ogelvie. He was a veteran of the Middle East and South West Pacific campaigns during WW2 and had recently returned from Korea. He decided there was no way George would survive in war, thus extra bayonet fighting drills each afternoon outside the hut was arranged. He was demanding and persistent. After a few days George began to enjoy the challenge. Now and then additional bayonet skills were added. George can still remember the final lesson, much more advanced than the recruit training objectives, where Sergeant Ogilvie charged at him with rifle and bayonet and George disarmed him. For George it was the beginning of confidence in him never to be reluctant to have a go; thanks to a magnificent warrior, Sergeant Wally Ogilvie.

Passing Out. Then came the final day of recruit training. Most had survived the yelling, screaming and bastardry. They had tasted the edges of battle discipline, mastered the basic infantry skills with much emphasis on weapon handling, bayonet fighting and how to dig and camouflage a trench.

They were very fit, confident and proud of who they were and all as one. As the trucks carried them past the barrack gate, the aged light horse veteran waved and George waved back. His short message on day one was still very clear in George's mind. A message he would never forget and indeed passed onto the subsequent generations. For George, it was like a torch passing on the spirit of ANZAC.

Do You Remember? Marching in terrible stifling heat or drenching icy rain Sergeants screaming '*Pathetic'* and Corporals barking 'Do it again' The need to cope with tasks, thirst, hunger and little sleep; to never question orders or the system's wrath you would reap. How we learnt that time was always short and never to be wasted. When we succeeded, so sweet was the success to be tasted. Very quickly we found the value of *'all for one and one for all'* A powerful bonding that made all of us so proud and tall How mentally and physically tough we became Battle inoculations of shell and blast was part of the training game Many times was the cry *'the way you train is the way you will fight'* There is no doubt those who yelled it as a battle cry were right.

PUCKAPUNYAL 1952 - ADVANCED TRAINING

Arrival at Puckapunyal. Following enlistment, George underwent recruit training at Puckapunyal, the Army's primary training base in Victoria, located approximately 120 kilometres north of Melbourne. Puckapunyal served as the 'Depot Battalion' for training soldiers destined for Korea, providing both basic recruit training and specialist preparation before deployment.

A five-day train from Perth to Melbourne then finally by truck to Puckapunyal, an old Army base near the sleepy town of Seymour. George was posted to 11 Platoon, D Company Second Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment. The Company was housed in lines of old battered WW2 tin huts, each containing a number of very small four-man rooms.

There were many broken windows stuffed with old newspapers in what proved to be futile efforts to keep out the icy cold winds, which George swears came direct from Siberia. He was the youngest in the Platoon and indeed the Company of which a significant number were veterans from WW2 who had enlisted specifically to serve in Korea (K Force). Given they were already battle tested, the un-initiated listened and watched.

His prior service in the CMF and his Post Office training in Morse Code and wireless operation gave him advantages over recruits with no military or technical background. He already understood basic military structure, drill and procedures. The CMF had introduced him to weapons handling, field operations and military discipline. This foundation allowed him to progress more rapidly through recruit training than soldiers starting from zero military knowledge.

George's existing technical skills led to his selection for signals training. His proficiency in Morse Code and wireless operation made him a natural fit for communications specialisation. Recognising his existing skills, the Army developed his signals specialisation, which proved significant throughout his military career. His technical competence provided opportunities for advancement and shaped his early service.

In a short time, George found the parade ground the hard way, armed with yet another WW1 rifle and with a pack on his back and a Duty Sergeant screaming and shouting at him and others found guilty of military sin. The tormentor never seemed to make up his mind. One second it was left turn and then right turn, halt, quick march then double march and so it went, on and on.

George was horrified as it dawned on him that Sergeants, Warrant Officers and Regimental Sergeant Majors in the Army were all cloned, brainwashed with the same vocabulary of verbs, nouns and adjectives and issued with ever spotless ironed uniforms with shiny boots like mirrors while poor mortals slept on their clothes to press them and convert dull WW2 red boots into polished mirror like black boots. It was with brave heart George decided to find out what made them tick, until nearly forty years later, he gave up.

The training at Puckapunyal was demanding, building the physical fitness and mental toughness required for operations. Recruits learned essential infantry skills like weapons handling, fieldcraft, tactics and navigation, practicing drill until movements became automatic. They qualified with their weapons and learned to function as part of a military unit, gaining the fundamental skills required for infantry operations.

RISKS WHILE TRAINING FOR WAR

The Mortar Incident. They watched from a distance as the mortar crew went through their drills as they continued to engage a distant target which could be seen from time-to-time mid red flashes and mushrooming smoke and dust. Suddenly and without warning, there was a loud explosion at the mortar position followed by a thick screen of smoke masking the scene. There came a short crackling message over the Platoon radio and they were told the demonstration was ended and then marched significant mileage back to what was now familiar sleeping quarters.

There always seemed to be a consistent acute shortage of vehicular transport in Puckapunyal, despite the presence of a Transport Squadron. The rumours started immediately on the incident and possible casualty number. It was not until following morning roll call parade when they were told that two of the mortar crew had been killed; then they were dismissed for breakfast. It was as simple as that and then business as usual.

Machine Gun Fire Fatality. Several days later they were advised a soldier had been accidentally killed by overhead machine gun fire while negotiating the battle inoculation course. Yet again, it was a reminder that they were soon to revisit the course and to keep their bloody heads down. The advice heartened George's soul, for it seemed that somewhere in the military heart was a microbe of tissue for caring. On hearing the news, he was already planning on which old WW2 soldier he should stay close to.

Grenade Training Incident. Another event which was not to be forgotten was a practice of throwing grenades from open ground without any protection. As two soldiers with an NCO as a supervisor advanced, they came under fire from a trench to their front and immediately go to ground then each throw a grenade into the trench or if not accurate, at least near the target. As soon as the grenade detonated, the pair would charge the trench with fixed bayonets. They had experienced this practice several times during advanced training. It was rather exciting to hear the shrapnel and base plug whir above and immediately gave confidence in throwing grenades from open ground.

On this particular day, one of the grenades detonated and threw the other one with burning fuse out of the trench back into the immediate vicinity of the prone soldiers and supervisor where it exploded. The supervisor and one student were wounded. A short time later, George was given a grenade. He pointed out that he had already just been on the course but to no avail. In reflection he must have shown signs of fear and the NCO decided the best way to restore confidence was to do it again. Both casualties recovered, although the digger whom George knew well, lost a leg.

All of the above occurred in a matter of weeks and there were other casualties; events which would be unacceptable in today's society. However, such events were still very much alive and accepted by a nation which a short time before had been at war. Nor should it be forgotten that the Battalion was responsible for feeding reinforcements to Korea and time was of the essence. As for George, such training made him more confident and besides, as a very naïve 17-year-old, he was immortal and bullet proof.

TANKS AND THE UNEXPECTED

The Order to Dig In. Towards the final phase of training which when completed successfully would then classify them ready for war, they underwent a very demanding forced march by day and night and finally arrived on some unnamed rocky hill. The Company Commander, Captain Reg Saunders, (the very first indigenous to be a commissioned officer in the Australian Army), had but one order.' *Dig in. In two hours, a troop of tanks will arrive and attack this position and they will use live ammunition.'*

George started to dig in a leisurely fashion, until he noticed that the World War Two veterans were digging with a sense of urgency. Even at his young age he realised the order by Saunders was not an idle threat. He dug faster. The problem was that he had been volunteered as the Platoon Commander's orderly and the officer was busy with other tasks which meant George did all the digging for both of them. As he dug, his mathematics from recent schooling clicked in and it was easy to realise that the trench would be only half as deep as the others.

The Tank Attack. George can still hear the clanking noise as the tanks arrived on the opposite ridge, belching oil and smoke. Suddenly there was a whistle blast and an order by Saunders to take cover because in X minutes the tanks would commence firing and overrun the position.

On passing, they were then to attack them from the rear using rocks as simulated sticky bombs. In a few seconds, everyone was below ground or almost. George says almost, because in the weapon pit that he had dug, the two of them were rather cramped. The officer was lying on the floor of the trench and George had no choice but to lie on top of him, thus adopting a most undignified military position.

The war began. George could hear the crack of the machineguns just above his head with the rounds whacking into the loose soil created from his labour and the rumbling clatter of the tanks ever so close. It was then the Platoon Commander yelled at him to move because he had a terrible cramp. Now, the only way George could move was upward and that was not going to happen even for a bloody General. He told him to *'Get f…. . ed.'*

Suddenly they had a new problem. A tank was on top of their trench, blotting out the sun and there was this terrible noise, smoke, dust, claustrophobia and worse still, George could feel the trench contracting and closing in on him. A miracle occurred and there was light again and now a strange shrieking noise, which didn't take long to realise it was him screaming.

Behind the tanks came three soldiers with shovels and now and then one would signal to his mates and they would quickly dig out a trench which had partially collapsed. So ended the tank inoculations and they filled in their trenches (The Army has a warped sense of humour, dig, then fill in) and wearily continued the forced march back to barracks. It had been the first time George had told an officer to get stuffed and actually get away with it. Alas it was to be the first and only time without severe consequences.

OVERNIGHT LEAVE IN MELBOURNE

The Troop Train. Leave was very rare and when it occurred, was of limited time. George can still recall with detail the train taking them down to Melbourne. Its steam whistle signalling it was a troop train as they rattled through the yawning suburbs of Melbourne. Melbourne in the Nineteen Fifties was a sprawling city that was becoming a beacon for many post WW2.

Young and Jacksons – Melbourne

Chloe's Bar. On arrival, the Platoon would head for Chloe's Bar located at Young and Jackson's, where George was allowed one beer while the rest of the team located shoulder to shoulder at the bar drank at a rapid rate.

He was far from alone as he had dearest *'young Chloe'*, framed on the wall and totally nude, to stare at in amazement and wonder.

Then the much older brothers would direct him to a picture theatre while they headed off to other activities well out of bounds to minors, uniform or no uniform. Hours later they would rendezvous at the YMCA and sleep on stretchers, side by side in a very crowded and noisy hall mid many whispering groups with clinking bottles. George always felt very secure in such crowds, for despite being volunteered for most chores when in the field, the entire Platoon was very protective. The following day they were back on a troop train with a significant number of empty seats and wondering when the Army would see it fit to allow another weekend in Melbourne town. Such weekends were rare and used as a powerful weapon by superiors to assist in discipline.

ROLL CALL

The Morning Ritual. In the cold bleak Victorian winter of 1952, military routine continued in the best of traditions at Puckapunyal. They were subject to the rituals of room inspections, parades, kit checks and endless tasks of barrack room duties. One consistent and seemingly religious ritual while in barracks, rain, hail or shine was the roll call, conducted in the early hours of morning. Thus, in winter, it was still dark as the troops, roused by whistle blasts assembled on parade mid much stamping of boots and repetitive orders to answer their names as called by the Platoon Sergeant, armed with torch, from the roll book.

Covering for a Mate. The night before, after weekend leave in Melbourne, a very close friend, madly in love, had in the last moments before boarding the troop train suddenly decided to stay and asked George to cover for him at the morning roll call. Here it was, the morning roll call and George was about to hide his absence. The Sergeant bellowed name after name and then came the ultimate test of loyalty.

The friend's name cut through the icy darkness. George came to attention and yelled '*Present*' and tensed. The Sergeant continued calling names. Soon after with the first light of dawn, the Platoon Sergeant reported all correct and present. Oh, joy of joy and such relief; George had beaten the system but only for a milli-second. He had underestimated the Company Sergeant Major (CSM), who had developed a sixth sense during many campaigns and knew every soldier's trick in the book.

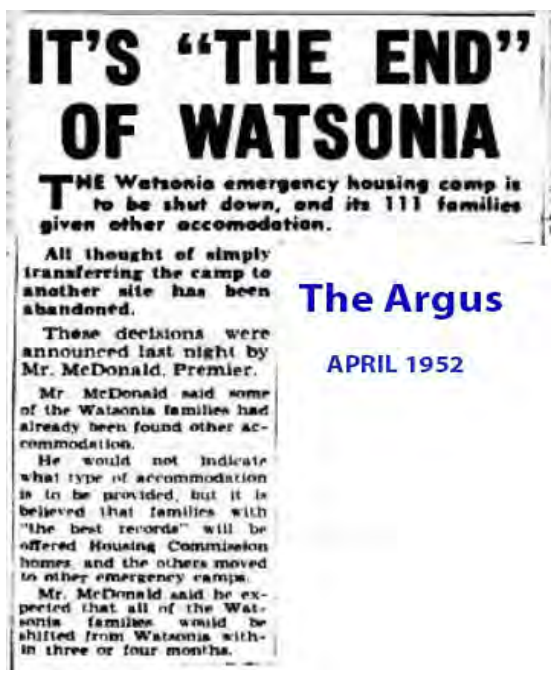
Caught Out.' *Count them'* ordered the CSM. In typical Army fashion, the Platoon was ordered to number from the right and it was then the Platoon Sergeant realised that there was one short from the roll call. His obscenities were loud and many. He then issued the dreaded ultimatum.' *Righto, step forward the magician with two names or the entire Platoon will be route marching all night.'*

George stepped forward to another wave of abuse and was charged with a military offence. That afternoon the mate paid for his love affair with the loss of pay and fourteen days confined to barracks. Soon it was George's turn to face the Company Commander, Captain Reg Saunders. He was a well-respected officer. To George's utter amazement, he tore the charge into shreds and while George was trying to maintain his composure, gave him a tongue lashing.

It went something like this.' *The Army has been calling the roll forever and a day and it is not for amusement. Not only do we check to see who has returned from leave, we check during and after a withdrawal, after an assault and after we have been attacked. We check and check and then a young smart bastard like you turns up and wants to change the whole bloody system'. 'Who do you think you are, Field Marshall Blamey??? As extra training you are going to call the roll whenever I decide over the next month and as well, Duty Runner in HQ every night, including auditing the roll books. If you make one mistake I will have your guts for gaiters.'*

George wasn't even game to blink. So, it came to pass. Calling the roll and as additional punishment and duty every night for some four weeks. For every year after George was always reminded of that wonderful and wise leader whenever he heard the order *'Call the roll.'* Such a magnificent mentor and it was not to be the only time he was to experience Saunder's sense of discipline and leadership.

CIVIL DISOBEDIENCE IN WATSONIA 1952



IT'S "THE END" OF WATSONIA

THE Watsonia emergency housing camp is to be shut down, and its 111 families given other accomodation.

All thought of simply transferring the camp to another site has been abandoned.

These decisions were announced last night by Mr. McDonald, Premier.

Mr. McDonald said some of the Watsonia families had already been found other accommodation.

He would not indicate what type of accommodation is to be provided, but it is believed that families with "the best records" will be offered Housing Commission homes, and the others moved to other emergency camps.

Mr. McDonald said he expected that all of the Watsonia families would be shifted from Watsonia within three or four months.

The Argus

APRIL 1952

Deployment to the Migrant Camp. With scant warning D Company was deployed to an old WW I-2 military camp located in Watsonia, a suburb of Melbourne and since the end of WW2 had been used as a migrant camp.

However, the time had arrived for the new Australians to depart the camp and regrettably some families had refused to go. Of equal concern was that there were fabricated huts disappearing at an increasing frequency.

George might add that on arrival at the camp, the assessment from him and his mates as simple Infantry Privates was that allowing the illegal removal of buildings in such a dilapidated state was perhaps the most effective means in which to solve both problems.

However, they were not gifted with the talents of senior officers or the many civilian agencies which seemed to be involved. D Company's mission was to guard the facilities and be prepared to evict the squatters.

A New Leader. Apart from a few bottles being thrown at Sentries guarding road intersections within the camp, calm was restored by a newly arrived and very impressive Platoon Commander, Lieutenant Russell Lloyd. George can clearly recall him spending time with him as he guarded a road intersection known to be used by trouble makers late at night. He showed much interest in who George was and where he came from.

In George's short military career, he had never experienced such interest by an officer. Lloyd was a strict disciplinarian, very fair, always kept them informed and showed interest in all soldiers under his command, all of which made them feel very important. Not surprisingly, he was well respected as their leader and regrettably for them, it was only for a short time as he was posted to Korea where he was awarded the Military Cross for leadership and gallantry. George will never forget the night his lone sentry post was harassed by protesters with stones and beer bottles.

Lloyd arrived on the scene and told him in a calm voice, that he and George would stand fast until help arrived. His words were of far more comfort than the empty rifle with fixed bayonet. It was, in George's view the first test of danger for him and felt all alone until Lloyd had appeared. In the years that followed Lloyd became known as an outstanding leader in both peace and war. Their paths were to cross on a number of occasions during and after military life and always the instant memory of an angry crowd on the verge of becoming very dangerous and his firm and clear command *'Stand fast.'*

The Evictions. Then came the order from distant comfortable headquarters. The patience of the government was exhausted and despite numerous discussions and warnings, the migrant families refused to budge. The Company was tasked to evict them ASAP and the plan was simple. The families would be targeted one at a time and the method of eviction was to simply remove the roof of the hut. It was not a popular task, even for soldiers, particularly for a sensitive 17-year-old with his 18th birthday ever so close.

George can still see the family sitting at the breakfast table, the parents and three children staring at them with mouths open as they removed the roof above them. To make it even more embarrassing George slipped and fell into the room, apologised and returned to the roof to help his mates complete the task. Some readers may well say that no such thing would happen, well, George is prepared to swear on a stack of Bibles that such evictions did. He would add that shortly after the first sortie of removing a roof, the family departed and within a short time, the remaining families followed without the need for further action by the Company.

A Good Ending. For George there was a good ending to the episode. Several weeks later while on leave in Watsonia, he was recognised by the mother and her teenage daughter involved in the house eviction. He was greeted in broken English with smiles and offerings of fruit. Later, when they left at short notice by truck to return to Puckapunyal, the family was near the gate with friendly waves of farewell. It seemed their intelligence of future Army activities was far better than theirs. In 2011, many years later when the author interviewed George at his home 'Wundurra', Far North Queensland said that it was one of the few times that he (George) was embarrassed to be an Australian and disagreed with the government of the day.

The foundation of a future leader. The years from 1934 to 1951 were formative for George Mansford. His birth in an Aboriginal mission community, his wartime childhood in Bassendean, his Post Office training and his CMF service all shaped the man who became one of Australia's most respected military leaders. The mission community taught him that character mattered more than background. His wartime childhood taught him about duty, sacrifice and war's cost for families. His mother's strength and the Bassendean community's resilience taught him about endurance and mutual support. The Post Office had taught him discipline and professionalism. The CMF taught him military fundamentals.

The recruit and advanced training at Puckapunyal in 1951-1952 built upon these foundations. The old Light Horse veteran's advice; *'Look after your mates, never dob, watch out for Sergeants and always duty, honour and love of country'*; became a torch passing on the spirit of ANZAC. Sergeant Wally Ogelby's extra bayonet training gave George confidence never to be reluctant to have a go. Captain Reg Saunder's leadership and discipline showed him what an officer should be. Lieutenant Russell Lloyd's calm command under threat demonstrated leadership under pressure.

The training casualties; two dead in the mortar incident, one killed on the Battle Inoculation Course (BIC), one who lost a leg in grenade training; taught George that war preparation was deadly serious. The tank attack that left him screaming in a collapsing trench taught him the terror of armoured assault. The roll call incident taught him the purpose behind military procedures. The Watsonia evictions taught him the uncomfortable reality that soldiers sometimes face tasks that challenge their humanity.

These experiences created a foundation supporting everything Mansford subsequently accomplished. His philosophy of service, understanding of leadership, commitment to realistic training and advocacy for soldiers and veterans all had roots in these formative years. The boy who grew up in war's shadow; who watched his mother weep as his father departed for service, who dug air-raid trenches at school, who learned Morse Code at the Post Office; had been forged into a soldier ready to begin the journey that defined his life.

The decision made in 1951 set in motion events that led George through Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, through the ranks from Private to Brigadier, through establishing Jungle Training at Tully and through decades of service to the Australian Army and nation. The seventeen-year-old who walked into the recruiting office with five schoolmates could not have known where that decision would lead.

CHAPTER 3:
KOREA - BAPTISM BY FIRE

1951-1955 THE KOREAN WAR CONTEXT

The Korean War began in June of 1950 when North Korean forces invaded South Korea. Australian Forces deployed as part of the British Commonwealth contribution to United Nations operations. By the time George enlisted in September of 1951, the war had been raging for over a year and Australian casualties were mounting.

The Australian Government announced on 5th October 1951 that a second Battalion would be sent to Korea. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (1 RAR), stationed at Ingleburn, was warned for service in Korea in November of 1951.

The conflict had evolved from the dramatic advances and retreats of 1950–1951 into a more static war of attrition along established front lines.

Fighting remained intense, characterised by regular combat operations, patrol actions and artillery exchanges. Australian soldiers were serving in difficult terrain and extreme climate conditions, facing experienced North Korean and Chinese forces.

The war had already settled into static trench warfare by late 1951, although the final major battle at the Samichon River in July of 1953; the last-ditch North Korean and Chinese attempts to influence the armistice negotiations; occurred just days before the ceasefire was signed. This armistice created the conditions under which George served when he eventually deployed to Korea; a war characterised by defensive positions along established lines, patrol actions and the constant danger of artillery fire and local attacks, in stark contrast to the mobile warfare of the wars earlier phases.

TOO YOUNG FOR WAR

Orders for Korea. Came a day of bitter disappointment. George was on duty as a runner when the Company Commander returned from a conference with the news '*Orders for Korea,*' followed by a list of tasks and one of which immediately alerted George.' *Check the records and put all soldiers born after May 34 in the too young category.'*

Mansford was given the task and went straight to the letter 'M' to ensure young George stayed in the right box. The very first one he saw was Billy McCutcheon; he was a close mate who was of the same age and his card went into the right box. Seconds later George was searching for Mansford when the Sergeant Major, perhaps suspicious, took over the task. Bill survived the cull, George didn't. It was a devastating blow. The military family he had become part of was about to leave him behind.

Australian military regulations required soldiers to reach eighteen years of age before they could be deployed to combat zones overseas. For the seventeen-year-old Mansford, who enlisted on 17th September 1951 (just weeks after his seventeenth birthday on 19 August), this statutory requirement meant he could not deploy until after August of 1952. However, his actual deployment to Korea did not occur until 31st March 1954, when he was nineteen, as Battalion rotation and training requirements determined the timing.

Attempts to Join. George wrote to Cramer, the then Minister of Army requesting to remain in the Battalion. His reply was not helpful. So, the next option was taken and George volunteered for a newly formed Parachute Platoon. The officer who interviewed him and pointed out he was too young. It seemed that despite all the intense and demanding training which had been endured, George was too young for anything other than guard and kitchen duties.

It was rebellion time and he would not accept the umpire's decisions. Little did George know it but there was a mentor who would in a very short time influence his direction of life forever and a day. Within a week he and other minors were shifted to Watsonia to maintain security of the aged camp. Captain Reg Saunders, a WW2 veteran who had already served in Greece, Crete and Korea was their Commanding Officer.

OPERATION STOW-AWAY FAILS

The Plan. When 2 RAR was warned for Korea, George was devastated to be left behind; too young at seventeen. The Battalion was about to entrain at Seymour for the first phase of the journey to Korea. Three minors in the Battalion decided to stow away with the help of Billy McCutcheon and others. Then came the time to sneak out of barracks and travel to Seymour when the Battalion would begin the first part of the journey by train and head for the embarkation point. In his eagerness to serve, he attempted to stow away.' *I shot through. I stowed away; or tried to stow away.* '

'The MPs caught us and we were put under close arrest and charged with being absent without leave.' Two of them never got past Seymour where they encountered Military Police conducting checks on military personnel and having no leave passes, were arrested and returned to Watsonia. The third of the party, Grahame Belville, avoided the net and was successful in stowing away. He surrendered when the ship was well out to sea and returned to unit strength.'

However, one of his mates succeeded in the attempt.' *Belleville got on board and once the ship was at sea, he gave himself up. The CO had no choice but to fine him five miserable pounds and put him back on the strength of the unit.'* As fate happened, later in soldiering, he too was commissioned and killed in action in Vietnam. George was by then also a Captain and took his place.

Going Absent Without Leave. Even a well-respected and admired soldier such as Reg Saunders was not going to discourage George from his intended tantrums and disobedience to what to him was so unfair. So, as diggers' would say *'He shot through' or as the military would recite 'Absent without authorised leave.'*

At Watsonia, George shot through again. Soon after his leave pass had expired George returned to face the wrath of the military and become a martyr for his cause. He expected to be immediately placed under arrest and charged. Nothing happened. He was confused. This is how it was NOT meant to be. By now he was supposed to be a martyr. His mates were just as puzzled. Then he was exposed to strategy he had never imagined possible.


Captain Reg Saunders

Captain Saunders Strategy. Reg Saunders response was masterful. George was ordered to the CO's office and not invited to sit down. Saunders never seemed to pause in his tirade. It went something like this. George was useless; he had left his brains in WA and who was he to assess military rules. He had been marked rest in the roll book and not absent without leave and now he was going to learn about responsibility.

He was now an acting Lance Corporal and responsible for rationing. No one but no one wanted to be the official greengrocer. Worse still, it may well affect his draft priority for overseas service. Captain Reg Saunders, MBE, George's Company Commander in 1 RAR and the first Aboriginal Australian commissioned officer; was there when I got back.'

Congratulations, you have been made Lance Corporal'. He completely ignored the fact that I had been Absent Without Leave. (AWOL). I was promoted; he totally ignored it. He even covered the books, which was totally illegal. He covered for me. So, what do you do? I was humiliated. My plan had fallen apart; the military wasn't supposed to do that. But I realised this bloke was saying, I know how you feel, but this is no way to act.

For the next three weeks George was the ration clerk, weighing meat, checking vegetables and fruit and all other items that hungry soldiers eat. He was then demoted and returned to the Rifle Section a wiser and cautious soldier. Soon after, some of them were posted to the next Battalion preparing for Korea. As they left the Unit, Captain Saunders was there to wish them good luck with strong handshakes. George is sure he wanted to be with them. Many years later, George had the good fortune to meet him again and asked him why he had not been more severe in the roll call incident and the rebellion at Watsonia; his answer was profound which George would mention later in his journey as a soldier.

This incident taught George a lesson about leadership that he never forgot. Reg Saunders had not punished him through formal discipline. Instead, Saunders demonstrated trust and confidence by promoting him, making it impossible for him to continue his defiant behaviour without betraying that trust. The lesson was profound: leadership was not always about punishment and authority but sometimes about understanding motivation and redirecting it constructively.

The nineteen-month wait. During this waiting period, he was assigned to 2 RAR, where he completed his basic training and absorbed the fundamental skills and discipline of infantry soldiering. He was being transformed from a young telecommunications operator into a professional soldier, though the most significant test of that transformation still lay ahead. The period from 1951 to 1953 was spent in training and garrison duties. George developed his skills as a signaller, practised infantry tactics, participated in exercises and absorbed the culture and standards of The Royal Australian Regiment.

He learned what it meant to be a professional soldier, what standards were expected and what qualities distinguished effective soldiers from merely adequate ones. This waiting period also allowed him to mature physically and mentally. The difference between a seventeen-year-old and a nineteen-year-old is significant. The additional time gave him the opportunity to develop the physical strength, mental toughness and emotional maturity that would serve him well in combat operations.

ENOGGERA BARRACKS BRISBANE

A New Home. Brisbane was a city of trams and high houses on poles or so it seemed. The modern barracks were located at Enoggera and in the fifties, only took some 15 minutes by tram to the heart of the city. It was a far cry from the isolation and Spartan existence at Puckapunyal. The barracks were brand new. Four soldiers to a room and showers and toilets plus a laundry with washing machines and dryers. There was even a sparkling brand-new canteen.

It seemed to be heaven but a close study revealed there was a hint of hell with RSMs' in the form of not one but two huge parade grounds. A further reminder of the old Army was a two-story wooden building where the Battalion Headquarters was located and known as 'Bullshit Castle' (Battalion Head Quarters). They also noted the rifle range was very close to the barracks and suggested much less of tiring long route marches on duty tracks to practice marksmanship. It was as if there were some soft spots in their masters after all.

Company Sergeant Major Joe O'Sullivan. There was one true blue soldier always feared, highly respected, most consistent and who demanded the highest of standards. The Company Sergeant Major (CSM), Joe O'Sullivan knew all the tricks of the trade and often would hand out his own punishment to fit the crime. His wisdom and appropriate punishment in George's view would have matched the judgement of Solomon from the biblical ages. Nothing but nothing escaped the sharp eyes and ears of 'Big Joe'. In fact, George swears that he knew in advance what soldiers were thinking long before it happened. He also demonstrated his willingness to speak up if there was unfairness.

The Flare Incident. In preparation for Korea, they were involved in a defence exercise far from civilisation. George was on sentry duty at night when he heard noise directly to his front and there appeared to be the sound of movement. He gave the challenge *'Who goes there?'* knowing full well they had no troops forward and certainly would not be slithering around in aggressive fashion, but rules are rules.

The challenge was met by a loud bang followed by a bright flare whooshing past just above his head. Flares should be fired high to provide effective illumination and this one as far as George was concerned had been fired at him. His actions were immediate. He picked up a rock from the bottom of his trench and shouting *'Grenade'* lobbed it towards the source of his anger. There was a scream followed by silence which was then broken by an urgent cry of medic. Soon after, the master of Verey (Flare) pistols, a Lieutenant, was rushed to hospital by a very old ambulance left over from WW2.

He was in hospital for several days suffering from concussion and forever after wore a scar on his forehead. George was paraded before the Company Commander and ordered to visit the hospital to apologise to the junior officer. He was of course relieved there was no serious injury but refused to comply with the order, claiming the Lieutenant was the one to blame for the incident. George was marched out followed by many threats of punishment to come.

His spies told him later that 'Big Joe' had gone to his defence, pointing out that perhaps it could be resolved with a Routine Order stating no rocks were to be thrown in the field on exercises. George took great pride in this published routine order and a copy was one of his prized possessions for many a year until it went missing in the Brisbane Floods in 1974.

Deployment to Bowen. The training was interrupted when the government deployed elements of the Battalion to counter a wharf strike in Bowen, North Queensland. The union had gone on strike and there were ships waiting to be loaded with frozen meat from the abattoirs.

A FLAGPOLE AND 'BIG JOE'

The Night before sailing. A week before they sailed there was a closed camp and no leave for all ranks to ensure pre-embarkation procedures had been completed. The following night they were granted leave. George went with much of the Platoon to Brisbane for a few drinks. They were to be back in barracks by midnight but they paid little attention to timings. There was always the back gate and besides, they were having a great time. It was well past midnight when they returned to barracks and all was quiet. Save for a few night bird calls. No one but no one was around. It was too tempting. George tied a naval cap one of the fellows had souvenired from a sailor on leave to the rope and hoisted their prize to the top of the flagpole.

As he secured the rope he realised even the night birds had stopped calling and there was a deathly silence, stranger still, his companions had all disappeared. It was then as he turned, came the terrifying awareness that he was in big trouble. An inch or two from him was 'Big Joe', on duty as the Orderly Officer and judging from a fiery breath in his face, he was not happy. As George said earlier, 'Big Joe' always seemed to know what they were going to do long before they had even thought of it.

The Punishment. Next morning when George reported to his torture chambers with his anger still ringing in his ear as he had roared '*My office at 0730 and do not be a second late,'* George arrived at his torture chambers 15 minutes early as he did not dare risk even the slightest unexpected delay in his short journey. He even skipped breakfast. The non-regulation punishment was unexpected. 'Big Joe' alias the biblical Solomon sentenced George to the remaining five nights in Australia to guard the flag pole dressed in full field equipment and armed with a baseball bat from the Q Store from 1700 to 2200 hours each night until they sailed.

The timings were not by chance, for they were identical with the opening and closing of the soldier's canteen. Yet there was still some heart in 'Big Joe'; on the second last night, he grunted, seemingly with reluctance, that George could proceed on leave the last night before the camp was closed for 24 hours prior to sailing.

DEPLOYMENT TO KOREA

Mansford finally arrived in Korea in early 1954, following the armistice signed 27th July 1953. When George reached the required age, he deployed to Korea with the 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment on 31st March 1954. His service in Korea, from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955, placed him in the static phase of the Korean War; the period following the 27th July 1953 Armistice when active combat had largely ceased but tensions remained high and the threat of renewed conflict was constant. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment moved into the line on 5th April 1954, taking positions along the Jamestown Line. The Battalion formed part of the Commonwealth Division, operating alongside British, Canadian and other Commonwealth Forces in defensive positions designed to deter North Korean and Chinese aggression and to maintain the armistice.

PUSAN – KOREA

Arrival. The old work horse for movement of migrants and troops in the fifties was the ship New Australia bringing migrants to the land down under and transporting Australian troops to war zones. In this case, it carried them to Korea where they disembarked at the port of Pusan to the sounds of several US Army Brass bands. They were then convoyed from the port to a staging camp on the periphery of the city in preparation for a further phase of the journey north.

First Impressions. Pusan (Busan) shocked him.*' It was just a hovel of humanity, filth and cardboard boxes. Koreans living in cardboard boxes. It was a hotbed of humanity; that was my first exposure overseas.'* For many on their first trip overseas, the difference to their home-land was huge. Throughout the entire area of Pusan was wall to wall small improvised family structures clad with cardboard, tin or wood from packing boxes and quite a few were a mixture of all three. Countless children waved and begged as they drove past. The nauseous smell was indescribable.

These people were refugees who had fled their homes from North Korea then swelled by those of the South as the war drew closer and closer to what then became an enclave in the area and countryside approaching Pusan. It was impossible to imagine the enormity of misery and suffering when the population would have been even larger at the peak of the war when Com-munist Forces were knocking on the door and so close to victory.

The poverty and devastation of post-war Korea contrasted sharply with the relative prosperity of Australia. George witnessed first-hand the human cost of war; not just the military casual-ties but the destruction of civilian infrastructure, the displacement of populations and the suf-fering of ordinary people caught in the conflict. This experience shaped his understanding that war affected entire societies, not just the soldiers who fought.

A VISIT TO THE UNITED NATIONS WAR CEMETERY

Confronting Reality. His first stop was the United Nations War Cemetery. *'Johnny Russell, the Aboriginal I told you about, he was there. Keith Foran. Yeah, a few of them.'* There was time the following morning when some of them visited the War Cemetery where many of the fallen from countries of the Free World were interred. There was a sea of markers indicating the various religions.

There was some irony in that the Turkish Graves were not far from their own fallen. Their grandfathers or even fathers had perhaps fought each other during World War 1. George will never forget the emotions that suddenly surged within him as he stood by the graves of several fellow Australians who he had served with, who had only a short time before were laughing, joking, breathing life and not a worry in the world. He could still see them.

Snowy Gordon during Recruit training. Corporal Smith (Smithy) who had been his Section Commander and taught him so much. Keith Foran, Wells and others he had stood beside on roll call and sang with on many a route march. How could he ever forget Johnny Russell, a smiling young indigenous mate with whom he had often shared the same poncho and wet overcoat, huddled together to try and keep warm in the icy rains in the Tallarook Ranges.

The visit to the cemetery brought home the reality of war in a way that training never could. These were not abstract casualties or statistics in a report. These were men he had known, men who had enlisted with the same hopes and expectations; men who had not returned. The rows of white crosses represented the ultimate cost of military service; a cost that Mansford now understood could be demanded of him. The visit brought to George the sense of reality in regards the consequences of war. It was, he firmly believes, his major leap towards maturity. Equally was the feeling of guilt that he had not been there as part of the team.

THE TROOP TRAIN NORTH

Journey through Destruction. As the troop train's steam engine hissed and groaned in preparation for the journey north George was to witness yet another ploy by some in their fight for survival. The railway station was cluttered with Koreans of all ages begging and bartering. As they watched, two young urchins approached their carriage trying to sell cheap wooden mementos. One of their members, a not so popular individual and a bit of a bully on occasions beckoned the two children to his open window and began bartering. Finally, there was agreement and the deal was made much to his delight and in his words, *'had conned the little bastards.'*

The Watch Theft. As the travelling companion reached out to receive his memento, the young grim lass did likewise to receive the pitiful sum of money being offered. Her male companion appeared to be resigned to the hard bargain as he stared somewhat sadly at the concrete platform. Then in a blur it happened. As the hands made contact, the girl without any warning, seized the extended hand and knelt forward thus her body weight immediately stretching the victim's wrist down toward the platform.

There was a shout of protest from the window as the buyer leaned forward to try and ease the sudden pain of having his arm stretched downwards. At the same time the male companion sprang forward, slamming the window down on the victim's wrist and then calmly removed a watch from the trapped wrist. As the victim screamed in agony, both culprits grinned, gave the traditional fingered salute and were gone.

In the 'land of the morning calm' it seemed that the younger generation had learned very quickly in how to survive in such desperate measures and for them, it had been a lesson not to forget and certainly a story to tell at subsequent camp fires with great delight at the expense of a somewhat unpopular soldier who nursed a damaged wrist for several weeks.

The Scars of War. Throughout the entire journey the countryside was a stark reminder of the destructiveness of war. Twisted and rusting steel bridges; crumpled and deserted ruins which not so long ago were the home of peaceful, happy and hardworking families. Now and then, were seen the skeletons of burnt and scarred tanks, perhaps with the ashes of their crews inside the tortured steel shell. Such scenes were yet another reminder of the horror of war and its cruel consequences.

Reunion and Farewell. The Battalion George knew well from Puckapunyal days was cheering when they debussed in the small valley where it was located. He met many old friends and for them it was both a very special day and the beginning of a long journey back to their land down under to unite with their beloved families. His old mate, Billy McCutcheon gave him a bear hug before admitting he had cursed George on many occasions in both winter and summer for removing his card from the too young category.

Now he was going home. Billy and George were to spend many years of soldiering here and there and thus, in a time no longer known as young pups by those before them, they became old bastards to those who followed. A final wave and they were gone and now it was their turn for duty in Korea.

THE KANSAS LINE

The Defensive Position. They moved into a defensive position located a short distance south of the Imjin River. Their new home was part of the Kansas Line which had been established very early in the war and had become a bloody arena in the early phases of the conflict when the line was subject to a massive enemy attack by 30 divisions with the main thrust directed to capture Seoul, further to the south.

En-route to their defence position via back-breaking spur lines and re-entrants they had followed a long line of old American defence positions consisting of old bleached sandbags obviously constructed to provide some protection from small arms fire and shrapnel for the defenders, now long gone.

Mansford in Korea

Puzzling Defences. There was little sign of weapon pits and it was to them, quite puzzling. As young soldiers and although inexperienced in warfare, they had been taught the need for mutual support, interlocking fire and positions in depth and yet saw none of this in this apparent defence of the area from early days of the war. No doubt it had been a hasty desperate defence against an overwhelming force.

At their new home, it was a far different situation. The Platoon area dominated all forward approaches with clear field of fire and views of the shimmering Imjin River to the north. The bunker system would clearly provide mutual support within the Platoon and flanking subunits while there was depth provided by a sister Platoon. The bunkers had been dug and constructed with strong overhead beams covered by several rows of sandbags. In the front of each bunker were small slits from where any assault could be engaged with small arm and machine gun fire. The new accommodation was gloomy and musty but clearly would be most welcome if ever under attack.

Dreams of Home. No matter the circumstances, soldiers devoted time to dreaming of home. Be it loved ones, Melbourne Cups', Football Finals, a very special way of life, there was often time to snatch a glimpse of home or when drifting into exhausted sleep, a faint but comforting glimpse of what was and in time would be again.

THE KOREAN ENVIRONMENT

Two Seasons. The Korean Peninsula presented environmental challenges as severe as any combat threat. The terrain was mountainous, with steep hills, narrow valleys and limited roads. Movement was difficult, requiring soldiers to climb steep slopes while carrying heavy loads. Defensive positions had to be dug into rocky hillsides. Supply lines stretched over difficult terrain, making resupply challenging.

There were two seasons in Korea; winter with its freezing cold winds and heavy snow followed by summer, sweating gasping for air in smothering heat with parched throat and mouth. Both frost bite and heat stroke were not uncommon. On the Kansas Line, conditions were extreme. *'In summer, it was a hundred degrees plus climbing those mountains and in winter, it was below zero. I was at a place called Tejong guarding the railway and the cold was pain. Total pain.'*

The climate proved as challenging as the terrain. Temperatures during Mansford's service period ranged from extreme cold in winter to oppressive heat in summer. In November of 1952, when 1 RAR had previously served on Kowang-san (Hill 355), temperatures had fallen to minus 16 degrees Celsius, with howling north winds bringing even lower readings. Soldiers learned to cope under extremely adverse conditions, managing cold-weather injuries, maintaining equipment in freezing temperatures and sustaining operations despite weather that would have halted civilian activities.

In winter the bunkers and tents were warmed by a dripping fuel line of diesel into a hot metal stove, they called them 'Choofas' because of the constant but small noise made when each drip of fuel hit the stove. The residue from the fuel created a film of soot onto soldiers' faces and clung to their uniforms. The 'Choofa' was often cherry red and which spread warmth in the immediate area and 'Choofa' faces were a common sight.

The cold George experienced was not merely uncomfortable; it was physically painful and potentially lethal. Soldiers had to maintain constant vigilance against frostbite, had to ensure weapons and equipment remained functional in freezing temperatures and had to perform their duties despite the numbing effects of extreme cold. The experience taught him that environmental conditions could be as dangerous as enemy action and that soldiers had to be trained and equipped to function in the most extreme conditions.

During the warmer months, heat and humidity created different challenges. Soldiers worked in oppressive conditions, sweating through their uniforms, managing heat exhaustion and maintaining alertness despite physical discomfort. Water discipline became critical, as dehydration could incapacitate soldiers as effectively as enemy action.

The living conditions in defensive positions were austere. Soldiers lived in bunkers dug into hillsides, reinforced with sandbags and timber. These positions provided protection from artillery fire and small arms but offered minimal comfort. Soldiers slept on the ground, ate rations and endured whatever weather conditions prevailed. Personal hygiene was difficult, with limited water available for washing. Soldiers learned to function effectively despite discomfort, fatigue and the constant low-level stress of living in a combat zone.

Daily Routine. There was always work to be done. Digging, wiring and work parties carrying loads of water and supplies were common rituals while sentry duty was part of a set routine and clearly a test of discipline in the middle of winter when exposed to the elements. The face, hands and feet were the most vulnerable. Gloves and balaclavas were part of the dress but they still wore WW2 military boots which were still being issued and wore extra pairs of socks in an effort to avoid the painful icy cold invading the feet with numbing effect.

Patrols in the DMZ. Regardless of weather, there were observation tasks by day; wiring and patrolling by night in the area now defined as the Demilitarized Zone which separated both armies. It was so eerie in an area which a short time before had been a constant din of war.

The hill 355 which had been manned by old mates from D Company and with flanking forces had defied the constant infantry assaults. During daylight was the distant blurred shape of Maryang san which the Third Battalion of the Regiment had captured in a brilliant and daring assault. Such recent and stirring history could not be ignored despite the snow and bone freezing cold, experienced on patrol.

The silent but ever sensitive deadly minefields either side of the track just waiting for a touch of pressure to leap groin high before exploding into small steel shards of shrapnel, stabbing, slicing flesh, artery, muscle and smashing bone. To add to the scene were rusting skeletons of tanks and other litter of war surrounded by dominating ridges and hills where old mates had stood fast against what seemed impossible odds.

COMBAT OPERATIONS IN KOREA

Combat operations during the static phase of the Korean War consisted primarily of patrol actions, defensive operations and artillery exchanges. Unlike the mobile warfare of 1950–1951, the static phase involved holding defensive positions along established lines while conducting patrols into no-man's land to gather intelligence, demonstrate control of disputed areas and prevent enemy infiltration. On the 2nd July 1954, Major Thomson led A Company in a well-planned raid against a fortified enemy strong point on Hill 227.

The raid demonstrated the continuing operational tempo despite the armistice. Australian Forces conducted offensive operations designed to keep enemy forces off balance, gather intelligence and maintain combat readiness. Major Thomson was awarded the Military Cross for his leadership in these actions. He later achieved the rank of Brigadier, served as a Federal Member of Parliament and founded the Reef Hotel Resort at Palm Cove, north of Cairns.

On 25th and 26th November 1954, A Company launched a diversionary attack against well-entrenched Chinese positions on Hill 227 in support of the British Royal Fusiliers during Operation Beat Up. These operations required careful planning, coordination between units and the courage to assault fortified positions knowing that casualties were likely.

For soldiers like George, these operations represented the reality of infantry warfare; the constant danger, the physical demands, the reliance on unit cohesion and the competence of officers and non-commissioned officers. Success in these operations depended on training, discipline, leadership and the mutual trust between soldiers who depended on each other for survival.

The twelve-month period of 1 RARs service represented the continuation of Australia's commitment to the United Nations effort in Korea. The fighting consisted primarily of patrol actions, raids, artillery exchanges and the constant work of maintaining defensive positions in harsh conditions. This static warfare created particular challenges. Soldiers faced danger without the sense of progress that came from advancing or defending against major attacks.

The threat was constant but often indirect; artillery fire, sniper attacks, patrol clashes and the ever-present danger of mines and booby traps. The psychological strain of this environment, combined with extreme weather and difficult living conditions, tested soldiers endurance and resilience. Maintaining alertness and discipline over extended periods, when danger was constant but combat was episodic, required mental toughness and strong unit cohesion.

MEMORABLE INCIDENTS

The Railway Terminal at Tuckchon. There were many memorable incidents. Now and then, there were periods of travelling to the rear for various tasks which meant a break in the routine and where there were real hot showers. On one occasion, the Platoon without Lieutenant and Sergeant was sent south to guard the railway terminal at Tuckchon which was the end of the line so to speak and from where supplies were distributed forward. They arrived by truck just before last light, weary, unwashed and hungry to be met by a bellowing British Major and his helpers.

In a short time, they were formed up in three ranks and inspected by the Major. He was angry and horrified at their state of attire and told them in no quiet terms they were a disgrace and after all, what could be expected from Colonial rabble. There were murmurs within the ranks which encouraged George to step forward and point out that they might be rabble but they were Australians and had rid themselves of 'Pommy' Colonialism some 50 years before. There was laughter in the ranks.

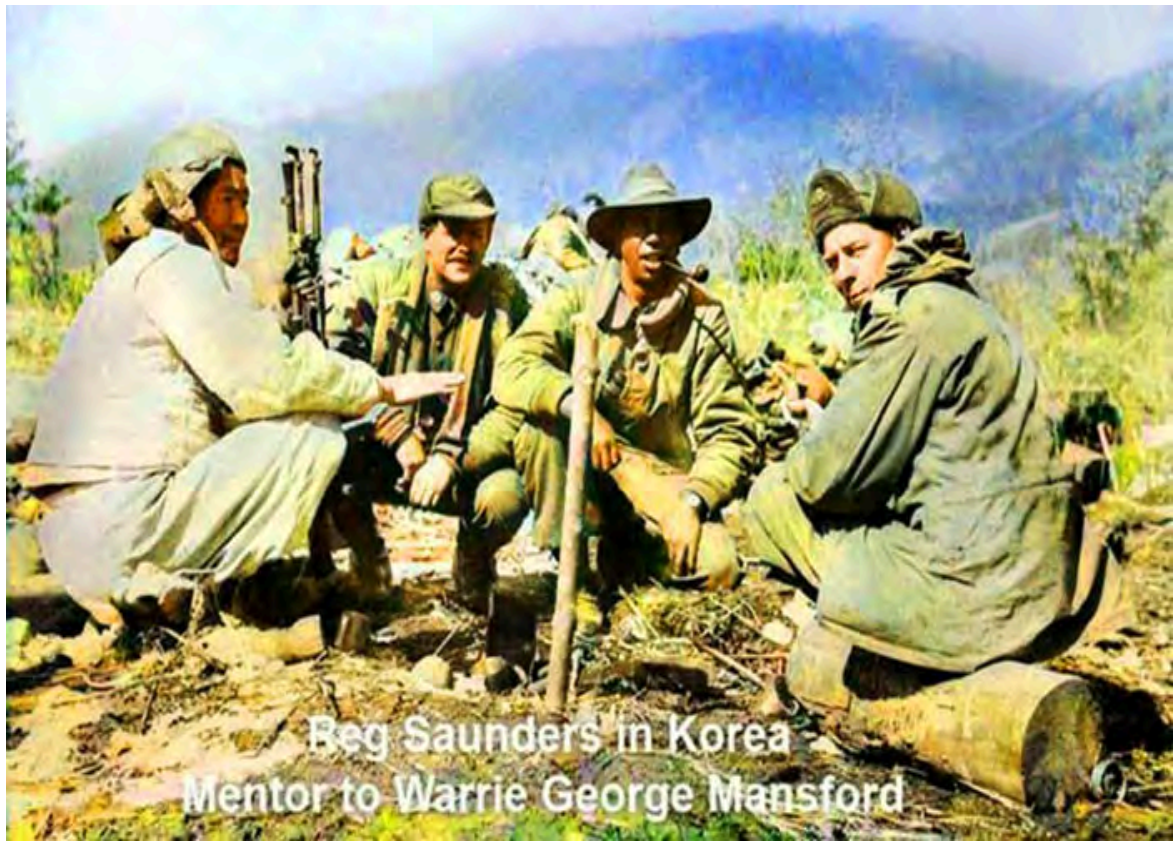
His reaction was instant. This wretched soldier, being George, was to be sent back to their unit immediately and if anyone wanted to join him then step forward. The entire Platoon stepped forward. Within seconds, someone had hummed one of their favourite songs *'The wild colonial boy'.* He was speechless. He disappeared into the fading light. In the biting cold, their voices grew louder and stronger.

A Sergeant appeared and dismissed them from the parade. Then soon they were in a warm mess hall eating a warm stew with heaps of Irish potatoes, well, perhaps they were Irish. After all, someone even Colonials could guard the depot and this they did for the next few days until they were relieved.

They never saw Major 'Bastard' again and to their knowledge, nor were their insubordination officially reported to their Battalion. However, such talk does travel and soon after, their RSM visited the Platoon position in the Kansas Line, complimented their work on the defences and with a suspect smile departed with the comment *'I best leave you F…. EN Irish Colonial convicts to get on with your tasks'*. Such a nice way of telling them the word had reached him in Bullshit Castle.

The Refugees and the Fire. On another occasion, they were manning a check point well to the rear and were using discarded wooden railway sleepers for a fire. Just on last light suddenly appeared a small group of South Korean women, children and an old man. George assumes by their belongings they were heading south, seen the glow of the fire and had arrived to seek its warmth. Within a few minutes, they had all of them surrounding the fire while the soldiers moved to the rear with an icy wind straight from Mongolia, it seemed, piercing their backs.

It is an incident that surfaced in George's reflections when in recent times, a very senior General unjustifiably, in his view, made public remarks which were critical of male behaviour in the military in regards respect to women. His edict was clear to all ranks.' *Conform or get out.'* George guesses that even Generals will smoke whatever they can get at times.



LEARNING LEADERSHIP FROM BELOW

Mansford's Korean War service provided him with a unique perspective on military leadership. He experienced leadership as a recipient rather than as someone in command. He was led by officers and non-commissioned officers, both competent and incompetent and he observed first-hand the difference between theoretical leadership and the practical demands of keeping soldiers alive and effective in combat. This experience of learning leadership from the bottom of the military hierarchy proved invaluable throughout his subsequent career.

He understood what soldiers needed from their leaders not from textbooks or theoretical instruction but from his own direct experience of being a Private soldier under operational conditions. He observed which leadership approaches worked and which failed. He saw how competent leaders-maintained morale, enforced discipline and kept soldiers focused on their duties despite hardship and danger. He also saw how incompetent leaders created unnecessary hardship, failed to maintain standards and endangered their soldiers through poor decisions or inadequate preparation.

The lessons learned as a Private soldier in Korea informed Mansford's entire approach to leadership throughout his career. He learned that soldiers respected leaders who shared their hardships, demonstrated competence under pressure and showed genuine concern for their welfare. He learned that leadership was earned through example rather than granted by rank and that soldiers would follow leaders they trusted even into situations of extreme danger.

The Signaller's role. Mansford's role as a Signaller placed him in a position of significant responsibility. Communications were critical to military operations, linking units with headquarters, allowing commanders to coordinate operations and enabling the rapid transmission of intelligence and orders. Signallers operated and maintained radio equipment, encoded and decoded messages and ensured that communications remained functional under all conditions.

The Signaller's role required technical competence, reliability and the ability to function under pressure. Radio equipment had to be maintained in working order despite harsh environmental conditions. Messages had to be transmitted accurately, as errors could have serious operational consequences.

Communications had to be maintained even when positions were under fire or when equipment was damaged. George's Post Office training in Morse Code and wireless operation proved directly applicable to his role as a military Signaller. The skills he had developed as a civilian telegraph operator transferred seamlessly to military communications work.

His proficiency at sending and receiving Morse Code, his understanding of radio equipment and his disciplined approach to technical work made him an effective Signaller. The Signaller's position also provided him with broader awareness of operations than many Private soldiers possessed.

Because communications flowed through the signals section, Signallers' are aware of operational plans, intelligence reports and command decisions that ordinary infantrymen might not know until orders were issued. This broader awareness contributed to George developing understanding of how military operations were planned and conducted.

Return from Korea. The 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment departed Korea on 19th February1955 aboard the transport ship '*New Australia*'. The Battalion's deployment had lasted nearly eleven months, from 31st March1954 to 19th February1955. The soldiers had maintained defensive positions through a Korean winter, conducted offensive operations against fortified enemy positions and performed the demanding work of static warfare under extremely adverse conditions.

The *'New Australia'* arrived in Sydney on 8th April1955, bringing 1 RAR home after its tour in Korea. The return to Australia represented a significant transition for soldiers who had spent nearly a year in a combat zone. They moved from an environment of constant alertness and danger to the relative safety and comfort of Australia. They reunited with families and friends. They resumed lives that had been suspended during their deployment.

For George Mansford, his service with 1 RAR in Korea provided the foundation for his subsequent military career. T

he experience of serving in a combat zone, operating communications equipment under difficult conditions and functioning as part of a professional Infantry Battalion shaped his understanding of military service and informed his development as a soldier.

He had proven himself under operational conditions. He had demonstrated technical competence as a signaller.

He had endured the hardships of Korean service and maintained his effectiveness despite challenging conditions. He had learned what combat felt like, what soldiers needed from their leaders and what standards were required for effective military operations.

Reflections on Korea. When George reflects on Korea, there are reflections that often spring to mind, the extremes of both summer and winter, the rugged terrain with such towering steep mountains which dominated both sides of the main arterial route and what seemed to be a small and narrow road from Pusan to the Imjin river. Thirdly, in his view, was a clear surge in his maturity, personal discipline, camaraderie, more respect for most of the rules of authority and immense pride in wearing his nation's uniform. The unforgettable memory of mates, laughter and the welcome delight in military mischief and returning to their precious and most fortunate land of 'OZ' and their loved ones and above all, the ghosts they left behind without fond farewells.

Lessons from Korea. Mansford's Korean War service provided lessons that informed his entire military career. He learned that combat was fundamentally about people; about soldiers' courage, endurance and mutual dependence.

- He learned that technical competence mattered, that equipment had to be maintained properly and that small failures in maintenance or procedure could have serious consequences.

- He learned that leadership was tested under pressure that soldiers judged their leaders by their actions rather than their words and that respect had to be earned through demonstrated competence and genuine concern for soldiers' welfare.

- He learned that unit cohesion was essential, that soldiers fought for their mates as much as for abstract causes and that the bonds formed under operational conditions created obligations that extended beyond the period of service.

- He learned that environmental conditions could be as challenging as enemy action that soldiers had to be trained to function effectively in extreme heat and cold and that physical toughness and mental resilience were as important as tactical skills.

- He learned that static warfare created psychological challenges different from mobile operations and that maintaining alertness and discipline over extended periods required strong leadership and unit culture.

- Most importantly, he learned that military service was serious business with life-and-death consequences. The decisions made by commanders, the standards maintained by units and the competence of individual soldiers all affected whether people lived or died. This understanding drove Mansford's later insistence on realistic training, uncompromising standards and thorough preparation for combat operations.

The foundation for a military career. Mansford's service in Korea from 31st March1954 to 19th February 1955 represented the first chapter of his military career. He had enlisted as a seventeen-year-old with Post Office training and Citizens Military Forces experience. He returned from Korea as a combat veteran who had proven himself under operational conditions and who understood what military service truly meant.

The progression from Private soldier to combat veteran provided him with credibility that served him throughout his career. He had not merely trained for combat; he had experienced it. He had not merely studied military operations; he had participated in them. He had not merely learned about leadership from books; he had observed it under conditions where leadership quality directly affected soldiers' survival.

The technical skills he developed as a Signaller, the leadership lessons he absorbed as a Private soldier and the operational experience he gained during his Korean deployment all contributed to his development as a professional soldier. These experiences created a foundation that supported everything he subsequently accomplished. Korea also taught George about the broader strategic context of military service. Australia was committed to collective security through alliances and international organisations. Australian soldiers served alongside forces from other Commonwealth nations and the United States, operating under United Nations authority. This international dimension of Australian military service remained a constant throughout his career, from Korea through Malaya to Vietnam.

The significance of Korean service. Mansford's Korean War service, though relatively brief in the context of his forty-year military career, held lasting significance. It was his introduction to combat, his first experience of operational service and his first opportunity to test himself under conditions where the stakes were life and death.

The Korean War was Australia's first significant military commitment following World War II. It demonstrated Australia's commitment to collective security through the United Nations and to supporting allies in conflicts where communist aggression threatened regional stability. For soldiers like George, Korea represented the reality that Australia's strategic interests extended beyond its immediate region and that Australian Forces might be called upon to serve in distant theatres.

The static phase of the Korean War, during which George served, was characterised by frustration and difficulty. Soldiers maintained defensive positions and conducted operations without the sense of progress that came from advancing toward victory. The armistice had halted major combat operations, but the war had not ended. Soldiers faced danger and hardship without the clarity of purpose that came from fighting toward a decisive conclusion.

This experience taught him that military service often involved enduring difficult conditions without immediate gratification or clear progress toward resolution. Soldiers had to maintain discipline, alertness and effectiveness even when the strategic situation was unclear and when their service seemed to produce no visible results. This lesson; that soldiers must continue to perform their duties regardless of broader strategic uncertainties; remained relevant throughout his career.

The bonds of service. The soldiers who served together in Korea formed bonds that lasted throughout their lives. They had shared hardship, danger and the unique experience of serving in a combat zone. These shared experiences created connections that transcended the specific period of service and fostered lifelong obligations of mutual support and remembrance. Mansford maintained connections with his Korean veterans throughout his life. He attended reunions, commemorated significant anniversaries and supported fellow veterans who faced difficulties in civilian life. The bonds formed during his Korean service were among the earliest of many such connections he developed throughout his military career.

The Korean War veterans represented a distinct generation within the Australian military. They had served in the first significant conflict following World War II, had operated as part of a United Nations Force and had experienced a type of warfare; the static phase following an armistice; that was unique in Australian military history. For George, the Korean War veterans represented a community of shared experience and mutual understanding. They understood what he had experienced because they had experienced it themselves. They shared memories of the cold, the hardship, the danger and the bonds formed under operational conditions.

This community provided support, validation and a sense of belonging that extended far beyond the period of active service. It was a brotherhood forged not through ceremony or declaration, but through the elemental reality of having faced death together on frozen ridgelines half a world away. These men spoke a language that civilians could never fully comprehend; a vocabulary of shared sacrifice, dark humour and unspoken recognition. In the decades that followed, this network of Korean veterans would remain a constant throughout his life, providing both social connection and a touchstone to the formative experiences that had shaped him as a young soldier.

Reflection on early service. The period from Mansford's enlistment on 17th September 1951 to his return from Korea on 8th April 1955 represented the foundation of his military career. He progressed from a seventeen-year-old recruit with Post Office training and CMF experience to a combat veteran. The nineteen-month waiting period allowed him to mature, develop his signaller skills and absorb The Royal Australian Regiment's culture and standards. His 1952 attempt to stow away to Korea demonstrated eagerness to serve but also illustrated the Army's commitment to protecting young soldiers through age requirements.

His Korea deployment from 31st March 1954 to 19th February 1955 provided his first combat experience and opportunity to observe leadership under pressure. The harsh environment, static warfare and constant danger shaped his understanding of military service. The technical competence, discipline and reliability he demonstrated established his reputation as a capable, professional soldier; the foundation for his subsequent advancement through the ranks.

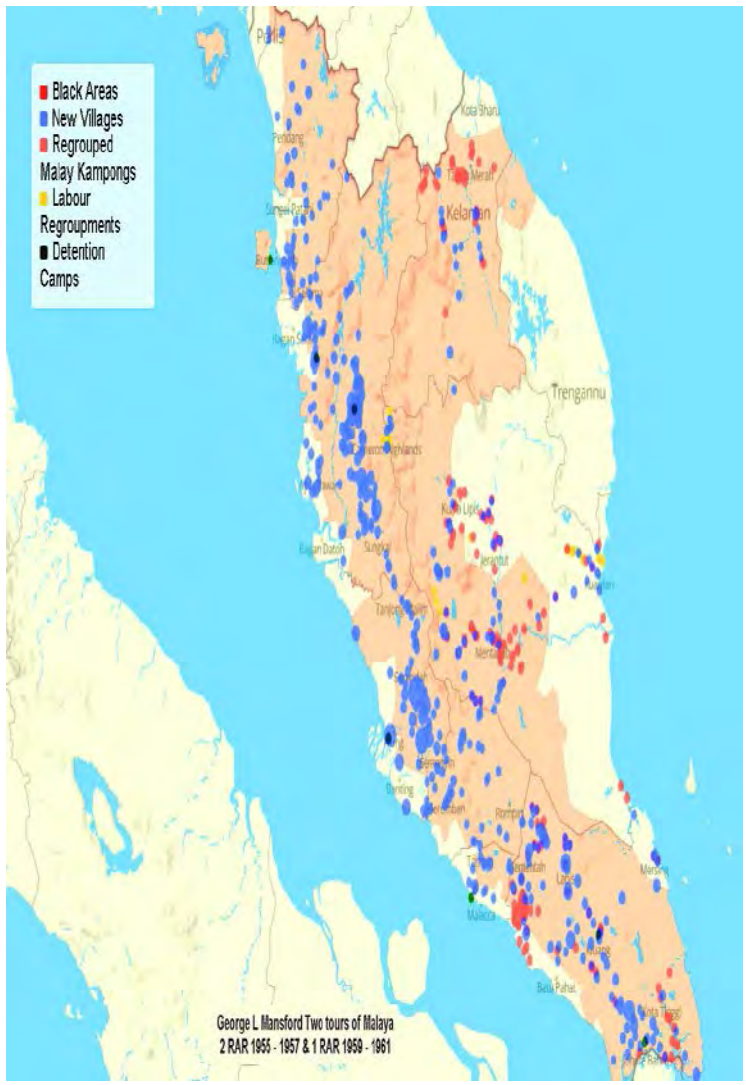
Following his return from Korea in April of 1955, Mansford's military service continued without interruption, reflecting the high operational tempo of the Australian Army during this period of heightened Cold War tensions and regional commitments. He carried with him the essential lessons from his deployment: that combat was fundamentally about people, that leadership was earned through example and never simply bestowed by rank.

That soldiers depended on each other for survival in ways that transcended formal military structures. These were not abstract principles learned from doctrine or instruction; they were truths burned into his consciousness through direct experience.

He had proven himself capable of enduring extraordinary hardship and performing reliably under the most severe pressure. Having observed both competent and incompetent leaders in conditions where the consequences of leadership failures were measured in lives lost, he had formed a clear and uncompromising understanding of what made leaders effective. The lessons learned as a Private soldier under operational conditions; watching, evaluating, surviving; became the foundation for his entire approach to leadership throughout his career.

The credibility earned through combat and the bonds formed with fellow veterans would remain with him throughout his life, informing every decision he made as he rose through the ranks. His next posting would take him to the counter-insurgency operations of the Malayan Emergency where these hard-won lessons would be tested in an entirely different environment.

CHAPTER 4:
MALAYAN OPERATIONS



1955-1961DEPLOYMENT TO A DIFFERENT WAR

Mansford's first tour of Malaya with the 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, from 1955 to 1957, marked a significant transition from conventional warfare to counter-insurgency operations.

The Malayan Emergency presented a fundamentally different operational environment compared to Korea. Instead of massed infantry assaults and defensive positions along fixed lines, the conflict in Malaya required small-unit jungle operations, extended patrols and the relentless pursuit of an elusive enemy through some of the world's most challenging terrain.

The Malayan Emergency had begun in 1948 when the Malayan Communist Party launched an armed insurgency against British colonial rule.

The communist terrorists, predominantly ethnic Chinese, established bases deep in the jungle and conducted a campaign of ambushes, assassinations and attacks on rubber plantations, tin mines and isolated settlements. Australia's commitment to the Malayan Emergency reflected both Commonwealth obligations and Cold War strategic concerns.

For Mansford, the transition from Korea to Malaya required adaptation from static warfare to the fluid, unpredictable nature of counter-insurgency. The enemy in Malaya did not hold fixed positions or conduct conventional attacks. Instead, they melted into the jungle, struck without warning and disappeared before superior forces could respond.

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA AND LEAVE

Family Reunion. Upon returning from Korea in April of 1955, much of George's leave was spent in WA where he caught up with his mother and step father (an ANZAC), two brothers and then some time with his sister and her husband and others of the family tree including his beloved grandparents. He had tried to renew old friendships with old school mates and alas, he was now the odd man out. He spoke a different language with different views.

RETURNING TO 2 RAR

Return to Battalion. Upon returning from Korea in April of 1955, George rejoined 2 RAR, which was preparing for deployment to Malaya. It was midnight when he arrived at the barracks and reported to a Corporal Frank Moffitt, a WW2 and Korean veteran with a chest full of campaign ribbons. He advised George, it was too late to organise a bed and pointed to the WW1 wooden floors of the office which was to be his bed for the night. Next morning, George was awakened by familiar bugle calls, yelling predictable screaming and cursing of Corporals and Sergeants and he was quite content. He was home again in very familiar surrounds. The reunion was immediate and profound.' *It was just like coming back to the old family. The brotherhood was so immense that you could be away somewhere for three or four years and when you turned up again, somebody would say, 'Where the bloody hell have you been? It is your shout.'*

Learning from Veterans. The Battalion held extraordinary depth of experience and capability.' *There was still about thirty to forty per cent of the Battalion that had Korean service; there was certainly a significant number who had had World War II experience.'*

Among them were men whose service records formed a living archive of Australia's military history: 'Bomber' Harris, a decorated tail-gunner from the air war over Europe; David McAuley, a Kapyong veteran who never rose beyond Corporal but remained a magnificent soldier and Dick Mayals, a former Japanese prisoner of war who had survived years of captivity and returned to military service.

These veterans formed Mansford's true education in soldiering. While formal training provided skills and procedures, the veterans taught what could not be captured in training manuals; judgement, tactical awareness and the subtle skills that distinguished effective soldiers from merely competent ones.

'*When I first joined the Army, the training was very simple but effective. The rear rank was always the younger soldiers and the rear rank was always told. You will do exactly what the front and centre rank do. As you progressed, you ended up in the front rank and consequently, you were learning from your peer group*.'

This system of peer learning ensured that knowledge and skills were transmitted directly from experienced soldiers to new recruits. The young soldiers watched how the veterans moved, how they handled their weapons and how they responded to different situations. They absorbed not just techniques but attitudes; the professional approach to soldiering that separated 2 RAR from less experienced units.

'The Beer Train'. The voyage to Malaya aboard the troopship '*Georgic'* demonstrated the resourcefulness that characterised the Battalion's soldiers. George had become an old hand in travelling in troopships as had many more of those from 2 RAR days in Puckapunyal. One of whom was Corporal Tim Payne and now their Section Commander, an old soldier always quick to note flaws and use to his advantage and thus planned another memorable incident, fondly related to as the beer train.

Each evening, a work party would carry cartons of beer to the deck to be distributed to all; one bottle per man. Thus, three volunteers infiltrated the beer train and as it passed their cabin door, they deserted the beer train and in a split second on three separate occasions a total of three cartons of beer had been liberated. It was a once only raid on the ten-day voyage and it seems the crime was never detected.

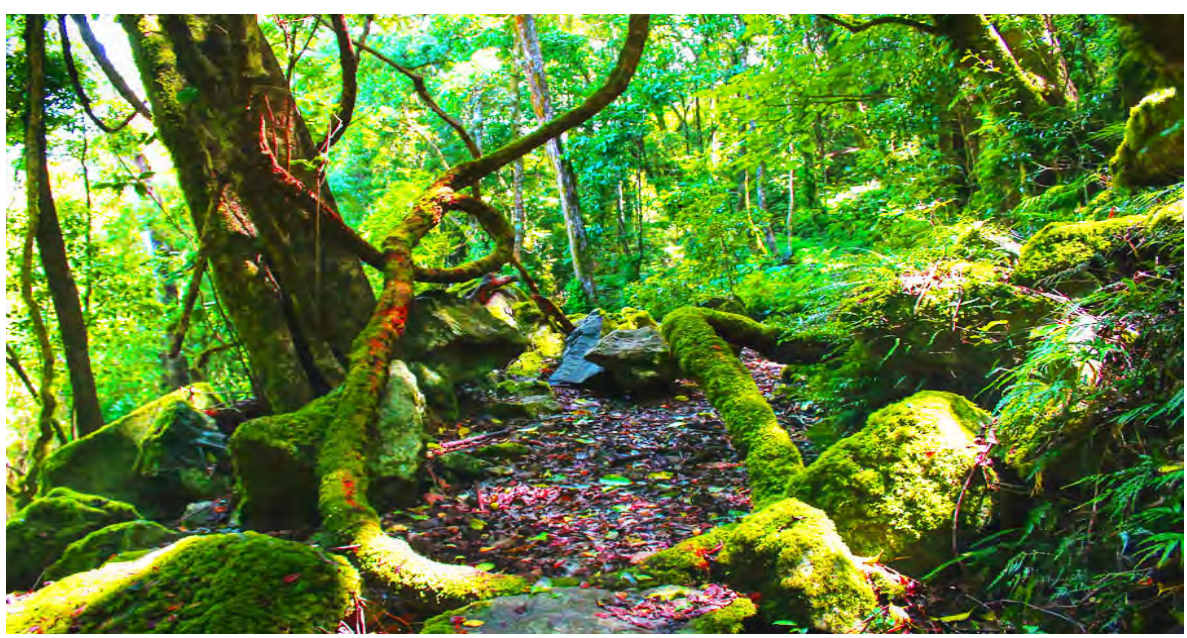
David McAuley organised what became known as the 'Beer Train'; a scheme to supplement the limited beer ration available to soldiers during the voyage.' *We did that twice on the way over without getting caught. They were magnificent soldiers; the kind of men who could organise the impossible while maintaining discipline.'* 'McAuley's Beer Train' involved joining the working party carrying beer from the ship's hold, then diverting cases to their cabin before official distribution.

This operation required planning, coordination and execution under watchful eyes. It was in miniature, the kind of operation that required the same skills used in combat; reconnaissance, planning, execution and withdrawal without detection. This incident illustrated an important aspect of military culture. These were not undisciplined soldiers stealing for personal gain. They were professional soldiers using initiative and skill to improve their circumstances while maintaining the discipline and cohesion that made them effective in combat.

Lectures and Preparations. There were many lectures on the customs and traditions of the Malay people and quite a few on the causes of the current conflict where a sizeable enemy guerrilla force with communism as their bible was scattered throughout the Malay Peninsula, trying to seize power. On the final approach to Malaya, they were welcomed and escorted by two Australian tribal class destroyers, HMAS *Warramunga*, HMAS *Arunta* and a flight of RAAF Lincoln bombers. They felt special. Shortly after, Penang Island where they were to be based appeared on the horizon.

PREPARATION FOR MALAYA

Training at Canungra. Before deploying to Malaya, the Battalion trained at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra in Queensland. There was a rigid and tough training preparation for service in Malaya and on rare leave passes in between soldiering. When they were sent to the Jungle Training Centre for their baptism of jungle warfare, it was tough, demanding, seemingly endless training, day after day; no matter the moods of Mother Nature, including her tantrums of chilling winds and icy rain. There was no sympathy or mercy for injuries or surrendering to mental or physical exhaustion. The greatest crimes were failing to be part of the team or not mastering battle discipline, particularly sleeping on sentry duty.



Jungle at Canungra

It was stressed to them that in the jungle, you will more often hear the enemy before you see them. Night or day, whispering was obligatory and they also communicated by hand signals. At night they still spoke in hushed whispers. They survived because of personal and unit pride, mateship and above all, battle discipline. Always were the dreams of hot showers, edible food, undisturbed sleep and meeting loved ones.' *The training was very pertinent. For many of us, it was the first exposure to the jungle. Korea was open paddy fields. The jungle gave us immense confidence so that when we did get to Malaya and eventually on operations, it wasn't anything new and we were ready for it.'*

However, Canungra's training had significant limitations that became apparent once operations began in Malaya.' *It was obviously designed for South East Asian Treaty Organisation (SEATO), where we were training for the last war; the Japanese enemy type of techniques of contact front and deploying machine guns to the higher ground. Very important in certain aspects of war, but when we got to Malaya, it was a totally different war.'* The training was based on conventional warfare tactics derived from World War II experience.

These tactics had limited application against an enemy that avoided conventional engagements and relied on ambush and rapid withdrawal. More critically, weapon handling standards were inadequate.' *Our rules of engagement were non-existent. Other than the traditional, conventional rules of challenging when a patrol came in and counting them, everything was a fair go.'* This lack of clear procedures and standards for weapon handling and rules of engagement created dangers that became apparent during operations.

Twenty-First Birthday in the Jungle. George celebrated his 21st birthday, dirty, weary, in filthy jungle greens. Their small group, huddled together had spent precious water and shared a mug of coffee. Peter West, later to lose his life during Confrontation in Borneo had carried birthday candles in his haversack for the occasion, unfortunately after so long in the jungle, all but one had been crushed and the lone survivor half bent flickered then died. For George it was the most memorable birthday celebration of his life as they huddled in the blackness of nowhere listening to the faint whispers of happy birthday calls from a newly found and bonding family.

Colonel Warfe and the Bayonet. George in June 2012 during his correspondence with the author, said that: When 2 RAR was preparing to head to Malaya and conducting training at Canungra. We were heavily laden and advancing up what seemed to be an endless mountain. At the very bottom of the mountain George Warfe was watching as each soldier passed in single file. As I passed, he simply looked and said nothing.

Much later that day as we neared the top, a message was passed that I was to report to Warfe who was still at the start point. I did so and he simply said, '*you have a female bayonet. Attention to detail is critical in the game of soldiering.'* I had placed my bayonet in the scabbard back to front with the bayonet ring facing forward. After that brief message I then climbed the mountain once more. Suffice to say I never forgot the lesson. He was of course a wonderful and very tough soldier'.

As for George, he once more began climbing the mountain along what was now a familiar well-worn track. It was not the last time he would hear of the mad magnificent Colonel. In Vietnam when located in an isolated outpost, George was handed a well-travelled letter. In brief and simple, it said, *'Heard you were here in Vietnam. Take care and I do hope your attention to detail in carrying bayonets has improved.'* It had been 12 years since the incident in Canungra and he still remembered.

A TEMPORARY HOME - MINDEN BARRACKS

Arrival at Penang. Their temporary home was Minden Barracks which had been built pre-WW2 and in time for the Japanese Imperial Forces to occupy in the very early days of 1942, soon after the bombing of Pearl Harbour. Regrettably, the comfortable spacious tropical barracks were not for the likes of them and they were allocated tents on the distant jungle edge. Leave was often granted and they spent much of it in the capital city, Georgetown. A favourite meeting place was the Britannia Club controlled by the British Military and became an accepted RV for troops on rest throughout the remaining 5-6 years of the Emergency.

The Locals and Rising Tension. Apart from the shysters, the locals were very friendly and comprised mainly Malay, Chinese and Indian. In the free world at that time there was fear of Reds under every bed, reinforced by the communist invasion of South Korea and the Malaya Emergency. Everyone was impatient and wondering if the rumours were true that they would soon be committed to operations on the mainland. In the meantime, for George, a second Christmas away from home in a row was looming.

The Jungle Environment. The Malayan jungle presented challenges unlike any other operational environment. Primary jungle consisted of towering trees reaching heights of over one hundred feet, their canopy blocking sunlight and creating perpetual twilight at ground level. Visibility was measured in metres rather than hundreds of metres, making navigation difficult and ambushes devastatingly effective. Secondary jungle, which grew in areas where primary jungle had been cleared, was even more difficult. Movement through secondary jungle required cutting paths with machetes, a process that was physically exhausting, time-consuming and tactically dangerous because the noise compromised operational security.

The tropical climate added to the challenges. Temperatures regularly exceeded thirty degrees Celsius, with humidity approaching one hundred per cent. Rain was frequent and heavy, turning streams into torrents and soaking equipment and clothing. Everything was perpetually damp; creating ideal conditions for fungal infections, skin rot and equipment deterioration. The jungle was also home to leeches, mosquitoes, snakes and other hazards. The jungle was not merely difficult terrain; it was an environment that tested soldiers' physical and mental endurance every hour of every day.

OPERATIONS - JUNE 1956

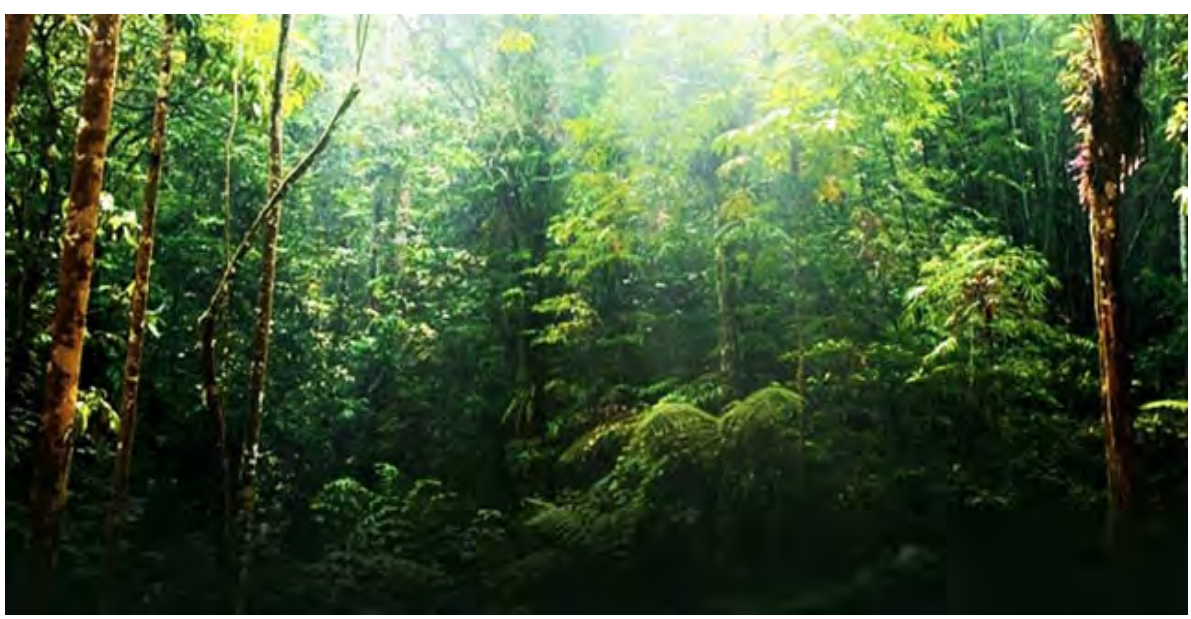
Standing To. It was an early morning in June 56 in the jungles of Perak and as was the routine when on operations; their patrol was ready for instant action while *'standing to'*. It was a well-used term in the Army meaning an intense period of alertness while changing routine from night to daylight. It is also the time when a position is most vulnerable to attack. When it was clear there was no threat, the welcome whispered order *'stand down'* signalled all was well. It was followed by a busy ritual of weapons cleaned and oiled, packing a half tent shelter and changing a relatively dry shirt and trousers for wet ones from the day before.

Such precious time was also used to brew up and search a 24-hour ration pack for whatever seemed suitable for breakfast. Such activities had to be quick, for more often than not, the signal would be sent to move in five or ten minutes was always hovering over their heads. They had thought it bastardry in recruit training to be racing against the clock. It was rare to receive more warning time to don equipment for another backbreaking day of patrolling. On that morning, fortune shone on dirty unshaven soldiers. There had been no order as yet to saddle up. It was time to rest and reflect.

Reflections on Operations. As their wait for orders grew longer George was in deep thought, reflecting on several months of operations since they left Penang in very early January. News from home was unpredictable. There would often be weeks before a letter and then followed by a flood of mail and every envelope contained precious news from loved ones. Operations had been long, demanding and so often frustrating. Their foe at this stage of the war was very evasive, operating in small groups and very selective in their choice of ground and circumstances to commit to battle.

DEPLOYMENT TO KEDAH (JANUARY 1956)

Surprise Deployment. At the beginning of the New Year, their Battalion had deployed by vehicles at night to Company areas of operations in Kedah. It was supposed to be a surprise deployment; however, they were completely mystified that the intended area of operations was bombed, strafed and shelled the day before they arrived. Pre-dawn their Company established a base at an old rubber shed which they named 'Pear Shape' due to surrounding terrain and soon after, at first light, each Platoon moved into separate areas to begin search and destroy operations. Ironically on this very first operation, their Platoon was hindered in several areas by massive dead fall caused by the recent bombing by their Air Force.



The Jungle Canopy

Adapting to the Jungle. Given their introduction to the jungle at Canungra, they adapted quickly to the Malayan jungle and soon became familiar with its smothering closeness where struggling sunlight filtered through the dense tree canopy and foliage but never enough to dry damp ground or wet clothes. There were often monkeys and orangutans screaming and crashing through the canopy from tree to tree as they followed them; surely a warning to any enemy in earshot.

Blood sucking leeches thrived on the foliage as did fiery ants and occasionally, nests of angry wasps. The jungle floor was home to more leeches and ticks reaching out to cling to jungle canvas boots then travel to various parts of the body seeking blood, while at night uninvited mosquitoes were clacking. At night, scorpions were always busy on the jungle floor and often would seek rest and comfort in an empty boot. They quickly learnt that while sleeping it was wise to have two wooden stakes to suspend boots upside down, well clear of the ground.

Learning the Hard Way. In the early weeks, they were quite awkward with their various drills and procedures and there was much for them to learn. It seemed they were light years from mastering essential skills and procedures they had been taught in Canungra and which were so essential in a jungle environment. It was a far cry from the Battalion's previous environment in Korea of night patrols, open terrain, barbed wire and living in well dug and protected bunkers.

First Operations. On 1st January 1956, operations began in Kedah. Within days came the first contact with the enemy. On their very first patrol, there was a contact, quick and unexpected, initiated by the forward scout. It was a short burst of firing. By the time they had deployed to attack, he was gone, leaving a blood trail which led them to the edge of a steep ridge line and out of their area of operations. Their drills taught in Canungra for conventional jungle warfare had not been fast enough. Soon after, their battle drills and tactics were changed to be more aggressive in pursuit.

Terry Iland, serving as forward scout, spotted a communist courier moving through the jungle.' *He'd spotted us and propped behind a tree, so Terry gave him a few bursts from his Owen and hit him. Then he took off. We followed the blood trail all day; he'd gone back into the village through the rubber, so we never did get him.'*

The incident, though tactically minor, exposed significant training gaps.' *That comes back to my point before, the lack of procedures and training for forward scouts. Terry's got a bead on him, keeps the bead on him while somebody else comes up to also add the firepower.'* Proper Forward Scout procedures would have involved the Scout maintaining his aim on the target while signalling other members of the patrol to move forward and add their firepower. Instead, the Forward Scout engaged alone and while he hit the target, the enemy escaped.

The Shelling Must Have Stirred Them. The shelling and airstrikes must have stirred the enemy, as in the next few days there were several contacts within the Battalion area of operations including a ration resupply in the early hours of daylight led by their Company Sergeant Major. Fortunately, they were only a short distance from the contact and soon on the scene to find a distraught CSM in a very angry hostile mood. The enemy had done them no favour. In a time of danger, their 'never smiling' CSM not grateful for their rescue, reprimanded several of them who were in range of his observations for being so untidy.

For the remainder of their tour in Malaya, he was consistent, be it night and day to find unforgiveable, disgraceful wretched flaws where they thought there were none and always was his anger and appropriate punishment. It was years later before George came to understand that what seemed to be bastardry was his relentless demand for battle discipline and attention to detail. Even at Unit reunions in the distant years to come his eyes would be searching you from head to foot. He was the perfect and dedicated Warrant Officer to the very end of his life.

The accidental clash. Days later came an incident that demonstrated how inadequate training and procedures could create catastrophic consequences. The patrol returned early from an operation and approached their base camp from an unexpected direction. Soon after, as their patrol was returning to base, there was suddenly heavy firing close to their front and they were the target. On this patrol, George was the 'Rear end Charlie', where on initial contact, his task was to protect the patrol from any threat to their rear and in no way be distracted by the fire fight. In a very short period of time, it was realised the fire had come from their own Platoon located in the firm base and from where a nervous sentry had opened fire. There were no casualties and a clear reminder marksmanship was lacking and their battle procedures and disciplines needed much more attention and quickly.

'The Sentry immediately interpreted us as the bad guys and opened fire. We didn't realise we were already back in the base camp and assumed we were in a contact.' The patrol, believing they were under attack from communist terrorists, returned fire. For several minutes, Australian soldiers exchanged fire with other Australian soldiers, both groups believing they were engaged with the enemy. The engagement only ended when someone recognised voices or uniforms and realised what was happening.

When the Patrol Commander reported to Major LC Chambers, the response was telling. He said that *'We had an accidental clash and that so many rounds had been fired and no casualties.'* Chambers came back and said, *'What do you mean? How can you fire that many bloody rounds and not hit anybody?*' He was quite disappointed about our marksmanship. The dark humour masked a serious point. The fact that dozens of rounds had been fired at close range without causing casualties suggested that soldiers were not aiming properly and lacked basic marksmanship skills required for combat operations.

Back at base, another incident reinforced the message about weapon handling. An Owen gun discharged accidentally, destroying the *'char-wallah's'* stock of tea and supplies. Major Chambers assembled the Company to address the series of incidents.' *He talked; quite rightly; about the accidental clash and there'd been a few other Unauthorised Discharges (UDs) and weapon handling was not good.'* Then Chambers returned to his office, where his batman was cleaning his rifle. As Chambers moved to sit in his chair, the batman's rifle discharged, sending a round through the chair Chambers had just vacated.

The weapon handling was so poor throughout the Company that soldiers developed a grim joke. We were jokingly saying that if you saw a bloke loading a rifle, you had every right to kill him; you could shoot him in self-defence. The humour reflected genuine danger. Poor weapon handling killed and wounded soldiers as effectively as enemy action.

The Warm Food Bowl. In another incident, several days later, their small patrol crossed a small creek, refilled their water bottles as was the routine whenever passing a water supply, then began moving forward in single file once more. Seconds later, they found themselves in a small clearing which with several bamboo and thatched huts plus weapon pits. It was clearly an enemy camp and judging by the number of trenches plus a primitive kitchen, perhaps 10 to 15 enemy had been occupying the camp. They swept through the camp in assault formation without contact and in one trench George found a wooden bowl with warm food, which suggested they had left in a hurry shortly before, possibly when they were at the creek.

In the middle of the camp was an unexploded very large dented bomb, perhaps dropped in the recent air strike. The nose was damaged and it had been dragged into the camp, not as a souvenir but for some mischievous purpose. Later, three of them escorted a British engineer back to the abandoned camp where he prepared the bomb for demolition, gave a *'thumbs up'* and they withdrew to a welcome steep re-entrant and minutes later there was a very large detonation. It was yet another incident of many that was never recorded in the unit war diary.

Contact and casualties. Later operations brought more serious contact with the enemy. The patrol discovered an occupied communist camp. George, moving through the position, encountered the enemy at close range.' *I walked around the corner and there they were. So, we said a quick G'day! to each other and into it. I didn't worry about fire control. I just let the whole magazine go on my Owen gun and then replaced it and started to go again when I heard a clunk; the round had jammed into the spout.'* The enemy returned fire while he struggled with his jammed weapon.' *I dived behind this stash of rice and you could see the rice trickling down where they were getting into me. Bomber Harris arrived on the scene; he really saved my life, I guess.'*

Harris's arrival and his suppressive fire allowed Mansford to deal with his weapon stoppage and continue the engagement.'*This round had jammed in the chamber. We had to prise it out with a machete. It was a faulty round; it had expanded inside the chamber.'* The incident demonstrated how equipment failures could occur at the worst possible moments. The fact that George survived was due to Harris's intervention and the cover provided by the rice bags rather than any tactical advantage.

Don Cameron and the Beetroot. There were more incidents of frustration and disappointment. A few days later, Don Cameron, MM, veteran from Korea, engaged a fleeing enemy soldier at short range. He could see the rounds impacting on the fleeing soldier's haversack. The foe staggered, dropped his pack and continued his record flight to other places. Don inspected the pack and noted a significant amount of fresh red stain suggesting a severe wound. It was only when he opened the pack did, he realise he had shot several tins of beetroot. The WW2 ammunition had failed to penetrate. They were using ancient ammunition and many questioned its lethality other than at very close range. George too joined the club of non-believers a few months later.

Sergeant Charlie Anderson. During the same phase of the operation, among other casualties was the beloved Sergeant Charlie Anderson, a full blood indigenous who had been killed in an assault on an enemy camp. George was there at the funeral as part of the honour guard, when they buried him and two others killed in the same week. Charlie Anderson's death, in particular was a huge blow. He was their invincible hero who had served in WW2 and Korea and many of them thought of him as their adopted father.

Harry Smith's Night Ambush. The last incident for their Company in Kedah operating from their base, Pear Shape was when Harry Smith, (later to command D Company 6 RAR in the Battle of Long Tan), night ambush, killed a local Malayan. The local village claimed he had been on his way through a rubber plantation at night to worship, despite a curfew. To them, the claim of worshipping late at night was simply bullshit. Soon after, their Battalion ceased operations in Kedah and moved to Perak, a neighbouring State, to a new operational base at Sungei Siput, a town renowned as a hot bed for terrorism and in their tour, lived up to its reputation.

SUNGEI SIPUT

The Spark That Started It All. 'Sungei Siput' was the spark in 1948 which quickly flamed throughout Perak and then the entire British colony of Malaya. The fuel for the resurrection was communist inspired, with a clear objective of seizing the British Colony by force. They settled in quickly which provided the luxury of secure and sound sleep, showers, hot meals in between varying operations of patrolling, ambush and village searches in the surrounding region of rubber plantations manned by British managers and a community of rubber tappers.

A Cozy Base. Waterproof roofs, electricity, three hot meals a day, hot showers and limited patrolling. It seemed they had hit the jackpot. In the middle of the town was a small bar which many of them visited without authorised leave from time to time. They lived in fabricated tin huts next to the main railway lines some few feet away and always midnight was a regular and very effective alarm clock at midnight as the very punctual night train rattled past their trembling tin huts. The other attraction was the small park in the small court house surrounded by neat gardens and manicured lawns. It was there where the British Magistrate would deliver Colonial justice, mostly small offences committed within the wide spread community.

Constant Operations. Soon after, there followed village searches for illegal food and weapons. There was also the constant tasking of patrols and night ambushes in the surrounding rubber plantations. It was very demanding soldiering in pursuit of an elusive and dangerous enemy. Their need to maintain a very high standard of battle discipline was constant.

THE ISOLATED RUBBER PLANTATION

Death Threats. Late one afternoon, without any warning, their Platoon was sent to a very isolated rubber plantation located at the end of a very narrow and very lonely road. The British plantation owner and his family had been receiving death threats, as well as small harassing probes on the quarters of rubber tappers and his family home. After their arrival followed a phase without enemy probes and harassment, yet they drew no comfort from that. It was part of the enemy strategy to wait and see.

Labour Day Warning. However, their pleasant rest with regular meals and adequate rest was not to last. A warning order was issued of possible increased violence during Labour Day. Thus, maximum precautions, including the 'Sungei Siput' Bar was declared out of bounds. The intelligence report proved to be correct. Just before dark, a cyclist peddling past hurled a grenade into the bar where some of their mates from another Platoon were drinking.

They had broken curfew. The explosion and shrapnel wounded a young child and two soldiers wounded, Don Pickering and Keith Pascoe. It could have been far worse. The good news was that the cyclist was chased down and apprehended in the course of the next few hours. The captured grenadier disclosed valuable information that several groups of the enemy were intending to RV (rendezvous) on the edge of the rubber plantation in preparation for an attack on their small paradise. However, the exact location of the RV was not known.

The failed ambush. A Company area ambush, reinforced by the Battalion Machine Gun Platoon was committed. It was a night move and given there would be rubber tappers working the following day, all troops discarded military jungle boots to wear sandshoes so not to betray military movement through the rubber plantation. Thus, it came to be in the early hours of the morning all groups including three ambush groups from their Platoon were in position to cover approaches to the intended RV. There was an additional incentive; the plantation owner of their rapidly disappearing paradise promised their Platoon a magnum of champagne for each terrorist killed or captured.

Their group covering one approach to and from the enemy suspected RV was at full alert. Ambushing requires a great deal of skill and above all, a very high standard of battle discipline. One movement, a cough and switching to dream time were examples from the past of total failure. From a distance, the difference between a successful ambush and a failed one is often determined by the sound of firing. A single shot or a short stutter of automatic fire then silence was always an ominous sign that there had been failure on the other hand, a sudden heavy volume of firing suggested the ambush had been sprung successfully.

If the fire fight continued, it may well be the ambush had taken on more than it bargained for. In this case, the many magnums of champagne evaporated when the silence was broken by the sound of one single miserable lonely shot, followed by a deathly unwanted silence. It had been a total failure and a classic example of questionable leadership or a lack of battle discipline or very poor battle procedure and perhaps all three. It was a huge blow to their morale.

On Labour Day in 'Sungei Siput', a grenade attack wounded several Australian soldiers. In response, an area ambush was established at Gelon Tinggi to intercept communist terrorists using known routes. The enemy arrived; twelve or fourteen men moving along the track; presenting the perfect ambush opportunity.' *What happened was, this particular section had decided to have a brew before they moved into ambush and in doing so, had put a Bren gun out to cover the track. He spotted them coming and couldn't warn his blokes, so he did the next best thing and fired. When he fired, all there was a clunk of the Bren.'*

The Bren gun failed to fire. The gunner's attempt to engage the enemy alerted them to the ambush and they fled before the Section could properly engage. The opportunity was lost.' *We didn't get them, but when you analyse it, the Bren gun had been borrowed from a British Artillery Unit and hadn't really been test-fired. It was a combination of some very bad mistakes and it was a chance we never got again.'*

What Went Wrong? As it turned out, their troops involved, were resting before establishing the ambush and a sentry with a light machine gun had been positioned on the track. A very short time later, the sentry heard noises of movement on the track short of his position. He tried to attract the attention of his Section but failed and the sound of what were obviously enemy became louder. The leading terrorist stopped and listened. The noise of the troops preparing to establish was obviously heard by the enemy scout who froze, a normal drill to confirm hostile noise. The ambush party had been heard.

The sentry decided the game was up and opened fire with his Bren gun, a light machinegun, but after just one round, the gun jammed. The shot echoed throughout the entire area and acted as a pistol shot at the starting block; the enemy immediately dropped their packs and then carried out a record sprint followed by a long distant marathon. The end result was 15 enemy packs discarded by what were now successful runners who could have clearly qualified in both sprint and marathon events in the Olympics soon to be held in Melbourne.

More evidence of poor battle procedure was yet to be discovered. The Bren gun fired by the sentry had been issued to a soldier shortly before deployment and no time to test fire prior to the operation. Thus, the single shot that began the battle ended the same battle. Soon after, they rejoined their Company at Sungei Siput and continued operations in their given zone. Terrorist incidents were still common, including murdering rubber tappers who would not co-operate and in recent times two successful ambushes killing police escorts and one rubber plantation manager. The incident illustrated multiple failures. The Section had delayed moving into position to brew tea, reducing the time available to prepare the ambush properly. These failures, individually minor, combined to turn what should have been a successful ambush into a missed opportunity.

The toll of accidents. The cumulative effect of inadequate training, poor weapon handling and insufficient procedures became tragically apparent when three soldiers were killed in separate incidents within a short period.' *We were just getting ready to do that when he came up and said, 'Make it three', so we buried three of the boys, all really accidental.'*

One was Sergeant Ewal, killed in an ambush position through what became known as friendly fire.'*He moved from his part of the ambush to get back to the Platoon Commander. He came out of the clearing in moonlight. He appeared to be wearing khaki; of course, we weren't wearing khaki; it was the moonlight that gave that impression; and the Platoon Commander led the firing.'*

Mansford's bitterness lay in the fact that Ewal was out on operations and whether killed by the enemy or through an accident, it should have been classified as killed in action.' *When you lose three people, you have also got the three that pulled the trigger and so you can write off six. Not good.'* The Corporal commanding the failed ambush fell to his death from the second story of Minden Barracks when their Company was resting in Penang before further deployment to a new Company base at Kuala Kangsar.

Life in the jungle. The physical demands of jungle operations were relentless. Each day began with the knowledge that soldiers would cover significant distances under challenging conditions.' *You'd get up in the morning and somebody may say, 'Righto boys, we are going to go fourteen clicks that way today. ' That's a lot of territory in rainforest and jungle; the heat, the rain, slipping and sliding and mountains; but we were so fit.'*

Photographs from the period reveal the toll jungle life took on soldiers.' *You look at them; we all look like bloody greyhounds; the clothes were just hanging off us, we were thin.'*

The nightly routine became a ritual of survival.' *The smell of hexamine at night and the smell of the tucker in your dixie, good bonding with the team you had.' Dry clothes were a luxury rarely afforded. We always had our spare set of clothing. Soldiers never used it because that was your luxury at night-time; to get into your dry gear and put your sandshoes on.'*

Mornings often brought punishment.' *Getting back into that wet clothing was unforgettable. Almost freezing with this wet, damp shirt and trousers, you shuddered for about three minutes. The only consolation was that you knew that all your mates had to do it too.'*

KUALA KANGSAR AND THE AMBUSH

Back to Operations. No sooner had they arrived back at their new base when they were back on operations. George can still recall with detail that morning, half way through a 10-day operation. They were carrying out morning routines and preparing to move when the radio crackled with new orders and situation reports.

Alpha Company Ambushed. They arrived back at Kuala Kangsar just as news was breaking that terrorists had ambushed a patrol of Alpha Company which had recently relieved them at Sungei Siput. Three of their military family had been killed and several wounded. They were told the names of the casualties and immediately two of them came to mind. Only a short time before they had been playing cricket plus a few beers with them on the day they handed over the Sungei Siput base to them.

The Pursuit Operation. The subsequent operation was one of the most demanding operations they experienced and involved the entire Battalion and a supporting Artillery Unit. Their Platoon had no contacts but the evidence of their presence in recent times became more visible with each day. First were the fresh tracks of several enemies.

That same afternoon, they discovered a huge buttress tree where the large surface roots had been cut to provide a rifle butt for obviously damaged or aging weapon and then soon after they discovered a series of fighting trenches well dug astride the track they had been following. Soon after dawn they continued their pursuit and within minutes, their Platoon suddenly found itself in a very large camp of huts built on tall bamboo poles, either side of a small path. In the centre of the camp was an old flag pole where no doubt the red star had flown.

The concealment of the camp was superb. The surrounding trees had been bent with ropes to lean over the camp and to provide a canopy of foliage to mask observation from the air. It was a camp for at least 80 troops. There was no sign of any recent occupation but clearly the track through the camp was clear of leaves, which suggested recent residency. It was, by far the biggest of the several enemy camps George had seen. Thankfully for their under-strength Platoon, it was not occupied. For their tactics for conventional war had changed for what was an increasingly smaller number of enemy quick to flee unless they had a clear advantage or shielding a larger force.

Return to Base. After what seemed an endless operation, they returned to their base at Kuala Kangsar for welcome showers, fresh and hot meals and much beautiful deep sleep. There were no battle casualties but attrition of their Platoon from sickness, injuries and constant physical demands was telling. As always with soldiers, eager for news from home and the soaring of spirits was when the Platoon Sergeant shouted *'mail call'*. Always were the dark faces and forced smiles when some names were not called.

Dreams of Home. When on operations they still craved for news from their beautiful land Down Under, be it the Melbourne Cup, Grand Finals, their victories at the Melbourne Olympics and any other news which they could debate or dream of.

CHECKPOINT DUTIES

Boring Security Work. In the meantime, their security duties at checkpoints was becoming very boring, checking and searching cars, bikes, wagons and workers shuffling with their loads. Weapons, food, drugs and medicines were the main targets. Years before, the British had centralised vastly spread communities into fortified villages for easier protection with guarded entrances and exits. The intent was to cut the terrorists from their main supply of essential needs. In time it worked and the enemy's efforts to weaken resolve of the hamlets failed. Yet always was the need for checkpoints until the enemy surrendered or sent to the graveyard.

Stand By Force. At the same time as duties on checkpoints, their sub-unit was part of a stand by force to react to the unexpected which was not uncommon. On one occasion and with little warning, they replaced security checks to patrol an area skirting one of the villages. A week prior, one of their patrols had clashed with the enemy and inflicted casualties and one who was wounded, escaped and sought refuge in dense undergrowth near his home village. There was a price on his head and a Judas betrayed him.

The Body on the Bonnet. It was brutally quick. They deployed into small cut off groups and then the Patrol Commander and four others found his temporary lair and, in the process, the enemy soldier was shot and killed. They were at the truck waiting for the order to mount up, when the order came to lash the corpse to the bonnet of the truck. This was done with reluctance, anger and disgust. They drove around Sungei Siput several times with the body in full view. It took days for their anger to subside. After all, he was a soldier fighting for a cause, be it in their eyes, right or wrong.

FAMILY REUNION IN PENANG

Special Leave. The following day, George was given special leave to meet his family which was flying into Penang, 24 hours hence. The long and seemingly endless count-down of close to 12 months was at last nearing an end.

The Old Pre-War Structure. Their very first home was an old-pre-World War 2 structure, completed just in time for the Japanese conquerors to use. George suspects the structure had been intended as quarters for Britain's Colonial servants of its flung empire, which finally occurred with the defeat of Japan. It was a very basic, dark and gloomy structure and reminiscent of cell blocks with its barred windows.

The home was located at the edge of the jungle and often heard was the screech of monkeys and other wild life. Minden Barracks was a short distance away surrounded by tropical gardens crowded with magnificent coloured blooms. Directly opposite their married quarter was a tented area occupied by a Company of British soldiers on rest and recuperation. All that was missing from Colonial days were balls and chains. Nevertheless, it was their home for the time being and they were very happy.

Short Stay and Farewell. It was a short stay with his family and then began what was to be a familiar scene of frequent farewells in their beautiful marriage with a stern military mistress always hovering so very close.

A NEW LEADER - LIEUTENANT RUSSELL LLOYD REPLACEMENT.

Return to Kuala Kangsar. On arrival back at Kuala Kangsar, George discovered they were to be commanded by a new officer. Their old loved and trusted boss had been sent to Battalion HQ, ('Bullshit castle'). They were sad to see him go, for he was a sound and respected young officer. They were apprehensive and waited with bated breath to determine their new good or bad fortunes.

The New Officer. It was obvious that their brand-new officer thought he knew all the answers and his first briefing was very much wanting. A small patrol of short duration had been tasked from their Platoon. Its composition had already been planned. He changed that and added George to the list. George protested pointing out he was due for 5 days rest in Penang, but to no avail. Why he was added, George will never know.

THE DISASTROUS PATROL

First Day Disaster. It began as a routine patrol and the first day was a disaster. He kept interfering with what were standard and automatic drills guided by hand signals. Consequently, precious pre darkness time associated with normal routine such as heating a tin of stew with small flame from a hexamine as well enjoying hot mug of tea were lost, then it rained and rained.

The following day was even more difficult; slipping and sliding in the mud and worse still, the dark stormy clouds robbed the jungle canopy of filtering sunlight to the jungle floor, creating a dark and gloomy environment with increasing patches of moving and flitting dark shadows. Consequently, Terry and George as Scouts, were travelling slower than normal and as they continued to follow a small narrow animal track; the rain was easing and shadows were disappearing.

Finding the Tracks. Soon after, Terry found several footprints, clearly indicating someone was ahead of them. Their Patrol Commander without further assessment decided it was a rubber tapper. In a free fire zone? Soon after, there were more tracks coming in from the rubber plantation and also heading in the same direction as them. Yet again they were told to keep going and they did. In fairness, it was his first patrol and he was now very weary if not exhausted and clearly very confused, yet he did not call a halt to seek other options.

Contact. Minutes later, Terry spotted a sentry and opened fire. As with the drill, George moved up to cover him and expended a magazine in very quick bursts; then armed with a fresh magazine charged down the track as he yelled out *'contact front'*. It was a modified drill used in Malaya to establish and maintain contact with very elusive enemy, as opposed to deploying and waiting orders.

Suddenly George was in an enemy camp with a huge cache of bagged rice at the entrance. In front of him were several enemy preparing to flee. He was still alone. Ignoring the golden rule of short disciplined bursts and in the name of self-survival, he fired a long burst with his Owen gun as they scattered. One collapsed, clutching his leg. George dived behind the huge wall of bagged rice. It saved his life. Within seconds, rounds were thudding into the bagged rice and a constant, increasing flow of rice onto his head and shoulders. He was still alone.

Once more he changed magazines and with very short prayer he was back on his feet and firing at the hobbling one and two others still to be seen at the edge of the camp clearing. One wearing a haversack, faltered. George could see the rounds tugging at his pack, the second one received the same treatment and the rounds were also tugging at the back of his shirt. The third, the hobbler who was having a very bad day, cart wheeled into the foliage as he dropped his rifle. It was then George had a stoppage caused by a spent round, jammed in the chamber of the barrel. He was still alone.

'Bomber' Harris Arrives. Precious seconds later, 'Bomber' Harris arrived on the scene, gave George his rifle and George continued to fire along the track while he extracted the expanded cartridge from the breach with his machete. George had total faith in 'Bomber'. He had flown bombing missions over Germany and awarded the DFC for shooting down a German fighter and damaging another. Later he enlisted in the Army, to serve in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam.

To George he was a God and always will be. Ron Gildersleeve was the next to arrive. He and George swept the area where the three enemy had fallen, stumbled or dived for cover. They found the rifle of the cart-wheeling soldier who like his two mates, had crawled into the dead ground and escaped. Like Don Cameron who months before, had shot up the pack of a fleeing enemy; the WW2 ammunition lacked the power of penetration.

Later in life they were reflecting on the enemy camp incident and George joked with 'Bomber' why he was the bloke with his head exposed doing the firing, while 'Bomber' was on the ground removing the damaged round from the Owen gun. Quick as a flash came the answer *'That's how I became an old soldier'*.

Poor Decisions. They were then ordered to stand to for a counter attack when the drill should have been to pursue. The young officer ordered that the medicines and rice cache to be destroyed, all of which the intelligence world would have loved to have examined. Finally, he made a huge error to end the operation, as opposed to following up at daylight. Thus, they reached the rubber by last light and stumbled noisily through the plantation to the main road and soon after, they were back in Kuala Kangsar.

The Unjust Charge. The following morning, they were roused from deep sleep and with the remainder of the Company including a very angry Company Commander, returned to the scene of the crime. A patrol found drag marks of two improvised stretchers which were followed until the sign became less and then none. They returned to their base in KK and resumed normal routine. There was no debrief of their patrol and the hierarchy relied on the report of a Patrol Commander in urgent need of military education.

Two days later without any warning, George was officially fronted before the Company Commander to explain why, as shown in the Patrol Report, failure had been due to his negligence. He was dumbfounded and went into survival mode where he simply defended the maintenance of his weapon which was supported by Lance Corporal 'Bomber' Harris. George was rattled, in survival mode and made no comment as to the appalling conduct of the patrol. Twenty-five years later George was to meet their 'Audie Murphy' once more in very different circumstances.

Vindication. The Major found George not guilty and he retreated to Penang on a delayed rest entitlement to find his family had been moved from the barred cells to a beautiful and secure home. George saw little of the Officer after that and then in a short time, he had been returned to Australia with some mysterious spider bite. The penny had obviously dropped and suddenly George was often tasked as the Major's minder to accompany him on small recons whenever the HQ travelled with them. His patrol skills were sadly lacking and it was a huge sign of confidence and trust in George as escort.

Promotion. The other news was George had been recommended for promotion to the dizzy heights of Lance Corporal, which in his view was the most difficult rank to command.

CONSTANT OPERATIONS

Busy and Demanding. They were always busy and soldiering was quite demanding. Operations were constant and varied from two-day ambush patrols to long searching patrols from 10-21 days. The longer the duration of patrol; the more frequency of air drops by their Pommy mates flying ancient aircraft in cloud covered mountains, where the drop had to be very low to ensure success. In their two years in Malaya, there were at least three aircraft supporting ground forces lost with no survivors. They were the best of the best.

THE ASSISTANT MANAGER INCIDENT

Skulking Around. Then came an incident where the 'Gods of War' were on George's side. As a small patrol, they had an incident at the jungle edge with the assistant manager, Malay, of the neighbouring rubber plantation, who was skulking around the area, without vehicle or bike. George was convinced he was up to no good and too far from home to be back in time before curfew. He was allowed to leave. The distraction consumed much of their precious time and darkness was not far away. George was the Forward Scout and given the order to take a short cut. He readily obeyed, as there seemed little threat.

Near Death. Soon after, George was blinded by a powerful light from what was obviously a scout car. He immediately raised his hands above his head and in the following precious seconds was identified. Lieutenant Brian Macfarlane, later to serve in 6 RAR, Vietnam as a first-class Infantry Commander, had been manning twin Bren guns from the top of the armoured car. On hearing movement to his front, he clicked his safety to fire and illuminated the area with bright light and spotted what seemed to be enemy.

He was a milli-second away from pressing the trigger when he saw George's arms being raised and realised they were friendly. George had nearly been killed for a short cut involving neglect of procedures and saved by a quick thinking and alert Officer. The lesson stayed with him forever and a day. Later they discovered that an informer had warned of an intended food lift in that general area. Apparently, it was all too 'TOP SECRET' for soldiers in the field.

The Assistant Manager Returns. Several weeks after the incident with the assistant manager skulking around the jungle edge, there was news that vindicated George's suspicions. The assistant manager had been arrested by the police. He had been supplying the enemy with food and information. When questioned about his activities on the day George's patrol had encountered him, he admitted he had been checking a food cache for collection by the enemy that night. Had George's patrol not been in the area, the food would have been collected. The manager was tried and executed.

EAGLE FORCE – 'EAGLE SWOOP'

Call for Volunteers. Early in the year there was a call for six to seven volunteers from each of the Battalion's Companies in the form of *'you blokes have just volunteered.'* Soon they found themselves in a Company sized force commanded by Major Gerry Dunstan, a WW2 veteran who had won the Military Cross and Bar.

The Second in Command was Captain Reg Saunders, another WW2 veteran and George's old Company Commander from Korea days. The task of Eagle Force was to conduct a series of surprise sweeps through specific areas which were considered to be enemy strongholds. They were to be known as Eagle Swoops.

Training and Deployment. There followed several days of intensive training on drills and battle procedures. They were to operate in small groups of 6-8 and would be deployed by helicopters in the early hours of the morning. The drill was simple. On landing they would immediately move in a predetermined direction at a rapid rate for a set distance, then slow down and commence normal search and destroy operations. The intent was to catch the enemy by surprise before they could melt into the jungle.

First 'Eagle Swoop'. The first 'Eagle Swoop' was into an area near the Thai border. It was a very early departure from Ipoh by truck convoy and then by helicopter to various landing zones. George's group was commanded by Sergeant Wally Smith, a highly respected NCO and WW2 veteran. As they lifted off in the ancient Sikorsky helicopter, there was the usual banter and nervous laughter. The door gunner was alert, his machine gun at the ready as they skimmed the tree tops. Suddenly they were descending and seconds later, they hit the ground running as the helicopter lifted off to collect another group.

The Contacts. They moved rapidly through the jungle for the set distance then slowed to commence their search. Within an hour, they heard firing in the distance. One of the other groups had made contact. Throughout the day there were several contacts and by nightfall, the enemy had suffered casualties while 'Eagle Force' had none. The following day they continued the sweep and there were more contacts. On the third day, they were extracted by helicopter and returned to Ipoh for a well-earned rest.

Subsequent Swoops. There were to be several more 'Eagle Swoops' over the following months. Each one followed the same pattern. Early morning deployment by helicopter, rapid movement, then search and destroy operations. The enemy was clearly rattled by these sudden intrusions into what they had considered safe areas. Intelligence reports indicated that the swoops were having a significant impact on enemy morale and their ability to operate freely.

BETWEEN TOURS: BROKEN PROMISES AND HARD CHOICES

The Government Office. Upon completion of his first tour in Malaya in 1957, george returned to Australia for brief leave before reporting to the Brisbane Military Depot in preparation for discharge. He carried with him a record detailing three years of distant correspondence courses; studies undertaken at his own expense during rest periods between operations and throughout his deployment in Malaya.

His ultimate ambition was clear: to attend university and study law, following the path blazed by several World War II veterans he knew who had successfully made that transition. In the simplest terms, he wanted to find a trade or profession that would provide both intellectual engagement and adequate income to support his small family.

He arrived at the Commonwealth Government Office in Brisbane's city centre, an agency tasked with assisting and training veterans for resettlement into the civilian workforce. What he encountered there would shape his decision-making for years to come. The air-conditioned office was staffed by bored faces in suits, not one showing even a tiny spark of interest in his aspirations or his documented three years of self-directed study. The blank expressions confirmed immediately that his challenging aspirations would not see the light of day.

The message from their leader was short and simple: the scheme was closing. However, they could provide tools and equipment for a butcher's trade. At least George thought bitterly, it wasn't sweeping out the Tivoli Theatre after each performance. The anger that surged through him was profound.

He had been betrayed, given the flick, handed a barrow full of broken promises after six years of anticipation and effort. Sayonara. Salamat tinggal, or in soldier language: 'Up yours'. As he left their office, Captain Saunder's voice from long ago echoed in his mind chiding him: *'Stay calm and always have one foot on the ground.'* George searched but found no firm ground to reach for. It seemed he could well fall on his arse and drag his family down with him.

Taking the Queen's Shilling Again. Thus, once more, he took the Queen's shilling. He and 'Moff'; inseparable as always; were posted back to the Regiment to serve in 1 RAR, now located in Brisbane. It would not be easy. Military pay and conditions in those days were far from generous. On reflection, Mansford would later suspect that despite the military mistress being a bitch, he was far from certain and perhaps reluctant to leave her for the uncertainty of civilian life, which by now had become quite alien to him. Two years passed quickly. He was now a Section Commander holding Corporal rank as the Battalion prepared to return to what was now Malaysia, an independent nation still facing a diminishing terrorist threat on its border with Thailand.

RETURN TO MALAYSIA: MOFFITT BROTHERHOOD & BRIDGES' LEGACY

The Jungle and the Bond with Moffitt. The familiar jungle beckoned once more in 1959. Moffitt and Mansford were inseparable and he took great pride in their close friendship. Moff was a first-class proven leader, always leading from the front, reliable in thick and thin; particularly when they found themselves in strife with their own hierarchy. In George's view, Moffitt's greatest strengths were his unwavering loyalty to those he commanded and a brilliant sense of humour that saw them through many testing times, whether on leave, in the field, or in barracks.

Although the enemy threat had diminished since the height of the Emergency, the long, arduous, unrewarding and frustrating effort to find such an elusive foe became increasingly demanding, both mentally and physically. On leave, the single fellows sought release through drinking and boisterous behaviour, while those with families in Penang treasured precious time with wives and children before yet another farewell and return to the deep, dark jungle.

Long-Range Operations. Self-discipline of the highest standard remained essential, particularly during long-range operations that were becoming the norm. On such demanding patrols, there was constant rotation of rest periods that included dozing, playing cards or reading paperbacks that had been swapped and re-read countless times. Security never faltered. When unusual sounds arose; Orangutans travelling from tree to tree, the crack of a distant branch; there would be immediate silent running, no whispered conversation, just listening for sounds of possible threat.

Night and day, their ears were the critical radar. The ability to identify and interpret sound became the most valuable weapon in their arsenal. A small group remained on notice at all times to assist any patrol in contact. The urgency of such contacts was determined by the volume and type of fire. Without exception, there existed a powerful sense of trust and confidence in each other that never left them.

Even after they said their final farewells to soldiering days and went their separate ways, their precious bonding was never fractured. It was and always would be the most important asset in any unit. All as one; and it begins from the very first order on day one of recruit training. Fiddle with this essential unity, be you a General or Lance Corporal and you are dead, dead, dead.

Captain Dick Whitton: Guardian of Unity. Such unity was nurtured by the Company Second-in-Command, Captain Dick Whitton, a Korean veteran who could anticipate their moods and shortcomings and provide sound solutions. Dick was loved by all of them, a great caretaker of their unity and discipline.

Above all, he was never reluctant to demonstrate his anger at their shortcomings but equally ensured they were well administered both in the field and in base. George's respect for Dick Whitton was so immense, that later in life he still addressed him as *'Sir.'* Whitton was one of those who did more than their share and was never adequately recognised for his professionalism and dedication.

The Jungle's Hazards. Over two years, the Company experienced two incidents of snake bites, a stampeding elephant that decided there were no rules for the jungle highway and a tiger that shadowed them for several days, leaving huge paw marks where it had circled their night camps. Frequent fevers, bruised bodies and limps were part of everyday routine, not forgetting several near-misses at night when old trees died with shattering crashes. Their contact with the outside world was by radio, just twice daily, subject to suitable atmospherics at first and last light.

Lieutenant Clive Bridges: The Model Leader. Of all George's memories from those two years of duty, the proudest and starkest lessons in soldiering were demonstrated by their beloved skipper, Lieutenant Clive Bridges; a reserved but very competent junior leader. He was decisive, firm and friendly, never reluctant to seek advice when options needed to be considered. It was a far cry from the conduct of *'Audie Murphy'* during their previous tour.

When Lieutenant Bridges fell ill and was hospitalised for two months, George, as the senior Corporal, took command. It was a compliment of trust to the Platoon that Battalion Headquarters did not assign some green young officer as a temporary replacement. When Bridges returned and resumed command, he withdrew once more from his temporary appointment as acting Platoon Sergeant. (It seemed *'temporary'* was his trademark.) His rifle section had done quite well without him, which chastened his ego for a while.

The Day Everything Changed. Bridges' return coincided with the beginning of a new deployment. Following standard procedures, he took the first truck while George, as acting Platoon Sergeant, commanded the second vehicle. Soon after departure, Bridges' truck left the mountain road and burst into flames. There were casualties. As he reached the scene of the wreckage, high-pitched screams pierced the air from the overturned and burning cabin. He passed one prone body totally engulfed in flames.

From the blackened face, he wrongly assumed it was the Gurkha driver. That meant their boss was still trapped in the burning cabin. Legs were clearly visible protruding from the wreckage. George tried desperately to drag the trapped man free, but the body wouldn't budge and the blaze was increasing. It was then he realised that the boots he was tugging were British issue and the seemingly lifeless body lying close by the fiery cabin was Lieutenant Bridges. The screaming man in the flames was the driver.

An Impossible Choice. There was no hesitation in his decision. The driver was clearly doomed; it was their boss who might be saved. He abandoned the screaming driver and tried to smother the flames on Bridges with his own body. He failed. Someone arrived with a fire extinguisher and in seconds George had killed the flames. The last words he heard Lieutenant Bridges say were: *'How are the boys?'* George assured him all were okay. It was then Bridges gave his final order: *'George, take command.'* He did, remaining in command until they sailed for home later that year.

A Lesson That Lasted a Lifetime. Those words from a dying soldier would be remembered always. They were clear evidence of acceptance of duty and immediate concern for the welfare of his soldiers'. This act of leadership reached deep into his memory and constantly resurfaced over the next twenty-five years.

As a guest speaker addressing The Royal Military College Cadets soon to be commissioned as junior officers, he often used Lieutenant Clive Bridges as an example of what leadership truly meant; not rank, not authority, but responsibility and care for those you lead, even in your final moments.

The lesson was seared into George's consciousness: a leader's first thought, even in extremis, must be for his soldiers. Bridges had not asked about his own injuries or survival. He had not cursed his fate or expressed fear. His dying words were about his men and his final order ensured continuity of command. This was leadership distilled to its purest essence.

The brotherhood. The bond forged in the jungle exceeded everything. This was mateship in its purest form; not an abstract concept but a lived reality born of shared hardship, mutual dependence and absolute trust. In the jungle, soldiers depended on each other for survival. The man beside you might save your life, as Bomber Harris saved his. You shared the misery of wet clothes, the exhaustion of long patrols, the fear of contact with the enemy and the small comforts of hexamine stoves and dry socks at night.

Band of Brothers in Malaya

This mateship created bonds that lasted lifetimes. It was the knowledge that your mates understood what you had experienced because they had experienced it too. It was the certainty that you could depend on them absolutely and they could depend on you. It was the willingness to endure hardship without complaint because your mates were enduring the same hardship.

'Of all my time in the military, the time I spent in Malaya, with 2nd Battalion, on operations against terrorists, was the most demanding, most rewarding, endearing time of my whole military life and it was the time that I learnt more than anywhere else.'

George once remarked that *'the best years of my life were in the jungles of Malaya.'* Despite the raised eyebrows implying he was drifting away from family, he understood the significance of those experiences.' *However, it really was; it was quite remarkable, that camaraderie we had there.'*

RETURN TO AUSTRALIA

Homecoming. Suddenly their tour was over and they were aboard a troopship once more, heading back to their precious land down under. Ships in Sydney Harbor welcomed their return with whistle blasts. Later that day they were in Brisbane, safe and secure in their own very modest homes. George had left Australia a young soldier seeking education and a future. He returned a leader who had learned the hardest lessons not in correspondence courses, but in burning truck cabins and jungle silence, in the friendship of men like Moffitt and the example of men like Bridges. The Army, for all its hardships and betrayals, had given him something far more valuable than a trade; it had given him purpose, brotherhood and the beginnings of a leadership philosophy that would define the rest of his life.

TWO TOURS, ONE TRANSFORMATION

When George's second tour with 1 RAR concluded in 1961, he returned to Australia with extensive operational experience from two Malayan tours: 1955-1957 with 2 RAR and 1959-1961 with 1 RAR. This operational experience, combined with his demonstrated leadership abilities and tactical competence, positioned him for continued advancement in his military career. The skills and experience he gained during his Malayan service proved directly applicable to his subsequent assignments. His expertise in jungle warfare, understanding of counter-insurgency operations and practical knowledge of what was required to train soldiers for jungle operations made him a valuable asset to the Australian Army as it prepared for potential future conflicts in Southeast Asia.

LEGACY OF MALAYAN SERVICE

Australia's Longest Commitment. The Malayan Emergency was Australia's longest continuous military commitment of the twentieth century. Australian Battalions served in Malaya from 1955 to 1963, maintaining a presence throughout the final phase of the Emergency and into the post-Emergency period. Although this is true, if you count the post-Emergency (55-63) presence that continued until late 1960s, some historians argue Vietnam (1962–1973) was longer. For soldiers like George who served multiple tours in Malaya, the experience was formative. The extended operations in demanding conditions, the tactical challenges of counter-insurgency warfare and the leadership responsibilities of commanding soldiers in combat provided lessons that could not be learned in peacetime training.

Bonds That Lasted. The bonds formed during Malayan service created lasting connections between soldiers who had shared the hardships and dangers of jungle operations. George maintained friendships with soldiers he had served alongside in Malaya throughout his life. These connections were not merely social but represented a community of shared experience and mutual understanding that transcended the specific period of service. The professional reputation he established during his Malayan tours followed him throughout his career. He was known as a competent, reliable Section Commander who could be trusted with responsibility and who performed well under demanding conditions. This reputation opened doors for future opportunities and contributed to his selection for subsequent operational deployments and leadership positions.

A Spring Board for Leaders. The Malayan Emergency significantly developed the operational capabilities of the Australian Army. It prepared soldiers for the complexities of jungle warfare and counter-insurgency operations, fostering a generation of leaders who would later excel in subsequent conflicts.' *The Malayan Emergency was a huge development for our Regiment; it prepared us so well for Vietnam. We went from our 1937 webbing to the British webbing. Suddenly we had better tents, better rations and better equipment.'*

More importantly, it developed leaders. '*Have a look at all the young soldiers who were commissioned and served as officers in Vietnam, or later and have a look at all the young soldiers who suddenly became very outstanding senior NCOs. It is a huge list. In 1 RAR, in A Company, there was something like about nine from that Company, of a hundred, who were commissioned and served in Vietnam; so, this was a huge springboard, this Malaya, a huge springboard.'*

For George, Malaya had been the crucible. Korea had tested his courage; Malaya had forged his leadership. The lessons learned in the jungles of Malaya; from the mateship of men like Moffitt to the dying example of Lieutenant Bridges; would guide him through the decades ahead as he rose through the ranks and shaped the next generation of Australian soldiers.

FAREWELL TO MALAYA

Final Days. The final days in Malaya were busy with handover procedures to the incoming Battalion. There were briefings on operational areas, enemy activity and local contacts. Equipment was checked and accounted for. There were farewell functions with British Units and local officials.

Reflections. As George reflected on his two years in Malaya, he was struck by how much he had learned and how much he had matured. He had arrived as a young soldier, eager but inexperienced. He was leaving as a seasoned veteran with combat experience and a deep understanding of jungle warfare. He had seen mates killed and wounded. He had experienced the frustration of hunting an elusive enemy and the satisfaction of successful operations. Above all, he had learned the value of discipline, teamwork and leadership.

The Voyage Home. The voyage home on the '*New Australia'* was very different from the voyage out. Then, they had been apprehensive and uncertain. Now they were confident and experienced. There was much laughter and storytelling as they recounted their experiences. There were also quiet moments of reflection for those who had not survived to make the journey home.

Arrival in Australia. The arrival in Australia was emotional. Families were waiting at the dock and there were tears and laughter as they were reunited. For George, seeing his family waiting brought home the reality that his tour was over and he had survived.

RETURN TO NORMAL LIFE

Settling In. The return to normal life was not easy. The transition from the intensity of operations to the routine of garrison duty was difficult. There were parades, inspections and training exercises, but they lacked the edge of combat operations. Many of the soldiers found it hard to adjust.

Promotion and New Responsibilities. George's promotion to Lance Corporal brought new responsibilities. He was now responsible for a section and had to ensure they were trained and ready for whatever came next. It was a challenge, but one he embraced.

Family Life. For the first time in years, George was able to spend extended time with his family. They moved into married quarters and began to establish a routine. His wife was pregnant with their first child and there was much to prepare.

POSTED TO DEPOT BATTALION

New Assignment. After several months, George was posted to the Depot Battalion where new recruits were trained. It was a very different role from combat operations, but an important one. He was responsible for training the next generation of soldiers and ensuring they were ready for whatever challenges they would face.

Teaching the Lessons. George found that he enjoyed teaching. He was able to pass on the lessons he had learned in Korea and Malaya. He emphasised the importance of discipline, attention to detail and teamwork. He was demanding but fair and the recruits responded well to his leadership. He stressed the lessons that had been learned at such cost in Malaya. Weapon handling was paramount. Battle discipline was essential. Attention to detail could mean the difference between life and death. He taught them that in the jungle, you hear the enemy before you see them. He taught them to move quietly, to observe constantly and to trust their mates.

The young recruits did not always understand why he was so demanding. They could not know that behind every drill, every inspection, every seemingly trivial detail, there stood the memory of soldiers who had died because those details had been neglected. They could not know about the accidental clash, about Sergeant Ewal shot in moonlight, about faulty ammunition and jammed weapons at the moment of contact. But George knew. And he was determined that the soldiers he trained would be better prepared than he had been when he first entered the jungle in 1956.

Reflections on Teaching. Years later, George would reflect that his time as an instructor was some of the most rewarding of his career. He took pride in seeing young soldiers develop and knowing that he had played a part in preparing them for service. Some of those young soldiers would later serve with distinction in Vietnam and a few would seek him out to thank him for the training that had kept them alive.

The transition from combat soldier to instructor marked another phase in George's development as a leader. In Malaya he had learned to lead by example, to care for his soldiers, to make decisions under pressure. As an instructor, he learned to pass on those lessons, to shape the next generation and to ensure that the hard-won knowledge purchased with blood in the jungles of Malaya would not be lost.

The Malayan legacy. The Malayan Emergency shaped George in ways that would influence the rest of his military career. The operational experience, the leadership lessons, the bonds of mateship; all would prove invaluable in the years ahead. The young soldier who had arrived in Penang in 1955, fresh from Korea and uncertain of what lay ahead, had been transformed by six years of jungle operations into a capable, confident leader.

The lessons of Malaya were etched deep. The importance of proper training and procedures. The value of experienced NCOs and officers. The necessity of attention to detail. The power of unit cohesion and mateship. The reality that leadership meant putting your soldiers first, even in your dying moments.

Lieutenant Clive Bridges' final words; *'How are the boys?'* and *'George, take command'*; became for George the essence of leadership. Not self-concern, but concern for those you lead. Not abdication of responsibility, but ensuring continuity even in extremis. These were not abstract principles learned in a classroom but truths burned into consciousness by fire and death on a mountain road.

The friendships forged in the jungle; with Moffitt, with Bomber Harris, with the veterans who had taught him, with the young soldiers he had led; remained among the most important relationships of his life. The shared hardship, the mutual dependence and the absolute trust created bonds that transcended the years and circumstances.

The professional competence developed through two tours of demanding operations positioned George for continued advancement. His expertise in jungle warfare, his proven leadership abilities, his reputation for reliability and competence made him a valued asset as the Australian Army looked ahead to potential future conflicts in Southeast Asia.

Mansford in Malaya

The Malayan Emergency had been Australia's longest continuous military commitment. For George, it had been the crucible that transformed him from a young soldier into a leader, from a follower into someone others would follow, from a student of war into a teacher who would shape the next generation. The jungle had tested him. The operations had challenged him. The deaths of mates had marked him. The example of leaders like Bridges and the friendship of soldiers like Moffitt had shaped him. He had entered the jungle seeking education and found it; not in correspondence courses, but in the hard school of combat operations.

As he trained new recruits in the relative safety of Australia, the sounds and smells of the Malayan jungle remained vivid. The smell of hexamine stoves. The feel of wet clothes in the morning. The sound of rain on the canopy. The whispered conversations at night. The sudden crack of gunfire. The screams from a burning truck.

These memories would never leave him. They would inform every decision he made, every lesson he taught, every soldier he led. The Malayan Emergency had ended, but its legacy would continue through the soldiers it had shaped and the lessons they would pass on.

For George Mansford, Malaya had been more than a posting or a tour of duty for George. It had been a transformation. He had arrived as a soldier. He left as a leader. And the lessons learned in those jungles would guide him through the rest of his military career and beyond.

CHAPTER 5:
VIETNAM DEPLOYMENT - 6 RAR

COMMISSIONING FROM THE RANKS

The Journey to Officer. George Mansford's commissioning from the ranks in 1964 marked a significant milestone in his military career. After thirteen years as an enlisted soldier and non-commissioned officer since 1951; including deployments to Korea and two tours in Malaya.

He was selected for the Knife and Fork Course, a six-week programme designed to commission experienced non-commissioned officers in the Australian Army.

The pathway from enlisted ranks to commissioned officer was selective and demanding. George's selection reflected his demonstrated leadership in Korea and Malaya, his tactical competence and his potential for greater responsibility.

By 1964, he had accumulated more operational experience than many officers who entered service through conventional pathways.

He had carried heavy loads through jungle terrain, slept on the ground in monsoon rain, navigated featureless jungles and made tactical decisions under fire. This experience gave him credibility that could not be acquired through classroom instruction.

The Knife and Fork Course. The commissioning course, colloquially known as the Knife and Fork Course, emphasised social conventions expected of officers alongside comprehensive military instruction. Officer Cadets received training in tactics at Platoon and Company levels, studied military history and learned administration, logistics and staff functions. The course emphasised decision-making under pressure; analysing complex situations and making sound tactical decisions based on incomplete information.

George's operational experience gave him significant advantages. He understood from personal experience what worked in jungle operations and what soldiers needed from their leaders. The lessons from Malaya; the importance of proper training and procedures, the value of experienced NCOs, the necessity of attention to detail, the power of unit cohesion and mateship; informed his approach to officer training.

Leadership Transition. The transition from Sergeant to Second Lieutenant required adjustment. As a Non-Commissioned Officer, George had led through direct personal contact with soldiers in his section. As an Officer, he would command larger units through subordinate leaders, requiring different skills: delegation, accountability and broader operational perspective. Officers commissioned from the ranks often enjoyed particular respect from enlisted soldiers. They had walked the same path, understood the challenges soldiers faced and brought practical knowledge to their leadership.

His combat experience in Korea and Malaya gave him additional credibility. Soldiers recognised he had been where they were and understood what it meant to be a Private soldier carrying a rifle on patrol. The transition was not without challenges. Former peers became subordinates. The informal relationships that characterised NCO life gave way to the more formal relationships between officers and enlisted soldiers. George had to learn when to maintain distance and when to close it, when to be formal and when to be approachable.

ESTABLISHMENT OF 6 BATTALION

Formation and Selection. The 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment (6 RAR), was raised on 6th June 1965 at Enoggera Barracks in Brisbane, Queensland. George was one of the original officers assigned to the newly formed Battalion. His selection recognised his operational experience, proven leadership and jungle warfare expertise. The formation of 6 RAR represented Australia's expanding commitment to South Vietnam. Rather than deploying an existing Battalion, the Army raised a new Battalion specifically for Vietnam service, allowing careful selection of experienced personnel and targeted training. The Battalion drew officers and senior NCOs from across the Regiment, creating a unit with extraordinary depth of experience.

Officers of the 6th Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment1965

George was assigned as Assault Pioneer Commander, a specialist position responsible for demolitions, obstacle breaching, mine warfare and engineering tasks supporting infantry operations. The position reflected his technical competence and leadership ability. The Assault Pioneer Platoon would play a crucial role in operations, clearing obstacles, destroying enemy bunkers and providing engineering support to rifle companies.

Building the Battalion. The process of building 6 RAR from scratch presented both opportunities and challenges. The Battalion could establish its own culture and standards from the beginning, but it had to create cohesion among soldiers who had not served together before. His experience in 2 RAR and 1 RAR; Battalions with strong traditions and powerful unit cohesion; informed his approach to building the Assault Pioneer Platoon.

The integration of National Servicemen presented particular challenges. National Servicemen brought enthusiasm and capability but limited military experience. The Battalion had to blend regular soldiers with extensive operational experience with National Servicemen who were still learning basic military skills. George and other experienced leaders emphasised that combat success depended on soldiers working together effectively, regardless of whether they were regulars or National Servicemen.

Vietnam

INTENSIVE TRAINING PROGRAMME

Preparing for Vietnam. Following formation, 6 RAR commenced intensive training for Vietnam operations. The programme focused on jungle warfare, counter-insurgency operations and tactical challenges specific to South Vietnam. Training built on Malayan Emergency lessons and adapted them to Vietnam's operational environment.

George's Malayan experience proved directly relevant. His jungle warfare skills, tactical lessons from operations against communist insurgents and understanding of soldier survival needs informed his approach to training the Assault Pioneer Platoon. He knew what soldiers would face in Vietnam because he had faced similar challenges in Malaya.

The training emphasised physical fitness and endurance; carrying heavy loads over difficult terrain, operating in tropical heat and humidity and maintaining performance despite fatigue. Soldiers trained to move through jungle terrain, establish ambush positions, conduct cordon and search operations and respond to contact with the enemy.

Specialist Training. The Assault Pioneer Platoon received specialised training in demolitions and mine warfare: handling explosives safely, constructing demolition charges, breaching obstacles and detecting and neutralising enemy mines and booby traps. This training was demanding and dangerous. Soldiers learned to work with explosives under pressure, knowing that mistakes could be fatal.

Tactical training reflected Vietnam's unique environment. Unlike Malaya's focus on small insurgent groups, Vietnam involved larger enemy forces capable of both conventional military operations and guerrilla tactics. The enemy in Vietnam could mass Battalion-sized forces for major attacks and then disperse into small groups for guerrilla operations.

Patrolling formed the central training element. Sections and Platoons practiced jungle movement, security, navigation and contact response. They rehearsed immediate action drills until responses became automatic. George emphasised the lessons from Malaya: the importance of forward scouts, the need for quick decision-making and the value of fire discipline.

The Malayan Emergency had been a huge development for the Regiment. It prepared soldiers for the complexities of jungle warfare and counter-insurgency operations.' *We went from our 1937 webbing to the British webbing. Suddenly we had better tents, better rations and better equipment.'* More importantly, it developed leaders.' *Have a look at all the young soldiers who were commissioned and served as officers in Vietnam, or later and have a look at all the young soldiers who suddenly became very outstanding senior NCOs.'*

'In 1 RAR, A Company, there was something like about nine from that Company, of a hundred, who were commissioned and served in Vietnam; so, this was a huge springboard.' For George, the lessons of Malaya shaped his approach to training 6 RAR for Vietnam. He emphasised realistic training that prepared soldiers for combat realities. He stressed weapon handling and safety, remembering the accidental discharges and friendly fire incidents in Malaya. He taught soldiers to think for themselves and make decisions under pressure, knowing that in combat there would be no time to wait for orders.

DEPLOYMENT TO VIETNAM

Arrival in Phuoc Tuy. 6 RAR deployed to South Vietnam in June of 1966. Lieutenant Mansford deployed as Assault Pioneer Commander, marking his first Vietnam tour. The deployment represented Australia's largest military commitment since Korea. 6 RAR would serve in the 1st Australian Task Force in Phuoc Tuy Province at Nui Dat. Upon arrival, the Battalion began constructing defensive positions and preparing for sustained operations in tropical conditions.

The base at Nui Dat required extensive engineering work; clearing fields of fire, constructing bunkers, establishing wire obstacles and creating the infrastructure needed to support a Battalion-sized force. As Assault Pioneer Commander, he supervised construction of defensive positions at Nui Dat and fire support bases. Assault pioneers used explosives to clear fields of fire, create obstacles channelling enemy attacks into killing zones and improve defensive positions under threat of enemy attack. The work was demanding and dangerous, conducted in tropical heat while maintaining security against possible enemy attack.

Band of Brothers Vietnam

Transfer to AATTV. George was transferred from 6 RAR to the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) in 1966 with the rank of Captain. He was tasked with conducting advisory work with South Vietnamese forces; a very different role from commanding the Assault Pioneer Platoon. His experience with 6 RAR during its formation and training proved valuable, but his primary role in Vietnam would be as an advisor rather than as a combat leader with an Australian Unit.

CHAPTER 6:
AUSTRALIAN ARMY TRAINING TEAM VIETNAM (AATTV)

Transfer to the 'Team'. Mansford in 1966 as a member of the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV), an elite unit tasked with advising and training South Vietnamese Forces. His deployment would prove to be a defining chapter in a distinguished military career that would span decades and multiple conflicts, establishing him as one of the Australian Army's most respected voices on soldiering, mateship and duty.

His assignment came at a critical juncture in Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The 1st Australian Task Force had recently established its base at Nui Dat in Phuoc Tuy Province and the Australian advisory effort was beginning to extend beyond conventional military operations to include the challenging work of advising Regional Force (RF) and Popular Force (PF) units; the lowest level of South Vietnam's provincial military organisation.

The AATTV, commonly known as 'The Team', consisted of Australian Army Advisors assigned to train and advise South Vietnamese military units and accompany them on operations. Service with the AATTV was considered one of the most demanding and dangerous assignments available to Australian soldiers in Vietnam.

AATTV members served individually or in small groups embedded with South Vietnamese Units, often in remote locations with minimal support from other Australian Forces. They operated as the only Australian personnel present, relying on their own skills, judgement and cooperation of the South Vietnamese units they advised.

Mansford's assignment to the AATTV reflected his operational experience and demonstrated ability to work effectively in challenging environments. His service in Korea and Malaya, experience as a Section Commander and Platoon Commander and recent service with 6 RAR prepared him for the demands of advisory work.

The Team had an extraordinary record of service. AATTV members served throughout South Vietnam, from the Mekong Delta to the Demilitarised Zone. They advised Vietnamese Rangers, Regional Forces, Popular Forces and Regular Army Units. They accompanied Vietnamese Units on operations, often in areas where few other Australian forces operated. The casualty rate among AATTV members was high relative to their numbers. They faced constant danger from enemy action, operated in isolated locations and often lacked the support available to soldiers serving in Australian Units. The Team earned four Victoria Crosses during the Vietnam War; more than any other Australian unit.

THE BINH BA MISSION

George was dispatched to Binh Ba, a village and French rubber plantation located just seven kilometres north of the Nui Dat base, connected by Route 2. The strategic importance of this location was clear: it represented a potential enemy approach route to the Australian Task Force. One of the concerns was the possible enemy line of approach to the Task Force from the direction of Binh Ba.

The establishment of an RF Company at Binh Ba, it was reasoned, could supplement the Task Force's early warning system of infantry patrols and reconnaissance flights. The province chief acceded to the subsequent request and ordered the relocation to Binh Ba of the RF Company from Phu My, a village in the far west of the province. At the same time, Lieutenant Colonel John Warr, commanding 5th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment at Nui Dat, convinced the Task Force Commander and Milner, commanding the Training Team, that Warrant Officer Smith, who was attached to the 5th Battalion for civic action duties, would be better employed advising the RF Company. This was arranged and in September 1966 Smith was appointed to assist the move of the Company and help it settle in at Binh Ba.

The lodgement of the RF Company coincided with the arrival of Captain Mansford into AATTV. Dispatched to Binh Ba and with the assistance of Smith, he supervised the establishment of the outpost. Working alongside Warrant Officer Smith, George supervised the establishment of what would become a critical outpost. The 614th RF Company had been relocated from Phu My and his task was to transform this unit into an effective fighting force capable of defending the village and providing intelligence to the Task Force.

Establishing the outpost. At this time in South Vietnam, the US advisory effort was beginning to permeate to districts and to isolated RF and PF outposts, then the lowest level of the provincial military organisation. Advisers to the villages broke new ground.

They found that there was little or no organisation to confront the Viet Cong and no framework from which one could be developed; that they were the last in line for support; and that de facto control of the people; often uninterrupted since before the French departure; was by the Viet Cong.

Thus, it was at Binh Ba, typical of the outposts in Phuoc Tuy, to which members of the Team were posted in 1966.

The conditions George encountered at Binh Ba were typical of isolated RF and PF outposts throughout South Vietnam in 1966. There was little organisation to confront the Viet Cong, no framework from which one could be developed and the advisers were last in line for support. De facto control of the local population had often been in Viet Cong hands since before the French departure. The instructions given to George were broad-ranging. He had a dual role. First, under the province senior adviser, he was to organise, supervise, train and oversee the operations of the newly arrived 614th RF Company. This largely meant preventing Viet Cong harassment of the villagers of Binh Ba and the surrounding hamlets.

His second responsibility was to warn the Task Force of any Viet Cong activity observed and to submit regular reports of information discovered in the village. The Task Force would reciprocate by advising of suspected Viet Cong activity which might affect the outpost, although as Mansford wryly noted, such reports often concluded with an assessment that the outpost, yet again, was about to be overrun. George learnt to accept these predictions philosophically.

Mansford and Smith established their headquarters halfway along a disused French-built air-strip immediately to the north of Binh Ba. There they found the remains of an old French colonial two-storey house, long since deserted. Once the home of a well-to-do plantation owner, it had been taken over by beetles and geckoes. Verdant growth had encroached on the veranda and climbed the outer walls, while inside there was no furniture, lights, sewage or water. It took several days of work, with the help of some of the men of the Company, to render the house habitable again.

The outpost's low priority was evident in every aspect. So low in priority was the outpost that the advisers were not even able to obtain a Company vehicle. Eventually Smith solved this problem by driving a jeep away from the lines of an American unit in Vung Tau. With this vehicle they were able to visit the Task Force weekly to seek additional rations and defence stores.

George would often visit his previous Pioneer Platoon at 6 RAR and beg, borrow and extract other stores from within 6 RAR and store depots around the Task Force. Phillip 'Butch' Buttigieg and others often assisted George and Smith with any stores that they could afford. Whenever they received fresh meat from that source it meant a feast was in the offing, there being no refrigerator at the house to store it. Luckily, ice for cooling beer was available. Fresh vegetables were obtained from the local market.

The Long Tan Connection. At one stage when he had been visiting 6 RAR from his AATTV posting, seeking out ammunition, pyrotechnics and other stores for his post. Whilst in the area, George said: *'I was visiting from the 'Team', I was down there and I saw Harry Smith and the boys. I stayed with Charles Mollison of Alpha Company who invited me to go on patrol with them. I said yeah and that was the patrol that went out when it was all happening. Just before they left, I got this phone call came through the Battalion Headquarters from the CO of the 'Team' saying, 'you went down there for a rest, you know, now you bloody get your 'ass' back up North!'*

Twenty fours later, on the 16th to 17th August 1966, enemy forces attacked Nui Dat, causing casualties and damage, indicating enemy forces were operating near the base in significant strength. D Company, with approximately 100 soldiers, fought against an enemy force estimated at 2,000 - 2,500. The Australians held their ground, inflicted heavy casualties on the enemy and were eventually relieved by A Coy, 6 RAR in armoured personnel carriers. Mansford's absence from Long Tan was determined by that telephone call that altered his assignment; a significant moment of reflection and became a defining moment in his Vietnam experience.

Building a Fighting Force. The challenges were immediate and daunting. Of the 120 personnel who were officially on the strength of the RF Company, only forty appeared on the ground. Many of the remaining eighty were 'ghost soldiers', those non-existent troops, probably killed in action, whose retention on the books allowed their pay to be collected by senior personnel in the Vietnamese hierarchy.

George's first task with this small band was to establish a fortified position in the vicinity of the house. For three months the soldiers worked tirelessly preparing bunkers and weapon slits against a possible night attack. Ammunition, Claymore and M16 mines, barbed wire, sandbags and pickets were all obtained from the Task Force, as were two highly prized . 50 calibre machine-guns donated by the Cavalry Squadron. Fields of fire for the machine guns were cleared, minefields were established and fire was registered by the Task Force artillery on likely enemy approaches to the outpost.

AATV Legends

There was little change from the daily tasks, although occasional mortaring by the Viet Cong and radio reports of enemy activities in the province kept the advisers on their mettle. But there were some high spots. On one occasion Mansford and Smith, assisted by a squad of soldiers, were laying the protective minefield. It was a tricky business for the semi-trained group, placing the mines in the ground, removing safety pins or affixing trip wires.

While the squad was thus engaged, Smith looked up to see a mangy red dog running towards them from the far side of the field. As the dog ran forward its zigzag pattern left a wake of exploding mines and trip flares; but miraculously it continued. The group could do nothing but watch, mesmerised, as the friendly dog came closer. Smith tried to shoot it but missed. Before reaching the terrified onlookers however, the dog veered off in another direction. The same unnerving event was repeated on other days, causing Smith to swear that the animal had been coached by 'Charlie'.

Transformation and achievement. After several months the Company, now grown in strength, was beginning to take on the appearance of a disciplined unit. Initially a semi-trained rabble, their expertise grew daily under the guidance of Mansford and Smith. Day and night patrol programmes were instituted and any time which could be spared from patrolling or improving the defensive position was spent on training.

Unit spirit and a feeling of belonging were encouraged by such measures as the institution of a daily flag-raising and lowering ceremony. George understood that military effectiveness required more than tactical proficiency. He worked to build pride, discipline and cohesion; the same qualities that would later resonate throughout his speeches about the beloved Regiment and the importance of mateship and duty.

By March of 1967, when Mansford and Smith were leaving, they felt that much had been accomplished in this first six trying months. Perhaps the most notable achievement was that they were never attacked; partly aided, no doubt, by the Advisers letting it be known among the villagers that they were surrounded by formidable minefields and protected by the guns of the Task Force.

More significantly, the outpost was able to provide the Task Force with information on enemy patterns and reduce, but certainly not entirely prevent, Viet Cong harassment and recruitment of villagers from Binh Ba. As well, the outpost performed important duties related to civic action. The Company ensured that teams, mainly medical personnel from the Task Force, were able to carry out their work in Binh Ba without harassment.

While civic action in the early days consisted mostly of emergency dental treatment, stethoscope checks and the dispensing of pills, it appeared to help in securing the goodwill of mothers and their children. Smith himself carried out minor tasks such as assisting with the distribution of Australian exercise books and other items at the local school and provided materials for painting the Binh Ba hospital.

The early experiences of the advisers in the Binh Ba outpost were similar to those in outposts elsewhere in the province. Most advisers felt a sense of achievement, although results varied and were always difficult to assess. Almost all who had served in other areas in Vietnam nevertheless agreed that it was with a certain feeling of relief that they moved to Phuoc Tuy where they had the benefit of the protective umbrella of the Task Force.

AATTV

Go visit where they trained 24/7, for unknown tomorrows
Revising skills and the arts of war for foreign troops to follow
It was here the Team was born and soon to leave for distant shores

All were volunteers to help foreign friends in many needs of war
In constant danger and the unknown,
They were scattered as small teams

From the vast treacherous Mekong to an angry DMZ
Blood, sweat, tears and vague orders, scarce joy and much woe
Yet always was the Team's cry in war "Follow me, let's go"

Wooden sentries planted long ago, still reach for the sky
Yet another generation of happy screeching bird in freedom fly
Silent and watchful trees still guard the flags, night and day

A beloved bright Southern Cross as a true compass shows the way
Slowly the team is gathering to all be together again
Each with a tree beside a flag and a proud beloved name

Soon or late, God will order a roll call to confirm all are here
"All accounted for" will signal a loud, proud shout "Persevere"

(George Mansford 2 July 2O22)

DUC My Ranger Training Centre.
George served at the Duc My Ranger Training Centre, training South Vietnamese Rangers; elite light infantry units trained for reconnaissance, long-range patrol and counter-insurgency operations.

The Rangers were among the best South Vietnamese Units, selected for their physical fitness, motivation and combat effectiveness.

Training at Duc My emphasised skills required for effective counter-insurgency operations: patrolling techniques, ambush tactics, tracking, navigation and jungle survival.

The curriculum drew heavily on lessons from the Malayan Emergency and Australian experience in jungle warfare.

Mansford's Malayan experience proved directly relevant. His jungle warfare skills, understanding of counter insurgency operations and knowledge of what soldiers needed .To operate effectively against guerrilla forces informed his training approach, George taught the Rangers the same lessons he had learned in the jungles of Malaya; the importance of noise discipline, the need for constant vigilance and the value of proper patrolling procedures.

Training at Duc My was demanding and realistic. George ensured Rangers were trained to standards preparing them for combat realities. Training exercises simulated combat conditions with live-fire exercises, night operations and extended field exercises testing endurance and tactical skills. The emphasis on realism reflected his conviction that soldiers deserved training that kept them alive in actual combat.

Cultural challenges. Cultural dimensions of advisory work presented significant challenges. George communicated through interpreters, worked within Vietnamese military command structures and navigated cultural differences affecting training conduct and reception. Effective advisory work required patience, cultural sensitivity and building relationships based on mutual respect.

The language barrier complicated everything. Even with good interpreters, nuances were lost in translation. Technical military terms did not always translate accurately. Instructions had to be simple and clear, demonstrated as well as explained.

Cultural differences affected how training was received. Vietnamese soldiers came from a different military tradition with different expectations of leadership and training. What worked with Australian soldiers did not always work with Vietnamese soldiers.

George had to adapt his teaching methods while maintaining training standards. Building trust was essential. Vietnamese officers and soldiers had to trust that their Australian Advisors understood their situation, respected their culture and genuinely wanted to help them become better soldiers. This trust developed slowly, built through shared experiences, demonstrated competence and mutual respect.

Christmas 1966 Operation. The Christmas 1966 operation occurred during a declared ceasefire intended to observe Christmas and New Year holidays. Both the United States and South Vietnamese Governments announced temporary cessation of offensive operations, expecting Communist Forces would reciprocate. The ceasefire was scheduled to begin 24th December 1966 and extend through the New Year period.

The supposed peace was a fragile veneer, a political fiction that held little sway in the dense jungle. For the Australian soldiers and their advisors, the tension was palpable; the quiet was not one of peace, but of suspense. Intelligence reports painted a grim and relentless picture of enemy movement, resupply activities and preparations for renewed hostilities.

The ceasefire was being exploited as a strategic pause, a crucial window for the enemy to regroup, rearm and improve their tactical positions. Every captured document and radio intercept suggested they were not honouring the truce but were instead coiling for a strike, ready to launch fresh operations the moment the ceasefire officially concluded. This period of deceptive calm was, in many ways, more psychologically taxing than open combat, demanding constant vigilance against an enemy who played by a different set of rules.

George's role involved coordinating between Australian and South Vietnamese forces operating in the same area; essential to prevent friendly fire incidents, ensure effective responses to enemy actions and maintain security despite ceasefire constraints. Coordination between Australian and South Vietnamese Forces was complicated by differences in language, radio equipment, operational procedures and command structures.

Mansford's experience with both Australian Units and South Vietnamese Forces made him particularly valuable. He understood Australian tactical procedures and standards from service with Australian Battalions in Malaya and as one of 6 RAR's original officers. He understood South Vietnamese Forces through advisory work at Duc My and operational experience with Vietnamese Units.

Despite the declared ceasefire, enemy forces remained active in Phuoc Tuy Province. Intelligence reports indicated enemy movement, resupply activities and preparations for renewed operations. Australian and South Vietnamese Forces-maintained vigilance, knowing the ceasefire might be broken at any moment.

This treacherous environment was the crucible in which George Mansford's leadership was further forged. His legacy of service, from his foundational role in 6 RAR to his demanding work with the AATTV, demonstrated his profound adaptability and operational understanding. As an Advisor embedded with South Vietnamese Rangers, he was at the sharpest end of this shadow war. His role demanded more than tactical acumen; it required immense cultural sensitivity and the strength of character to build trust with allied soldiers while facing an enemy's duplicity.

The Christmas 1966 operation exemplified the challenges of advisory work. He operated in an environment where the rules were unclear, supposed allies might not be trusted and where the enemy exploited every advantage. He had to coordinate between forces that spoke different languages, used different equipment and operated under different command structures. He had to maintain security while respecting ceasefire constraints that the enemy ignored.

OPERATIONAL REALITIES

The Nature of the Enemy. The enemy in Vietnam was different from the Communist Terrorists (CT)in Malaya. In Malaya, the enemy operated in small groups, avoided contact when possible and relied on support from isolated communities in the jungle. In Vietnam, the enemy could mass Battalion and Regiment-sized forces for major attacks, then disperse into small groups for guerrilla operations. The Viet Cong and North Vietnamese Army were well-trained, well-equipped and highly motivated. They had extensive experience fighting the French, the Americans and the South Vietnamese.

They understood jungle warfare and counter-insurgency operations. They were patient, disciplined and willing to accept heavy casualties to achieve their objectives. Mansford's experience in Malaya prepared him for some aspects of Vietnam but not others. The jungle skills were transferable; movement, navigation, noise discipline, observation. The counter-insurgency tactics were similar; patrolling, ambushes, cordon and search operations. But the scale of operations was different. In Malaya, contacts typically involved small groups. In Vietnam, a patrol might encounter a Company or Battalion-sized enemy force.

The Advisor's Challenge. As an advisor, Mansford faced challenges that did not exist when commanding Australian soldiers. He could advise and recommend, but he could not command. The Vietnamese officers made the final decisions. If they rejected his advice, he had to accept their decision and work within it. This required a different kind of leadership. Instead of issuing orders, Mansford had to persuade, explain and build relationships that created trust. He had to demonstrate competence so Vietnamese officers would value his advice. He had to show respect for their culture and their military tradition while maintaining professional standards.

The advisory role was often frustrating. George saw mistakes being made that he could not prevent. He watched soldiers take unnecessary risks because officers ignored his advice. He dealt with corruption, incompetence and political interference that compromised military effectiveness. But there were also successes. When Vietnamese officers trusted their advisors and followed their advice, units performed well. When training was properly conducted, Vietnamese soldiers demonstrated courage and competence. The Rangers Mansford trained at Duc My were among the best South Vietnamese Units, capable of conducting difficult operations in demanding conditions.

Living Conditions. Living conditions for AATTV members were often primitive. Unlike Australian soldiers serving in major bases like Nui Dat, advisors lived with Vietnamese units in remote outposts. Accommodation was basic; often just a cot in a small room or a hammock strung in a corner. Food was Vietnamese rations supplemented by whatever could be obtained locally. Medical support was limited. The isolation was profound. Advisors might go weeks without seeing another Australian. Communication with other AATTV members was by radio, subject to atmospheric conditions and security concerns. Mail was irregular. News from home was scarce.

The constant danger created stress that accumulated over time. Unlike soldiers in major bases who had periods of relative safety, advisors were always at risk. The outposts they lived in were vulnerable to attack. The operations they accompanied Vietnamese Units on were dangerous. The roads they travelled were subject to ambush. George's Malayan experience helped him cope with these conditions. He was accustomed to extended operations in difficult terrain. He knew how to maintain morale when conditions were hard. He understood the importance of small comforts; a hot meal, dry clothes, a letter from home.

THE TEAM CULTURE

Standards and Expectations. The AATTV maintained extraordinarily high standards. Selection was rigorous. Only experienced soldiers with proven combat records and demonstrated leadership were accepted. Training was demanding. Advisors had to master not only military skills but also language, cultural awareness and the complex political environment of South Vietnam. The Team expected advisors to lead by example. They could not ask Vietnamese soldiers to do anything they would not do themselves.

They had to demonstrate courage, competence and commitment. They had to earn respect through their actions, not their rank. This culture of excellence created a unit with remarkable esprit de corps. AATTV members took pride in their service. They supported each other despite being scattered across South Vietnam. They maintained professional standards despite difficult conditions. They earned the respect of Vietnamese soldiers and American allies through their performance.

Casualties and Sacrifice. The casualty rate among AATTV members reflected the dangers they faced. The Team earned four Victoria Crosses during the Vietnam War; an extraordinary record for a unit that never numbered more than about 100 advisors at any one time. Many advisors were killed or wounded. Many more suffered from the accumulated stress of extended service in dangerous conditions. George knew the men who died serving with the Team. He attended memorial services for Advisors killed in action. He wrote letters to families of men he had served with.

These losses reinforced his conviction that training had to be realistic, that soldiers deserved preparation that gave them the best chance of survival in combat. The sacrifices made by AATTV members were often unrecognised. They did not serve in large units that attracted media attention. They did not participate in major battles that made headlines. They worked quietly in remote locations, training and advising Vietnamese Units, accompanying them on operations and sharing their dangers.

REFLECTIONS ON VIETNAM

Winning and Losing. Years later, George reflected on Vietnam with a perspective forged in the heat of that experience: '*Where I come from with Vietnam, I make it quite clear: Australians didn't lose the war; we won ours; we won Phuoc Tuy. There was no question we had Phuoc Tuy in our hands and when we left the country, it was still in our hands. It wasn't until years later that North Vietnam swept down in breach of and violated the ceasefire. That's where the war was lost; not in the conduct of it.*'

This perspective reflected Georg's understanding of what Australian Forces accomplished in Vietnam. In Phuoc Tuy Province, Australian Forces conducted effective counter-insurgency operations, secured population centres, disrupted enemy operations and maintained control of their area of operations. When Australian Forces withdrew, Phuoc Tuy was secure.

The subsequent fall of South Vietnam resulted from political decisions, not military failure. The ceasefire agreement signed in 1973 prohibited North Vietnamese Forces from invading South Vietnam. When North Vietnam violated that agreement in 1975 and launched a conventional invasion, South Vietnamese Forces without American air support and with limited ammunition and supplies could not hold. His reflection captured the frustration many Vietnam Veterans felt. They had done their jobs well. They had fought effectively. They had accomplished their missions. Yet the war was lost through political decisions beyond their control.

The Value of the Experience. Despite the ultimate outcome, he valued his Vietnam experience. Service with the AATTV taught him lessons that could not be learned anywhere else. He learned to work effectively in a complex political environment. He learned to build relationships across cultural barriers. He learned to adapt Australian training methods to different contexts. He learned about the importance of trust between advisors and the soldiers they advised. He learned that competence and courage earned respect regardless of nationality. He learned that good training saved lives and poor training cost lives.

These lessons informed his later work establishing the Jungle Training Centre. He understood that training had to be realistic because he had seen what happened when soldiers faced combat without proper preparation. He understood that soldiers needed to think for themselves because he had operated in situations where there was no time to wait for orders. He understood that leadership meant taking responsibility for soldiers' lives because he had commanded soldiers in combat.

LEGACY OF VIETNAM SERVICE

Professional Development. George's Vietnam service; from 6 RAR to the AATTV; demonstrated his adaptability, commitment to soldiers and operational understanding. His experience as one of 6 RAR's original officers during the Battalion's formation and training gave him insight into building effective units. His narrow miss of Long Tan reminded him of how chance and fate operated in combat. His demanding advisory work with South Vietnamese Rangers taught him about cross-cultural leadership and the complexities of counter-insurgency.

The combination of experiences; conventional operations with Australian Units and advisory work with Vietnamese Forces; gave him a breadth of understanding that few officers possessed. He understood what Australian soldiers needed because he had been an Australian soldier. He understood what Vietnamese soldiers needed because he had trained and advised them. He understood the challenges of jungle warfare because he had operated in jungles in Malaya and Vietnam.

Preparation for Future Roles. The lessons learned during Vietnam prepared him for his later role establishing Jungle Training at Tully. He knew what training soldiers needed because he had seen what happened when training was inadequate. He knew how to make training realistic because he understood what combat was like. He knew how to develop soldiers' initiative and decision-making because he had operated in situations where those qualities were essential.

His conviction that realistic training saved lives in combat became the foundation of his approach to training. He would not allow soldiers to be sent into combat without proper preparation. He would not accept training that was comfortable but unrealistic. He would not tolerate standards that were lower than what combat demanded. His understanding of what soldiers needed from their leaders shaped his approach to leadership development. He taught that leadership meant taking responsibility for soldiers' lives. He taught that officers and NCOs had to earn respect through competence and courage. He taught that the first thought of a leader, even in extremis, must be for the soldiers they lead.

The Malayan-Vietnam Connection. The connection between George's Malayan experience and his Vietnam service was direct and profound. The Malayan Emergency prepared the Regiment for Vietnam. The jungle warfare skills, counter-insurgency tactics and operational procedures developed in Malaya transferred directly to Vietnam.

'The Malayan Emergency was a huge development for our Regiment; it prepared us so well for Vietnam. We went from our 1937 webbing to the British webbing. Suddenly we had better tents, better rations and better equipment.'

More importantly, Malaya developed leaders. The young soldiers who served in Malaya became the officers and senior NCOs who led in Vietnam. The lessons learned in Malayan jungles were taught to soldiers preparing for Vietnam. The traditions established in Malaya shaped how the Regiment fought in Vietnam. George embodied this connection. He was a young soldier in Malaya, learning from World War II veterans. He was an officer in Vietnam, teaching what he had learned. He would later establish a Jungle Training Facility, ensuring that future generations would benefit from the lessons purchased with blood in Malaya and Vietnam.

THE COST OF SERVICE

Personal Sacrifice. Vietnam service exacted a personal cost. George was separated from his family for extended periods. He lived in dangerous conditions. He witnessed death and suffering. He made decisions that affected whether soldiers lived or died. These experiences left marks that never completely faded. The stress of advisory work was cumulative. The constant danger, the isolation and the frustration of working in a system where corruption and incompetence sometimes compromised military effectiveness took a toll.

Advisors had to maintain high standards in conditions that made maintaining standards difficult. He coped through the same discipline that had sustained him in Malaya. He focused on his job. He maintained professional standards. He took care of the soldiers he was responsible for. He found small comforts where he could; a letter from home, a conversation with another advisor, the satisfaction of seeing Vietnamese soldiers perform well after good training.

The Bonds of Service. Vietnam created bonds similar to those forged in Malaya. AATTV members shared experiences that few others could understand. They had operated in isolated locations under dangerous conditions. They had worked with Vietnamese Forces. They had seen the war from a perspective different from soldiers serving in large Australian Units.

These shared experiences created lasting connections and AATTV members continue to maintain contact after the war. They attended reunions. They supported each other when dealing with the aftermath of Vietnam service. They took pride in what they had accomplished, even when the broader outcome of the war was disappointing.

The bonds extended to Vietnamese soldiers George had trained and advised. Years after the war, he remembered individual Rangers, their courage, their dedication, their fate after the fall of South Vietnam. He wondered what had happened to them, whether they had survived, whether they had been sent to re-education camps, whether they remembered their Australian Advisors.

Transition to the next phase. George's Vietnam service concluded in 1967. He returned to Australia with experience that few officers possessed; combat service in Korea, two tours in Malaya, service with 6 RAR during its formation and advisory work with the AATTV. This combination of experiences positioned him for his next assignment: instructor at the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra. The transition from combat operations to training was significant. George would no longer lead soldiers in combat. Instead, he would prepare soldiers for combat. The responsibility was different but equally important.

The lessons he learned at Binh Ba; about leadership under adversity, the importance of building unit cohesion, the value of patience and persistence and the bonds formed between soldiers in difficult circumstances; would inform his understanding of military service for the rest of his life. These experiences gave authenticity and depth to the speeches he would later deliver, speaking with authority born of having lived the values he espoused. His experience at Binh Ba was emblematic of the AATTV's mission during the middle years of Australia's Vietnam involvement.

Advisers like him broke new ground, working at the lowest levels of South Vietnam's military organisation with minimal support and maximum responsibility. They lived among the people they were helping to defend, gaining intimate knowledge of local conditions and earning trust through shared hardship and demonstrated competence.

George's service with the AATTV represented a chapter that exemplified the qualities he would spend decades celebrating: 'Duty First', never dobbing, looking after your mates and never being found wanting when the call came. His six months at Binh Ba, his work at Duc My Ranger Training Centre and his experience during the Christmas 1966 operation all contributed to forging a leader who understood what soldiers needed and what combat demanded. This understanding would shape his future contributions to Australian military training and establish him as a voice of authority on the values that defined the Australian soldier.

CHAPTER 7:
AUSTRALIA - THE RETURN HOME

TRANSITIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS (1967-1975)

Return and Transition (1967). George returned from Vietnam in 1967, confronting a jarring transition from the chaos of combat to the mundanity of civilian life. Within just forty-eight hours of experiencing the harrowing realities of war, he found himself at a suburban barbecue watching his son play football.

This rapid shift from combat to domestic normality produced profound dislocation. Routine questions from acquaintances; '*Where have you been?*'; were met with the response Vietnam, often eliciting indifference rather than acknowledgment of the sacrifice he had made.

For many Vietnam veterans, the return home lacked adequate support. Many, not all National Service soldiers would receive their discharge papers at the airport and were expected to resume civilian life within days. The absence of transitional support, formal decompression procedures, or institutional acknowledgement further intensified feelings of alienation. His experience mirrored this reality; within two weeks of returning, he was recalled to Canungra as an instructor, truncating his leave and family time.

This abrupt transition from combat to peacetime service posed challenges that many veterans would grapple with for decades. The stark contrast between the intensity and danger of combat operations and the mundane concerns of peacetime garrison life was difficult to reconcile. Soldiers who had made life-and-death decisions under fire found themselves subjected to peacetime regulations and administrative requirements that seemed trivial by comparison. George's struggle to adjust was compounded by the lack of understanding from those around him; the everyday concerns of civilian life felt irrelevant in light of the experiences he had endured.

Canungra Trails

CANUNGRA INSTRUCTOR PERIOD (1967-1969)

Training the Next Generation. At Canungra, George joined a cadre of instructors comprised of returned men and recently commissioned leaders who had served in both Malaya and Vietnam. This environment allowed him to channel his combat experiences into training for the next generation of soldiers. As an instructor, he bore the weight of processing battlefield losses while preparing soldiers for survival and effective operations in jungle environments. The instructors mess at Canungra became a space for grieving and advocacy.

Instructors like George utilised informal gatherings to share their experiences, discuss the human costs of combat and push for training that reflected battlefield realities. After learning about several deaths in Vietnam, the instructors collectively expressed their grief in a symbolic act of smashing glasses into a fire, linking classroom training to the real human costs they bore. This cathartic release was essential for processing their collective trauma and solidifying their resolve to advocate for necessary changes in the training protocols.

He recognised the urgent need for specialised training to prepare soldiers for the unique challenges they would face in Vietnam. This recognition led him to develop a dedicated Mine and Booby Trap Course at Canungra. His motivation stemmed from personal experience, having commanded vulnerable outposts and suffered injuries from a mine blast during his service. The course aimed to equip soldiers with the skills to detect and counter enemy devices, which had caused significant casualties.

The Mine and Booby Trap Course. This course emerged directly from operational experience. Enemy forces had utilised mechanically and victim-activated devices to devastating effect, resulting in injuries and fatalities among Australian soldiers. The course addressed this operational imperative, providing instruction on the specific threats encountered in Vietnam. George insisted on realism and rigorous standards. The course included instruction on recognising tactical cues indicating mine presence, proper movement techniques and immediate action drills. He emphasised the cognitive load of combat decision-making to prepare trainees for the stressors they would face in real situations.

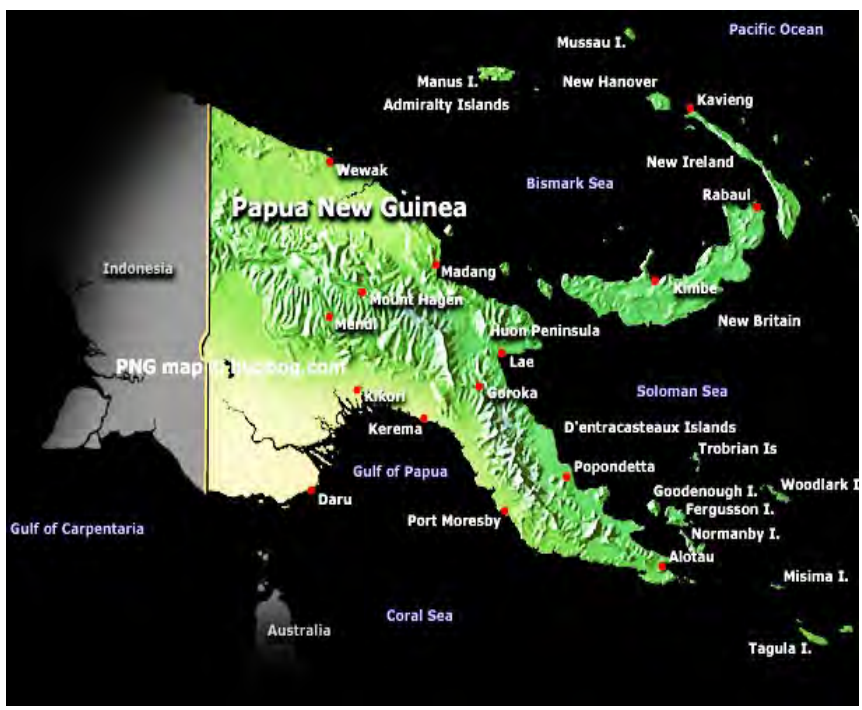
Training sessions were designed to be as realistic as possible, incorporating elements of surprise and uncertainty to mimic combat chaos. Soldiers learned to navigate dense jungle terrain where the risk of encountering hidden explosives was ever-present, preparing them mentally and physically for warfare's unpredictable nature. The course used practical exercises that simulated potential combat scenarios.

Weapon handling was another critical aspect of Mansford's training. He had witnessed too many tragic incidents caused by accidental discharges and friendly fire. He established strict protocols mandating every trainee arrive with a weapon loaded with a blank in the chamber. Unauthorised discharges carried significant penalties, reinforcing weapon discipline. George enforced equal standards across ranks, fining senior officers for breaches. This approach cultivated a culture of accountability beyond technical proficiency, instilling zero-tolerance habits that prevented accidents and ensured immediate action responses were reflexive under pressure. By treating every soldier equally, he fostered mutual respect and shared responsibility where safety was paramount.

TREBLE CHANGE – PAPUA NEW GUINEA: A DEFINING EXERCISE

Planning and Purpose. As the Vietnam War drew to a close in terms of Australian commitment, 1 RAR, under the command of Lieutenant Colonel 'Blue' Hodgkinson, was placed on notice for another tour of operational duty. In light of the Battalion's readiness and the need for continued training, George and his colleagues recognised the importance of providing soldiers with a significant challenge that would maintain their operational edge

George reflected on the situation, noting: *'I remember it well. In fact, I have the Exercise report somewhere in my study and no doubt it would take months trying to find it.'* The planning for Exercise Treble Change began as a response to the cancellation of the Battalion's anticipated deployment to Vietnam. It was crucial to channel the soldiers energy into a demanding operational environment that would foster a sense of individual and collective achievement.



Papua New Guinea

The exercise aimed to achieve several objectives:

To keep the soldiers engaged and focused, (particularly when Vietnam deployment was cancelled)

To provide a tough operational challenge in a hostile environment.

To enhance unit preparation for future combat scenarios.

Execution of Treble Change. Papua New Guinea was selected as the location for Exercise Treble Change, offering diverse terrain that would challenge the soldiers. The exercise was a resounding success, demonstrating what Australian infantry could accomplish when properly trained, professionally led and given a mission worthy of their capabilities.

In George's own words, *'The exercise remained one of my proudest achievements, not because of personal glory, but because it demonstrated what Australian infantry could accomplish.'* The Battalion had undergone a long and demanding phase of training, which included previous exercises in the Atherton Tablelands, reinforced by competitive training in Lavarack.

The Commanding Officer: Hodgkinson, (left) Operations Officer: Mansford and RSM Jack Currie recognised that the soldiers needed to feel a sense of purpose and achievement and Exercise Treble Change provided that opportunity.

' The exercise included several weeks of continuous operations in demanding terrain, with minimal resupply and virtually zero casualties. The only medical evacuation by helicopter during the entire exercise involved a soldier who at night nearly lost an eye on his return from the Platoon Orders Group ('O Group'). He had injured his eye on a stick near his hootchie'. This was a testament to the professional standards and tactical discipline maintained throughout the training. That soldier was Lance Corporal later Warrant Officer Warren Payne

The dual purpose of the exercise was also evident. It not only served as intensive training but also functioned as a morale booster, allowing soldiers to demonstrate their skills in a realistic environment. The soldiers engaged in various tasks that tested their physical and mental endurance, reinforcing the maxim that how you train is how you fight.

Mountains of Papua New Guinea

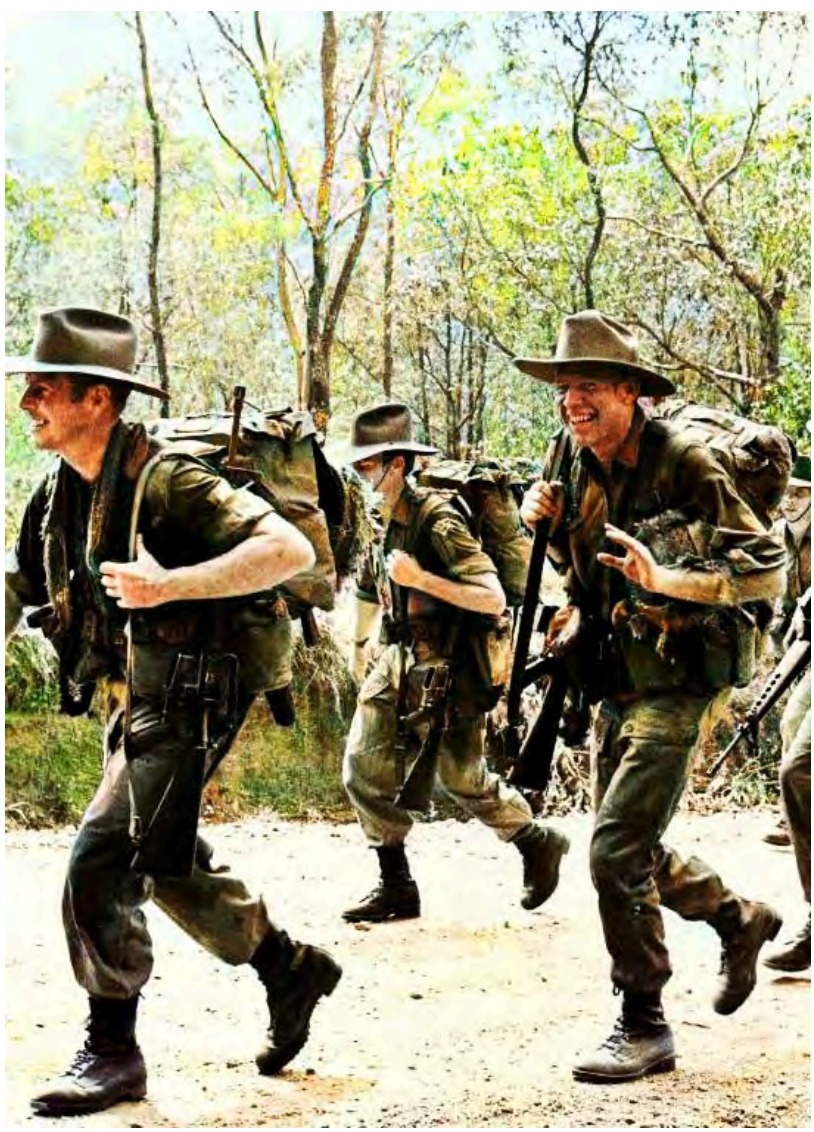
Reflections on Treble Change. Years later, when briefing a British Brigade Commander, George took particular pride in highlighting Exercise Treble Change as an extraordinary achievement. It was a definitive validation of their training philosophy, showcasing the immense capabilities of the Australian infantry. In the gruelling terrain of Papua New Guinea, the soldiers demonstrated exceptional readiness and adaptability, proving their physical and mental resilience under the most challenging circumstances.

The successful execution of the exercise underscored the effectiveness of the training programmes and the profound trust between the leaders and the men they had forged. Mansford and Hodgkinson even contemplated an audacious conclusion: marching the Battalion back along the coast instead of using helicopter extraction. That this demanding feat was seriously considered, speaks volumes about the Battalion's elite fitness and their Commanders absolute confidence in their soldiers unbreakable spirit.

Cleaning weapons - Papua New Guinea

As Mansford reflected in his eighties, It was a very tough professional Battalion.

The exercise had decisively proven that 1 RAR, though denied its Vietnam deployment, was a formidable force whose performance became a benchmark of professional excellence.



Route March - Samford Road Brisbane

RETURN TO 6 RAR: SERVICE UNDER TONY HAMMETT (1973-1975)

A New Chapter. Following his successful work at Canungra developing the Mine and Booby Trap Course, George returned to the 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, serving as Operations Officer under the command of Lieutenant Colonel Tony Hammett.

This period, from 1973 to 1975, proved to be one of the most memorable and formative of his career, characterised by innovative thinking, creative problem-solving and the kind of larrikin audacity that defined the Australian military tradition.

Mansford and Hammett shared a philosophy: operational capability mattered more than bureaucratic compliance.

Sometimes, the best way to serve the institution was to circumvent its rules. Their partnership produced two legendary initiatives that became part of 6 RAR folklore; the clandestine creation of a Parachute Company and the unauthorised acquisition of *'Bluey'*, the Battalion's mascot.

The 6 RAR Parachute Company. As often happens in the Regiment, ideas great and small are conceived after work. Early in Hammett's reign, during 1974, in the mess over a few beers, the decision was made to create a Parachute Company. Mansford remembered it well because, as the Operations Officer, he was tasked with organising it. Parachuting was far from a priority in an Army still recovering from the marathon run in Vietnam. While George saw potential problems, Hammett did not hesitate to pursue the idea. Having known Hammett for many years, including service together in two other Battalions, George trusted his direction.

The big question loomed: How do you get a Company of Infantry parachute trained when there is no official authority to do so, especially in an environment where it was unusual for more than two candidates from any unit to attend a parachute course?

Exercise Strike Master – Shoal Water Bay

'The first part of the strategy was to nominate several candidates. As expected, only one was approved. I can't be court-martialled this late in life, so here is the confession, Mansford later wrote. We used the travel authority for the successful applicant to send four to the course and waited for any signs of a storm.'

Fortunately, the Parachute School was run by Harry Smith of Long Tan fame and he cooperated with their scheme. All four returned with parachute wings. The process was repeated, but Harry Smith, being an old soldier, was now alert to the scheme but still willing to cooperate. Before long, there was a smattering of parachute wings on the weekly Battalion parade, but Hammett was eager to complete the task. It was time for more ingenuity.

A mate in high authority within the Commando Regiment was sounded out to see if they could put a couple of 'illegals' on the next course. He confirmed that there were a large number of vacancies. They hired a bus and sent a large contingent down. The number of parachute wings worn on parade grew steadily. However, one soldier returned with a rifle bent like a banana, raising questions about how to report such damage incurred during an unauthorised activity.

This was successfully camouflaged thanks to support from their brothers in arms from the Cavalry, ensuring no names were revealed. As luck would have it, a second commando course became available and they repeated the process, but it was not without being detected. Just before the bus was to depart from the barracks, George was briefing a young Officer (Richard Greville) when the Commander of the First Division rang to advise that he was aware of the scheme and the bus was not to move. George was instructed to report to his office immediately. (Hammett was on reconnaissance in the field.)

George complied with the order and, upon arrival, reported that the bus had long left; a small exaggeration, as it had just departed. The storm they had been waiting for broke, but it was more like a category five cyclone. To the credit of the General and his staff, the bus continued on its way and their senior commanders accepted the reality of the growing asset. From that point on, it was mostly plain sailing, or should I say jumping?

Shortly after, they planned and executed Exercise 'Strikemaster' at Shoalwater Bay Training area, commenced with a parachute drop of Delta Company. Hammett had achieved what many perceived as impossible. George held great respect for Hammett, recalling: *'He was a magnificent soldier and I still miss the bastard'.*

'*Bluey*' the Cattle Dog. In the aftermath of Vietnam, the soldiers of 6 RAR felt somewhat bemused by other Battalions mascots while their own Battalion felt left out. Units like 8/9 RAR had a mascot such as John MacArthur aka 'Stan the Ram', 'Septimus' the pony was 1 RAR, causing a desire within 6 RAR for a Battalion mascot of their own.

The motivation to acquire a mascot gained momentum, particularly after an infamous incident where 8/9 RAR presented them with a birthday cake that turned out to be made of soap.

The discussions about a mascot grew louder during gatherings after work, fuelled by several beers. It was agreed that their mascot must be distinctly Australian; certainly not a Scottish refugee or an exotic animal from overseas.

The consensus emerged that the mascot should be a fair dinkum cattle dog, a blue heeler; an apt choice reflecting the rugged Australian spirit. Under the direction of Lt Col Hammett, George was tasked with procuring such a pup. True to form, he selected the ugliest dog from the litter, believing that it was appropriate for an animal endowed with such ugliness and who had no clue who its father was to join the ranks of 6 RAR.

Thus, 'Bluey' was enlisted and placed under the watchful eye of the RSM, WO1 Jim Husband. In the early days, 'Bluey' made his home in the Battalion Guard Room, observing the antics of soldiers under close arrest and, as George suspected, he probably spent many hours in the Sergeants Mess.

Following Hammett's departure, George was temporarily in command for approximately six weeks, before the arrival of the incoming Commanding Officer, Lieutenant Colonel Peter Stokes. A missive from Director of Infantry (DINF) reprimanded the unit for not seeking permission for a mascot.

Fortunately, while George was still trying to devise an excuse for the oversight, he received a copy of a letter sent to Director of Infantry (DINF) by General Tom Daly, who found the situation amusing and recalled a similar incident from his own service during World War II. Thus, all was forgiven and 'Bluey' was officially recognised as the Battalion mascot.

This informal entry into Regimental history without the usual protocols and paperwork felt fitting to Mansford. The arrival of such an ugly blue heeler; not wanted by his mother yet conscripted into military life; was a fitting symbol of the Battalion's spirit. He had no doubt that Tony Hammett and all the other 6 RAR warriors who had departed were nodding in agreement from their firm base in Valhalla.

Continuing Advocacy and Community Engagement. George's personal life was characterised by challenges and commitments. He remained devoted to his family, maintaining close ties with his children while navigating life after military service. Vietnam profoundly shaped his views on duty, sacrifice and community importance.

His advocacy extended beyond military families to the broader community. George was known for practical competence and hands-on problem-solving. This ethic translated into community life, where he became a fixer in civic and veteran spheres. He undertook detailed organisation, coordination and problem-solving, demonstrating effective leadership involved more than ceremonial roles.

Mansford's advocacy for military widows and families became a cornerstone of his community engagement. He recognised the challenges faced by those who had lost loved ones in service. His personal experiences of loss fuelled his commitment to ensuring that military families received the support they needed, particularly in navigating bureaucratic systems and accessing entitlements.

George's return to Australia, his time at Canungra and his achievements with 1 RAR and 6 RAR highlighted a military career marked by service and advocacy. His experiences shaped his understanding of military life and the importance of community support for veterans and their families. The initiatives he led, from the Mine and Booby Trap Course to the Parachute Company, demonstrated his commitment to preparing soldiers for combat.

The Royal Australian Regiment Memorial Walk – Enoggera Brisbane Queensland

CHAPTER 8:
TULLY (1975-1982)

Know Your People, Understand Your People, Value Your People.

'This philosophy; know your people, understand your people, value your people; appears throughout George's life. Soldiers from different eras, different units, all heard these same words. '

In late 1979, the Australian Army established a Jungle Warfare training facility near Tully, Queensland, at the first course conducted in 1980.

It had become clear that the subtropical environment of the existing training centre at Canungra did not adequately replicate the true tropical conditions soldiers faced in Southeast Asia.

The site at Tully was formally secured and developed in the late 1970s as the intended 1st Division Tropical Training Centre, later renamed the Field Force Battle School and then the Land Command Battle School, the first fully structured courses commenced

Senior leaders, including Major General Ron Grey, understood that without a dedicated institution to champion this expertise, the hard-won lessons of jungle warfare would be lost.' *We need to find a place and somebody'*, Grey stated.

The place was Tully. That 'somebody' was Lieutenant Colonel George Mansford, whose extensive operational experience made him the ideal choice. His leadership philosophy; forged across two decades of service in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam; would become the foundational principle of the new institution: *'Know your people, understand your people, value your people. '* In Korea, he had learned that knowing his soldiers individually was the key to effective leadership. What is not well known is that whilst George was the Operations Officer at 6 RAR, the Battalion had been using Tully as an alternative Jungle training facility in lieu of Canungra, prior to the Battle School at Tully being established.

In Malaya, he saw how understanding their motivations were essential to sustaining effectiveness in gruelling counter-insurgency operations. And in Vietnam, he learned that truly valuing soldiers meant preparing them honestly for the brutal realities of combat. He arrived at Tully to find no infrastructure and no established curriculum.

The environment itself was the primary asset and the greatest challenge: a dense primary rainforest with steep terrain, oppressive humidity and genuine hazards from venomous snakes and crocodiles to leeches and scrub typhus. His task was to transform this undeveloped wilderness into a functional training facility while simultaneously creating its programmes and hand-selecting its instructors.

1980: The Battle School Emerges. By 1979, senior leadership identified troubling trends that had emerged in the post; Vietnam Army: training had become reliant on lectures and technology, leading to inadequate field preparation. In response, they established a Battle School to re-emphasise essential field skills and prepare soldiers for the profound physical and mental demands of combat. George returned to Tully in 1980 to command this new Battle School, articulating its stark purpose with a plaque at the entrance:

- The training philosophy he implemented was straightforward and uncompromising: soldiers deserved training that replicated the conditions of combat, because realistic training saved lives.

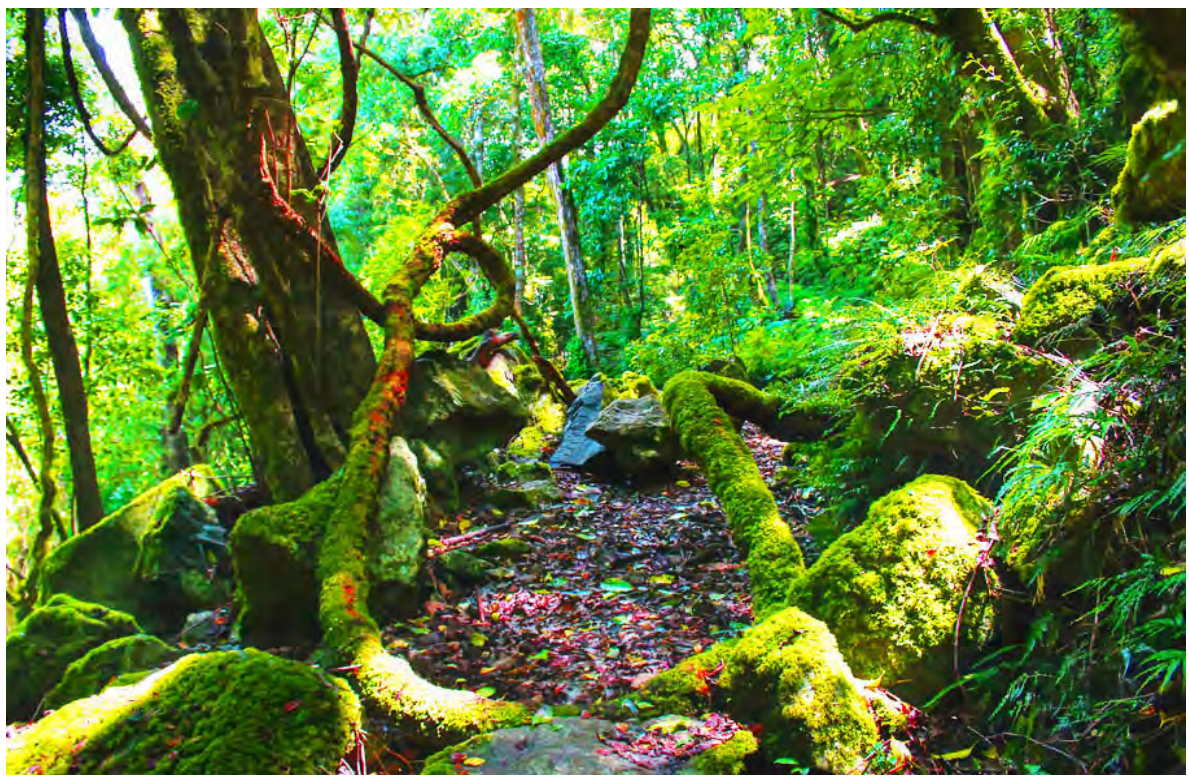
- The courses at Tully were designed to be physically and mentally demanding, with students operating in a genuine tropical rainforest, carrying realistic combat loads and conducting tactical exercises under operational conditions.

- The primary course, the Jungle Warfare Instructors Course, trained officers and non-commissioned officers who would then teach others, ensuring the skills were disseminated throughout the Army.

He established rigorous standards for his instructors, requiring both operational experience and a proven capability to teach. With many instructors being Vietnam veterans, the training had instant credibility and was grounded in relevant tactical knowledge. Supported by senior leaders like Lieutenant General Sir Donald Dunstan and Major General Grey, Tully evolved from a concept into an established institution with expanding influence.

When you joined the Army, you took an oath to serve your country and that did not imply a contract for unions or relaxation or the pleasures of life. On the contrary, that oath meant you were going to face danger, hardship and risk of life, loss of mates, discomfort and exhaustion. The Battle School is here to remind you of that oath.

The infrastructure was deliberately austere to match this philosophy.' *There was no office as such; I had a blackboard. The training programme was on the blackboard'*, George recalled.' *It was a place in isolation; it was like a monastery.'* This commitment required immense personal sacrifice.' *No married quarters; our wives and families lived in Townsville, which was four hours away and I saw them once a month for about four days and we did that for three years.'* This sacrifice was a demonstration of his unwavering commitment to the mission.' *Why did I do it? We were training for war even though there wasn't a war around.'*



Tully Jungle Environment

Know Your People. The telephone box incident became legendary at Tully and perfectly illustrated George's core principle. When a public telephone box was installed on the base without his knowledge, he ordered its immediate removal. His reasoning revealed a deep understanding of soldier welfare.

The beauty of not having a telephone box, he explained, was that *'Anybody and everybody had to go through the system and if they had a problem, we discovered it. Some soldiers that were broke, their wives weren't getting money or somebody's wife was playing up were problems that affected soldiers. We had the ability to start sorting them out because we knew.'* He understood that financial problems, family crises and personal issues destroyed a soldier's effectiveness. By requiring soldiers to report their problems through the chain of command, George ensured his leaders could intervene and help them. The removal of the phone box was not an act of control; it was an act of care.

This knowledge was not gained from an office. His approach was defined by constant presence; he walked the training areas, observed exercises and maintained direct contact with his staff and students. He eliminated his own support staff, where there was no batman, no orderlies, no stewards and everyone got their own food; which ensured visibility and a common experience for all ranks.

The successful execution of the exercise underscored the effectiveness of the training programmes and the profound trust between the leaders and the men they had forged. Mansford and Hodgkinson even contemplated an audacious conclusion: marching the Battalion back along the coast instead of using helicopter extraction. Most significantly, George subjected himself to the same conditions he imposed on his soldiers. Years later, when he returned for a visit and was offered upgraded accommodation, he refused.' *I said, I am not sleeping here. If I sleep there, every bastard I serve with will find out about it in 24 hours.'* He then took his gear and slept in the long grass.' *It rained all night and I was soaked and wet and cold and shivering.'* This principle was absolute: leaders could not truly know what they asked of their soldiers if they exempted themselves from the experience. They could not honestly assess whether a requirement was necessary without feeling its weight personally.

Understand Your People. Military leadership requires taking responsibility and maintaining resolve under chaos and pressure. Effective leaders understand that ethical decision-making involves balancing obedience, honest counsel and stewardship of the profession. Knowing soldiers was the first step in leadership. Understanding them was what distinguished effective leadership from mere knowledge. When a young soldier threatened suicide over a failed relationship, his response was extraordinary. '*I took him out bush and set up camp. I had a rifle and I gave him a rifle',* George recounted. I said, *'There is the rifle; I will be gone for three days. Now, if you really want to kill yourself, you have got seventy-two hours in which to do it*. Big call, but I knew him.

He understood the difference between a genuine crisis and manipulative behaviour; the soldier's threats had come through public letters to the system, not as a private cry for help. By calling the bluff, he forced an honest confrontation with reality. I went away and I didn't hear any shots. When I came back, he was still there. His subsequent counselling was direct: *'The girl is not worth it. You're worth something and you have got to get on with your life'*.

He applied this same penetrating insight to a defiant soldier who fronted him, declaring he didn't care what George did; he just wanted to go home. George tore up the charge sheet.' *Son, I am not going to charge you. I do not want to spoil your record'*. The soldiers grin disappeared when Mansford continued: What I am going to do with you is you're not going home; you're going to stay with me and start the next course tomorrow.' *You're with me for another five weeks.'*

He understood the soldier's defiance was strategic; he had calculated that misbehaviour would result in his removal. Conventional discipline would have rewarded this manipulation. Mansford's response directly countered it and the incident became a legendary warning: Do not stuff around with 'Warrie' George. This deep understanding informed all his training policies. He knew soldiers needed challenge and honest preparation.

He recalled the state of the Army that led to the Battle School's creation: It was post-Vietnam; there were too many lectures, too many slides, too much technology. George understood that soldiers wanted to be treated like soldiers. They responded positively to the demanding physical standards at Tully; carrying operational loads of thirty to forty kilograms through steep, tropical terrain with limited sleep; because they understood its purpose. They could distinguish between necessary hardship and pointless suffering. His approach to weapon handling was another example.

To combat the scourge of accidental deaths he had witnessed in Malaya, he instituted a radical policy: Everyone walked around with a loaded weapon with a round up the chamber and if anyone had an unauthorised discharge, they were fined a hundred dollars. Many training establishments prohibited this, but George understood that soldiers were capable of constant awareness if faced with real consequences. The financial penalty created immediate, personal accountability and unauthorised discharges decreased dramatically. Finally, his understanding of soldier psychology recognised that sustained discipline required a controlled release.

On the final night of each gruelling Battle School Course, he would open the canteen. Let them drink, let them do whatever they wanted to do until twelve o'clock at night, he said: *'If they had a fight, they could have it and they sorted themselves out'*. After weeks of austerity and discipline, the soldiers needed this release. By providing a controlled opportunity, he channelled their energy where he could manage the consequences. The timing was deliberate. The next day they went home and they would be too tired to go to town in Townsville to get into trouble. This was not permissiveness; it was a profound understanding of human nature.

Value your people. For George, valuing soldiers meant demonstrating through action that their lives deserved the best possible preparation for war. The Battle School plaque articulated this honest contract: inadequate training demonstrated contempt for a soldier's life; realistic training was the highest form of respect.

'We weren't trying to create soldiers who enjoyed the jungle; that would be unrealistic,' he explained. *' We were trying to create soldiers who could function effectively in the jungle despite the discomfort, despite the fear, despite the confusion. That requires honest training that doesn't pretend the jungle is anything other than what it is: a difficult, dangerous environment that will kill you if you're not competent.'*

Soldiers graduating from Tully would face genuine danger on deployments. A navigation error could result in a lost patrol; failure to recognise an ambush site could lead to catastrophic casualties. George valued his soldiers enough to train them in an environment replicating these dangers.

The training was hazardous, but risks were managed through careful planning, experienced supervision and robust safety procedures. Graduates themselves validated this approach, reporting that Tully skills proved directly applicable in combat. Valuing soldiers also meant treating them as equals. George's refusal to accept privileges; exemplified by the night he spent soaked in the long grass; demonstrated that standards applied to everyone, especially those who set them. A leader demanding commitment while exempting himself showed he did not truly value his soldiers.

His willingness to endure the same conditions communicated that he saw his soldiers as fellow professionals engaged in the same serious enterprise. Furthermore, valuing soldiers meant valuing their futures and achievements. When he tore up the defiant soldier's charge sheet, he explained his action was to avoid spoiling the man's record. The consequence; repeating the entire course; was severe, but it didn't come with permanent career damage. This showed a sophisticated understanding that a single poor choice did not define a soldiers entire worth. Similarly, the final night celebration was an acknowledgement of achievement. After weeks of demanding training, the students had earned that recognition.

Ultimately, his refusal to lower standards was the highest expression of value. Instructors were required to have operational experience and tactical competence. Physical standards were demanding but achievable. Students who met these standards knew they had accomplished something genuine.

British Marines with George at Tully

Building Culture and Institutional Memory. Mansford's most significant achievement at Tully was demonstrating that a people-centred leadership philosophy could be embedded so deeply into institutional culture that it persisted beyond any individual leader. The Jungle Warfare Instructor's Course was the primary mechanism.

Officers and NCOs who graduated returned to their units and trained other soldiers, carrying not just tactical skills but a leadership philosophy demonstrated through powerful example. They had experienced what it meant to be known, understood and valued so much so that when these graduates assumed training responsibilities they replicated the approach. This distributed influence spread the Tully philosophy throughout the Australian Army, leading to improvements in field exercises and operational effectiveness.

George also established systems that preserved this philosophy in institutional memory. Detailed Instructor Guides captured not just tactical procedures but the reasoning behind them. Rigorous after-action review processes ensured training was constantly refined based on operational feedback. This documentation captured lessons learned from decades of jungle operations; knowledge purchased with Australian blood in Malaya and Vietnam; ensuring it would not be lost.

George's second command tour concluded in 1982. His seven years at Tully were his most significant institutional contribution, with the Combat Training Centre - Jungle Training Wing. Built on the foundation of knowing, understanding and valuing soldiers. His most enduring contribution was embedding this philosophy to survive changes in command and evolving operational requirements. The Jungle Training Centre remains his living legacy, where graduates benefit from his principle that effective training begins with the soldier. As George moved to senior command, he carried this proven philosophy: Know your people. Understand your people. Value your people.

CHAPTER 9:
THE BRIGADIER

The Final Command (1982-1990). Following his profoundly successful tenure at Tully, George Mansford's career entered its final and most senior phase. The period from 1982 to 1990 marked a transition from the direct, hands-on leadership of training establishments to the strategic and institutional challenges of senior command.

As a Lieutenant Colonel and later a Colonel, he was now responsible for shaping policy rather than merely implementing it, coordinating across multiple organisations and navigating the complex bureaucratic landscape of a peace time Army.

In 1983, as Deputy Commander of 11 Field Force Group, George gained a comprehensive understanding of the strategic challenges facing Australia's vast and sparsely populated north. He saw a region of immense importance where conventional military thinking, based on southern models, was failing.

Existing arrangements relied on sporadic visits from southern-based units, creating no sustained presence or meaningful engagement with the local communities. It was here, observing the unique environment of Far North Queensland and the Torres Strait that the seeds of his most audacious vision were planted. In late 1979, the Australian Army established a jungle warfare training facility near Tully, Queensland; a decision born from the harsh realities of Vietnam. The first course was conducted in 1980.

This period was defined by a quiet but determined mentorship of the next generation of officers and a fierce dedication to preserving the hard-won institutional memory of Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, which he saw fading as experienced veterans retired. The culmination of his active service came in 1987 with his promotion to Brigadier and his appointment as Commander of the 11th Brigade. This command, headquartered in Far North Queensland, was the perfect opportunity to implement the northern vision he had been developing for years. He now had authority to transform Australia's military posture in the north.

His first and most revolutionary objective was the creation of a dedicated surveillance force. He recognised that conventional approaches would not secure the region. His vision was to leverage the unparalleled local knowledge, bushcraft and commitment of the Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders.

'I harangued people like the Defence Minister, Kim Beazley (A fellow West Australian) *and Generals down in Canberra,'* George recalled. I said, *'I want to create a recon surveillance force in Cape York and the Torres Strait Islands and the Gulf'.*

The response from Canberra was predictably dismissive. The Generals in Canberra were saying, *'It is all too hard; you can't do it'*, George said.*' Why can't I do it?' 'Well, because the Aborigines are up there and Torres Strait Islanders, they are scattered and they will probably need to have a bit more training'.*

Here, his core operational philosophy; that mission accomplishment trumps administrative compliance; came to the fore. Rather than waiting for formal approval he knew would result in years of delay and likely rejection, he acted. He began recruiting and training surveillance units using existing authorities and resources, embodying the audacity he had learned throughout his career.

Tully Training Area

He was prepared to accept the consequences. The decisive moment came when a senior general visited the region.' *We were about to land in Weipa and General Peter Gration said, "George, I think we will put this to* 'SIGSAC,"' George recounted, referring to a high-level Army committee.'*I knew what SIGSAC* (otherwise known as CGSAC - Chief of the General Staff Advisory Committee, pronounced SIGSAC), *meant; that meant six years later regurgitate it out the other end with a No.'*

His reply was a masterstroke of calculated audacity. I said, *'Well General, I am delighted you're happy about it because when you get off the aircraft, you're about to meet the Company.'* He said, *"Company"* and I said, *'They are waiting for you, sir.'* and he said, *"You haven't been given the nod." a*nd I said, *'I have already formed them.'*

Presented with a functioning unit already conducting operations; a fait accompli; senior command had no choice but to acquiesce. The strategy worked. The Regional Force Surveillance units gained institutional legitimacy and grew rapidly, providing meaningful employment for Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islanders while contributing significantly to national security.

51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment

The 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment (51 FNQR), has served as the military presence in Australia's remote north since its formation in 1936 in Cairns. Disbanded following World War II, the Battalion was re-raised in 1950, reflecting the strategic importance of Far North Queensland.

The unit's role is defined by its vast area; from Cardwell to the Torres Strait and across Cape York Peninsula. Operating in challenging terrain, the Battalion has earned its reputation as the *'eyes and ears of the North,'* conducting surveillance across tropical rainforests, remote coastlines and isolated communities.

The 51 FNQR's brass collar badge bears the motto *'Ducit Amor Patriae';* Love of Country Leads Me; capturing the spirit of soldiers serving in Australia's most demanding environments. The Battalion maintains strong connections with Indigenous communities, recognising the strategic value and cultural significance of these relationships. This integration of local knowledge with military capability makes the 51 FNQR uniquely suited to its mission. Under Mansford's command, the 11th Brigade re-raised the 31st and 51st Battalions, Army Reserve infantry units with proud histories. He insisted these Reserve Units be treated as integral components, held to the same standards as Regular Army Formations. His command was defined by sustained engagement with Indigenous communities, reflecting operational necessity and personal commitment dating to his childhood.

He met regularly with Elders, built relationships based on mutual respect and ensured Indigenous soldiers and their cultural practices were valued. This deep connection was demonstrated when, upon the deaths of significant Torres Strait Islander leaders, it was not politicians or ministers asked to speak, but Brigadier George Mansford AM.' *There is only one bloke, George Mansford,'* he was told. In 1990, Brigadier George Mansford AM officially retired from active military service and accepted the role of Honorary Colonel of the 51st Battalion, the Far North Queensland Regiment.

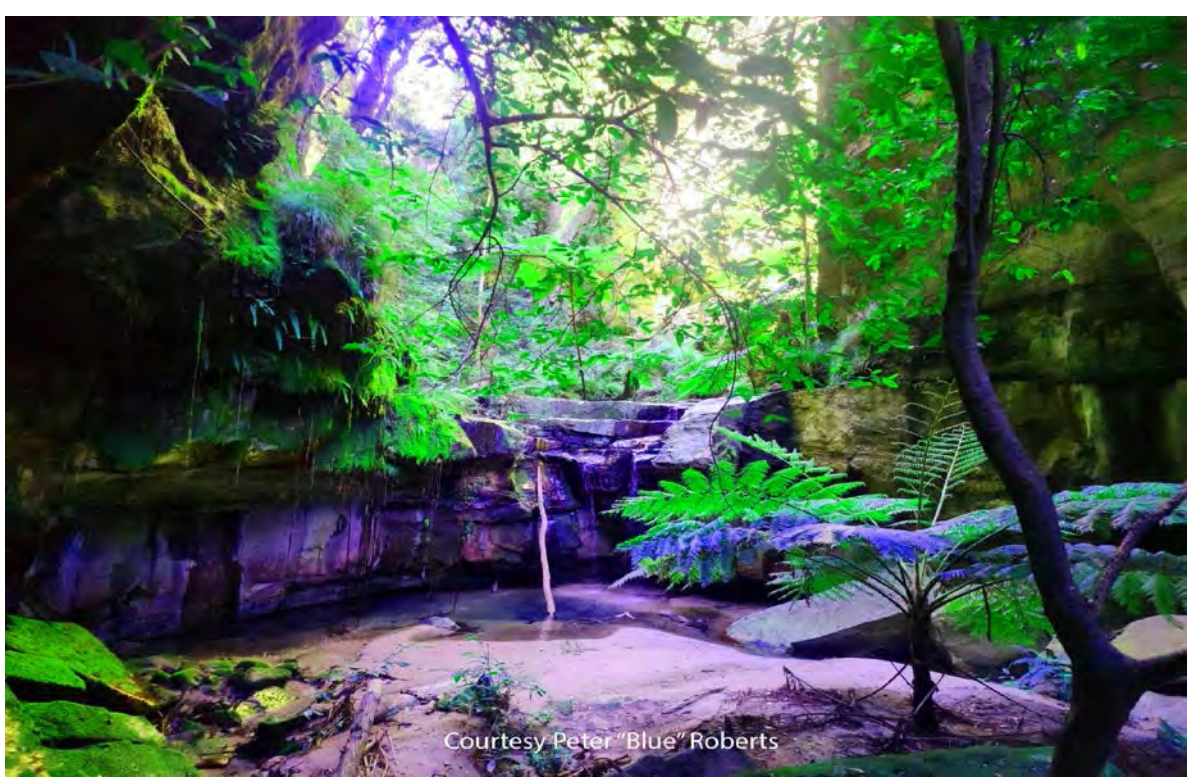
51 FNQR PATROLLING THE FAR NORTH

Service Beyond the Uniform (1990-2026). Mansford's retirement years continued service, demonstrating that his commitment to the Defence Family was a lifelong covenant, not a contract ending with the uniform.

He actively engaged with the Regiment, attending exercises, speaking with soldiers and offering the wisdom of his experience. He provided a living link to the Battalion's history and traditions of The Royal Australian Regiment.

He became known throughout the veteran community as The Advocate: Mr. Fix It. His approach was defined by practical, hands-on action. When veterans or military widows faced bureaucratic obstacles, he intervened personally. He spent countless hours on the telephone, writing detailed letters and applying pressure to navigate the Department of Veterans Affairs. He helped veterans prepare claims, challenged unfair denials and connected them with medical and mental health services.

His work with Legacy and focus on widows' needs was informed by deep understanding of loss and a soldier's sense of obligation to families. His public speaking at ANZAC Day services and school commemorative events extended this advocacy. He used these platforms to educate younger generations, preserve the memory of his mates and remind society of its obligations to those who had served. His poetry, direct and heartfelt, became a powerful tool, giving voice to the warrior's experience and arguing for fair treatment of all who served.



Far North Queensland Rainforest

The Community Steward: Legacy on the Land. Mansford's ethic of service extended far beyond the parade ground into the rainforests of Far North Queensland, where he applied the same discipline, strategic thinking and commitment to duty that had defined his military career. In 1999, he chaired the Wet Tropics Cassowary Advisory Group, bringing military planning skills to bear on environmental conservation. The endangered cassowary, an ancient bird whose survival was threatened by habitat loss and vehicle strikes, became the focus of his attention with the same intensity he had once devoted to training soldiers.

He oversaw initiatives that included traffic-calming measures, rescue programmes, emergency response kits and specialised veterinarian training. Marshalling volunteers and coordinating with government agencies and community groups, he demonstrated that his commitment extended not only to the people of the region but to the land itself. This dedication culminated in the establishment of The Brigadier George Mansford AM Reserve Rainforest Rehabilitation Project, the centrepiece of the Australian Rainforest Foundation's efforts in the Daintree. In 2007, the Foundation purchased two hundred acres of land at Cape Tribulation; the largest single block of privately owned rainforest land acquired for conservation in the Daintree region.

The reserve, named in honour of Brigadier George Mansford AM (Retired), past and founding Chairman of the Australian Rainforest Foundation, abuts the Wet Tropics World Heritage Area with Thompson Creek flowing through its centre. Scientists identified the land as possessing the highest ecological values. The vegetation is classified as Type 1a/2a complex mesophyll to notophyll vine forest, with a canopy reaching eighteen to twenty-five metres in height. The reserve harbours many rare and threatened species of flora and fauna, including the endangered cassowary that George had worked so diligently to protect.

A little over a quarter of the allotment had been previously cleared for farming, though intact remnant riparian rainforest remained adjacent to Thompson Creek and in fragmented patches of regrowth within the cleared areas. Environmental weeds and introduced species had colonised these disturbed zones and encroached upon the forest margins, presenting a challenge that required the same methodical approach George had brought to every mission.

Cassowary

The Foundation undertook to raise $2. 6 million to cover the cost of purchasing and rehabilitating this critical rainforest block. A specialist nursery was constructed close to the site to gather seeds and forest stems for use in revegetation. The Foundation estimated that 30,000 trees would be needed to complete the restoration of the Brigadier George Mansford AM Reserve; a living memorial to a man who understood that service to country included stewardship of the land itself and that the values he had spent a lifetime defending were inseparable from the environment that had shaped the Australian character.

Hellenic ANZAC Memorial. Perhaps the most unique dimension of his later life was his role as The International Guardian of The Hellenic ANZAC Memorial. When he learned that a group of veterans were creating a memorial in Pellana, Greece to honour the bond between three nations, he offered his immediate and heartfelt support. He was deeply moved to be named a Guardian of the memorial and his name etched in marble alongside that of his old mate, Tony Hammett.

That his tree stood beside one dedicated to Tony Hammett made the honour even more meaningful. He followed the project's progress closely, offering advice and encouragement. For George, memorials were not merely stone and bronze; they were sacred spaces that strengthened the bonds between nations who had stood together in conflict. His support connected the memorial to the living memory of veterans, grounding it in authentic experience.

Hellenic ANZAC Memorial – Pellana Laconia Greece

The Measure of a Life: Final Years and Enduring Legacy. Even as advancing age brought physical limitations, George's dedication never wavered. He remained active in advocacy and public life into his final years, adapting his methods but never his mission. The principles that had guided his life; dedication to duty, commitment to mates, insistence on realistic training and lifelong service to the Defence Family; remained his true north. I n a 2011 interview, he reflected on his life with characteristic honesty, reinforcing that his values were not abstract ideals but were forged in the crucible of lived experience.

FREEDOM AND PEACE COME AT A PRICE

"O Stranger, whoever you may be and where ever you may have come from. We know, you will, one day come.

Let it be known that upon this land, all memories of a bygone era meet together as companions.

Do not therefore begrudge us this small plot of earth that represents those who gave their all.

Return back home a friend. Tell your people of us and of the memories we embrace"

LEST WE FORGET

Ω ξένε, όποιος κι αν είσαι, α π' όπου κι αν έχεις έρθει. Γνωρίζουμε, πως κάποια μέρα θα έρθεις.

Ας γίνει γνωστό, ότι σε αυτό τον τόπο, όλες οι αναμνήσεις μιας περασμένης εποχής, συναντιούνται σαν γνώριμοι.

Επομένως, μην δείχνετε μνησικακία για αυτό το μικρό σημείο της γης, που αντιπροσωπεύει εκείνους, οι οποίοι έδωσαν τα πάντα.

Γυρνα πισω σαν φιλος. Πες στους δικούς σου για εμάς και για τις αναμνήσεις που αγκαλιάζουμε."

ΔΕΝ ΞΕΧΝΩ

Kia mate a ururoa Kaua hei mate a tarakihi. - Fight like the Ururoa, fight to the death". Maori War Cry

HANZAC GUARDIANS

THANASIS DAVAKIS - PATRON GREECE. JIM HAMMETT - PATRON AUSTRALIA. - PATRON NEW ZEALAND
PETER ADAMS - CHAIRMAN. MAURICE BARWICK - TREASURER. GEZA BENKE - SECRETARY
STEFANOS SGOURDAS - MARATHON COORD. KOSTAS MIHALOPOULOS - ASSET MANAGER

CONRAD ADAMS	KON GLEKAS	GIORGOS PARASKEVOPOULOS
DAVID ADAMS	COLIN GOODWIN	PANAGIOTIS PARASKEVOPOULOS
MARK ADAMS	DIMITRI HADZIDIMITRIOU	THEMISTOKLES PATSILIVAS
MATTHEW ADAMS	PETER HATHERLEY	WARREN PAYNE
PAUL ADAMS	RON HILL	PHILLIP PHILIPOPOULOS
WILLIAM ADAMS	LARRY ILIFFE	GENE PRATT
YOVANNA ADAMS	PETER JASONIDES	PAUL PRICKETT
GARRY ADAMS	PETER KALLIAKOUDIS	THANASIS RASSIAS
NICK BAKIS	TERRY KANELLOS	PETER ROBERTS
NICK BANTOUNAS	GIORGOS KARAGIANNIS	JIM ROZAKLIS
MARCUS BASTIAAN	ILIAS KATSOS	KOSTAS SGOURDAS
EDWARD BLACK	TONY KELLY	PANAGIOTIS SIGALOS
CLINTON BREEZE	AZHAR KHAN	MICHAEL SUKKAR
EDWARD BRYSON	LUKE KIROPOULOS	AUDREY 'MAVIS' TREGONNING
BILL CHARLTON	GABBY KIWARKIS	LEON TSOMGAS
BARRIE DANIEL	SAM KOSTOULIAS	STAVROS VALASSIS
GUISEPPE DE SIMONE	MICHAEL KROGER	MARIA VAMVAKINOU
NICK DEROS	DOUGLAS LUIK	DIMITRI VAROUTSOS
GEORGE DIMOS	DIMITRI MALLIAROS	GEORGE VASILOPOULOS
VASILIKI DIMOS	GEORGE MANSFORD	KOSTAS VLAHAKIS
CHRISTINE ETHEL	SANDRA MERCER-MOORE	ELENI VLAHOGIANNI
HELEN FINNIGAN	PETER MERCOULIA	WAYNE WHITROD
DENNIS GEORGE	PAUL MITCHELL	CRAIG YOULL
CHRIS GLEKAS	DONALD NORMAN	JOE ZAPP
DIMITRI GLEKAS	KALIOPI PAPAPOSTOLOU	BARRY ZIEBELL
KALIOPI GLEKAS	BILL PAPASTERGIADIS	SUSAN ZIEBELL

Guardians Wall – Pellana Laconia Greece.

These recorded oral histories preserved his voice, ensuring his hard-won wisdom on leadership, service and sacrifice would continue to inform and inspire.

The designation Warrior Poet perfectly captured the synthesis of his later public life. He was not a literary figure but a veteran using the power of verse as a tool for advocacy, remembrance and moral instruction.

The authenticity of his poetry came from the fact that he had lived what he wrote about. The measure of George Mansford's life is not found in the honours he received or the rank he achieved, though both were significant.

The true measure is found in the lives he affected: the soldiers he trained who survived combat because of his methods, the veterans he advocated for who received the help they needed, the widows he supported through their darkest times and the communities he served, from 'Wundurra' in Far North Queensland to Pellana, a small village in Laconia, Greece. His legacy is not institutional but relational and moral. It is a legacy of courage, integrity and an unwavering commitment to knowing, understanding and valuing people. In 2025, the author sent a final email to George reporting that his olive tree in Pellana was heavy with fruit. It was a simple update, but it served as an unwitting testament to a life of profound and enduring service.

The tree may stand in Greek soil, but the roots reach back to an Aboriginal mission in Western Australia, to the jungles of Malaya, to the rice paddies of Vietnam, to the rainforests of Tully, to George's tree located at the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam Spiritual Grove at Canungra where his Australian tree lies amongst his mates and to every place where George Mansford served, fought, taught and advocated for those who wore the uniform and those they left behind. It is a living metaphor for a legacy that continues to nourish all who draw upon it.

OPERATION TREK BACK: A FINAL MUSTER.

Long after the echoes of battle had faded and the uniforms were stored away, George Mansford's commitment to the Australian soldier remained undiminished.

His final years were not a quiet retirement but a continuation of his life's work: honouring the legacy and welfare of the Defence family.

One of his most significant post-service achievements was co-organising *'Operation Trek Back'* in 1993, a monumental undertaking that brought the past vividly into the present.

Fifty years earlier, the region of Cairns and the Atherton Tablelands was the humming heart of Australia's war effort in the Pacific. It was a frontline city, a sprawling transit hub and training ground where over 100,000 Allied troops prepared for the brutal campaigns in New Guinea. Trinity Beach was scarred by amphibious landing drills and the harbour was a vital base for special operations. For thousands of young soldiers, this tropical corner of the continent was their last taste of home before heading into the crucible of war.

For the returning veterans, now in their twilight years, the journey was a pilgrimage. The humid air and scent of tropical rain would have triggered a flood of memories; of youthful bravado, unspoken fears and of mates who never made it back. They walked the sands of Trinity Beach not as the boys who scrambled from landing craft, but as grandfathers, their steps slower but their memories sharp.

They were retracing the footsteps of their younger selves, bridging a fifty-year gap between two different worlds, honouring both the men they were and the men they became. Jim Hammett a Lance Corporal (Colonel Rtd) was present at the ceremony; whilst he was serving with the First Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment, remembers well *'Operation Trek Back'*

Recognising that these memories were fading, George, alongside Sir Sydney Williams, envisioned a grand reunion.' *Operation Trek Back'* was born from a desire to honour this history and the men and women who lived it. It was an invitation for veterans to return to the Far North, to walk the ground where they had trained and to rekindle the unique bonds of mateship forged in wartime. In 1993, the call was answered.

More than 2,000 veterans from across Australia and overseas, descended on Cairns. The event was a master class in commemorative organisation. The Cairns Railway Station was transformed, adorned with flags and bunting, to welcome the returning heroes.

A troop train re-enactment brought history to life, creating a festive and deeply emotional atmosphere. The air buzzed not with the tension of war, but with the warmth of reunion. Handshakes turned into embraces as faces, now lined with age, broke into familiar smiles. Stories were exchanged, old jokes retold and the years simply melted away. The troop train re-enactment was particularly poignant, its' whistle a haunting echo of the past. As it pulled into the station, it carried not just passengers, but the collective weight of a generation's expe-rience. The presence of the public transformed the event from a private reunion into a shared, public acknowledgment of immense gratitude.

It was a powerful symbol of a nation's gratitude. For George, this event was more than just logistics and ceremony; it was an act of profound respect. It underscored his belief that a soldier's service creates a lifelong connection, not just to the institution, but to the places and people that defined their youth. The success of Operation Trek Back, later documented in a commemorative book, stands as a testament to his enduring role as a guardian of Australia's military heritage. This was his ethos in action: ensuring sacrifices were remembered.

Best of mates: L to R: Frank Moffitt – George Mansford – Barry Caligari.

Brothers. *I first met him when an oath we did swear. To serve our nation, no matter where. We were just ordinary blokes enjoying life.*

Suddenly trapped in an angry world of strife. We were bonded; two youngsters as part of a team. Sharing dangers, chores and even dreams

We became as one, part of each other. No matter our past, war had made us brothers.

George Mansford

CHAPTER 10:
UPHOLDING THE ANZAC SPIRIT

The Digger and the Brigadier. This chapter is a digger's view of George Mansford, drawn from that relationship and decades of shared history. In March of 2012, a dialogue captured the essence of the modern ANZAC spirit. It was an exchange between Brigadier George Mansford AM and Peter Adamis; a soldier who had served under his command and was known to his mates affectionately as *'Pete the Greek'.* Adamis had sent to his old Commander reflections on what it meant to serve Australia as a migrant and Mansford's response revealed a profound understanding of how migration had enriched the Australian Defence Force and strengthened the nation itself.

***'Warrie'* George & *'Pete The Greek'* 2011**

george saw that beyond the pride in service, Peter's words spoke to a wider truth: the wonderful contribution that so many from the old world had made after choosing Australia as their home.

He believed this social history should serve as a lesson; that Australia's strength grew when it welcomed those prepared to integrate fully and become fair dinkum Aussies.

This is a personal account of a man who, along with a select few, shaped the author's life. It is the story of how a leadership philosophy, forged in the jungles of Malaya and Vietnam, was proven in the barracks and training fields of a multicultural, integrated post-war Army.

The Philosophy – Know, Understand, Value. The post-Vietnam era was a demanding one for the Australian Army. For soldiers like Peter Adamis, who had missed deployment, it meant a relentless cycle of exacting field exercises and rigorous training designed to maintain the highest standards of an infantry that had been honed by a decade of war. It was in this environment that George's leadership philosophy was put to the test in a new context.

His core principles; know your people, understand your people, value your people; took on particular significance in Battalions filled with soldiers from diverse backgrounds. He made a deliberate effort to understand his migrant soldiers, recognising they often brought different life experiences. Rather than viewing these differences as obstacles, he saw them as assets. He invested time in learning about their families, aspirations and strengths, validating their place in the Battalion and confirming that their backgrounds were part of their value.

He understood the psychological dimension, appreciating how stress and fatigue could be expressed differently across cultures. He adapted his communication to transcend these differences, ensuring high standards were applied equally to all and that the demands made on them reflected confidence in their capability, not skepticism.

OUR FLAG

A new day in this ancient land has begun
The flag once more raised in the morning sun
See how proudly she does fly
National pride above so high

On city square, country school or sacred soil overseas
Our proud history revealed with the early breeze
This treasured cloth has flown since Federation begun
Carried ashore at ANZAC to show we are as one

Always watching over us, sometimes flood, famine, fire or war
More often than not, bountiful rich harvests galore
Flying high for all to see, no matter the season
A symbol which generates pride, hope, purpose and reason

Now and then a tattered rag which can still spur our Nation
To seek courage, purpose, vision and creation
This coloured cloth rouses fierce love of country and so much more
From the thirsty rugged inland to distant golden shores

In remote shearing sheds, cattle yards to busy factory floors
Reaching out to sons and daughters, true blue to the core
Our flag high above as we plan for tomorrow
The guardian of our past triumphs, joys and sorrows

Hovering over the next generation to lead
Urging youth to go forward and emulate past deeds
A true-blue compass to guide them as one people along the way
As it did for all those from so many yesterdays

As the crimson glow fades in the west
Our national banner is slowly lowered to rest
The pulse beat of our Nation slows
All walks of life sleep and dream as the night does flow

Tomorrow this symbol of our country will once more fly
To watch over a young vibrant Nation marching by

George Mansford

Most importantly, he valued his people through action. He ensured training was realistic and that the welfare of their families; whether in a Brisbane suburb or a village in Greece; was a genuine priority. By refusing privileges and sharing the hardships of his troops, he created an egalitarian environment where soldiers were judged on performance, not rank, origin, or class.

True integration was not achieved through formal programmes, but through the shared experience of demanding training under a leader who applied one standard to all. In the crucible of a jungle exercise, national origin became irrelevant.

What mattered was competence under pressure and unwavering support for your mates. It was here that the true spirit of ANZAC was forged anew.

The Proof – A Digger's Story.
For Peter Adamis, this philosophy was not an abstract theory but a lived reality, proven in the mud and sweat of the field. His first encounter came after a brutal exercise in Papua New Guinea.

When George let the exhausted soldiers drink, then cancelled the trucks and made them walk 25 kilometers, what could have been a moment of bitter resentment was transformed by a simple explanation.

Years later, he revealed the training was designed to forge them in place of the Vietnam deployment they never got. He and the CO, *'Blue'* Hodgkinson, believed that after PNG, the soldiers could face any challenge. For the young diggers', that validation was immense; their suffering had a purpose. The following year when the author was deployed to Singapore, he met up with Mansford. It was after a completing a punishing obstacle course, that the author looked up to see Mansford grinning.' *Owyagoing dig'*, he said. That simple, gruff acknowledgement from a man the diggers' all respected and revered was a powerful affirmation that their effort was seen and valued.

His obstacle running mate, Mick Driscoll (from Geraldton West Australia), asked, *'How do you know 'Warrie' George?'* Pete replied with a soldiers gallows humour: *'He was the mongrel bastard who made us trek through Papua New Guinea last year'* This connection, forged in the field, endured for decades, evolving from a command relationship into a deep mentorship. Adamis sought his opinion and in April 2011, a visit to 'Wundurra' revealed the depth of Mansford's character; from his fondness for old mates to his formative disgust at being ordered to rip the roofs off migrant huts at Watsonia when George was a young soldier.

The correspondence continued across continents, proving most vital when Peter was in Greece recovering from cancer. Feeling vulnerable and enraged after being repeatedly robbed, he contemplated a violent response. George emailed advice was a lifeline. He counselled against aggression, urging him to channel his anger into his writing. It was the voice of a commander and a father figure, steering him from a destructive path and giving his pain a new purpose. Those words soothed the rage and gave him the strength to continue. It was during this period that Peter made a promise to himself: he would create a memorial and write about the men, like George, who had shaped him. This vow became a mission to preserve their legacy before it faded into history.

Defending the Spirit. George's plain-speaking manner sometimes led to misunderstanding. A poem he wrote, '*Tomorrow is what we make of It'*, sparked accusations of racism from those who misinterpreted his call for migrants to integrate as a form of exclusion. It was another old soldier, Neil Weekes, who rose to his defence.' *George does not have a mean bone in his body and he is definitely not a racist'*, Weekes wrote, reminding critics that George had grown up with Aboriginal children and fought alongside soldiers of every race and origin. He pointed to the poems final stanza, which explicitly called for education and integration: *'Plus fair dinkum measures to educate them and us to integrate. Surely, it is our duty to ensure a sweet tomorrow for all who follow.'*

Weekes understood what critics missed: George's concern came from a love of country, not a hatred of others. His call for integration reflected the military reality that cohesion requires shared values and a common purpose. The ultimate rebuttal to the accusations, however, was unspoken. It laid in the decades-long, respectful relationship between the old Brigadier and 'Pete the Greek'; a relationship built on mutual admiration and a shared understanding of Duty First and service.

The Legacy of George Mansford . He taught that soldiering was about being prepared for the worst, looking after your mates and accepting responsibility. The principle of Duty First became a life philosophy for the author, its lessons extending far beyond the military: stand up to bullies, support those in trouble and maintain community connections. The author does not seek to canonise Brigadier George Mansford AM. He was a rough-edged, plain-speaking soldier who cared more for his diggers' than for his own advancement.

What made him extraordinary were his authenticity and his unwavering consistency. Whether correcting an article, advising against violence, or discussing the state of the nation, he never wavered from his core principles: duty, mateship and honesty. This account is one digger's attempt to articulate the debt owed to a mentor who shaped him, saw potential where others saw problems and was tough when needed.

The promise made during chemotherapy finds expression in these pages; a tribute to George and all the men who influenced the author. These words speak for a generation of soldiers who passed through Mansford's hands and emerged stronger. They carry him with them; in the way they stand, face adversity and look after their mates. That is the mark of a true teacher and his enduring legacy.

CHAPTER 11:
THE CANBERRA SUITS - A SOLDIER'S RECKONING

This chapter reflects Mansford's views, expressed in his poetry and advocacy work. The opinions are his, preserved here as part of his legacy.

The 'Canberra Suits': George Mansford's Lifelong Battle for Australia's Soldiers. There are battles fought with rifles and grenades, where the 'enemy' wears a uniform and the danger is immediate. Then there are battles fought in carpeted corridors and air-conditioned offices, where the 'enemy' wears suits and wields policy manuals. For Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM, the second battle proved more frustrating than any he faced in Korea, Malaya, or Vietnam. When formal channels failed, he turned to an unexpected weapon: poetry. His verses about 'Canberra Suits' and broken promises became strategic advocacy wrapped in artistic expression, giving voice to veterans who felt abandoned by the system they had served.

The Awakening: When the Real 'Enemy' Revealed Itself. As George rose through the ranks, he encountered a stark reality: the bureaucratic machinery in Canberra operated on entirely different principles from those that governed life on operations. Where he saw soldiers; individuals with families, hopes, fears and sacrifices; the bureaucrats saw numbers, budget lines and policy considerations. The 'Canberra Suits' had never heard a shot fired in anger, never carried a wounded mate, never had to write letters to grieving families.

Yet they made decisions affecting soldiers' lives without experiencing the consequences. The gap between political promises and reality became increasingly apparent. Politicians made soaring speeches about supporting those who served, then voted to cut veterans' benefits or denied recognition to those who had fallen. He witnessed soldiers killed in operational areas denied recognition as '*killed in action*' because of bureaucratic technicalities. He saw veterans struggling with injuries and trauma whilst navigating a maze of paperwork and indifference.

The Poet's Arsenal: When Words Become Weapons. George understood that direct confrontation with the political establishment could be dismissed as the complaints of a disgruntled officer. Formal channels could bury criticism. Official reports could be ignored so he turned to poetry. His poems became both shield and sword, protecting him from accusations of mere bitterness whilst striking at the heart of systemic failures. Unlike formal complaints, poetry conveyed genuine emotion; anger, disappointment, betrayal; in ways that resonated with fellow veterans.

Broken promises and deceit by 'Canberra Suits'. In this searing indictment of political hypocrisy, Mansford wrote: *'Politicians on the other hand never practise any of this, so when wealth has been wasted and gold coins are short, comes need for sacrifice excluding their own opulence and benefits.'*

The poem captured a fundamental truth every veteran understood: when budgets needed cutting, it was never the politicians' salaries or benefits on the chopping block; always the veterans' pensions, medical support and promised recognition.

'Women on the Wire'. George challenged the arrogance of distant decision-makers: *'Be quiet! Do not argue! Our arrogant 'Canberra Suits' know best, they are tempting Eros to fight in the forward trenches.'*

The command to *'Be quiet! Do not argue!'* captured the bureaucratic mindset perfectly; they didn't want input from those who would actually face the consequences of their decisions. The image of tempting Eros to fight in the forward trenches was devastating, suggesting the 'Canberra Suits' were so detached from military reality they might as well send the god of love into combat.

Why? Perhaps his most philosophically profound poem questioned the very foundations of political decision-making: *'And too few politicians ask the questions: What for? Later with the sanity and calmness of peace, veterans ask 'why?''*

This captured the temporal disconnect between political decision-making and veteran reflection. Politicians acted in haste, driven by political pressures, without asking fundamental questions about objectives and costs. Only later, when veterans returned home, did the question Why? emerge.

THE SPECIFIC BATTLES: UNDERSTANDING THE FRUSTRATIONS.

Equipment and Training: When Bean Counters Cost Lives. George knew from hard experience that proper equipment and realistic training weren't luxuries; they were life-or-death necessities. At the Jungle Training Centre in Tully, which he founded and commanded, he insisted on conditions that mirrored combat reality. No comfortable beds. No leave during courses. No shortcuts. The philosophy was simple: train hard, fight easy. Soldiers who trained in comfort would be shocked and unprepared when they faced the brutal reality of jungle warfare.

Years after retiring, when George returned to Tully, the staff proudly showed him to a room with a proper bed, white sheets and a mosquito net. His response was immediate: '*I am not sleeping here. If I sleep there, every bastard I serve with will find out about it in 24 hours.'* He slept outside in the rain with a poncho, just as his students did.

This wasn't theatrics; it was leadership, the embodiment of his core principle: never ask soldiers to do what you wouldn't do yourself. The 'Canberra Suits' questioned why training had to be so harsh, worried about complaints from soldiers' families and suggested the military was too traditional. His frustration stemmed from a simple truth: none of these decision-makers would face the consequences of their policies.

Recognition and Support: The Betrayal of Broken Promises. Perhaps nothing frustrated him more than the failure to properly recognise and support those who had served. He witnessed soldiers killed in operational areas denied recognition as *'killed in action'* because of bureaucratic technicalities.

Prime Minister Kevin Rudd once said: *'The responsibility of government is the security of the nation. And it follows therefore that the Government has a particular responsibility towards those who have worn the nation's uniform. Because there is in my view no higher calling than to wear the uniform of Australia.'* Beautiful words, stirring rhetoric and utterly hollow.

Prime Minister Tony Abbott said: *'We are determined to do the right thing by the forgotten people, by the battlers and by everyone who is making a contribution or who is yearning to make a contribution to our great country. We stand for the people who work hard, pay their taxes, volunteer in their local community and save for their retirement.*

The Australian national character is about helping neighbours, giving people the benefit of the doubt, welcoming strangers and having a go at making everyone's life better. We stand for all Australians', the citizen over the official, the community over the state and the family over everything. We trust the citizens of Australia to get most things right, most of the time; and mostly, Australians do because they understand what is in their best interests.' Inspirational words yet not followed up.

Mansford and thousands of veterans knew the truth: The 'Canberra Suits' were expert at speeches and photo opportunities but far less competent at ensuring veterans received the support they had been promised.

The Dehumanisation of Soldiers: Pawns in a Chess Game. The bureaucratic system reduced soldiers to statistics, budget items and policy considerations. To the 'Canberra Suits,' soldiers were pieces to be moved strategically on a board, sacrificed when necessary and forgotten when the game was over. To George, they were brothers and sisters in arms, human beings who had entrusted him with their welfare and, potentially, their lives. Soldiers have souls, families, loved ones, emotions and feelings. Once someone wore the uniform of Australia, they became unique; part of a brotherhood that transcended rank, background, or origin.

The Psychological Toll: The Burden of Dual Loyalty. George faced a psychological tension that many leaders experience but few articulate clearly. He felt loyalty to two entities increasingly at odds: the institution; the Army and the government he had sworn to serve; and his soldiers, who needed advocacy and support. His solution was poetry. It provided a socially acceptable outlet for frustrations that, if expressed directly, could have been career-ending. It allowed him to process anger constructively, speak for those who had no voice, create a permanent record of broken promises, maintain dignity whilst expressing legitimate grievances and build solidarity among veterans. This was strategic brilliance disguised as artistic expression.

Why Poetry Mattered: Strategic Communication. Mansford's choice of poetry was strategically brilliant for several reasons:

1. **Bypassing Official Channels:** Direct complaints could be dismissed or buried in bureaucracy but poetry went directly to people; veterans, serving soldiers, civilians who cared. It couldn't be classified, buried or dismissed with bureaucratic jargon.
2. **Creating Lasting Impact:** Policy papers are forgotten, but poems are remembered and repeated. They're shared at RSL gatherings, read at commemorations, passed from veteran to veteran; keeping issues alive long after immediate crises have passed.

3. **Building Solidarity:** When a veteran read his words about broken promises, they knew they weren't alone. The poetry articulated feelings many veterans had but couldn't express, creating collective experience and shared struggle.
4. **Educating Civilians:** Poetry made military experiences accessible to non-military audiences. A civilian might not understand procurement policy intricacies, but they could understand the emotion in his words.
5. **Emotional Honesty:** In official communications, he maintained professional composure. But in poetry, he could express raw anger at injustice, deep sadness at lost mates and frustration with systemic failures. This emotional honesty resonated powerfully.
6. **The Legacy: A Permanent Record.** George Mansford passed away on 19th February 2026, at the age of 91 but his legacy remains vibrantly alive in the leaders he mentored, the soldiers he trained, the principles he championed and the poetry he created.

Neil Weekes AM MC. Wrote in his foreword to Mansford's work: *'Some of his poems demonstrate his frustration and disappointment with all Australian politicians in their failure to look after returned and retired service personnel.'* This wasn't a character flaw; it was evidence of a leader who cared deeply about his people and refused to accept their mistreatment.

The Influence on Generations. Mansford's influence extended far beyond his immediate command. Soldiers who trained under him carried his principles forward into their own careers. His insistence on shared hardship, on never asking soldiers to do what you wouldn't do yourself, on maintaining standards regardless of personal cost; these principles shaped generations of leaders. The route marches, the harsh training, the uncompromising standards; all served a purpose beyond immediate military effectiveness. It built character, created bonds of mateship that lasted decades and instilled resilience that soldiers carried into civilian life.

The Continuing Relevance. The 'Canberra Suits' still exist. Bureaucratic indifference persists. Political promises still outpace political action. Mansford's poetry remains relevant because the problems he identified haven't been solved. Veterans still struggle to navigate bureaucratic mazes to access promised benefits.

Families still fight for recognition of loved ones who died in service. Politicians still make soaring speeches about supporting those who serve, then vote to cut funding. The dehumanisation continues and while soldiers are still viewed as budget line items rather than human beings deserving dignity and support; Mansford's poetry keep these issues alive, reminding new generations of the gap between promises and reality.

The Moral Authority of Shared Experience. Mansford earned the right to criticise through decades of shared hardship with his soldiers. He never enjoyed privileges he denied to those under his command. He slept in the rain when his students slept in the rain. He endured the same route marches, the same harsh conditions, the same dangers.

This gave him moral authority that no 'Canberra Suit' could match. When he spoke about broken promises and bureaucratic indifference, no one could accuse him of hypocrisy. Mansford's poetry drew power from this contrast. It wasn't just the words; it was who was saying them: a man who had earned the right to speak through decades of service, who had kept his promises when others broke theirs.

Lessons for the Future. Mansford's example offers crucial lessons for current and future leaders:

For Military Leaders:

1. **Never stop fighting for your people.** True leadership extends into ensuring soldiers receive the equipment, training, support and recognition they deserve.
2. **Lead by example.** Never ask soldiers to do what you wouldn't do yourself. Shared hardship builds moral authority.
3. **Choose your battles and weapons wisely.** Find methods that will be effective, not just emotionally satisfying.
4. **Maintain the moral high ground.** Keep critique principled, focused on systemic failures rather than individual failings.
5. **Document and preserve.** Create permanent records of struggles and lessons learnt.

For Political and Bureaucratic Leaders.

1. **Remember that soldiers are human beings, not statistics.** Every decision affects real people with families, hopes, fears and dreams.
2. **Keep your promises.** Broken promises destroy trust and betray those who have sacrificed for their nation.
3. **Listen to those with relevant experience.** Before making decisions affecting soldiers' lives, listen to soldiers.
4. **Accept that leadership requires sacrifice.** If you demand sacrifice from others, be willing to sacrifice yourself.
5. **Understand that comfort is the 'enemy' of understanding.** Spend time with soldiers, visit
   training Battalion

For Veterans and Advocates

1. **Your voice matters.** Individual voices, properly articulated, can create lasting impact.
2. **Strategic advocacy is more effective than angry confrontation.** Find methods of advocacy that will be heard.
3. **Build community.** Shared experiences create solidarity crucial for effective advocacy.
4. Preserve the record. Document injustices and systemic failures.
5. **Never give up the fight.** The battle for proper recognition and genuine
6. respect is ongoing.

The Measure of a Man. George Mansford's legacy cannot be measured in battles won or ranks achieved. It must be measured in the lives he shaped, the principles he instilled and the example he set.

His true legacy lies in:

1. The soldiers he trained who carried his principles to the next generation
2. The harsh but necessary training standards at Tully that prepared soldiers for combat saving lives
3. The poetry that gave voice to veterans' frustrations
4. The example of a leader who never stopped fighting for his people
5. The moral authority he earned through shared hardship and kept promises
6. The reminder that soldiers are human beings deserving dignity, respect and support

DO CANBERRA SUITS THINK IT'S ALL A GAME?

I heard the news that the Senate had given old soldiers the flick
Clearly, those past promises were a cruel trick
It seemed there has been betrayal from the Greens who vowed trust
And Senator Lundy who not so long ago preached that the cause was just

The war drums are beating and there's anger in the air
All the military wanted was a fair go and this result is far from fair
The ire is growing and I doubt if it will subside
The warrior fraternity has been taken for a ride

They're not asking for riches, perks, or what they haven't earnt
Nor like others, seeking new bridges to replace those they've burnt
Don't Canberra Suits really understand that it's about "a fair go"
Diggers', young and old are fair dinkum; this isn't a one-week show

Let me relate some truths from days gone by
Youngsters volunteered to wear the sacred cloth and eager to try
They believed in each other and their leaders never lied
As soldiers' they were ready to fight and knew some would die

With no union rules they followed orders and no questions asked
Even though there were sometimes doubts about the Canberra Brass
Soldiers were told things that were not very nice
"The fresh rations aren't coming so eat what's left of the rice"

"Sorry fellas, saddle up, there's no time to rest"
"We're outnumbered and the enemy to our front is their best"
"No matter what happens, stand fast, cos we're here to the very last"
"Leave's been cancelled" or "your bed for the night is this Marsh"

Diggers' have been used to tough times and even worse
They have always obeyed and got on the task, albeit with a curse
Not enough family giddays and far too many sad hoorays
Over the years, a nomadic life and let's face it, poor conditions and pay

All of this was accepted and there was never hesitation to serve
Now the bloody Senate turns it back on what is their just deserve
The irony of all of this is very clear and far from sweet
Instead of soldiering and compulsory retirement payments to meet

They could have surfed every day and doled for many a year
Then, like the Canberra Suits and others, received a better indexation
Is it any wonder that among the warriors there is growing vexation?
By the way, as well as super, the military too pays personal taxation

So as old soldiers' prepare for the final phase of life
Many hope that the first to go will be the beloved wife
Cos the reduced pension which a widow officially deserves
Is pathetic recognition of women who kept home fires burning & quietly served

Given Canberra's double standards of them and us; is there no shame?
Or do the Canberra Suits think it's all part of some bullshit game?
Speaking of which; let me close with words a recent Prime Minister said
"We must always honour those who wore the proud national thread"

George Mansford June 2011

Neil Weekes (Brigadier deceased). Described Mansford as embodying: *'Everything Australian, the larrikinism, the determination not to be defeated, the will to have a go, the indomitable spirit'.*

But perhaps the truest measure of Mansford came from those he led. They loved him despite his foibles.

They respected him because he never asked them to do what he wouldn't do himself. They trusted him because he kept his promises when others broke theirs.

The continuing relevance of the 'Canberra Suits' critique. Decades after George began writing about the 'Canberra Suits,' the critique remains disturbingly relevant.

The Persistence of Bureaucratic Indifference. Veterans still navigate Byzantine bureaucratic systems to access promised benefits.

Claims are delayed, denied on technicalities or lost in administrative processes.

The dehumanisation continues; veterans become case files, claim numbers, processing delays.

The human cost remains invisible to those making decisions: veterans who commit suicide whilst waiting for mental health support, families who struggle financially whilst claims are processed, soldiers denied recognition because paperwork doesn't meet criteria.

The Gap Between Political Rhetoric and Action. Politicians still give soaring speeches about supporting those who serve. ANZAC Day sees an annual parade of political figures laying wreaths and praising sacrifice. But budgets for veterans' support do not match the rhetoric. Recognition criteria remain restrictive. Support services are underfunded.

The Comfort-Reality Divide. The people making decisions about military matters remain comfortably distant from the consequences. Procurement officials who have never carried a rifle make decisions about infantry equipment. Bureaucrats who have never experienced combat trauma design mental health support systems. This comfortable distance allows decision-makers to view military matters as abstract policy questions rather than issues affecting real human beings.

The Sacrifice Asymmetry. When budgets need balancing, it is never politicians' salaries or entitlements on the chopping block; always veterans' benefits, military families' support, or defence capability. The people who have sacrificed the most are asked to sacrifice again. The people who have sacrificed the least protect their own interests whilst demanding sacrifice from others.

The Broader Context: Australia's Treatment of Veterans. Mansford's critique must be understood within the broader context of Australia's historical treatment of veterans. The pattern of soaring rhetoric combined with inadequate support stretches back through Australia's military history. After World War I, returned soldiers' faced inadequate support and struggled to reintegrate.

After World War II, despite improved support structures, many veterans struggled. Vietnam veterans faced particular challenges, returning to a society divided about the war, often receiving neither recognition nor support. More recent conflicts in Iraq and Afghanistan have seen some improvements, but fundamental problems persist.

The Systemic Nature of the Problem. The persistence of these problems across different conflicts, governments and eras suggests they're systemic rather than incidental. Several factors contribute:

1. **Distance from consequences:** Decision-makers do not experience the results of their decisions
2. **Budget pressures:** Veterans' support competes with other spending priorities
3. **Bureaucratic complexity:** Support systems create barriers preventing access to help
4. **Political cycles:** Attention to veterans' issues waxes and wanes with electoral cycles, preventing sustained focus on long-term improvements.
5. **Cultural disconnect:** As military service becomes less common, fewer politicians and bureaucrats have personal experience or family connections to military service, reducing empathy and understanding

The Cost of Failure. The cost of these systemic failures is measured in human suffering:

1. Veterans who commit suicide whilst waiting for mental health support
2. Families who face financial hardship because benefit claims are delayed or denied
3. Soldiers' whose sacrifices go unrecognised because bureaucratic criteria exclude them
4. Veterans who die early from service-related conditions that weren't properly treated
5. Families torn apart by the stress of navigating bureaucratic systems whilst dealing with trauma and injury

These costs remain largely invisible to the 'Canberra Suits' making decisions. They're statistics in reports, not human beings with names, faces and families.

The Power of Poetry as Advocacy. Mansford's choice of poetry as his primary vehicle for advocacy offers lessons for contemporary advocates across all fields.

1. **Emotional Resonance:** Poetry conveys emotion in ways that policy papers or official reports cannot. His anger at broken promises, his frustration with indifference and his pain at seeing mates abandoned; these emotions come through powerfully, creating connection with readers.
2. **Accessibility:** Poetry is accessible to audiences who might never read policy papers. It doesn't require specialist knowledge. The emotional and moral core of Mansford's critique comes through clearly regardless of readers' familiarity with military bureaucracy.
3. **Memorability:** People remember poems in ways they do not remember bureaucratic documents. Mansford's lines about 'Canberra Suits' and broken promises stick in readers' minds, quoted at RSL gatherings, shared among veterans, referenced in discussions about veteran support.
4. **Artistic Legitimacy:** Poetry carries artistic legitimacy that protects it from dismissal as mere complaining. The artistic form provided protection whilst allowing the message to come through clearly, demonstrating that the critique was considered, crafted and principled.
5. **Building Legacy:** Poetry creates lasting legacy in ways that other forms of advocacy often do not. Mansford's poems will be read and shared long after he's gone, continuing to influence attitudes and advocate for change.

The Way Forward: Honouring Mansford's Legacy. Honouring his legacy requires more than remembering his service or reading his poetry. It requires action to address the problems he identified and continuing the fight he waged.

Systemic Reforms. Fundamental reforms are needed to address systemic failures:

1. **Simplify access to support:** Bureaucratic complexity that prevents veterans from accessing help must be reduced with the burden of proof on the system rather than the veteran
2. **Ensure adequate funding:** Veterans' support must be funded at levels that match political rhetoric
3. **Improve decision-maker accountability:** Those making decisions should be held accountable for outcomes, not just process compliance
4. **Increase veteran input:** Veterans should have meaningful input into decisions affecting them
5. **Cultural change:** The dehumanisation of veterans as statistics must be challenged

Individual Actions. Beyond systemic reforms, individuals can honour Mansford's legacy:

1. Veterans and serving personnel can document their experiences, share their stories, build community and advocate for improvements
2. Military leaders can fight for their people, maintain high standards, lead, by example and refuse to accept inadequate support or equipment
3. Political and bureaucratic leaders can listen to veterans, keep promises, prioritise people over process and make decisions based on human impact
4. Civilians can educate themselves about veterans' issues, support advocacy organisations and hold politicians accountable

Preserving and Sharing the Poetry. Mansford's poetry must be preserved, shared and kept alive:

1. Archiving the complete collection ensures they're not lost and remain accessible to future generations
2. Sharing the poems at commemorations, in educational settings and through social media keeps the messages alive
3. Analysis of the poems in academic and professional military education contexts ensures the lessons are learnt and applied

Continuation of the poetic tradition by others ensures Mansford's approach lives on

The Unfinished Fight. George Mansford fought two types of battles. The first was on battlefields in Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, where the enemy wore a uniform. The second was in the corridors of power in Canberra, where the 'enemy' wore Suits and wielded policy manuals. He excelled at both. On the battlefield he earned respect through courage, competence and leadership, rising from Private to Brigadier through merit but it was the second battle; the fight against bureaucratic indifference and political hypocrisy; that defined his later legacy.

His poetry drew power from moral authority earned through shared hardship. He never asked soldiers to do what he wouldn't do himself. He kept his promises when others broke theirs. This gave him the right to speak; and his words carried weight. The 'Canberra Suits' he critiqued still exist. Bureaucratic indifference persists.

Political promises still outpace political action but Mansford's example shows that this battle can be fought; and must be fought not with resignation or cynicism, but with strategic intelligence, moral courage and unwavering commitment to those who serve.

His legacy lives on in the leaders he mentored, the soldiers he trained, the principles he championed and the poetry he created. It lives on in every leader who fights for their people even when it is uncomfortable, in every veteran who refuses to accept broken promises, in every advocate who demands accountability from the 'Canberra Suits. ' George Mansford demonstrated that true leadership extends beyond the battlefield into the corridors of power, that poetry can be a weapon as powerful as any rifle and that fighting for your people never ends; even when the 'enemy' wears a suit instead of a uniform.

The battle continues. The 'Canberra Suits' remain comfortable and distant. Veterans still struggle. Promises are still broken but George's poetry remains; a rallying cry, a permanent record, a reminder that soldiers deserve better and that the fight for justice and support must continue In the end, he embodied a simple truth: soldiers keep their promises; to serve, to sacrifice and to endure. Leaders must keep theirs; to support, to advocate and to never stop fighting for those under their command.

The 'Canberra Suits' may never fully understand this. But every true leader does and that makes all the difference.

THE WARRIOR POET'S BURDEN

What George Mansford's Poetry Reveals About the Soldier's Soul. George Mansford's poetry operates on two interconnected planes; the external world of military service and the internal landscape of betrayal. Through his verses, he constructs an unflinching account of what it means to serve your country, survive the wars and then watch politicians break every promise they made.

At the heart of his work lies the soldier's covenant; an unspoken agreement that those who risk everything for their nation will be honoured and cared for in return. When Mansford writes: We were 'K Force', 'Regs' and 'Nashos' clad in proud thread. The game we played was scored in wounded and dead; he establishes the price paid.

The deepest wound comes not from enemy fire but from those wearing Canberra Suits: 'Meanwhile false promises to veterans who once did dare. Some who live on Struggle Street with cupboards bare.

This is not simple anger. This is the profound disappointment of men who built their lives on duty, loyalty and trust; values that demand reciprocity. When politicians break faith, veterans don't just lose money; they lose the meaning of their service. George's repeated return to political betrayal; '

Judas is Living in Canberra, The Enemy From Within Are Wearing Canberra Suits'; reveals a man watching the covenant shattered while those responsible prosper. The military ethos demands soldiers endure without complaint, so when he finally gives voice to grievance, it carries decades of stoic silence and the weight of mates who can no longer speak for themselves.

What emerges most powerfully is Mansford's understanding that this fight is fundamentally about dignity and recognition. He is not asking for wealth or special treatment; just basic respect, the Australian 'Fair go.' When he writes 'All we want is a 'Fair Go'; but those bastards in Canberra continue to say 'No,' he articulates something deeper than poverty: the insult of being deemed unworthy by the very nation you defended.

Worse still, watching politicians vote themselves pay increases while telling veterans the CPI is good enough; 'Do you think we live on bullshit, spin and lots of smoke?' The poems document this hypocrisy with forensic precision.'

Ex and current 'Pollys (Politicians) get a rise, not old soldiers in plight. Politicians claim those who wore the uniform come first, then break every promise. They praise soldiers at memorial services, create new medals and monuments; that's how 'Pollys' make a right from a very old wrong; while veterans cannot afford set-top boxes for television and 'dig deeper for bills to pay.'

Mansford's concern extends fiercely to families who bore the burden alongside soldiers. When he writes 'Remember the medals Governments gave to hang on our chests? The bastards should have given some to our Sheilas who were the best,' he's acknowledging the 'grass widows' who 'tossed and turned in half-filled beds,' who became both mother and father, who endured their own combat on the home front.

The erosion of military pensions through CPI indexation; while politicians index their own pay to far more generous standards; becomes a slow attrition targeting those least able to fight back. His frustration stems from watching those he cares about struggle while the politicians who made promises at farewells 'nod and shuffle as loved ones mourn with many tears. Then leave to visit yesterday but fail to plan tomorrow.'

The humour throughout his work; boots on the wrong feet, Sergeant Tully the crocodile, Moffitt's pebble solution; serves a crucial function. These stories preserve the humanity of mates and maintain sanity in the face of institutional betrayal. But beneath the larrikin humour lays accumulated trauma: 'Losing two wives,' 'Losing a son,' moments when death brushed close and war's machinery revealed its indifference to individual value.

By invoking the 'Fair Go'; that cry from the First Fleet convicts, from Eureka Stockade, from Ned Kelly, from the Labor movement, from the ANZAC's; George positions veterans' struggles within Australia's defining narrative.' A Fair Go is part of our diet in this vast southern land.' This transforms personal grievance into national cause: the same politicians who fail to understand this fundamental Australian value 'don't understand the cry that made our nation strong.'

It's not just about veterans; it's about who Australia is as a nation. What Mansford ultimately tells us is that the wounds of war don't end when the fighting stops. When politicians practice 'Yes then No' politics, breaking election promises with impunity, veterans experience ongoing betrayal; combat without end, without mates to share the burden, without possibility of victory.' Betrayal and hypocrisy it seems is just the same.'

But military culture demands stoicism, so Mansford speaks for those who cannot: the dead, the broken, the forgotten, those who 'never did get to grow old.' His poetry witnesses the full cost; not just of war, but of a nation's failure to keep faith. When he writes 'Some Mates Who Never Did Get To Grow Old,' he performs a sacred duty: ensuring they are not reduced to names on memorials while their surviving mates struggle.

When he writes 'This Fight Is Far From Over,' he's asserting that the values learned in service; loyalty, courage, integrity, looking after your mates; remain valid even when those in power have abandoned them. The fight now is for basic dignity, for fair indexation, for recognition that 'old soldiers can't eat medals you know.'

George Mansford's poetry carries the weight of combat, broken promises and the fight for dignity. It's the voice of a man who did everything his country asked; 'Family, duty, honour and up the red rooster was the yell / Never a time to surrender and too proud to ring the bell'; and discovered that honour was not reciprocal. Politicians who sent them to war now treat them 'like a curse.'

Yet still he fights, still he writes, still he demands a fair go; not just for himself, but for all who served and their families. He proposes not violence but democratic action: 'Increase pressure in marginals and vote the bastards out!' In this persistence lies his triumph: the refusal to surrender, the insistence that we were here, we mattered, we kept faith even when faith was not kept with us and our story will not be forgotten. As he warns politicians: 'Come Election Day, OZ will surely remember and vote to get it right.'

A FAIR GO AND NO MORE BETRAYAL

We were soldiers who played the domino game
In foreign arenas for Caesars who sought global fame
They with other Canberra Suits often waved us goodbye
Uttered stirring slogans with fluttering flags held high
We were K Force, Regs and Nashos clad in proud thread
The game we played was scored in wounded and dead
We tightened our belts when hungry for a crust of bread
Faced the unknown and dangers but never complained
Endured stifling heat, mud and icy soaking rain
It became the norm for little rest, be it night or day
Fleeting fragmented visions of loved ones far away
Our bedroom a rocky ridge, a swamp or a trench
Too often surrounded by death and its terrible stench
Time marches on but the scene is very much the same
Youngsters in national cloth still play the bloody game
The Suits attend farewells for those with broken spears
Nod and shuffle as loved ones mourn with many tears
Then leave to visit yesterday but fail to plan tomorrow
In their wake are families left to exist in deep sorrow
Meanwhile false promises to vets who once did dare
Some who live on Struggle Street with cupboards bare
Pleas for a fair go are ignored by Suits who do not care
We need Allies and not Brutus or Judas with such plight
No more betrayals by Caesars who organize such fights
Never fear, create another memorial or a new gong
That's how Pollys make a right from a very old wrong

A FAIR GO

The cry of Fair Go arrived with the convicts from the First Fleet
Later, the Rum Corp demanded it by rebelling in the streets
A Fair Go is part of our diet in this vast southern land
The lack of it caused the Eureka Stockade and a defiant stand
The mob at Vinegar Hill stood fast to seek it and did defy
The Labor Party was born and Fair Go became its battle cry
Ned Kelly never got it, so took to robbing for his loot
Mind you, today's Pollys' do it far better and don't have to shoot
The ANZACS and those who followed fought to make it so
Their dream was to ensure every Aussie battler has a Fair Go
Today we scream it at the Refs and Umps when they get it wrong
Even louder with adjectives if we're playing Kiwis or Poms
We love it when a battler beats the system cos he got a Fair Go
Just like when David whacked Goliath for six into the back row
Then at last Canberra Suits were in the hall vowing us a Fair Go
Alas, the stage is now deserted as are the promises they gave
Given the current cast and the play, Ben Chifley's turning in his grave
Clearly today's Pollys simply get it all so bloody wrong
They don't understand the cry that made our nation strong
It's called a Fair Go for all walks of life, no matter who they are
Be it in the big smoke, country town, cattle runs or dream time afar
It does include old soldiers who can't eat medals you know
When it comes to indexation they too need a Fair Go
As do disabled diggers' who were ripped off not so long ago
Or the farmers invaded by moguls with their oil and gas drills
A Fair Go is being threatened by greed, PC*, spin and happy pills
Like all those before us, the call is still the same

CANBERRA HEADS ARE IN THE SAND

How very strange we can be
In our land down under, home of the free
How many times have we fought for others
The flower of our youth, sisters and brothers
When eagles screeched, lion and bear did roar
We stood as one for freedom evermore
On the 11 th hour we remember them all
Poppies, silence and fond bugle calls
And yet when dark clouds gather near by
And strangers arrive with strident cry
Unhappy with the way such infidels live
Accepting our roof and bed and what we give
Then use our very system to erode our way of life
Some even talk of Jehads and other bloody strife
Blind, deaf Canberra cannot see dangers of tomorrow's sun
When perhaps we will no longer be as one
Surely we witness the most subtle invasion of our shores
When in time sheilas and blokes will be no more
Forget about Xmas, bikinis, Melbourne Cups and all
Forbidden the soapbox, grog and the cooee call
Just faint whispers and rumours of what used to be
In the land down under that some reckon used to be free

'POLLYS' SMOKE SCREENS & MAGIC CPI

When you hear our Pollys' claiming
'Those who wore the uniform come first'
Then you must begin to wonder why
Is it them or you whose marbles have burst?
None of it makes sense-- you just wanna cry
Today, via media, we hear their political spin
With shiny mirrors and smoke screens galore
Casting magic spells, weaving webs and praising CPI
Uttering 'how grateful you should be, don't ask for more
You're old soldiers and don't you dare to bloody cry'
It's true that soldiers we have surely been
Made a life of it with no regrets I would say
Paid our super and tax--planned for a rainy day
Believing there was enough to live in a modest way
Then hung up our boots and said a fond hooray
But when old mates have to join the pension queue
Cos now their super's hardly worth a zac or sou
Then if the CPI is so great for us, the privileged few

SHABBY TREATMENT FROM POLITICIANS

There's a saying that old soldiers never die
Our PM said we must place them on a pedestal high
Generals issued orders that soldiers must not cry
Some poet wrote that theirs is not to reason why
It's clear to see that Pollys treat old soldiers like a curse
That's the real truth of the matter and even bloody worse
Do people in high places think life was easy for all who served?
The unknown, the dangers nor the recognition they deserved
Perhaps the problem was that they never did complain
Despite the poor conditions, soldiered on, again and again
Family, duty, honour and up the red rooster was the yell
Never a time to surrender and too proud to ring the bell
These were the Regulars, volunteers who gave their all for you
And don't dare forget, they paid their super and taxes too
When Bob Menzies handed twenty-year-olds some guns
Who do you think made the Regs and Nashos all as one?
Howard and Rudd in times of recent bloody strife
Rightly praised our soldiers for risking precious life
Moved them here and there and back again on foreign shores
Then captured much of the kudos and sought even more
Yet you have to ask the question, even to the dills
What was the secret why these soldiers served true blue
Was it the ANZAC genes or perhaps some magic pills?
Or forgotten Regulars who had kept the standards true?
Now there's a mad stampede on Parliament floor
A Polly salary increase is knocking at the door
Just in case you're confused and didn't get it right
Ex and current Pollys get a rise, not old soldiers in plight
What was it that Rudd, the leader of the push did say?
'We must honour all who wore our Nation's proud thread'
Perhaps the comment should have been 'no increase in pay
And forget the recognition until they are all so very dead'

THE POLITICAL ARENA - YES MEANS NO

Benedict Arnold, Judas and fairy tale Pinocchio too
Are well known as turncoats and liars in history and are but a few
But compared to Aussie Pollys, they're not in the race
Cos many of our elected reps are a bloody national disgrace
With Yes then No stampedes by Labor and Greens
The government's going around in circles it seems
They break more promises while on the hop
Than a panicked bull with vases and plates in a China Shop
As they blunder and stumble in familiar 'trust me' political games
Gawd, Parliament's no longer a guiding beacon but a flickering flame
The current trophy holder for changing camps is Kate Lundy
It's enough to make any old soldier get back on the Bundy
Before the elections she fluttered her eyes and said Yes for show
Now it's a cold lonely bed cos when the crunch came, she said No
Mind you there were many others close for the winning prize
They too said Yes when all the time No was written their eyes
It's true that the old military should pursue the debate
But for 'Christ sake' you best hurry up, times getting late
Otherwise, Kate and her mob will have a great coup
The old mob will be dead and gone and that includes you
We can't shoot them or riot and throw bricks from the crowd
So, we must continue to let them hear our protest clear and loud
So, as well as sensible debate with those Pollys who support us
Perhaps it's time to plan on being mobile and hiring a bus
It could well be part of planning Option Two
To travel to major towns for a protest or two
Don't forget the centre of those strategic marginal seats
To remind them all they can be beat.
No more the treachery of Yes then No
It's time for a fair go or out the bastards go

WHAT WAS IT FOR?

Old soldiers with campaign medals to show
Flood the streets, marching in row after row
Bugles call and drums do beat
While the watching crowds cheer and greet
Veterans with frayed shirts, old shoes and copper coins so few
Yet countless rich memories of mates' true blue
When facing death, their love of country proven time and time again
Immense pride in whom and what they were still remains
Confused and troubled in their beloved land
An oasis of beauty and riches being lost to spreading foreign sand
Reckless spending blinkered leaders recite 'I'm right, Jack'
Yesterday's blood, sweat and tears forgotten on our space age track
Broken promises and Darwin Port no longer we own
Selling to foreign interests rich fertile land where food is grown
Obligatory political correctness defies common sense and proud past
Diversity is the craze while 'one people, one flag' is now a poor last
Soon the march will end and old soldiers will go their own way
Always proud of their duty and deeds from yesterday
Alone or together, no matter when or where
They'll always stand tall and face Canberra Suits with icy stare

THINK OF THE ANZACS

Comes a time when young soldiers will ask
'How do I know I'm really fit for the task
If in battle and the chips are down
Can I be sure I won't let our mob down'
The answer of course is so very clear
Just think of the ANZACS no longer here
Cos they were Aussies, no different to you
Young, eager, larrikins and ever true blue
They too had doubts but never wore a frown
Despite dangers, still smiled, never looked down
Sometimes confusion from a General's flawed plan
Always the cry, 'keep going, let's do the best we can'
No matter the task, doubts, risks or cruel weather
They went forward as one; mates together
When no officers' were left, it was still 'let's go'
They knew what was to be done to beat the foe
So, look after your mates who are part of the team
Be careful, be tough but never cruel or mean
And remember that fortune favours those who dare
The ANZACS are watching; good luck and take care

CHAPTER 12:
THE WIVES - FAMILIES **AND** DUTY FIRST

A TRUE-BLUE ARMY WIFE

For all Military Wives. Past and Present

She was a soldier's wife all those years
So many brave farewells while hiding fears
Both mother and father when he was away
Always busy, cheerful and waiting, waiting, day by day

A cycle of postings and shifting family to places unknown
Tearful farewells to familiar places where friendships had grown
The tests on love with moving and organising children and pets
Arriving at a lonely, empty house and no sign of the furniture yet

Gloomy small married quarters she quickly made so bright
Love and laughter in her new home, be it day or night
Always enduring the tests and demands of military life
Never complaining, for she was a soldier's wife

Ready to lend a helping hand to new arrivals or those in strife
It was part of the creed of being a warrior's wife
A breed of their own and always so close in thick and thin
Such was their friendship they could have been next of kin

After long separations, such joy to greet him home
He was safe and she with her brood were no longer alone
Until once more she would bravely smile as he waved hooray
Then count the months and weeks until that wonderful magic day

Time marches on and a new family arrives at a well-used gate
Nothing's changed, there still the same fear and the long, long wait
Always the constant demands associated with military life
Is it any wonder why old warriors salute each and every army wife?

George Mansford

Defence Families.
Behind every soldier who answered the call of "Duty First" stood a spouse and family who embraced the same principle without uniform, rank, or recognition.

These families formed the invisible backbone of Australia's military capability, their service measured not in medals but in years of sacrifice, resilience, and unwavering support.

Mansford's Understanding. George understood this reality with uncommon clarity. Throughout his career, he witnessed the toll that military service exacted on families—the missed birthdays, the anxious waiting, the constant upheaval of postings. He knew that every operational decision he made as a commander rippled through households where wives managed alone and children grew up with absent fathers.

His poetry revealed the depth of his respect for military wives. In "A True-Blue Army Wife," he captured their strength and sacrifice with the reverence of a man who recognized that his own service was only possible because of their endurance.

He wrote of women who "never complained" and who "stood by their man" through decades of separation and hardship. These weren't romantic platitudes—they were observations born from personal experience and genuine admiration. His advocacy for defence families intensified after retirement.

THIS FIGHT IS FAR FROM OVER

Remember the medals Governments gave to hang on our chests?
The bastards should have given some to our Sheilas who were the best
Now I know the term is not politically correct but it's a compliment, dead set

I'm referring to those true-blue partners and wives
Such wonderful women who followed the drum for much of their lives
These were the girls, one hundred percent loyal and devoted for sure

Who made brave faces during many farewells in peace and war
They kept the home fires burning, trying to be happy, never sad
As well as being a Mum, they also became good old Dad

How many times did a grass widow toss and turn in a half-filled bed
After news of battle, wondering if a loved one was safe, wounded or dead
What about the girlfriends they comforted when there was bad news

As it is in the game of soldiering, there must have been quite a few
Don't forget the old married quarters where we paid rent to live
Struth, even recent refugees refused to set up home in such digs

Today, army super that a retired digger is paid
Continues to erode quicker than old soldiers do fade
It certainly means that those modest luxuries are few

Yet with strict budgeting, the girls make do
Is it any wonder there's concern about an aging Wife
If she's left behind to battle alone in what's left of life

Given a dwindling pension which is based on the CPI
Worse still, it's reduced to 5/8ths of bugger all when her mate dies
Perhaps in a future life, these girls should capture Politicians as pets

Cos Polly widows get a good slice of the kitty and are very well set
Meanwhile in Canberra, at the feeding trough there's been another stampede
With unanimous agreement by Pollys for new allowances to state their greed

Soon after, despite pre- election promises, the Senate ignored soldiers' needs
It knocked back a green light for fair indexation for those who had served
After all, they claimed the CPI is sound and is what soldiers deserve

The obvious question is that if the CPI is so good for old diggers and widows too
Why not change indexation for Pollys to CPI, instead of just us few?
Let there be no doubt that regardless of Canberra Suits and others

We'll never give up this fight and other such rights for our sisters and brothers

George Mansford

He became increasingly vocal about the inadequate indexation of service pensions, particularly the injustice faced by war widows whose pensions were slashed upon their husbands' deaths.

His poem "This Fight Is Far From Over" was a call to arms for proper recognition and compensation for these women who had already given so much.

He understood that the nation's debt extended beyond the grave, encompassing those who had supported the soldier throughout his service and continued to bear the consequences long after.

In his speeches and writings, George repeatedly emphasized that military families served alongside their uniformed members.

He rejected any notion that service was an individual undertaking.

To him, every deployment, every posting, every training exercise was a shared sacrifice.

He respected the silent courage of wives who waved goodbye with brave faces whilst fear gnawed at their hearts and he honoured the children who grew up understanding that duty sometimes meant Dad wouldn't be home.

The Reality of Military Family Life.

Military spouses lived a life defined by farewells.

They stood at railway stations, airports, and barrack gates, waving goodbye whilst transforming overnight into sole parents, household managers, and decision-makers. T

hey became both mother and father, maintaining discipline, providing comfort, and keeping family life functioning despite the absence at the dinner table.

The cycle of postings brought relentless upheaval. Spouses packed households, organized children and pets, and shifted families to unfamiliar towns.

They arrived at empty married quarters—often small, poorly maintained, and depressing—and through determination transformed these spaces into homes. Yet just as roots began to take hold, another posting notice arrived, and the cycle began anew.

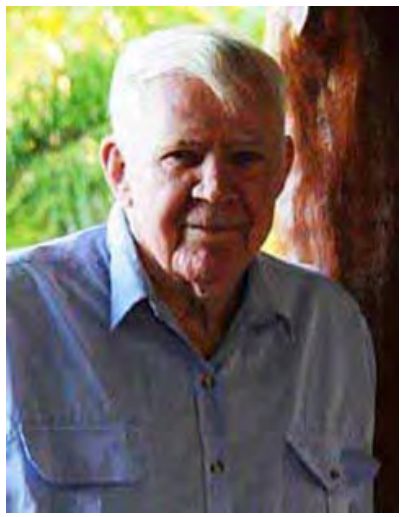
Within tight-knit military communities, wives formed bonds of extraordinary depth. They understood one another's struggles without explanation, shared practical advice about navigating military bureaucracy, and provided emotional support. Experienced wives mentored newcomers, teaching them how to cope with separation, manage on modest budgets, and maintain sanity through constant change.

The strain of separation cut deepest during operational deployments. Spouses waited by letterboxes and telephones, counting days, weeks, and months. Nights brought particular anguish when news filtered through of contacts or casualties. In half-empty beds, they wondered whether their loved ones were safe, wounded, or dead, whilst maintaining cheerful facades for the children.

Children grew up with parents present only in photographs and letters. First steps, first words, school concerts, sporting achievements, and birthdays passed with one parent missing. Teenagers struggled with identity and belonging as they moved between schools, never quite settling before the next posting arrived.

Financial hardship added another layer of difficulty. Service pay was modest, and families budgeted carefully. Spouses stretched every dollar, sacrificing luxuries most Australians took for granted. Even in retirement, inadequate pension indexation meant continued strain, with widows facing particular hardship when pensions reduced to a fraction of already modest amounts.

Practical demands were extraordinary. Spouses navigated medical emergencies alone, repaired household problems, dealt with landlords, and made critical decisions without consultation. They became experts in self-reliance, developing skills born of necessity.



Reunions brought joy but also unexpected challenges. Families who had adapted to single-parent dynamics readjusted to the returning member's presence. Children sometimes resented disrupted routines. Spouses who had developed independence faced renegotiating domestic arrangements. The returning service member carried operational experiences that created emotional distance requiring time to bridge.

For serving members, knowledge of what their families endured created a burden as heavy as any operational responsibility. They carried guilt over missed milestones and their partners' struggles. They knew their wives managed crises and bore loneliness so they could fulfill their duty. This awareness weighed on them throughout their careers.

The unspoken code within military communities provided crucial support. When tragedy struck, networks rallied immediately with meals, childcare, and practical help. They sat with grieving widows and comforted children. This solidarity created bonds as strong as those formed between soldiers in the field—a sisterhood forged through shared experience.

These spouses and families served Australia as surely as those who wore the uniform. Their sacrifice, though rarely acknowledged in official histories, was woven into the fabric of national defence. They embodied "Duty First" in every farewell, every lonely night, and every posting. George Mansford recognized this truth and spent his final years ensuring their service would not be forgotten.

CHAPTER 13:
ONE PEOPLE, ONE FLAG

George Mansford on the ANZAC Spirit. Within this Chapter a collection of addresses delivered by George Mansford between 2009 and 2021, capturing his reflections on service, sacrifice and the enduring spirit of the Australian soldier, are presented. These speeches, delivered at Regimental gatherings, ANZAC Day commemorations and community events, distil a lifetime of military experience into powerful messages about mateship, duty and national identity.

Speaking with the authority of a soldier who served from Korea through Vietnam, his words honour the fallen, celebrate the living and challenge future generations to preserve the values forged in war and sustained in peace.

A SOLDIER'S REFLECTION

Looking out at you all tonight, I see faces from every corner of this nation, from every walk of life. You served at different times, in different places, under different circumstances.

Some of you were there in the frozen hills of Korea, others in the jungles of Malaya and Borneo, many in the rice paddies of Vietnam and the newest among you in the deserts and mountains of Afghanistan. But it doesn't matter who you were, what you were, where you served or didn't serve.

Each and every one of you, from the youngest to the oldest, has one thing in common; you served in our beloved Regiment. So, join me tonight in a walk down observation lane. Let's capture some memories together, from our genesis to Afghanistan, from gaiters, 303's, Owen guns and Brens to Kevlar armour, night vision, Steyrs and mini guns. It's been quite a journey, hasn't it?

I can still recall the originals from Korea, those hard men wearing triangular shoulder patches with a 9 at each apex, representing 27 Brigade. In the barracks, they consumed copious amounts of alcohol, gambled constantly and in between brawling with strangers, they taught me some very basic rules of soldiering. Never dob. Look after your mates. Never volunteer. Simple rules, but they've served me well for more than half a century.

Each generation has faced its challenges, but I've witnessed at least four defining moments in our Regiment's history. The first was Korea, where our Regiment; poorly equipped, understrength, with limited warning; was committed to war for the first time and performed magnificently in the true style of the ANZACs. That's where our reputation was forged, where the benchmark was established for all who followed to emulate.

We shouldn't forget the importance of those young officers who were baptised in battle on those Korean hills and later commanded Battalions during the Vietnam War. Nor should we forget the numerous soldiers and NCOs who became the senior mentors in future conflicts; the Cruickshanks', Chinns', Bandys', O'Sullivans', Ostaras', Husbands', Roughleys', Curries', Gordons', Morrisons', Moffitts', Camerons' and so many others. These men carried the lessons learned in blood and passed them on to the next generation.

The second defining moment was the commitment to operations in Borneo and Vietnam, combined with the enormous task of absorbing National Servicemen, expanding the officer and NCO Corps, committing to training units and expanding to nine Battalions while providing officers, Warrant Officers and NCOs for other units new on the order of battle. Even more difficult was establishing a training and operational cycle to maintain three Battalions in Vietnam and one in Malaysia, while simultaneously preparing relief Battalions, providing reinforcements to replace casualties and replacing outgoing conscripts with yet another new generation to be trained and prepared for war. It was an extraordinary undertaking and somehow we managed it.

The third defining moment was what I call the great peace; that long period where the Army survived cutbacks, changes of direction and regular deployments. No matter how many times we defeated the 'Mussorians' in exercises, they kept coming back each year. It was a difficult and challenging phase of soldiering, often frustrating, frequently thankless.

We owe much to the generations who despite frustration and disappointment, maintained the standards and kept the Regiment ready for war. The professional deployments to Somalia, Cambodia, Rwanda and subsequent operations at short notice didn't simply happen because of ANZAC genes or some magic pill. They happened because of the professionalism and dedication of those who soldiered in a peacetime environment with little and often no recognition.

The fourth defining moment is happening right now; constant commitment and movement to and from operational areas within hostile and troubled environments, resulting in immense pressure on existing manpower and resources. You know what? The current warriors are doing it well. They're maintaining the standards we established all those years ago.

No matter when you served, there were always rebels who challenged authority, larrikins, rumour mongers, Battalion bookies, comedians and of course, the bush lawyers in the ranks who offered advice before military justice was handed out to the guilty ones before they fronted the brass. The military has always had a brilliant and effective system of justice; you always had the opportunity to plead your case after guilt and punishment had already been decided.

Between that very first tent in the South West Pacific and today's remote outpost in Afghanistan, home was often a leaky tent, a shell scrape or a bunker on countless hills, mountains, jungles and deserts or in Australia, at the back of Bourke or beyond the black stump.

You were and still are a special breed. When many in society ignored you, you shrugged your shoulders, drew strength from your own military family and became all the more professional. When some burned the flag, your love for that emblem became stronger. When some vilified you, it drew you closer together and strengthened your camaraderie. When you felt uncertain and scared, you drew comfort and courage from your mates beside you. When given a task, no matter how difficult or dangerous, you never hesitated and often did more than was expected.

In our Regiment, you were part of the family; not because of the colour of your skin or your accent, but because of how you performed. The 'Ziggy Imaks' from Lithuania, the 'Tony Parrellos' from Italy, the 'Von Kurtzs' from Germany, the 'Charlie Meaneys' from Torres Strait.

It was the family. It still is. And we need no 'do-gooders', academics, or social engineers to interfere with the Regiment's standards or attempt brainwashing with political correctness. Our Regiment has never been found wanting. It has proven itself on numerous operations in varying situations, regardless of the odds and circumstances.

The battle honours are etched on the walls of the Infantry Centre; Kapyong, Maryang-san, the Hook, Long Tan, Coral, Balmoral, Binh Ba. I hope recent campaigns such as Somalia, Rwanda, Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan will soon join the wall alongside Malaya and Borneo.

What's clear is that most commitments came at short notice. You went with what you had. There was no gilt-edged invitation, no RSVP. A recent example from Afghanistan says it all; a wounded soldier protesting, 'I wanna stay with my mates.' That's the spirit that's always defined us.

You've shared your water, the last of your rations, the last cigarette, the immense loads, the patrols, the dangers, the humour, the boredom and the excitement. As young soldiers and new officers, you received many a kick on the backside; and more often than not, you knew it was coming. Occasionally, you got a pat on the back when you least expected it but needed it most.

You were BCOF volunteers, K Force, Regulars, Special Reserve, National Servicemen, CMF on full-time duty. No matter who you were or what you were, you were the Regiment. And no bastard ordered you to be here tonight. You're here because you wanted to be back, if only for a short time, to be part of that wonderful and magnificent past.

Your presence tonight affirms your love of the Regiment, recognition of your mateship and respect for what was once yours. You're here to salute a life that can only be understood by those who have lived it. But time marches on. The old guard has marched off. The familiar order 'take command' has been given and a new generation stands guard. Most of us here are the past now. A new generation is on parade.

Nevertheless, the commonalities are there. The current warriors have the same pride that swelled your chest, the same determination that gave you victories, the same humour that stood your section, Platoon, Company and Battalion in good stead when everything seemed up the creek. They wear the same badge that says it all: 'Duty First. 'That's how the Regiment was. That's how the Regiment is. That's how the Regiment will always be.

I would be remiss not to recognize the important role of the women who support the Regiment in peace and war. In all wars, they watch loved ones depart and they wait. They play the waiting game. They listen to news of casualties and wait for that knock on the door. Our nation owes a great deal to these women who have been both mother and father during agonizing periods of separation.

In Korea, it was 'Sayonara.' In Malaya and Malaysia, 'Selamat Jalan.' In Vietnam, it became 'Take care.' Not goodbye, which implied finality, but 'take care'; implying you would meet again, next week, next year, or whenever. That there would always be the chance to meet up with old mates for another yarn, another beer, to crack a joke, to relive the good times and recall those who have gone who once shared it with you.

Tonight, whether I know you or not, whether I served with you or not, I use that special farewell with immense respect to each and every one of you. Until whenever and wherever; take care.

LONG TAN VIETNAM DAY 2009 IN CAIRNS NQ

It's been a long journey and for many of you it began when your birthday tumbled out of a barrel. By the time you arrived in Vietnam you were part of a highly disciplined force which confronted a tough, determined and experienced enemy. On the battlefield you demonstrated immense professionalism in the best traditions of the ANZACS and like them, you were young, eager and seemingly bullet-proof and like your fathers on other historic fields of battle such as Tobruk, Kokoda and Kapyong.

You enhanced the reputation of Australia's armed forces in the Vietnam arena. Like those before, you were not without humour and indifferent to official rules and regulations. No matter where you came from, what you had been; your religion or the colour of skin. You were judged on the simple but demanding ethos of soldiering and where mateship was at the top of the list.

You would have fond memories of mates no longer with us who were also young, eager, full of mischief and much humour. They too, like you accepted the task. They too, wondered at the so-called wisdom of the green machine and they too dreamed of going back to the Land of Oz. The ghosts I speak of shared their innermost secrets, as you did with them, in a trench, armoured vehicle, aircraft, gun position, chopper or a warship or during that short time of rest between nursing casualties.

You shared the water, food, the dangers, the chores, the heavy loads, the humour, the boredom, the fear, the rumours and the last of the tobacco. Above all was the daily count of so many days to go before the final 'wakey' and then glorious home and loved ones. You can still see those grins of confidence during difficult and bad days and how many times do you recall when although all were totally exhausted, there was always a willing hand, or even when knowing of the danger involved, someone would say 'It's my turn. I'll do it. '

You relied on your mates and they relied on you. It was total trust with each other. We stand here today to remember our fallen and those since gone. The question is how best to honour them? I have said it before and have no reluctance repeating it. Perhaps they would say: We are you and you are us. While you live, we live.

While you stand proud so do we fight for what is right. Fight for those mates less fortunate than you. Your tomorrow is our tomorrow and your conduct in that tomorrow is how we too shall also be judged in the pages of history yet to be written.

I am sure they would agree that today is a time to catch up with old mates, to enjoy the mateship and recall the good times and above all, to stand tall. It is a time once more to jolt the Government's conscience in regards responsibilities and often repeated promises to the veteran community. Prime Minister Rudd said 'Let us never forget our men and women in uniform'. Prime Minister, 'Sir, I say to you and those who will follow in your footsteps, stop the political rhetoric.

'We want action, not word'. Veterans want an end to the mockery of endless and fruitless inquiries by committee after committee into rapidly eroding disability pensions and superannuation. Where are the decisions from the report on military superannuation which was publicly released nearly two years ago? Just how long do we have to wait? Do politicians really understand the rigours and demands of service life?

Do they really comprehend that it is duty, honour and love of country that compels such men and women to operate in adverse conditions, often cold, wet, hungry, exhausted and uncertain if they will be alive the following day?

Do politicians really understand the frustration and anger old soldiers feel that although they met their service obligations time and time again, the Governments' of yesterday and today simply have not met theirs? Today our troops are once again deployed overseas including Afghanistan and are experiencing similar hardships and dangers as did veterans from past wars and thus it is an appropriate time to remind our Nation of some hard cold facts: Once committed to war, there are always the forgotten casualties including young widows, fatherless children, separation, divorce and veterans with broken bodies and minds.

War is not precise and no one but no one can guarantee the safety of civilians in a war zone. Despite the advantage of modern technology and science on today's battlefield, the ultimate decision to kill or be killed, as in the past will often be decided in a split second by a tired weary apprehensive soldier. After such incidents the soldier will need support– not holier than thou distant observers demanding to know why or seeking a sacrificial lamb. Once committed to war the obvious aim is to win. Shakespeare wrote 'Let slip the dogs of war'. It's true to say that if you cannot release the dogs of war without muzzling them then don't get involved in the first place.

Tomorrow we begin another phase of our long journey and there is still much to be done. Would the media and the Government Departments please note that most Casualties on operations are described as wounded or killed in action? Please save the term injured or hurt on duty for officials mishandling gym equipment or spilling hot water while making coffee. We must ensure tomorrow's wounded on return to OZ are not forgotten after the initial hype and backslapping is over. We must be ready to actively and publicly support the young veterans of recent campaigns, particularly in regards their future welfare entitlements.

We must continue to encourage and emulate those from within our ranks who demonstrate sound leadership and energy in pursuit of veteran entitlements and other interests. Individuals such as Blue Ryan; Jamieson; McGurgan, Weekes, Graham and never forget Jim Bourke and his team who showed Australia how to do the impossible by locating and recovering the remains of those missing in action in Vietnam.

There are hundreds of reasons why we should march united together into tomorrow and each reason represents a warrior no long with us or struggling in today's complex society and even more reasons which camaraderie and obligation to those currently serving and the generations yet to be born who one day will also wear the Nation's uniform. Perhaps by then politicians will remember them with just recognition and timely deeds and not rhetoric? *'Take care, old mates. It is indeed an immense honour to be one of you.'* George Mansford AM

REFLECTIONS ON VIETNAM

How time flies. Is it really forty-four years since Delta Company 6 RAR stood fast against what seemed impossible odds? Was it so long ago that many of you, as twenty-year-olds, perhaps used a good old expletive when your birthday date came out of the barrel? You said goodbye to 'Civvy Street' and g'day to the military. Regular and National Service recruits alike, you donned uniforms and met your new family. Among them were the Corporals and Sergeants who shouted, screamed and threatened you with punishment more horrible than death itself; but who were perfectly sane compared to the behaviour of Company Sergeant Majors' and the most senior disciplinarian in the tribe, the RSM, who seemed permanently attached to a piece of wood defined as a pace stick.

It was certainly a time of growing up very quickly. Recruits who came from all walks of life suddenly found themselves at war, where only a Regimental Number identified the difference between 'Nasho' and Regular. The lifetime bonds were beginning to set, bonds that would endure for decades to come. Was it really so many decades ago when many of you fronted up at Canungra and thought you were on another planet? Insanity seemed common in the regular Army. You were introduced to jungle warfare, obstacle courses and became masters of climbing and traversing ropes; and yet in your subsequent Army life, you were never required to imitate Tarzan.

Was it your first real farewell when you said goodbye to your parents, your girlfriend, your wife, your infants? Was it so long ago when you were aboard HMAS *Sydney*, nicknamed the Vung Tau Ferry, enroute to the 'Happy Farm' at Nui Dat? Was it really in this life that you were often wet, cold, or suffering from the heat, hungry, exhausted, frightened and always dreaming of home? No matter where you served, there was always the unknown and each sunrise was another day closer to returning to 'OZ'. No matter what your job, the reality is you were as one; be you Navy, Army, or Air Force.

It was a time where each day the bonds of mateship became even stronger. You shared and cared for each other. It was your small, proud family. Your little world and it seemed nothing else mattered in that place called Vietnam. It was a time you relied on each other, trusted each other, shared with each other and at times depended on others outside your immediate family; blokes you'd never met or heard of and yet in reality they were your brothers. Often, in the heat of battle, they were your link to survival.

Perhaps it might have been the hunched, muddy infantryman setting out for another patrol. The magnificent gunners who provided that comforting assurance of a protective umbrella of artillery fire support if and when needed. The engineer casually sliding into a tunnel to explore the dark unknown, searching for booby traps or confronting the enemy waiting for him. The crew manoeuvring a tank to destroy an enemy bunker, or fast-moving APCs arriving on the scene with firepower and reinforcements.

You were surely relieved to see the gun-ships hovering above, or to hear the sounds of the beloved Hueys coming to take you away from that madness, or a noisy Dust-Off winching out wounded mates. The Caribou resupplying isolated outposts in dangerous airspace. The C-130s lumbering to and fro with cargo and, at times, the wounded and dead. The naval gunfire arriving with deadly accuracy and effect from somewhere out there over the horizon. The often-forgotten, grease-smeared mechanics and transport drivers. Then, for many, the comforting voice of a nurse and the skills of a surgical team.

All of these and more. All of you here today were part of that big team at different times and different places. Your achievements against a fierce and respected enemy were many. In doing so, you demonstrated the same humour, boldness, audacity, toughness and stubbornness as all those generations before you. You upheld the traditions established in the deserts of North Africa, the jungles of New Guinea, the frozen hills of Korea and the rubber plantations of Malaya.

Amazingly, those old hard-bitten regulars who had cut their teeth in previous campaigns; Korea, Malaya, Borneo; and who you suspected had a few bolts loose, were suddenly seen in a different light. They were, in fact, your guardians, your minders and more often than not, they protected you on many occasions from higher command and meted out their own sense of justice.

You came to understand the demands, physically and mentally, of service life while on operations in a very unforgiving and harsh environment. It was not easy and it never will be in such circumstances. Nor will it be really understood within the civilian community by those who have not served. The evidence is undeniable that politicians, despite the rhetoric and promises, have never comprehended the conditions and commitments of service and what makes the military tick. I doubt they ever will.

They make decisions in air-conditioned offices, send young men and women to war and then seem surprised when those same young people come home broken in body or spirit. Time marches on and the ranks are thinning, but our resolve and brotherhood are as strong as ever. Many of yesterday's soldiers are still at the bottom of the food chain.

In our time as military, we were taught to share and accept responsibility; we were responsible right down to the mate in the same trench. Such beliefs don't wane with time. Thus, it's difficult to comprehend a political system that has abrogated its responsibility to those it is responsible for a new generation of military is serving overseas and with such service comes the inevitability of dead and wounded. We must be ready to actively and publicly support the young veterans of such campaigns, particularly regarding their future welfare and entitlements.

Let there be no doubt that these youngsters who currently serve are very much part of our veteran family and we should be prepared to stand by them. There should be questions asked when political correctness has gone mad; when soldiers of any rank, ordered to conduct a mission at night in unfamiliar surrounds, are confronted with unexpected circumstances at close range and must decide in a split second to act or be killed. A fatal split second, it seems, that may well be examined and debated over weeks, if not months, in the comfort of a secure, safe and air-conditioned environment in another world far from the scene of the operation, to determine guilt or innocence.

Such intent would be obscenity at its worst. If there is to be an accused, then let it be at the highest level; those who gave the orders, who set the conditions, who sent young soldiers into impossible situations and then abandoned them when things went wrong. I've watched this happen too many times over the decades. Young soldiers doing their duty, following orders, making split-second decisions in the chaos and terror of combat and then being second-guessed by people who have never heard a shot fired in anger, who have never felt the weight of responsibility for the lives of the men beside them, who have never had to make a decision knowing that hesitation means death.

It's easy to judge from a distance. It's easy to apply peacetime standards to wartime actions. It's easy to forget that in combat, there are no perfect decisions, only the least bad option available in that moment. We owe our current generation of warriors better than this. We owe them the same support, the same loyalty, the same refusal to abandon them that we expected from our mates in Vietnam. We cannot allow them to be sacrificed on the altar of political expediency or public opinion.

As I look around this room today, I see faces weathered by time but still strong, still proud, still connected by bonds that were forged in the heat and chaos of war. I see men who have carried the weight of their service for more than four decades, who have dealt with the nightmares, the losses, the injuries both visible and invisible. I see men who have never wavered in their commitment to each other, who still answer the call when a mate needs help, who still gather together to remember those who didn't come home, who still stand ready to support the next generation of veterans.

As always, it is an honour to be with you and an even greater honour to say with immense pride to whoever may care to listen; I am one of them. Have a great day, fellas. And remember; take care.

ST MARYS CATHOLIC SCHOOL, CAIRNS ANZAC DAY, 25TH APRIL, 2013. This morning, 98 years after the landings in the Dardanelles, we gather not to glorify war, but to honour all our fallen and reflect on qualities they demonstrated which are still applicable in today's society. The ANZACS demonstrated love of flag and country. They had purpose, theirs was a common cause.

Above all, they continued to have unquestionable pride and love for their young Nation despite the consequences of war with its cruel hardships and terrible demands on mind, body and death itself. We can learn much from the example of the ANZACs and all who emulated them in WWII and other wars.

A classic example of the ANZAC spirit was demonstrated during WWII by a small force of young men in New Guinea who stood between Port Moresby and the enemy. It was the 39th Infantry Battalion and comprised in the main of eighteen-year-old conscripts (not much older than your senior class). There was a great danger of invasion if the enemy captured Port Moresby and used it as a base for future operations against Australia.

They were desperate times with most of our Armed Forces in the Middle East. The 39th had little military training, was poorly equipped and operating in cruel terrain and alone with little support. Worse still, they were vastly outnumbered by a well-trained enemy force using that one single track though dense jungle to capture Port Moresby.

It was in many ways a repeat of the famous historical battle at Thermopylae between the Persians and Greeks, centuries before. As the battle progressed, the 39th fought a delaying action along the Kokoda Track. Each day their numbers grew less. They were starving, exhausted; malaria, dysentery and scrub typhus were rife and

yet they continued to delay the enemy until finally fresh troops arrived and thus the tide was turned. There were countless examples which continue to inspire our Nation. The wounded Corporal who sacrificed his life by delaying the enemy while his men withdrew. Soldiers shivering with the cold sharing a wet sodden blanket Soldiers sharing the last tin of meat.

A soldier shot though both legs who refused to be carried because there were other wounded more serious than him and he crawled on his hands and knees for days along the Kokoda Track, or the walking wounded returning to Port Moresby and safety for treatment, hot food, showers, clean clothes, sleep and then evacuation home to Australia were told by reinforcements heading for the battle that the 39th Battalion was about to be overrun.

They immediately turned around and limped back to aid their mates in battle. No longer the thought of going home. At the end of the campaign, of the many hundreds of soldiers from the original 39th there were only thirty-eight left. What can we learn from the ANZACs and those men and women from subsequent generations who emulated them? Who were they and why did they make such sacrifice? The answer is they were young men and women who believed in their cause and were willing to protect a way of life for their loved ones and those to follow.

The truth is that these Australians we remember were in many ways no different to you. In their childhood they too went to schools in the cities and the bush They saw the beauty of our country as you see it. They slept under the same beloved Southern Cross and smelt the sharp tang of eucalypt. They learned the same alphabet, spoke the same language as you and like you, cheered when the school holidays arrived. Like you, they dreamed of their tomorrows and yet sadly for many, such dreams were never to become reality. George Mansford, AM

What can we learn from ANZAC Day? Our men and women who served were certainly imbued with the spirit of the original ANZACs. The qualities they demonstrated in war are no different from those we should pursue in peace. Indeed, those we honour would expect you to master them. There can be no excuses for they are part of your development here at your school.

It's simply a question of understanding the reasons why and how serious you are in pursuing such social standards. Among the many qualities are acceptance of responsibility, respect for others and the rules, sharing, caring, friendship, a sense of humour, a sense of purpose, loyalty, discipline, enduring, being part of a team and the list goes on.

These are some of the qualities so essential in life no matter what your future, be you Premier, Prime Minister, Doctor, Engineer, Executive, Farmer, Nurse, Scientist, Architect, Builder, Teacher. You will also be wives, mothers, husbands and fathers. No matter what your personal intent, mark it well.

You are our Nation's future and its most valuable asset. In time you can tell new generations of their heritage and the sacrifices made from those times I speak of. You can tell of them of the deeds and examples from the past such as I have mentioned and others from the history books such as Simpson and the Donkey at Gallipoli. The many nurses who gave their lives while protecting the wounded.

The bravery of desperately ill and starving POW'S. When young soldiers shivering from malaria, hunger, exhaustion and outnumbered, refused to retreat. The courage of our naval ships and all those fighter and bomber crews in all theatres of war. The incredible bravery of our troops on the Western Front in WW1 and how they defied the final and desperate German Offensive. The dash and daring of the Light Horse in the Middle East The stubborn defence at Tobruk in North Africa, Kapyong in Korea and Long Tan in Vietnam.

You can tell them of a younger generation, including perhaps your older brother or sister who has served in recent conflicts and in peace keeping duties. You can also tell those yet to be born of what your aspirations were and how in time because of study and personal discipline they became achievements.

As tomorrow's adults, you too may face immense adversity in a peace time environment, particularly in regards Mother Nature. No matter what the challenge is, such adversity will be the time to remember and emulate the qualities I have spoken of.

Qualities that in time of personal and community crisis can find solution and that will keep you united as one family, 'One people and One Nation'. Never forget, many of those we speak of were young but did not live beyond it. They too had dreams but never achieved them. They too had love but never fulfilled it. Perhaps if their spirit now spoke those past generations would say to you, as the soldier in the poem did wish for you. George Mansford, AM

REFLECTIONS ON GALLIPOLI: ONE HUNDRED YEARS ON

George Mansford, Buderim, ANZAC Day 2015. When reflecting one hundred years ago after such a historic event as Gallipoli, it's important to understand the origins of those we honour today. At the dawn of the twentieth century, most of the ANZACs-to-be were still at school, more often than not barefooted. Their tools of education were rote, pen, inkwell, blotting paper, chalk and slate; and let's not forget the teacher's incentive with the cane. They sang 'God Save the King' each morning when on parade and learned of the British Empire and Mother England.

While crowded Europe was bickering over borders and alliances, youngsters in a new nation of some four million laughed and played, swam and fished, joined the workforce or pursued further education, found employment, began to find love. They still hadn't heard of a place called Gallipoli. Then arrived news of war. They travelled from all walks of life to volunteer. Shearer, ringer, teacher, butcher, baker, student, tinker, candlestick maker and the young nurse from town. As with all wars, some enlisted for adventure. Others saw it as a means of seeing the old world. For many, it was simply duty.

Their commonality was physical and mental toughness. They had endured isolation and the harshness of the outback and the frequent tantrums of Mother Nature. They understood hardship in ways that soft city dwellers never would. A stamp of their nationality was a fair go, equality, respect and mateship. There was a strong spirit emerging that was different from the old world. It was to become our way of life. All of this and more came from the very first seeds of our future spirit, planted soon after the arrival of the First Fleet, seeds that began to grow throughout the following decades.

On the 25th April 1915, those we speak of landed at Gallipoli under fire, confronted by unfamiliar and very difficult rugged terrain. There were casualties and confusion. In many cases, groups lost their officers and NCOs and yet there were those who, regardless of lack of rank, readily stepped forward to take command. No matter who or what they had been, no matter their reasons to enlist, on that historic morning they became united as one with a single purpose; to go forward. The seeds planted after the First Fleet were now fruitful. The spirit of Australia had been officially born and christened ANZAC.

They never wavered in their intent, then or throughout the following years of bloody warfare. Always was the boldness and determination. Always the sharp wit and humour, despite a fierce enemy, the physical and mental demands, inadequate water and food, exposure to harsh weather and disease. They endured. Always they endured. They demonstrated great courage and love of country and acceptance of responsibility beyond their rank. Above all was their mateship; caring, sharing, protecting each other no matter the cost.

Such was their spirit that it not only burned bright throughout the Gallipoli campaign but was fed even more fuel in subsequent battles in the Middle East and later on the Western Front. Always the familiar battered slouch hat was to be seen and often heard was 'Waltzing Matilda' and a healthy injection of Aussie slang; 'fair dinkum,' 'crikey,' 'fair go,' 'bonzer,' 'sheilas and blokes,' 'g'day cobber,' and the regular shout of 'come in spinner' when playing 'two-up.'

The spirit of ANZAC has been emulated by subsequent generations. One classic example was during World War Two. With Europe occupied, Britain struggling to survive, Singapore gone, Port Moresby threatened, Darwin bombed and rumours of the Brisbane Line, communities still sang 'Keep the Home Fires Burning' and 'It's a Lovely Day Tomorrow.' It was and remains, the strong pulse beat and signature of Australia and New Zealand.

Another example: when the first wave was preparing to attack Lone Pine, a soldier from the rear jumped into the trench and said to the officer, 'Bill is my mate and I wanna be with him when we go.' Nearly one hundred years later, a young soldier wounded in Afghanistan protested loudly when about to be evacuated: 'I wanna stay with my mates.' The spirit hasn't changed. The words are the same. The commitment to mateship remains unshaken across a century of service.

As the days, months and years of World War One slowly passed, those at war yearned to be home. To smell the eucalypt, hear the kookaburras, the boom of the surf, or a familiar cooee from the campfire. To score that elusive winning try or whack the ball for six. But for too many, that was never to be. No matter what their original reasons to enlist, they had answered a call. At Gallipoli they unified as one with a purpose of duty and to win. No matter the task, no matter the dangers, they stepped forward together, proud of who they were, what they were and were never found wanting.

Honour them by all means with wreaths, parades and fine words; but all is for naught if we allow our way of life, with its freedoms, to be eroded and ultimately destroyed due to apathy, 'I'm alright, Jack,' and 'what's in it for me?' Our duty is to ensure our way of life, our freedom; to stand on a soapbox and speak your mind, to worship if you wish, watch the footy or play cricket on the beach or in Mum's backyard. All of this and more is part of our precious way of life. A legacy handed to us by past generations who forged it with blood, sweat and tears. It was made official by the ANZACs for all the world to see that we are who we are.

We must rid ourselves of smothering political correctness and ensure that our precious values are forever protected. No matter the threats, be they from within or from other lands, our values, our way of life must never be prostituted, surrendered, or even compromised. They are not negotiable and not for sale. That is our sacred obligation to those before us and the generations yet to be born in our land down under.

As with all wars, there was a terrible price to pay. They too had dreams that, for many, never became reality. In their youth many found love, but it was never fulfilled. Their loved ones waited and waited, wondering, praying and dreading an unwelcome official visit that would mean no more the familiar voice, gone the laughter and the sound of a creaking front gate when returning from work.

All that would remain were the photos, an empty chair or bed, perhaps a horse in the paddock and a dusty saddle never to be used again, or a battered cricket bat and footy boots gathering cobwebs in the shed. For the youngsters here today, there is a very special message I'm sure the ANZACs and all who followed in their footsteps would want you to hear.

You are our future. You are our tomorrow. One people, 'One Flag, One Nation'. You will be the leaders at all levels. You will be tomorrow's mums and dads, the workers who will turn the wheels of industry. You too will have your Gallipolis' to confront; those demanding challenges including the unexpected and seemingly impossible, such as environmental crises, world peace, economic strife and rolling up your sleeves in the wake of natural disasters.

You too can overcome by mastering the qualities we've spoken of; mateship, love of country, respect, honour, duty, resilience and determination. The ANZACs' would urge you to learn the lessons from history. Love, not hate. Give, not take. Be resolute and resilient. Accept responsibilities. Show respect for all. Lead the way. Set high standards, not only for Australia but for all our troubled old world to follow. Above all, be vigilant and guard your precious legacy well.

You too will pass on the torch. You too will teach your children's children of the immense values we hold dear. You too can tell them of the ANZACs with their wonderful qualities. Above all, with immense pride, you can tell them to be proud, stand tall and tell all who care to listen: You are, I am, we are Australian. That's what the ANZACs would want. That's what they fought for. That's what they died for. Never forget them. Never let their sacrifice be in vain. Never allow the spirit they forged on those terrible cliffs at Gallipoli to fade or be diminished. We are the custodians of their legacy. Let us guard it well. Lest we forget.

GEORGE MANSFORD CAIRNS 2017

Today throughout our nation there will be gatherings such as ours to reflect on our involvement in the Vietnam War and above all, to honour our fallen. In doing so, we also pay our deepest respect to yet another generation of our military currently on operations. It seems nothing changes on our troubled planet. Was it so long ago that our men and women went to war in a place called Vietnam? It was a time when frequent government lotteries in rolling barrels full of birthday numbers determined which 20-year-old males would be conscripted for two years' military service.

It was a time of anti-war demonstrations and vilification of those in uniform and their families which caused our military to become closer and united more than ever. It was a time when protesting mobs burnt our National Flag and the consequences were that our troops cherished the sacred cloth even more. In Vietnam our units stood fast in battle. They endured the physical and mental demands placed on them.

They refused to relent against what seemed impossible odds on more than one occasion. Always evident was their battle discipline, confidence and trust in each other and even when battle weary, no matter when or where, were the grins. As well as major battles, it was also a time of countless patrols, ambushes, cordon and search operations, much of which is now long forgotten and gathering dust in history records

Always are the veteran's memories of such times. How could they ever forget the 'Wok Wok' of the beloved 'Huey' (Helicopter) and the familiar drone of the 'Caribou' (Airplane) or perhaps they were on one of the warships patrolling a very dangerous coast line. The Nurses waiting at the landing zone called 'Vampire' ready to receive yet another group of wounded. Do you remember counting the days until it was 'one day and a 'Wakey' before going home and so many dreams to pursue?

It was a time of varying farewells such as watching mates struggling with heavy packs and weapons boarding a chopper or armoured personnel carrier to commence another operation. Departing on Rest and Recuperation (R and R) to escape the madness for just a few days or going home. No matter the circumstances, always was the firm hand shake, sharp wit, a hug, a wave, a thumbs up as a fond farewell or perhaps a shout of '*Take care*'. Unknowingly for some, it would be for the last time.

There were forgotten lessons of war from previous campaigns and re-learnt the hard way in Vietnam. There were also new lessons learnt in Vietnam which have since been neglected or distorted thanks to social engineering and the continual onslaught of political correctness. Common was the immense camaraderie, determination, wry humour and battle discipline which demonstrated that the magnificent qualities of the original ANZACs' had not been diluted. There were pride, duty, honour and acceptance of responsibilities which had been developed from early age in our society then strengthened in the military during training and mastered on operations.

It was a time of loved ones waiting for news and dreading any unexpected knock on the door. We should never forget the wives, mothers and families who bore the brunt of isolation, not knowing and always searching for mail and the media for any fragment of news. They met the challenges with dignity and stood the test. Wives were both mother and father and always praying that the next knock on the door would not be by a grim faced official.

At war's end it was a time for adjustment and sadly that was not to be for so many who thought they had come home but hadn't. There are still those who confront the consequences of war in so many ways. There were those who in desperation said '*enough is enough*' and left us to join the fallen. Today the ranks grow thinner and always are the increasing nudges from 'Father Time' to remind all their mortality.

If the fallen could speak, perhaps it would be to remind all 'Who they were and what they were'. They would say 'Our nation is indeed the lucky country and will remain so, if you, the living strives to keep it so'. They would remind us 'To fight the good fight for what you believe to be right'. They would demand 'Honour us by your actions as active members of the community; for you are us and we are you. While you live, we live. George Mansford 2017

ANZAC MESSAGE 2018 STUDENTS IN CAIRNS GORDONVALE INNISFAIL

You are Them and They are You. 100 years ago today, Australian troops played a major role in defeating the final German offensive of World War One. Against all odds, they achieved their victory by stubborn defence and aggressive counter attacks in the surrounds of a French village called Villers Bretonneux where even to this very day, the local community displays signs revering the Australian soldiers. One of the Battalions was the 51st; your very own Battalion which is still on the order of battle and is located here in Cairns.

A member of the 51st Battalion, Lieutenant Sadlier was awarded the Victoria Cross for valor during the battle. Before Gallipoli and the terrible years of war that followed, our soldiers had once been in schools not as expansive as yours and in a time when they wrote with slates and chalk. Later, long before our space age, they learnt copy book writing with pen nibs dipped into ink wells. Throughout our beloved land 'Down Under' their footprints were seen and laughter heard in many a schoolyard. They too questioned right from wrong. They too tried every trick in the book to avoid or delay homework. They too had their cowards and bullies lurking in the shadows. They too were tempted to dare by what is now known as peer pressure.

As you can see, the challenges you confront, like theirs, are more than a few. Believe me, whatever your secret dreams, they too are not new. When all seems to go wrong, just remember that every one of those we honour had doubts of success and fear of failure, yet rolled up their sleeves and reached for the stars. I knew some of the aging soldiers who had served in Gallipoli and subsequent campaigns in the deserts of the Middle East or muddy fields of France and Belgium.

My stepfather was one of them. As an infant I watched many of their sons and daughters march through the streets on their way to another World War and then came a third generation who served in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam. Since then, many more have followed in bloody conflicts from Somalia to Afghanistan. From Gallipoli to this very day, within our people has always been a sense of purpose, mate ship, mischief, dry wit, humour and love of country. No matter where you were born, clearly the genes of national character are strong and contagious, for they are you and you are them.

Thus, today there is a huge gathering of spirits who watch with pride as you young mortals confront life with its many challenges. The personal qualities of life which they demonstrated are precious gifts you can unwrap and use to pursue your tomorrow with much vision and hope. In time it will be your turn to teach those yet to be born and pass on the same gifts as given to you, such as discipline, respect for each other, love of country, unity, sharing, caring and to keep going forward no matter the challenges being confronted.

You must never ignore such beautiful qualities of life that the ANZACs left as a legacy for you. They are not there to be prostituted but used wisely. Wherever you go and whatever you do, they too can be your strengths. The following message has been printed for you, our leaders of tomorrow. Read and remember it well and then go forward with pride in who you are and confidence in what you can become. God bless all of you, our nation, the ANZACs and all who have followed to protect our precious way of life beneath the Southern Cross. George Mansford

ST MARYS ADDRESS ANZAC DAY APRIL 2021

Tomorrow ANZACs in mufti. Did you know ANZAC day 1918 is where your 51st Battalion now in Cairns, stopped the German offensive in France at Villiers Bretonneux and won world acclaim. Two of its serving soldiers are with us this morning. Life has many phases including always the need to reach out and explore beyond the next horizon. Infants who can't stand want to walk; and when they master walking, want to run; and then even faster without a compass of true direction, their qualities are essential and include duty, love of country, mate-ship, respect, discipline and teamwork.

In my time as a soldier I served under Captain Reg Saunders, the first indigenous soldier to become an officer. He was as a father to us, hard, demanding but always protecting those under his command. One of many lessons he taught was when moving forward, always leave on foot firmly on the ground or you fall over. It is true for all walks and phases of life but more so for the very young so eager to reach out for the unknown just beyond the horizon. If we really think about it, one of the greatest aids to prepare for life's journey is to learn from the past and what better models to master that unknown tomorrow are the ANZACs' who in an early dawn found themselves on a lonely beach under heavy fire and so many unexpected changes before them throughout the long years of war.

Why do I talk of past? The answer is they are you and you are them. They had similar challenges which you are yet to confront as young men and women even in a peacetime environment the qualities of the ANZACs' are everlasting. If not ignored, they are of immense value as you leave your beach to find so many varying tracks into the mountains above. One is mate-ship which embraces many human values including caring and sharing, including hunger, thirst, fear and risk of life itself.

Another is to understand and demonstrate unity which as you know begins at the home be it the outback, city or in between. Your future must embrace duty, respect and a fair go for all and there is that word again---unity. A unity that was made very clear with a volunteer Army and not a conscript to be seen. Gallipoli brought so many to the fore and became a proud signature of our young nation to be seen within all walks of life. ANZACs' made mistakes but they learned from them. Their love of country was most evident. Their humour and camaraderie which was tested time and time again, kept them from the edge of madness.

In reflecting on the importance of ANZAC, we should never ever forget the long and painful wait of families back home isolated by distance and poor comms from recent news. They too lived in uncertainty. They too were very much part of the foundation of our nation and helped set the rules for a disciplined and orderly society. Therefore you? You are young ANZAC's in mufti, you too will have your own 'Gallipolies'; confronting failure, peer pressure and lack of confidence.

If all seems too much don't ever dare show a white flag. Draw comfort from friends. If you fall over, don't wait for someone to pick you up. You may be lucky enough to have assistance but it is your test to stand up and try again. Confronting the unexpected was a challenge ANZACs' experienced so often, yet they persisted and won. Their success was to anticipate and to have options, no different to how you can succeed. So, like them, plan for the unexpected be it work, study or social involvement

The ANZACs' would tell you that law and order, self-discipline and respect is essential for any civilised community. It begins with rules in the family home and reinforced by schools your test of tolerance courage and endurance could be just around the corner. Perhaps fire, flood, cyclone and famine . By the way, have you noticed how people bond together in such strife. It is one of our greatest strengths to always be as one.

There is so much we can learn from the Gallopli experience where the torch burns 24/7. Learn from it and in time with your childrens' children on your knees, you too can tell them of life experiences and how the ANZACs' became the glowing beacon for all who are so lucky to live in the land down under, now is your turn to keep the torch ever so bright. All for one and one for all. George Mansford April 2021

'**THE SPIRIT OF THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT'.** I was asked if I could provide some scribbles in regards to the military spirit which embraces our beloved The Royal Australian Regiment (RAR). Given my personal observations of troops in the field in recent time, there is no doubt it is very much alive and as vibrant as ever.

Our tribal genesis is the genes of the originals who were the battle-weary veterans of WW2. Many of them were still soldiering on and wearing the infant RAR Regimental badge during the Korean War. Some were still there during operational service in Malaya, Thai Border, Borneo and to remind all of us that old soldiers never die, there were still a few barking orders and setting examples in Vietnam.

A very critical and mostly forgotten phase of soldiering was during the Great Peace where there were those who guarded our standards and Regimental spirit. They did it well, as demonstrated in subsequent deployments including; Second Malay Emergency (Butterworth Malaysia 1969 to 1989), Papua New Guinea, Cyprus, Middle East, Solomon Islands, Singapore, Rwanda, Somalia and Rhodesia. Once the 'Great Peace' ended, it seemed traffic jams were inevitable as yet more generations of the Regiment travelled to and from Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan; as well as other deployments for hazardous Peacekeeping duties

What of that Regimental spirit? We were not born with it, nor was it issued, given as a magical birthday gift or presented by some Senior Officer from Canberra. It was developed slowly but surely on parade grounds, sentry duty, facing danger, enduring incredible hardships together, caring and sharing with each other, including the fear often hovering close by. Such spirit will always be a huge and powerful weapon. It gives strength and helps keep the team united, motivated and always ready to grit teeth, roll up sleeves to do what has to be done. The following text says it for all in our tribe of what we breathe, speak of and believe.

'The spirit, which grows up in a Battalion (Regiment) when it has been, is a comradeship almost spiritual in its strength and intensity. It springs from hardships shared equally, risks run by all in common and its power exceeds most of the emotions that an ordinary man will ever know. The care of soldiers for one another, their sure and calm dependence on each other are hard to understand by anyone who has not known it.' – Osmar White

Today, the cycle of soldiering continues; the old teaching the new so many qualities not recorded in textbooks and which are waiting to be mastered. Lessons which reach out from barrack-room routines, parade grounds, guardrooms, sports arenas, messes, canteens and in the field. The proud history to be read understood and confirmed by the deeds of yesterday etched on the sacred cloth flying high. Above all, the NCO Corp is watching; screaming orders as new recruits to the family blend with the old as they join the column. All are in step, marching into its tomorrow with purpose and always with a proud indefatigable Regimental spirit and ready to do its duty.

No matter where the column marches, all those yesterdays' march with it. Its legacy is a proud one and has been tested in the most adverse conditions. The Regiment's spirit has been demonstrated on many occasions and to mention a few include the defiance at Kapyong, Samichon, Long Tan and Coral-Balmoral; the daring and aggressiveness at Maryang Sang and Binh Ba and the perseverance so demanding in insurgency operations, seemingly forever and ever.

Always has been the high standard of battle discipline. No matter when or where the ANZAC humour still thrives and above all, is the trust and faith in each other. All of this and more, was, is and always will be linked to the spirit of The Royal Australian Regiment. It is a powerful treasure that can never be bought or stolen.

At Enoggera Barracks where many of the fallen once trained, there is 'The WALK' which honours the Regiment's fallen with a tree and plaque for each of our heroes. The custodians of 'The WALK' who devote their time to constant maintenance are old soldiers of the Regiment. They are clear evidence that the 'Regimental Spirit' exists beyond serving warriors to the whole RAR family, embracing mothers, fathers, sisters, brothers, spouses and children. To claim it, to feel deeply its great pride, you must be part of it. George Mansford. 2020

'A long happy life without war. Your dreams to be fulfilled. A world of tolerance, love and wisdom. Peace and not war. Finally, they the fallen and those who have followed them, would say: You have a tomorrow. Seize it; Master it. While you live; we live, for we are you and you are us. Remember us with pride and not sorrow. Be proud of who you are and what you are. Above all, be very proud to be Australian.' George Mansford.

CHAPTER 14:
‘WARRIE’ GEORGE MANSFORD
LAST MESSAGE TO THE REGIMENT

BRIGADIER GEORGE LYON MANSFORD AM
POST-SCRIPT REQUIEM TO THE ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT

BRIGADIER G. L MANSFORD AM

Rightio, listen up.

Time may be short, so this will be the briefest speech you’ll ever hear me give. I am advised that I might be heading off to the final roll call soon – I am not giving up, but sometimes things are out of our hands.

Soon I’ll be catching up with my old mate Moff and all the other warriors who have gone before us. I am proud to have served with each and every one of you. All of the Mad Galahs, young and old.

Give my love to the Regiment and look after them. When they next go overseas, make sure that they give the opposition curry.

They’ll need to shoot first and shoot straight, without hesitation. And keep on protecting them from those bastards in Canberra and their ridiculous decisions.

Don’t let the brass dumb down the training or make things easy. Hard training is the most valuable gift that we can give to those who follow us; it will keep them alive.

Don’t let any pencil pusher or bean counter tell you otherwise. Stay well and look after the younger generations as they carry the torch forward.

They are the future and it is your sacred duty to make sure that they are prepared for what awaits them. Anyway. We’ll have the harbour set up ready for you when you blokes eventually arrive.

But you’ll have to get there from the bottom of the hill yourselves, you can bloody well walk. I love you all. Give my best to everyone. Keep your rifles clean and the perimeter secure.

Now piss off and get on with it.

End of message.

George. [30 Jan 2024, for delayed release]

CHAPTER 15:
TRIBUTES TO GEORGE LYON MANSFORD

The following tributes are presented as delivered at Mansford's funeral on 10th March 2026. They are reproduced with minimal editing to preserve the authentic voices of those who spoke.

George Lyon Mansford's last farewell

ARMY CHAPLAIN ANDREW SHAPER. Please be seated. We are gathered here today to commemorate and celebrate the life of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM, widely known and fondly remembered as 'Warrie' George. On behalf of George's family, I'd like to thank you all for your presence here today and online to show your respect for a man who is incredibly well known and respected throughout the Australian Army, but who they knew as their dad and granddad.

The family is still coming to terms with the overwhelming show of love and respect being offered for Brigadier Mansford. My name is Andrew Shaper. I am an Army Chaplain with the 5st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment and it is a privilege and an honour to be able to lead us in this Thanksgiving service for Brigadier George Mansford AM.

On Thursday, the 19th February, at the age of 91, George passed away after a long and determined battle in which he refused to give in beyond the expectations of the medical experts, which is exactly what those who knew him would have expected of him. Today, we gather as family and friends to say our final goodbye to George. We also gather here today to commit him into the hands of God Almighty and to reflect upon his life and the impact he had on us all. Today, we've come from many different backgrounds, but we have one thing in common.

George had an impact on us all. I'd like to briefly outline my personal experience of George, not because I was his closest personal friend or the person who knew him best, but because I believe my experience with him indicates the level of man and leader, he was and the impact he had on so many people throughout the Australian Army. *'In 1989, I was an Officer Cadet with the Australian Defence Force Academy and we were doing our defence studies tour around the country. When we got to Townsville, we were briefed by Brigadier Mansford AM, who was then the commander of 11 Brigade.'*

Before the briefing, we were warned we were about to be briefed by an absolute legend. We were not to make fools of ourselves. We were to listen up, shut up on pain of death or worse. But there was no need for the warning because we were all captivated by the man and his stories and his lessons for us. In 1995, I was posted to Tully to the Jungle Training Wing, which George had implemented. He was mostly retired by that time, but he still loved the Army and the battle wing.

So, we had a bit to do with him, including a week of adventure training, where we went to help clean up his block. We were told the adventure part was the opportunity to sit around a bonfire and have a beer with George at night. And they were right. Later, I was posted to 51 FMQR, where George had been the Honorary Colonel. He was still a regular supporter of the unit and especially of the Mess. He continued to be a mentor and an inspiration and we were privileged to hear him speak at several of our functions. After that, I went to Staff College and when George came down to do the leadership lecture at The Australian Defence Force Academy (ADFA), the word went throughout Canberra and he was invited to the monthly infantry gathering.

What was usually a low -key, low -ranked affair became much bigger when everyone knew George was there. Every Infantry Officer in Canberra was present, from the Chief of Army down. As George arrived and was welcomed by the Chief of Army, he saw me standing in a corner and made a beeline straight for me to ask me how I was doing or going and how I was, how I was enjoying the course.

He was standing there quite prepared to have a chat while the rest of the room was basically standing at attention waiting for him to move on and over his shoulder, I could see the Chief of Army looking at me, wondering who's this clueless Major and why is George wasting his time with him. And I always thought this was a great example of leadership. He was unimpressed by rank and keen to pay attention to someone that he remembered, that others would potentially have looked over.

In recent years, I was privileged to be able to visit him several times when the Honorary Colonels, the COs and the RSMs would go out to visit. He was always lively, always thinking and always had advice to share. He always made us feel welcome, even if at times we had to bring our own biscuits. Today, we have family and close friends mourning the loss of a dearly loved part of their lives, but it is a measure of the man George was that his death will be felt even more broadly than that; because today many of us mourn the passing of an Army legend, a terrific Officer and a man who is an example to us all.

Today is your time to make your peace with George as we say our final farewells. Trusting as Jesus promised us in John 14, 1 -4, do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God, trust also in me. In my father's house and many rooms, if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you and if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me.

That you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am. Let's pray. Loving God, you understand and see our pain as we come together today for this solemn occasion. Your promise of eternal peace is a guiding light throughout our lives and is now a reality for George as you welcome him home. We pray that your promise may be real to us as we seek your face in this difficult time, as we join in the words Jesus taught us together for those who would like to recite the Lord's Prayer with us.

'Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread and forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive those who trespass against us and lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For thine is the kingdom, the power and the glory, forever and ever. Amen'. Well now be led in the hymn Abide with Me.

SHARON AND TRACEY. Dad was born in Guildford on the banks of the Swan River. He grew up with his sister Olive and his brothers Ben and Ron. His father Harry sought work far and wide during the 'Great Depression' he joined the military service and died not long after.

Dad never truly had a chance to know him. He was shaped instead by a strong mother, an adoring sister and the wide freedom of the Swan River. Swimming, playing and learning resilience early in life. They say, as the twig is bent, so the tree shall grow. Much of Dad's strength and determination were formed in those early years.

And so too was the loyalty that marked his life. We are grateful that members of the Perth branch of the Mansford family are here today and also the Wilson family, Helen's family and Helen's best friend Trish, who became a cherished part of Dad's life, the Wilson family and the Mansfords' that is. We know he would be deeply touched to see you here today. To the Army, he was Brigadier George Mansford.

To us, he was Dad. At home, the standard he expected of his soldiers was the same as his own. He lived by with us. Discipline, effort and loyalty. He gave us a deep respect for learning. He taught us that effort mattered, that discipline opened doors. Strength. Dad was not a builder. He built bedroom cupboards for his daughters. We could never open the drawers. He built a tree house which fell out of a tree with children in it. He built a brick wall at our family home, which collapsed. Still, the foundations he laid in people, loyalty, courage and resilience, never failed.

To the Army, he was a soldier's, soldier. To his family and his community, he was also a gifted teacher. Like many Army families, we shared with him his duty. Service asks much, not only the one who serves, but of those who wait. He carried great loss in his life, the passing of two wives, Maureen and Helen and the death of his only son, Peter. These were losses from which he never fully recovered and yet he kept going. He showed us resilience, even when the cost was heavy. He soldiered on.

It was later, when the pace of service slowed, that we came to know him more fully, not just as the Brigadier, but as our father. In retirement, Cairns became our gathering place. At Christmas and at different times of the year, family returned whenever we could. Children, grandchildren and later, great grandchildren.

Dad was the father of five. His only son, Peter, died 21 years ago. And we are grateful that Peter's daughter, Erren, her partner, Beau and mother, Belen, are here today. He was deeply proud of his 14 grandchildren and delighted by his 21 great grandchildren, their beloved 'Big G'. by everyone.

As a military advisor on the film Paradise Road, which was filmed here in Far North Queensland, Dad was considered a lovable larrikin by the film crew and the director. The actors, Cate Blanchett and Glenn Close, asked Dad to take them somewhere where they could have a swim in the pristine waters of Australia, somewhere where they could have some privacy.

Dad took them to a swimming hole and, in gallant fashion, left them so they could swim in privacy. It was only when he picked them up, to his horror, he saw a sign that said, ***'Saltwater Crocodiles here',*** that he realised that he put them (Cate Blanchett and Glen Close) in peril.

Dad also contributed to conservation the Wet Tropics and served as chair of the Cassowary Foundation. As many of you here know, he was staunchly loyal to his mates, the diggers' who served their country and he was a passionate advocate for their recognition and their welfare. Dad remained charismatic to the end. Only a month ago, when he was in hospital, he charmed one of the regular nurses into a chat. She gave his hand a long squeeze and affectionately told him how much she thought of him.

When she left the room, he leaned over and he said, ***'I've still got it.'*** In his final years, our sister Vicki walked beside him every day, caring for him with quiet devotion and love. Her husband Roger supported them both, taking care of the property and the many practical things, that life required. He leaves behind four daughters, 14 grandchildren and 21 great -grandchildren.

What a legacy. This was the legacy that mattered most to him. His leadership, the leadership he taught on the battlefield, was in the end the same strength he used to hold his family and his community together. Today, the Army honours a Brigadier. Today, we say goodbye to our father and we thank him for the life that continues through all of us.

GEORGINA.' I would like to share one of George's own poems, *'Do not Let Life Pass You By'*. Firstly, on behalf of the family, I just want to thank every single person that has come today. I've got some wonderful lifelong friends that have turned up. Thank you so much. Some of Dad's carers in the last couple of years have also turned up, which has been just wonderful. So, thank you. And as dad would say on the space age to everyone that's tuning in from the space age live stream, we feel your support.

Thank you so much. The poem I am going to read today is from Dad's book and this is not some self -promotion stuff, The Spirit of Australia. It is on page 223. Now, you do have the poem in your handout as well. Dad would have said you've all had half an hour to recite it by now, so you should know it off by heart. I unfortunately do not, so I am reading it out of his book. Feel free to read it with me.

'Do not let life pass you by. The penalty of love can bring great sorrow, a dearest one absent from your tomorrow. How seasons quickly pass and soon gone, yet always sweet, sweet memories live on. So, honour your past, love, by living life, no matter the challenges or the strife. Capture each precious moment on the way. This very hour will soon be part of yesterday. Tick tock, watch out, water one, time is slipping by. So, laugh, love, sing, be happy, do not cry'.

DAVID AND MRS WEBSTER Grief has no words could stay. His children woke to colder dawns with warmth now swept away. No earthly balm could fill, yet mates gathered round his side with loyalty.

We bore him home through silent roads, his world in shadow passed and stayed beside him through the days until her rights were passed.

For Army wives, those steadfast hearts that guard the home alone are pillars in the storm of war whose worth is seldom known, grief no words could stay.

The chaplain found a sheltering home where childrens' laughter grew and young instructors came to the fore as brothers firm and true. In time when grief had loosened its grip and tears had gentled down. A quiet hope returned again where sorrows once had grown. A meeting set by caring hands brought Helen to his door and from that night a love was born, the deepest evermore. He called her Wilson, soft and fond, a name both warm and plain and through the storms of life they walked as one through loss and gain. When George came with Altheas wind that lashed the Christmas sky, their blended family stood as proof that love can never die.

Through shifting posts and Army roads, their wandering years were past. They packed their hopes in travel bags and left no home to last. Yet everywhere the children went, they found in him their guide. And Helen's faith, serene and strong, walked always at their side. That time steals both joy and pain and last claimed Helen too. And in the Lord, she placed her trust as all the faithful do. She left his life as she had lived with courage, grace and light and those who loved her felt the hush that followed sacred night.

Through all those years of toil and strain, training men for war, we leaned on one another's strength to bear the weight we bore. The mess, the jokes, the shared fatigue, stories told at eve. These held us fast when darker thoughts might tempt a man to grieve. For though the nation roared with strife and bitter words were thrown, we kept our purpose clear and true in that green jungle zone. And many who recall those days still speak with grateful pride that George's hand and George's heart were always at their side.

The night George learned that Peter died cut deeper than a blade, A distant voice brought tragic news and all lights seemed to fade. No warning came, no final words, just shock too hard to bear. A father's world fell into grief; no heart should have to bear. Yet in his father's heart he lived, a light that did not fade. For every laugh and kindly deed, still warm the parts he made. And though the years moved quietly on, their memories never part. A cherished son, dear Peter stays, held close in every heart. He shaped his thoughts in measured lines, in verse both sharp and kind.

The soldier's heart laid bare in rhyme, his counsel unconfined. Through poems sent to far - flung friends, his truth found open ear for he spoke plain to Chiefs and Suits and those who marched nearer. When years had cast their shadows long and battle days had flown, he set his story down at last in calm, reflective tone. And serving with the best of the best, the chords to life he'd known and shared the truth that shaped his path from boyhood seed once on.

So let his memory stay with us, a lantern in the dusk, for lives like his teach quiet strength and hearts that learn to trust. And though the years may fade and turn, his spirit keeps its place. A soldier's heart, a good man's soul, still warms us with his grace. And now his tale draws gently closed, as all men's stories do, yet in the hearts he shaped through life, his spirit lives anew and while we walk, the roads he walked, through triumph and through strife, we will hold in pride this noble man who lived a soldier's life. Rest in peace, old mate.

PETER GOSGROVE AK CVO MC. Like all of you, today is fundamentally a sad day of reflection and remembrance and farewell. It is also, for me, a day of privilege. Why so? Today, my friends David and Marianne Webster, like them, we get to represent with words that giant other family that George Mansford loved so well for all of his adult life, the Australian Army.

Were honoured to have the Chief of the Army here today on behalf of the Army as the Chief of War. We are all here today to mourn, of course, but also to celebrate the wonderful life of this particular warrior, the inaudible George Mansford.

Many of you will recall and I think it was mentioned in David's verse, he went from the rank of an infantry Private soldier to Brigadier. He went from initial service in what was then the Citizen Military Forces, through many years in the Australian Regular Army and then back to the Army Reserve for his last stint.

His operational service included Korea, followed by two tours of duty in Malaysia as a Junior Non-Commissioned Officer. He was commissioned in 1964 and had further Regimental service before a tour of duty in the storied Australian Army Training Team Vietnam in 1967. With his wealth of operational service, particularly in our Army's expert niche of jungle warfare, you can imagine how well he would have performed in the 'Training Team', where so many of our soldiers were on combat operations. Later, George returned to service with The Royal Australian Regiment and I know from others what those Battalions and their leaders at all levels thought of that iconic soldier among them.

To me, the real value of George Mansford among all his contemporaries in that period, from the mid Sixties all the way to his retirement in 1990, was his training, leading, mentoring and growing younger soldiers, both men and women, to embrace and serve the Army he so much loved. I am of the RMC class of 1968. During that year, in the last few months before our graduation into the Army at large, the system anticipated that a lot of us would be off to Vietnam soonish after graduation.

Therefore, as the Class of 66 individuals, we were off to the then Jungle Training Centre at Canungra, where George was one of our primary instructors for a short and somewhat compressed Battle Efficiency Course. George was our major mentor come graduation, during that period and knowing that the reality of operations for us was just around the corner. You only needed a short exposure to George to understand he was speaking not with just a sense of urgency, but of profound knowledge of how to perform on jungle operations. We would do these outdoor lessons in field dress, jungle greens, boots, basic webbing, giggle hats. George as one of the Directing Staff would be in boots and greens and a pistol belt like his Staff colleagues.

He would wear a peaked cap, normally worn in barracks or in public. He probably was wearing that to allow onlookers to immediately differentiate a staff member from the students. We were mightily impressed in the conduct of a lesson that might be called why things are seen in the jungle and we the students were proving obtuse and vague. So, he demonstrated his frustration by taking off his pig cap and jumping on it quite a few times as goody -goody, if idle Cadets, we were mightily impressed and our eyesight for seeing things in the jungle instantly sharpened.

I might say, knowing and rubbing shoulders with the legendary Mansford for the remainder of his Army time, George was the obverse of a military fashion icon. Years later when George and I shared a posting of several years at the Infantry Centre, it signalled that George, then a Major, was due to appear at Victoria Barracks in Sydney to be interviewed for potential promotion to the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

My wife Lynne, who is with me today, was then expecting our first child. She and I were travelling to Sydney at the same time for her to have a routine check - up with the obstetrician. So, we all shared a ride. I knew that the dear old toffee noses who would interview George would appreciate a chap who looked spic and span in the formal uniform that was de rigueur to appear in their august presence. That did not describe George. George and I were mates and I couldn't think of a better person to be promoted to lieutenant colonel, apart from myself.

So, I set to work on him as we rode along in the car. And I was proud of my efforts when we pulled up inside Victoria Barracks that the man who stepped out of that car looked pretty smart and very Regimental. He turned away and regarded the long line of the barracks and then turned back and good heavens he had transformed back to the original like somebody who had just had three or four weeks in the jungle. Reflecting on it the Army and even its most pernickety senior officers knew the further potential of this diamond in the rough.

Of course, he was duly promoted. Time at the Infantry Centre allowed me to see him in action over several years. As with his patience, encyclopaedic knowledge and profound leadership, he led Specialist Wing for those several years in its delivery of a large number of infantry technical specialist courses. In that time, the George Mansford stamp was provided to hundreds of experienced infantry soldiers, many of whom would later on become the backbone of the Australian Army in Senior Non-Commissioned and Commissioned appointments.

I will make a bet with great confidence that very many of them will remember the Mansford touch in their training and in their subsequent careers. For my next statement some of you may argue with me and you can tell me so later without fear these days of getting locked up, so I'll just say it, but jungle warfare for the infantry soldier is a most demanding operational environment.

Allied with this is the reality that in our region it is such a dominant environment. It is also a truism that if our men and women can be competent in jungle warfare operations, adapting to a different environment is eminently possible. I think George knew that and I think even the Generals did. So, Im not really sure if George was made for the Battle School as it used to be known, or if the Battle School was made for George.

Either way, It was challenging and developing for every soldier who went there to be put through the 'ringer' by George and his handpicked staff. Even a Senior Headquarters Officer who, undertaking typical soldier training on the bayonet assault course during George's time, managed to bayonet his own foot. George had no hand in that foot.

Like you I felt the symmetry with George's marvellous stewardship of the Army Reserve here in North Queensland. These senior appointments therein were held up as a beacon to other parts of that important part of the nation's defence. All around Australia you should see what's happening up in North Queensland. That was a cry and its vibrancy and cohesion were a shining example to our reserve units and formations around the Commonwealth.

These men and women are represented here today and let me assure you all that on every one of the frequent occasions George and I shared over the past 30 years, he spoke with enormous pride and affection about that part of his time and certainly in my own very senior years, left me in no doubt the worth and the needs of that part of our wonderful Army. In his later years, this soldier, who we've heard, a lad from Guildford WA and a fresh -faced infantryman in the militia, reached out to us all with his poetry, some of which we've read to date and we all overwhelmingly understand through those lines and through what we know of the great man, the privilege of service.

Whatever it said on the page, we knew that the ink in which it was written was khaki. Thank you, George, for that legacy. Time for me to finish. David and Marianne, good job. I hope between us, we've been able to represent the fond way George Mansford was regarded in the Army, he loved. The fond way he served Australia and George, the identity of the 'Grey Domino' and all of that persons deeds, stays with me to the grave. You will hear no more on the 'Grey Domino'. Fortunately, George, I can report that there are still quite a few of us around that knew you, that were trained by you, that have taken your lessons to others. So, some part of you will always remain. Stand easy old friend.

TRIBUTES

The tributes at George Mansford's funeral captured the essence of a man who had shaped generations of Australian soldiers. Yet to fully understand the depth of respect shown at his passing, it is important to hear Mansford's own voice; his understanding of the ANZAC legacy and his message to future generations.

The voice of George Mansford: Keeper of the flame. Between the formal eulogies at George Mansford's funeral and the flood of tributes that followed his passing lies something essential: the man's own voice, speaking about what mattered most. In his addresses to soldiers and citizens alike, George revealed the core beliefs that shaped his life; beliefs about duty, mateship, standards and the Australian way of life that must be protected and passed on.

George understood that soldiers across generations shared something profound, regardless of when or where they served.' *You came from all walks of life'*, he would say.' *You served at different times in different places. It does not matter who you were, what you were, where you served or did not serve. Each and every one of you has much in common; you served.'* This recognition of shared service transcending time became central to his message. He traced military evolution from basic equipment to modern technology, yet always emphasised that hardware changed while the human spirit remained constant. What mattered was not the weapon carried, but the character of those who carried it.

Four defining moments shaped military history: the initial test where standards were established, the expansion requiring absorption of new soldiers while maintaining quality, the difficult peacetime years when standards were preserved despite neglect and frustration and the constant operational tempo demanding everything from limited resources. Through all phases, one truth endured; the quality of the soldier, not the era, determined success.

George celebrated military culture with affection and humour. He spoke of the rebels who challenged authority; the larrikins, the rumour mongers, the Battalion bookies, the comedians and the bush lawyers in the ranks. His wry observation that soldiers always had the opportunity to plead your case after guilt and punishment had already been decided captured the reality of military justice with a digger's knowing grin.

Yet beneath the humour lay serious conviction about standards and belonging. He honoured diversity; soldiers from Lithuania, Italy, Germany, Torres Strait; while emphasising that belonging came through performance, not background. Skin colour and accent meant nothing; how you soldiered meant everything. This was not prejudice but principle: the military family needed no do-gooders, academics or social engineers to interfere with standards or attempt brainwashing with political correctness.

The power of mateship connected all generations. A wounded soldier in Afghanistan protesting *'I wanna stay with my mates'* echoed sentiments from every conflict. Sharing water, the last rations, the last cigarette, the immense loads, the patrols, the dangers, the humour. These experiences transcended time, binding soldiers across decades in common understanding. George never forgot those who waited. The women who played the waiting game listening for news of casualties and dreading the knock on the door, deserved recognition. Our nation owes a great deal to such women who at one time or another have been both mother and father for those agonising periods of separation.

His message to new generations carried both reassurance and challenge. Veterans were now the past, but the commonalities endured. The current warriors have the same pride that swelled your chest. The same determination that gave you victories. The same humour that stood you in good stead when it seemed everything was up the creek. Yet with this inheritance came obligation.

When speaking of the ANZAC legacy, Mansford traced it to Australian origins; barefooted schoolchildren who became soldiers, shaped by isolation, hardship and emerging values of fairness, equality and mateship. When crisis came, they stepped forward, united by purpose. That spirit, officially born at Gallipoli, remained Australia's defining characteristic.

But George's message carried urgency: honour ancestors not merely with wreaths and parades but by protecting what they defended. Our values, our way of life must never be prostituted, surrendered or even compromised. They are not negotiable and not for sale. Future generations would face their own Gallipolis; different challenges requiring the same qualities: mateship, love of country, respect, honour, duty, resilience and determination. Whether addressing soldiers or citizens, He returned always to fundamental truths: the power of mateship, the importance of standards, the obligation to future generations and the precious nature of the Australian way of life forged in sacrifice and maintained through vigilance.

SOLDIERS' FAREWELL:

When Brigadier Mansford passed away on 19th February 2026 at the age of ninety-one, the news rippled through the Australian military community like a stone cast into still water. From Cairns to Canberra, from Singapore to Seoul, soldiers who had served under his command, trained at his battle school, or simply heard the legend of the man who slept in the rain rather than accept comfort his troops could not share, paused to remember.

The tributes that followed were as diverse as the man himself; formal condolences from senior officers, heartfelt memories from diggers' who remembered Tully, messages from Torres Strait Islanders whose communities he had championed and simple words from those who had never met him but knew his poetry by heart.

They came from Generals and Privates, from Vietnam veterans and young soldiers who had never seen war, from family and from the extended Defence Family that George Mansford had served his entire life. What emerges from these tributes is not merely the record of a distinguished military career spanning Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, nor simply acknowledgement of his establishment of the Jungle Training Centre at Tully or his raising of the 11th Brigade. Rather, these voices; some eloquent, some blunt, all sincere; paint a portrait of a man who embodied the Australian soldiers ideal: a leader who never asked his troops to endure what he would not endure himself, who valued mateship above rank and who understood that the true measure of military service was not medals or promotions but lives saved and values preserved.

These are the farewells of a grateful nation to a soldier's soldier. They speak in the authentic voices of those who knew him, served with him, learned from him and loved him. In their collective testimony, George Mansford lives on; not as a distant historical figure, but as a mate, a mentor, a legend and above all, a digger who never forgot where he came from or who he served. Lest We Forget.

6 RAR Association : Vale: 52028 Brig (Rtd) George Lyon Mansford. Sadly, we have received word that George Mansford passed away in Cairns today 19th Feb 26. George Mansford served with AATTV 66/67, as 2IC 6 RAR in 1973, but of course is well known for establishing the Jungle Training Centre at Tully. Funeral information will be provided by email and on Facebook, when known. Please join with us in offering our deepest sympathy to those who will mourn the passing of a loved one. Another 6 RAR family member taken too soon. 'Lest We Forget'

Alan Whelan: As I am in Cairns on holidays, today I attended George Mansford's funeral. The Service was well attended; Sir Peter Cosgrove gave the Eulogy. Lots of serving & former soldiers, pace sticks galore. Our Association was well represented, Glenn Willmann, Phil Buttigieg, Graham Gordon, Shorty Turner, Don McNaught, Cowboy Jones, Mrs Pam Drabsch, Gary McKay and a few others I missed.

Peter Adamis. Gone but never forgotten. A magnificent soldier, an officer of the highest calibre and above all, a wonderful man. Loved by many. Though his bright light has been extinguished, it continues to burn fiercely in our memories. We all understand that life has its limits, that longevity is never promised and that none of us know when our time will come. Even so, when someone leaves this earthly world for the next, grief is a heavy companion we must learn to carry.

For George, there are thousands of souls he touched; thousands who will grow old remembering the youthful days of a bygone era, shaped in part by his influence, his leadership and his example. May your journey be a good one, mate. You were one of the finest leaders I ever had the privilege to serve under; a gentleman, a devoted father and a 'surrogate father to us young diggers' finding our way. When you reach those heavenly gates, say hello to all our mates waiting there and put in a good word for us who remain. My deepest condolences to his family and to the countless individuals who served with him, had the honour of knowing the real George Mansford.

Adrian d'Hagé: I met him when he arrived in Singapore (I was the Adjutant) to ensure things ran smoothly. When his overseas removal arrived, the first thing out of the shipping container was his lawn mower. Oops. Put him back in his hotel in Orchard Road while we rescued the right shipping container from Australia. One of Australia's best. RIP.

Cairns RSL Sub Branch: A Military Service to honour & commemorate the life of GEORGE MANSFORD AM will be held on TUESDAY MORNING 10th March 2026, commencing at 10. 00 am at St Monica's Cathedral, 183 Abbott Street, Cairns City. George will be privately cremated. In lieu of flowers donations to Legacy would be appreciated. Thank you once again for all of your condolences and kind words. Regards Sharon, Vicki, Tracey and Georgina Mansford

John Caligari. It is with profound regret that I repost the announcement of the passing of Brigadier George Mansford AM, who passed away 19th Feb 2026 in Cairns. A legend in the RAR, Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, who made a very significant contribution to the Corps and Army and raised the Jungle Warfare Training Centre, Tully, as well as being instrumental in raising our 'RFSU's'.

Daryl Campbell Duty nobly done. The Regiment and indeed the Army lost a legend today, Brigadier George Mansford passed away this morning. So many owe so much to this great man, a soldier's soldier, a leader and a giant among men. Deepest condolences to his family and friends and all who were the beneficiary of his vast knowledge. Rest in Peace Sir. Lest We Forget

Andrew Clinkaberry 1 RAR (The Big Blue One). Vale: Brigadier George Mansford (1934 – 2026). The Australian Army has lost one of its most authentic and formidable leaders. Brigadier George Mansford passed away this morning aged 91. A veteran of Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, George was a soldier's soldier. He was the visionary founder of the Jungle Training Centre (Battle School) at Tully, where he instilled a standard of realism and discipline that has saved countless lives.

His philosophy was simple but profound: *'knowing your people, understanding people, valuing people'*. Whether through his book '*Leadership on the Battlefield*,' his novel about the '*Mad Gallahs*', or his work raising the 11th Brigade and Northern Surveillance units, he remained a relentless advocate for the quintessential Australian soldier. To the world, he was a Brigadier; to those in the trenches, he was a legend who understood that mateship is the most powerful weapon an Army has. Our thoughts go out to George's family. RIP.

Nathan Shingles President, Cairns RSL Sub Branch and 8/9th Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment Association (Inc). Vale: Brigadier George Mansford AM (1934-2026) On behalf of the members of the Cairns RSL Sub Branch and all in our community who hold deep respect for a life of extraordinary service, I pay tribute to George Mansford AM ; soldier, leader, mentor and one of the Australian Army's most authentic and formidable commanders.

The Australian Army has lost a giant. George passed away this morning at the age of 91, leaving behind a legacy forged in courage, discipline and an unwavering belief in his people. A veteran of the Korean War, the Malayan Emergency and the Vietnam War, he was, in every sense, a soldier's soldier. As the visionary founder of the Jungle Training Centre (Battle School) at Tully, George set a benchmark for realism and professionalism in jungle warfare training that has saved countless Australian lives.

His insistence on high standards was never about bravado ; it was about preparation, survival and bringing our people home. George's philosophy reduced to three principles: *Know your people, understand people, value people.* Everything else; tactics, training, advocacy; flowed from this foundation. To the wider world he was a Brigadier.

To those who served under him, he was *'Warrie'*; a leader who understood that mateship is the most powerful weapon an Army possesses. He embodied the spirit of service before self and led from the front in both war and peace. We extend our heartfelt condolences to George's family and loved ones.

Darren Chester MP. Jungle Training Wing at Tully, Queensland, received a visit from its legendary founder: Australian Army Brigadier (retired) George Mansford, last month. Brigadier Mansford's name is synonymous with the Centre he founded in 1980, resonating with all The Royal Australian Infantry soldiers and officers.

Having served in Korea in 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment, the Malayan Emergency, Thai Border, Vietnam, New Guinea and Singapore, Brigadier Mansford raised and commanded the Army's Battle School, now named Jungle Training Wing. It was designed as a reminder of the rigours faced by Australian soldiers overseas in South-East Asia, providing combat training in some of the most unforgiving environments imaginable.

HONOURING LEGACY, SERVICE & LEADERSHIP.

Heartfelt tributes on social media following the passing of a respected leader illustrate the profound impact he had on those who served alongside him. His departure sparked reflections from mates and soldiers across generations, all resonating with the sentiment that he was a true leader and confidant. Messages of remembrance encapsulate his contributions, particularly highlighting his significant role at the Jungle Training Centre in Tully.

There, many soldiers sharpened their skills under his mentorship in an atmosphere of camaraderie and lasting memories. The palpable sense of loss expressed online, with comments reflecting disbelief and sorrow, marks the depth of his impact. His legacy extends far beyond military accomplishments; it embodies the personal bonds he nurtured. Numerous accounts emphasise his reputation as a quintessential soldier.

Many remembered him as a stalwart figure whose tactical intelligence and leadership saved lives, earning the respect of peers and subordinates alike. He was often described as a great man, great soldier and true friend. Military phrases like 'Lest We Forget' are poignant reminders of the deep gratitude felt for his unwavering service and sacrifice.

His influence reached far beyond his military achievements. The principles he imparted resonate with those he mentored, ensuring his legacy remains alive in the values he instilled, inspiring future generations. Personal anecdotes from former mates illuminate his character, showcasing the warmth and approachability that endeared him to so many.

The bonds forged through shared experiences highlight the deep connections he cultivated. As a soldier in the 1980s, many recognised his legendary status and the profound impact he had on their development. His humanity alongside his military prowess underscores his multifaceted legacy. His impressive military send-off and the overwhelming turnout attested to the unity and respect he inspired.

NO WEEPING FOR ME

All men must die but how many really lived?
I had my fair share and naught left to give
I spent it all in what was a ripper of a life
Two beautiful women; each I once called my wife

A swag of kids who in time produced their own
Now there seems to be ankle biters still half grown
So many fair dinkum mates who were brothers of mine
All those obstacles crossed and mountains I did climb

Some days were tough but always was tomorrow
Mostly joy, often love and now and then deep sorrow
Listening, watching, learning, often teaching
There were times I was either giving or reaching

Sometime laughing and then there was the crying
The joy of birth and sadness of loved ones dying
Mutual respect and understanding other points of view
If times are bad, think of those far worse off than you

Life's fickle, sometimes doubt, hope, hate, happiness and more
Take your pick; frowns, gloom or smiles and laughter galore
So, no wailing when you hear I've finally passed away
Get on with your life and seize the rest of the day

Welcome each dawn no matter if droughts or flooding rain
Have a go and if you fall, get up and try again
Treasure each moment of love and bliss
Never forget the beauty and innocence of that first tender kiss

Far better to stand up for what you believe to be right
Then toss and turn in restless sleep for countless nights
It's your choice, be it revenge versus forgiving, betrayal or trust

Deceit or honesty; how about being greedy or sharing a crust?
Confidence and faith in who you are and what you could be
Or are you one of the chosen few who believe it's all for free?
God certainly knows I did try to make the best of my life
Breaking some of his commandments may well cause me strife

There is a lot more in life that I could do
But now times up, the whistles blown and I must say hooroo
So, a final toast to lucky bastards such as you and me
Who lived under the Southern Cross in a bonzer land so free

Just remember you have a life to live so don't mourn for me
Get out there and enjoy yourself cos happiness is free
That is how God planned life to be
You make sure you don't bloody weep for me

George Mansford

Many mourned him privately, unable to make the long trip to Cairns, yet in their hearts, they were present at his farewell.

They found solace in the belief he was now on a heavenly patrol with his mates, watching over the Regiment he so dearly loved.

George was more than a distinguished soldier; he was a mentor, a friend and a beacon of guidance for many.

CHAPTER 16:
THE WARRIOR, THE POET, THE ENIGMA

The Multi-Dimensional Man. George Mansford was never just one thing. He was a warrior who wrote poetry, a demanding leader who wept for his mates, a father figure to thousands while grieving his own lost son. These weren't contradictions; they were the complete man. He was simultaneously a hard-bitten warrior and a compassionate mentor; a conservative who worked effectively with Labor politicians; a husband, father, godfather and widower. These were not contradictions but different facets of a life built on a single, coherent philosophy: knowing people understanding them and valuing them completely.

This chapter explores three core facets of his being: the warrior forged by experience, the poet who gave that experience a voice and the enigma of a man whose private life gave his public actions profound meaning. As the author, I did not seek out soldiers who failed under his leadership or critics who questioned his methods. This tribute presents George as those who respected him remember him. Somewhere in the historical record are soldiers who didn't thrive under his command and their stories matter too.

The Warrior's Foundation. His character was forged long before he ever wore a uniform. His childhood at an Aboriginal mission in Western Australia became the bedrock of his worldview. Unlike many of his generation, he grew up among Indigenous Australians as equals, playing their games and absorbing an understanding that transcended race. He learned early that character mattered more than background; a lesson that became the cornerstone of his leadership.

This foundation was solidified in the jungles of Malaya. It was there he forged a bond with Frank Moffitt, ten years his senior, who would become what Mansford simply called, his best mate. Theirs was a quintessentially Australian friendship; few words, deep understanding and an unbreakable trust built in the face of shared danger. To those who knew them, the reference captured everything about military mateship; a connection that transcended time, distance and even life itself. This warrior was also a pragmatist. Though his instincts were conservative, he understood that serving soldiers required results, not ideological purity.

Kim Beazley

Kim Beazley. His effective working relationship with Kim Beazley, the Labor Defence Minister, was a master class in practicality. When military bureaucracy resisted his concept for a Northern Surveillance Force, George's ability to articulate operational needs in a way that resonated across the political aisle proved decisive.

He could speak the language of politicians without becoming one, navigating those waters without ever losing his military soul. However, this did not mean he was universally liked. He valued honesty over harmony and if he thought a senior officer was wrong, he said so, regardless of the consequences. This bluntness created friction, but it ensured that his respect, when given, was genuine and earned.

The Poet's Voice. George wrote poetry throughout his life, using it not for literary acclaim but as a vehicle for advocacy, remembrance and moral argument. His verses were direct and accessible - the voice of the warrior translating the experiences of his life into messages for his nation. At the heart of his work was the theme of mateship, the lived reality of his bond with men like Frank Moffitt. In *'Proud Memories'*, he captured the essence of brotherhood forged in adversity. Yet his poetry also explored the deep humanity within the soldier. In '*The Power of Dreams'*, he wrote of the solace found in sleep, where thoughts of home provided a shield against the chaos of war: '*Always the thoughts of loved ones when away on distant shores'*.

His verse also became a powerful commentary on the changing landscape of his country. In *'Whatever Happened to Ocker Land?'* he lamented the creeping influence of political correctness that he felt stifled the authentic, straightforward character of Australia. He expressed frustration with a society he saw as losing its way, warning **'***In a world of political correctness, be careful what you say'*. This critique sharpened in '*What Was All That Sacrifice For?*' where he delivered a scathing indictment of societal and political complacency in the face of new threats: '*Rabid fanatics with clear intent to destroy our way of life / Yet Canberra Suits still wear blinkers despite such threats of strife. '*

He understood the hidden costs of service, addressing the insidious nature of PTSD in poems that acknowledge that for a soldier, the fight does not end when they return home. His work was a call for a military culture that prioritised mental health and saw vulnerability not as a weakness, but as a shared struggle. Ultimately, his poetry was a call to remember. In his tribute Vale Major Don Parsons, he implored future generations to learn from the sacrifices of their forebears: '*Your service in war for future generations to read'*.

The Enigma of the Man – Grief, Care and Contradiction. Perhaps the deepest insight into Mansford's character lies in the painful irony of his life: he served as a father figure to countless soldiers while privately grieving the son he had lost. His son Peter's death at forty-nine devastated him in ways from which he never fully recovered. Yet, rather than withdrawing, Mansford channelled that profound loss into a deeper commitment to others.

He became a '*Father figure'* to Stuart Smith, a '*Godfather figure'* to Jim Hammett after his own father's tragic death and a mentor to innumerable young men and women. When Peter Adamis ('Pete the Greek'), one of his old diggers', was battling cancer, George, like many others encouraged him to fight on. When his friend Jeannette Bartlett received the same diagnosis, he rang her regularly to give her courage. These were not formal duties; they were acts of genuine care from a man who understood suffering intimately.

Those closest to him knew of a private ritual that revealed how he carried his grief. At his property near Cairns, he would walk to the back of the land. There, alone, he would sit and talk; to Maureen, his first wife; to Helen, his second; to Peter, the son taken too young; and to the lost mates of his military life. In these solitary conversations, the stoic warrior allowed himself a vulnerability he rarely showed the world, maintaining relationships that death had interrupted but not ended. This private grief was the source of his public compassion. It fuelled his tireless advocacy for military families and widows.

This was not abstract work; it was quintessentially George; practical and direct. When a widow needed help with paperwork, he filled out the forms. When she faced bureaucratic obstacles, he made the phone calls. He was living the soldier's creed: you never leave your dead behind and you never, ever abandon their families. His commitment extended even to the land itself.

As Chairman of the Cassowary Foundation, he worked to protect the endangered bird and its rainforest habitat, overseeing the planting of thousands of trees. Living at 'Wundurra', with crocodiles slithering up from the creek, he had a profound respect for the natural world. This environmentalism was not sentimental; it was the same warrior's pragmatism applied to conservation; identify the problem, develop a practical solution and get it done.

The Legacy – Man and Myth United. The enigma of his character endured only for those who did not understand his fundamental philosophy. To those who knew him, there was no mystery. He was knowable and unknowable at once: a mate who remained slightly apart, a father figure who had no easy answers for his own grief, a legend who insisted he was just an ordinary bloke doing his duty.

He achieved something rare: he became legendary while remaining recognisably human. The stories about him; pushing over telephone boxes, sleeping in the rain with his soldiers; have a mythic quality, yet they are all true. The man and the myth coincided because he lived his values so consistently that his actions became the legend. The Cairns RSL Sub Branch President captured his essence perfectly: His philosophy was simple yet profound: knowing your people, understanding people, valuing people.

This was the unifying principle of his life. Whether commanding a brigade, mentoring a soldier, comforting a widow, protecting a forest, or writing a poem, he remained the same man. He will be remembered as the digger's digger because he never forgot that behind every uniform was a human being worthy of genuine understanding and authentic care. His final message to the Regiment was the culmination of a life lived in service: Keep the faith and look after your mates.

Spirit of Australia.

We are the sons of battlers, born of sun and dust, Who learned that mateship matters more than glory or than trust, We carry forward legacies from Gallipolis steep shore and add our own small chapters to the story of the Corps.

The Long March.

From privates uniform to generals stars, the road was long and hard, Each rank was earned through sweat and blood, not pulled from some marked card, I learned from every digger that I led or followed too, That leaderships not given, mate—it's something that you do. George

The Night Before.

We're sitting here in darkness, waiting for the dawn, Each bloke alone with his thoughts, though were together, closely drawn, No one speaks of fear or death, we joke and take the piss, But every man knows tomorrow might be his last sunrise like this.

The Debt.

I owe a debt to those who fell, who gave their last full measure, To carry on their memory, to hold their service as my treasure, I owe a debt to those who served beside me through the years,

Think of the ANZACS.

Comes a time when young soldiers' will ask "How do I know Im really fit for the task
If in battle and the chips are down

Can I be sure I won't let our mob down"
The answer of course is so very clear
Just think of the ANZACS no longer here

Cos they were Aussies, no different to you
Young, eager, larrikins and ever true blue
They too had doubts but never wore a frown

Despite dangers, still smiled, never looked down
Sometimes confusion from a Generals flawed plan
Always the cry, "keep going, let's do the best we can"

No matter the task, doubts, risks or cruel weather
They went forward as one; comrades together
When no officers were left, it was still "let's go"

They knew what was to be done to beat the foe
So, look after your mates who are part of the team
Be careful, be tough but never cruel or mean

And remember that fortune favours those who dare
The ANZACS are watching; good luck and take care

CHAPTER 17:
ORAL STORIES-
MYTHS, LEGENDS, TALL TALES BUT TRUE

Citizens Military Forces

The Royal Australian Regiment

Australian Army Training Team Vietnam

51 Far North Queensland Regiment

The nature of military legends. Every military unit develops its own mythology; a collection of stories that define its character, transmit its values and connect generations of soldiers. These stories occupy a peculiar space between documented history and collective memory. They are fibs in that details shift with each telling, myths in that they carry symbolic meaning beyond literal truth, legends in that they grow larger over time and tall tales in that they stretch credulity. Yet they are also undeniably true; true to the spirit of the events, true to the character of the men involved, true to the values they embody.

Brigadier Mansford accumulated more than his share of such stories. Over forty years of service spanning Korea, Malaya and Vietnam, through commands from Section to Brigade, in training establishments and operational theatres, he generated tales that soldiers still tell decades later. Some involve acts of inspired leadership, others demonstrations of larrikin defiance, still others moments of humanity that revealed the man beneath the rank.

This chapter collects those stories; the ones told in Messes and at reunions, the ones that spread through the Army by word of mouth, the ones that define George's legend as much as his official service record. They arrive from multiple sources: soldiers who served under his command, officers who worked alongside him, family members who witnessed his private side and his own accounts from interviews and writings. Each is presented as told, preserving the authentic voice of the teller while providing context where necessary. Some contradict official records or each other; this is the nature of oral tradition. Some seem implausible; this is the nature of military life, where truth is often stranger than fiction. All reveal something essential about the man soldiers called 'Warrie' George.

Maurice G. Barwick. **(Major Retired)** When Maurice Barwick speaks George Mansford's name, his voice changes. There is a weight to it; not of sadness, but of genuine respect earned across decades of shared service. They were stationed together at Holsworthy back when there were only three Battalions. Maurice recalls with a wry smile that never suited Australian methods of battle and strategy. Maurice was a Captain then; George would have been a Sergeant. The Pentropic experiment failed and was quietly abandoned, but the friendships forged in that '*little Army*' endured far longer than any organisational chart.

George Mansford was the typical Aussie larrikin, Maurice says and the affection in his voice is unmistakable. Audacious and highly respected by those who knew him. He had that loveable look of a tall, lanky Australian; not as thin as Chips Rafferty perhaps, but commanding respect nonetheless. But Maurice meant something deeper than physical appearance. George had charm and posture, yes, but what set him apart was authenticity. He was respected because he'd earned it, not demanded it.

George was a loveable rogue whose character required no performance. He simply was who he was and in that *'little Army' where everyone knew everyone'*, that was enough. We had the great advantage, Maurice reflects, of having people who had been in Malaya and Korea, as well as those who had served in World War II, come back and take up positions within the three Battalions.

It was an Army where postings followed predictable patterns; one, two, three, then three, two, one, or one, three, two; with occasional diversions to Headquarters or Citizen Military postings. You knew where you'd been and where you were going. More importantly, you knew the men you'd serve with before you arrived.

In that environment, character couldn't hide. Pretence didn't survive. Men like George Mansford stood out not because they sought attention but because their authenticity demanded recognition. They were the backbone of a force that punched far above its weight that earned respect on battlefields from Korea, Malaya, Borneo to Vietnam that never forgot what it meant to be Australian.

Maurice's generation held values that seem absent from today's society. They had experience, certainly, but also something intangible; a quality that made men like George shine without working hard at background or pretence. George was one of those rare individuals whose presence elevated everyone around him, not through rank or authority, but through the simple force of being genuinely himself.

Those heroes came back from Korea, Malaya and Maurice never imagined they would go anywhere beyond normal soldiering. Yet after Malaya came Borneo during the Indonesian Confrontation and then Vietnam. The *'little Army'* kept marching forward, always forward, into whatever fire awaited and George was always there; the larrikin Sergeant who became the respected Officer, the tall lanky bloke who commanded respect without demanding it, the mate you wanted beside you when things went pear-shaped.

Maurice Barwick remembers those days with clarity and pride; not nostalgia for a sanitised past, but honest recognition of what has been lost. That *'little Army'* is gone now, scattered by time and transformation. The predictable posting patterns have given way to a larger, more complex force. The intimacy of knowing every officer and NCO in the Regiment has been replaced by professional distance.

The men who served in that era, who knew each other's strengths and weaknesses, who respected Citizen soldiers and larrikin Sergeants alike; they remain in memory, standing tall in the shadows of a bygone era. And when Maurice spoke of George Mansford, his voice carried the unmistakable tone of a man remembering not just a distinguished officer or a legendary trainer, but something more fundamental and more precious. George was the kind you do not forget, even when the *'little Army'* that made you both is long gone.

Albert '*Bert*' Franks. (Warrant Officer Deceased)
A tale of mate-ship and discretion. Bert Franks belonged to the same generation as 'Warrie' George Mansford; those hard men forged in Korea and tempered in the jungles of Malaya. Years after both had hung up their uniforms.'

When I was just a young digger in A Coy 6 RAR and Bert Franks was our CSM (Company Sergeant Major), we would often sit around a fire after a training exercise and listen to the yarns told to us by those who had been deployed to Korea, Malaya, Indonesian Confrontation and Vietnam.

On one such occasion, Bert shared a story with us that perfectly captured the larrikin spirit and unbreakable bonds of that era.' Somewhere in Asia; the exact location lost to time and discretion; Corporals Bert Franks and George Mansford found themselves drinking with a group of Americans. As often happened when soldiers from different Armies mixed alcohol with competitive pride, what began as friendly camaraderie deteriorated into something considerably less diplomatic.

The details of how it started remain unclear, but the outcome was inevitable: a full-scale brawl erupted. Both Bert and George, neither stranger to using their fists when circumstances demanded, became thoroughly involved in the melee that followed. These were men who could handle themselves; a fact the Americans discovered the hard way.

The Military Police arrived with their usual efficiency and began rounding up the combatants. Everyone was arrested and hauled away; everyone, that is, except Mansford, who had mysteriously vanished from the scene. Bert lost his stripes over the incident, reduced in rank as punishment for conduct unbecoming. Yet throughout the entire disciplinary process, he never uttered a word about his mates' involvement.

The code of mate-ship held absolute: you never dobbed in your mates, regardless of personal cost. When I asked Bert how George had managed to escape while everyone else was collared, he smiled with the knowing grin of a man recalling a perfectly executed tactical withdrawal.' *Warrie slipped under the tent and nicked off before anyone could spot him'*, Bert explained, his admiration evident even decades later.

The image is perfect; George Mansford, later to become a Brigadier, executing a hasty extraction worthy of any Special Force's operator, leaving his mates to face the music while he disappeared into the Asian night. Bert eventually won his spurs back, his competence and character overcoming the temporary setback. George, of course, went on to be commissioned from the ranks, rising eventually to Brigadier.

Their paths diverged in rank but the bond remained; the kind forged when two young Corporals stood back-to-back in a foreign bar, fists flying, looking after each other as diggers' always did. On reflection, I look back on that yarn and I am reminded of a similar story with 'Warrie' George's mate Frank Moffitt and wondered whether it was the same incident.

Years later, when my wife and I visited George at his property in Cairns, I mentioned knowing Bert well. George's eyes lit up with recognition and warmth; he knew Bert, remembered him, spoke of him with the respect one warrior reserves for another. I never got the opportunity to corroborate Bert's version of the story from George's perspective. Perhaps some tales are best left with a single teller, the other party maintaining the dignified silence of a gentleman who never tells all his secrets.

Whether George's escape was as smooth as Bert suggested, or whether Bert's loyalty in never mentioning his mate's involvement was reciprocated in ways unknown to me, I cannot say. What I do know is this: the story perfectly encapsulates the era, the men and the code they lived by. Mate-ship wasn't merely a word or a sentimental concept; it was demonstrated through actions, through taking punishment without complaint, through protecting your mates even when it cost you personally.

Bert Franks told the story with neither bitterness nor regret, only the satisfaction of a man who had lived by a code and found it worthwhile. 'Warrie' George Mansford, whether he slipped under that tent or not, became the kind of Officer who never forgot what it meant to be a Corporal drinking with his mates in a foreign land, looking after each other when the situation went pear-shaped. Some stories do not need corroboration. They carry their own truth; not necessarily in the exact details, but in what they reveal about character, loyalty and the bonds between soldiers that neither rank nor time could ever break.

Author's Note: This yarn was shared by Bert Franks and remains unverified by Brigadier Mansford himself. Like many stories from that era, the precise details matter less than the truth they convey about the men involved and the code they lived by. It is presented here as Bert told it; one old soldier's tribute to a mate who went on to become a legend, but who once was simply another Corporal in a bar brawl, looking after his mates and being looked after in return.

Neil Weekes AM MC. (Brigadier. Deceased) Within the Australian Defence family, George Mansford occupies a place comparable to The Man from Snowy River in national folklore; embodying that indomitable spirit, the determination to have a go and the larrikinism that defines the Australian character. Mention his name and conversations instantly become animated with stories of a man who rose from Private to Brigadier yet never forgot his humble beginnings. George Mansford is that rare individual whose word is binding, who speaks his mind only after careful deliberation and who never leaves a mate behind.

As Brigadier Neil Weekes AM, MC observed, in country terms, *'I would ride the river with George Mansford anytime, anyplace.'* This laconic, patriotic Australian possesses a great zest for life; his eyes sparkle when regaling friends with tales from Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. He leads from the front, calls a spade a shovel and was both tough soldier and compassionate Commander. He laughs often and loudly, though he has known profound sorrow.

Yet there is far more to George Mansford than this gruff, good-natured exterior suggests. He possesses that rare talent of expressing deepest feelings through poetry; a prolific writer whose verses span wide emotional terrain, often tinged with sadness, frequently laced with humour, always drawing on service experiences. Some poems voice frustration with politicians who fail returned servicemen; others capture the essence of mate-ship forged in battle.

An outstanding orator, George can take audiences from raucous laughter to tears within a single presentation about The Royal Australian Regiment. This collection of stories and verse encapsulates the Australian spirit from bush to battlefield, presented with the vitality and richness of his experiences and those of mates who served beside him. As Brigadier Weekes concludes, these works provide far greater understanding than any character description could achieve; George Mansford truly epitomises everything Australian.

Stuart Smith. (Major General Retired) Remembering you, George. In 1991, as a fresh Captain, I hosted your visit to our Battalion for Officer and Senior Non-Commissioned Officer training. Your reputation preceded you. But I was startled by your crumpled appearance.' *You do not need iron pressed clothes to go to war'* you explained,

'I am ready to go to war'. You opened your lecture with an enigmatic '*how are you, you pack of bastards?'* in recognition of the unofficial lyrics to The Royal Australian Regiment marching song, you had us in your hands.

Your message on the art of leadership was equally, disarmingly, succinct: '*you must be seen by your soldiers, you must listen to your soldiers and they must know that what they say matters to you, it is all about establishing trust'*. Simply: '*See, hear and value'*. I was enthralled. **You inspired.**

Remembering you, George. Years later, as a Battalion Commander, when visiting our troops at the Land Command Battle School at Tully, I would always conduct a side visit to your home.' *Stand by your beds for Commanding Officer inspection'* you would shout from the front door to no-one each time I arrived. You donated 100 copies of your book *'The Mad Galahs'* for the junior leaders of the Battalion. Kindly, you autographed a copy for me with a message regarding my father's service in Malaya and Vietnam. A message that touched my soul. Your advice on preparing a Battalion of 'Mad Gallahs' for another tour of duty in Timor was priceless.' *Train hard so that you can fight easy'* you offered. We did and returned to Australia with no casualties. **You mentored with wisdom.**

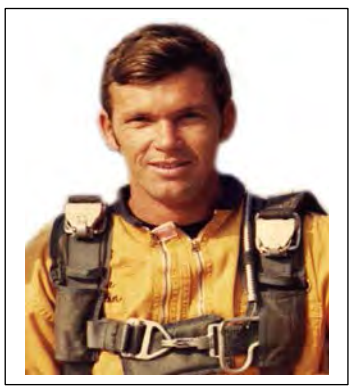
Remembering you, George. When I was a Brigade Commander my wife and I often hosted you for dinner at Jezzine House. Ever the gentleman, you always arrived with an overflowing bouquet of flowers.' *We can never thank our partners enough for their sacrifice while we serve'* you proclaimed. You spoke from the heart and lived experience. Accordingly, we always called on you when holidaying in Cairns. One visit saw you scrambling for morning tea cups in the kitchen and noticing a dirt smudge on your kettle. Catching my wife's eye as you buffed the dirt away with a tea towel, you quipped *'you see, always house proud'*. **You charmed with honesty and humour.**

Remembering you, George. After my military service, while working with the Department of Veterans' Affairs, I made a point of introducing you to some of my fellow public servants.' *They need the good oil on existing veteran support policies and processes from people like you'* I explained. You asked me about the reported rise in veteran suicide. I responded with the view that *'they need strong mentorship, someone to convince them that all the support they need is there and that they themselves have ownership of their direction in life'.' Smithy, your blood is worth bottling'* you responded.' **You promoted resilience.**

Remembering you, George. I last saw you in hospital, long before your final challenges. Beside your bed was a stack of envelopes, addressed to 'Florence Nightingale' etc. When I asked what they were, you explained that they were individual thank you letters to all the nurses that had supported you while in hospital.

Your blue eyes began to glisten.' *They are all Florence Nightingale's to me'* you opined. Then a young nurse appeared at your door.' *Excuse me cobber, can I interrupt to clear your lunch tray'* she enquired.' *Sure cobber, fill your boots'* you responded.' *Thanks, cobber, have a cracker of a day'* the nurse flourished as she left.

Then you touched my elbow and chuckled *'see, I have trained them up'*. **You fostered mateship, respect and manners.** Remembering you, George. It was hard attending your memorial service. We all thought of you as our Regimental 'elder' and that you would be there to mentor us into eternity. Perhaps you still will, through your enduring poetry and prose. **At the last post, you were seen, heard and valued.**



Ron Llewellyn. (Captain Retired) I had the privilege of serving with George Mansford from 1974 to 1976, when George was 6 RAR Operations Officer and Battalion Second-in-Command and then for a brief period as Acting Commanding Officer during the transition between Lieutenant Colonel Hammett's departure and Lieutenant Colonel Peter Stokes arrival.

I like to think we bonded through a shared belief that performance mattered more than appearance; especially during my time as Assault Pioneer Platoon Commander.'

I take a certain pride in the fact that never once during my nearly three years in the Battalion did, I ever participate in a Battalion Parade or Change of Guard, despite my slightly above-average number of appointments as Battalion Duty Officer.'

'The following anecdote was witnessed not from the parade ground, but from the second floor of the Officers' Mess; where I had an excellent view and no responsibilities. It was a full Battalion parade to mark the seasonal change of uniform from winter Battle Dress to summer polyesters and George, acting as Battalion Commander that day, was taking the salute. As George marched onto the parade ground, a ripple of chuckling began to spread through the ranks. The collective mass had noticed that Major Mansford was still dressed in his winter Battle Dress; while the entire Battalion stood resplendent in summer kit.

Without missing a beat, George addressed the formation: *'I detect that you have noticed I am still dressed in winter uniform.'* The volume of chuckling rose. He paused, letting it build and then delivered the punchline with perfect timing: *'Well, I can inform you that there is a special rule that permits the Second-in-Command of the Battalion to wear winter dress for one day longer than the rest of the Battalion.'*

The parade ground erupted. It was vintage George; turning a potential embarrassment into a moment of connection, using humour to bridge rank and reminding everyone that even Senior Officers' are human. More importantly, it reinforced the culture he and CO Tony Hammett fostered: one where competence mattered more than spit and polish and where leaders earned respect not through rigid formality, but through authenticity and results.

I trust I can speak for all the Junior Officers of that era when I say that under the leadership of Tony Hammett and George Mansford, we were given the opportunity to push the limits, test our judgement and grow as future leaders. They created an environment where initiative was encouraged mistakes were learning opportunities and performance in the field counted for more than perfection on the parade ground. That was George's gift; he built leaders by trusting them, challenging them and showing them through his own example, what it meant to lead with both competence and humanity. Rest in peace Sir.

Phillip '*Butch*' Buttigieg. (Warrant Officer Retired) A man second to none. George really was a man second to none. Besides being an inspirational Officer, he was a father to those men who needed reassurance. He was tough but with empathy and led by example. He quickly earned one's respect and loyalty forever.

In 1964, having just completed recruit training, I joined 5 Platoon, B Company, 2 RAR at Enoggera. The Platoon was commanded by newly commissioned Lieutenant George Mansford, someone I grew to respect more than any military member I came to know.

In those days a Rifle Platoon had four sections with a total of about forty-four personnel. Now being part of a combat Battalion was thrilling to me and I felt proud. But initially I felt a bit inadequate given that most of the men in George's Platoon had been soldiering for years. Many of the NCOs had been in the Army 10 years or more. They really knew their stuff. George, the '*Boss*' they called him, looked scruffier and older than all of them. He looked lean, mean and hungry to new soldiers like me and certainly didn't bother with the airs and graces of his fellow Platoon Commanders. But when he spoke to the Platoon, he was interesting, impressive and straight to the point. Inspirational! I knew right away that he knew his stuff. Everyone in the Platoon was keen to follow him.

In 1965 our Platoon was selected to go to New Guinea and act as an enemy force against 1 PIR. Being just 17 years old, this proved close to active service for me and other new soldiers in the Platoon because we operated against somewhat primitive natives who had trouble distinguishing exercises from war. At the time New Guinea was a trust territory controlled and administered by Australia. The PNG Army was led by Australian Officers and senior NCOs down to Platoon Sergeant level.

1 PIR (a Battalion of the PNG Army,) comprised mostly indigenous personnel who could not speak any English which heightened the suspense. They were to conduct a search and destroy exercise along the Kokoda Trail. We were to act as the guerrilla fighters they had patrol against to stop us influencing the villagers in the Owen Stanleys. It was a scary exercise for us as we more than once had to outrun those PNG soldiers who wanted to finish us with their machetes.

We were exercising in country with no roads and very poor communications. To get our supplies into the exercise region George hired 40 porters who initially received one shilling per day. After several days of carrying loads over very tough country the porters developed blistering and bleeding shoulders. They went on strike and we were stuck only halfway towards our exercise area. We'd only been given seven days to get into and prepare before 1 PIR set off after us. We needed time to win over the highland villagers etc. All negotiation failed until George made the decision to pay the porters two shillings a day. We were then able to resume our long foot journey.

But because the sack of shilling coins George carried would now run out sooner, he used every excuse to send some porters back to their village as the loads decreased. (Note: The porters would not accept any form of payment other than coins and payment had to be made at the end of each day). I will never forget the sight of 'jungle trained-killer George' plodding along over hill and dale carrying in front of him a white plum-pudding bag of coins and handing them out each evening ….' *one shilling for you and one for you'*, and so on until they had all received one.

Once the PIR reached the exercise area we needed more of George's experience and cunning to survive. The PIR patrolled the ridges and the creek lines vigorously. But they never ventured from the ridgeline trails unless first sighting us. Then they would become very aggressive and chase us wildly. The Australian Officers' and NCOs' had difficulty controlling them. Cunningly, George harboured us right under their noses, just off the lip of a ridge, close enough so our sentries could count the numbers in their passing patrols.

The PIR continued to patrol close around us but never ever managed to find our various camp sites. After the exercise ended a month or so later, by which time we were all very hungry from lack of resupply and weary due to George's insistence that we tough it out despite our situation. Some of us including me had discarded our leather boots and bought canvas jungle boots in Moresby before the exercise. With so much walking in wet creek lines the canvas boots eventually perished and fell off our feet. The subsequent walking in bare feet walking over creek stones led to bleeding feet. 1 PIR later admitted George had been just too cunning, too clever…. in outwitting the 'good guys!'

When 6 RAR was formed in June 1965 George was assigned a new command. I never conversed him again until after we arrived in Vietnam in 1966. He was by then a Captain advisor to a Vietnamese Unit based a few kilometres north of our Nui-Dat Task Force base. I encountered him desperately running around our Battalion area scrounging whatever defence stores, ammunition and claymores he could get hold of using the old Army methods beg, borrow and/or steal. True to form he was not complaining about the danger he faced at his remote station but was doing all he could using his cunning and initiative to save those he was responsible for. We gave him everything we could get away with giving him

Over the years hence I served in 6 RAR with George often. He was the Pioneer Officer, the Operations Officer and the Battalion 2IC. Such has been our mutual respect that after our military service George flew from his home in Cairns to speak as guest speaker at the high school where I taught history, among other things. He mesmerised the students just as he mesmerised us young soldiers. From 2021 I led a party of 6 RAR veterans each year to visit George at his Cairns home before sadly, the great man passed in 2026.

Warren 'Wazza' Payne. (Warrant Officer Retired) Mansford was the Officer the Diggers' Would Follow Anywhere. Warren 'Wazza' Payne served under George Mansford during a pivotal period in 1 RAR's history; 1971-1972; when George commanded B Company and later served as Operations Officer.

It was during this time that George, working in conjunction with Commanding Officer '*Blue'* Hodgkinson, orchestrated the Battalion's deployment to Papua New Guinea; a demanding operational exercise conceived as compensation for the Battalion's non-deployment to Vietnam.

Warren remembers George Mansford as an excellent operator, genuinely loved by his men and without doubt one of the worst-dressed Officers' he ever encountered in his military career. Yet paradoxically; or perhaps consequently; the diggers' idolised him and would have followed him anywhere without hesitation. While countless stories could be told about George from this period, several incidents capture his character perfectly.

Warren recalls vividly the day: '*George was being outfitted in his dress uniform for an important parade. The diggers' helped him dress, fussing over buttons and badges, determined to present their Officer Commanding (OC) in proper order. They then carried him; whether in celebration, affection, or larrikin mischief remains unclear; to the vehicle that would transport him to the parade ground.*'

Uniform. When they arrived and George alighted from the vehicle, his uniform had somehow crumpled completely. He looked thoroughly worse for wear, as though he had slept in his uniform rather than travelled a short distance in carefully maintained order. The immaculate turnout the diggers' had achieved minutes earlier had mysteriously disintegrated.

That was 'Warrie' George; incapable of maintaining spit-and-polish appearance even with dedicated assistance, yet commanding absolute loyalty and respect from soldiers who understood that substance mattered infinitely more than surface. The contrast between his disheveled presentation and his operational competence became legendary within the Battalion, a source of affectionate humour that somehow enhanced rather than diminished respect for him.

Smoking. Warren remembered George Mansford as the only officer who could be seen walking casually around the barracks in Townsville, pipe in hand, looking more like a contemplative professor than a military Commander. It was a sight that would have been unremarkable in civilian life but was quietly revolutionary in the structured world of the Army.' *If any of us diggers' had tried to emulate George's casual style, Jack Currie; our Regimental Sergeant Major; would have torn strips off us without hesitation,*'

Warren recalled with a grin.' *But George? He had a charmed life, it seems. The RSM knew better than to challenge him, not because of his rank, but because George had earned the kind of respect that transcended regulations.*' The men of the Battalion loved him for it. Here was an officer who commanded not through rigid adherence to peacetime propriety, but through demonstrated competence and genuine care for his soldiers. George's pipe-smoking strolls weren't acts of defiance; they were the natural behaviour of a man so secure in his authority that he didn't need to perform it.

The Slouch Hat Innovation. Another story, not well known outside the Battalion, speaks to George's practical approach to soldier welfare. Long before it became standard practice, George Mansford was reputedly the first man in the Regiment to wear the brim of his slouch hat down while the rest of the Battalion wore the traditional bush hat with brim up on one side. This wasn't a fashion statement; it was pragmatic leadership. In an era when little was known about the sun's effects and its association with skin cancer, George understood that Australian soldiers operating in tropical conditions needed protection.

While others maintained traditional appearance, George prioritised the health of his men and led by example. Years later, all the Battalions' adopted the practice, wearing slouch hats with brims down as a guard against the sun's harmful effects. What had once been George Mansford's quiet innovation became Army-wide policy, saving countless soldiers from the skin cancers that remain prevalent among veterans even today; the legacy of youthful exposure to Australia's harsh sun during training and operations.

It was quintessentially Mansford: George sees a problem, implements a practical solution, ignores regulations that didn't serve soldiers welfare and let the institution catch up later. The fact that he was right; again; only added to the legend.

Warren's stories capture an essential truth about George Mansford: he was loved not despite his unconventional approach, but because of it. In an institution that often-valued conformity over common sense, George demonstrated that true leadership sometimes meant having the courage to be different; and the competence to make that difference matter.

Warren emphasises that beneath the dishevelled exterior was a good man; tough, resilient, caring and compassionate; who fundamentally rejected the notion of making training easy. George believed training should be tough, difficult and above all, realistic enough to emulate actual battle conditions. Comfort and convenience had no place in preparing soldiers for combat. He drove his men hard, but they understood the purpose behind every demanding exercise; George was preparing them to survive and succeed in circumstances where inadequate preparation meant death.

Exercise Treble Change. in Papua New Guinea exemplified this philosophy. The deployment tested the Battalion under demanding conditions that replicated operational realities far more effectively than conventional garrison training. The terrain, climate and tactical scenarios pushed soldiers to their limits, revealing weaknesses and building capabilities that comfortable barracks training could never develop. George is on record stating that after Papua New Guinea, the Battalion was ready to face any challenge; an assessment validated by subsequent deployments and operations. Warren Payne's recollections capture the essential George Mansford: a leader whose crumpled uniform and unmilitary appearance concealed an operator of exceptional competence, whose men would follow him anywhere precisely because he cared more about their survival and effectiveness than about superficial military proprieties.

The diggers' understood instinctively what mattered; and they knew George Mansford had what mattered in abundance. Warren himself remained with the Battalion and rose to the rank of Regimental Sergeant Major, deploying overseas on multiple occasions and eventually retiring from the Army after twenty years of distinguished service. Even in retirement, he maintained contact with his mates, understanding as George had taught him that the bonds forged in service transcend time and distance. The lessons learned under George Mansford's command; about leadership, about what truly matters, about the difference between appearance and substance; stayed with Warren throughout his career and beyond.

Frank Moffitt. (Warrant Officer Deceased) The Orderly Room Floor and Other Acts of Insubordination. There are friends, there are mates and then there's the bloke who points you to a concrete floor at midnight and calls it a bed. For George Mansford, that bloke was Frank Moffitt; a man who spent 68 years proving that loyalty, courage and a complete disregard for barrack room protocol could coexist in one magnificently stubborn human being.

Their friendship began in the most romantic way imaginable: Mansford stumbling into the orderly room of Charlie Company, 2 RAR after leave, exhausted and looking for a bunk. Corporal Moffitt, on duty and clearly in a generous mood, gestured magnanimously to the floor.

'There's your bed, mate. Kit bag's your pillow.' It was the beginning of a beautiful relationship; one built on hard floors, harder campaigns and the kind of mutual respect that only comes from watching someone get demoted multiple times and still refuse to admit they were wrong. Frank Moffitt was *'never'* wrong. Not once. Not in 68 years. George made this abundantly clear in his eulogy, calling it *'Moff's only major and irritating flaw.'* One can only imagine the decades of good-natured arguments: *'Moff, you got arrested.' 'Yeah, but my mate made it back, didn't he?' 'Moff, you were reduced to the ranks.' 'Still commanded my section, though.' 'Moff, you're bleeding.' 'Just a scratch.'* The man was infuriatingly consistent.

In Malaya when Moffitt lost his stripes for fighting with the *'Brits'*(British soldiers); George who was involved managed to get away. Moffitt and company got their own back on George some weeks later when George was in hospital delirious with Malaria, they visited him and announced the Battalion was deploying to Laos and that everybody would know that George malingered his way out of it. Then they abruptly walked out, leaving George in a state of nervous funk for several days until he recuperated and discovered it was but a clever hoax.

Moff's military career reads like a checklist of every conflict Australia involved itself in for three decades. Five campaigns. Nine years of active overseas service. Wounded four times. Promoted. Demoted. Promoted again. Awarded the American Silver Star for Bravery which he never wore because apparently even medals couldn't convince Frank Moffitt to follow dress code regulations. The story of Moff rescuing his mate (George Mansford) from an out-of-bounds district is *'pure Moffitt'*. He knew the rules. He understood the consequences. He went anyway. Got arrested. Got busted back to Private. And yet his leadership was so undeniable that he never actually lost command of his Section. The Army could strip his rank, but they couldn't strip his authority. Within record time, he was a Corporal again, probably still arguing he'd done nothing wrong.

Frank Edwards CSC. *(*Brigadier Retired) I first served with George Mansford in 6 RAR in 1974. I was the Recon/Anti-Tank Platoon Commander and George was Operations Officer. I was detached to his office in Battalion Headquarters for three weeks to sit at a desk next to him and prepare the safety templates for a Battalion live fire exercise at Tin Can Bay.

Every weapon held by the Battalion was to be live fired in attack and defence. George did all the detailed planning to ensure as much realism as possible and it resulted in one of the most comprehensive live fire training I ever experienced. He was a taskmaster but patient and thorough teacher.

From this time, I learnt the importance of realism in training, regardless of the time it took to prepare. George also took the time to talk with junior officers in the Mess and get to know them and either encourage or berate, depending on what was deserved. He conveyed to us all that knowing your men was essential and that standards in soldiering were non-negotiable. Of course, that did not apply to George's standard of dress!

My second experience with George was at the Infantry School at Singleton several years later when he was Senior Instructor Specialist Wing. One of his tasks was reintroducing sniper training and I was in Infantry Development Wing searching for suitable weapons and preparing doctrine for snipers.

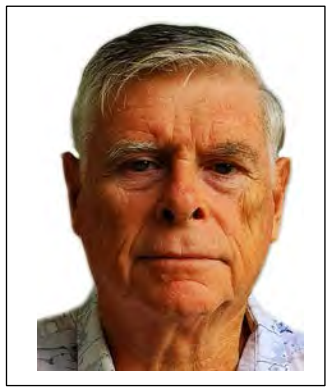
Once again, he was teacher and coach to many men, Officers and NCOs alike. Despite his occasional gruff nature and the exacting standard, he demanded, he always had time to coach people and spend time with them. He was a generous man and on one occasion when I (a Captain) could not get a babysitter for a Mess function, he volunteered and looked after my 12-month-old daughter at his married quarter. His generosity was remarkable.

Front Row (L–R)	Maj D. Savage, Maj J. Langler, Maj L. Quinlivan, Maj T. Holland, Lt Col T. Hammett (Commanding Officer) Capt J. Longworth, Maj G. Mansford, Maj W. Sheppard, Maj S. Farmer, Chaplain Thompson.
2nd Row (L–R)	Capt J. Rule, Capt R. Savage, Capt N. Standing, Capt D. Rowe, Capt A. Smith, Capt D. Mead, Capt R. Scott Capt J. Haddon.
3rd Row (L–R)	Lt P. Schmitt, 2Lt G. Byles, 2Lt D. Wells, Lt F. Edwards, Lt P. Maher
Back Row (L–R)	2Lt K. Jobson, 2Lt P. Feeney, 2Lt P. Roberts, Lt R. Greville, 2Lt L. Douglas, 2Lt A. Sparks, BEM.

6 RAR Officers Enoggera

My strongest memory of George is when I took C Coy 2/4 RAR through the Battle School at Tully when he was founding Commanding Officer. Without a doubt the most realistic and demanding field training I had been involved in that tested every man. Amongst it all a figure would suddenly emerge from behind a frond or a tree and give terse comment on an error spotted or some praise to be awarded. A man who was housed at Tully camp in a leaky hut sleeping on a camp bed under a mosquito net with a Field Notebook and a pen as his office.

He wrote the motto of the Battle School and it very much reflects George's character and the way he led life: *'The oath to serve your country did include a contract for normal luxury and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary, it implied hardships, loyalty and devotion to duty, regardless of your rank. This battle school is here to remind you of that oath. '* George Mansford embodied what it was to be an Australian soldier and like many great Australian soldiers there was a rascal inside him with a great sense of humour and a smile always lurking waiting to emerge.



Phillip Charlesworth (Lieutenant Colonel Retired). I served with George Mansford on two occasions. The first was as a newly graduated Lieutenant posted to 6 RAR where he was the Unit Second in Command (2IC) in 1975.

The second time was at the School of Infantry in 1978 where George was Senior Instructor at Specialist Wing and I was posted as one of his Officer Instructors. From the year in Brisbane who could forget the Darwin deployment, the traditions; that only applied to the 2IC, the raids George led on our sister Battalion 8/9 RAR, the insistence on knowledge of 'Regimental History'.

Others have spoken already about our relationship with George and how he knew all of us and what we did. For me George acknowledged that Junior Officers inevitably made mistakes and that was where the learning took place.

While George knew that we often got up to mischief it was quickly dismissed. Nothing to be castigated over unless there was damage, insult or injury. He also acknowledged that the Mess was where we lived and was where we could let our hair down and be ourselves. My working and personal relationship with George were special.

Both he and our CO, Tony Hammett, knew my Dad who was one of the originals with 3 RAR deployed to Korea in Sep 1950 and who subsequently commanded 2 RAR in SVN in 1967/68. We had very few diggers' at that time due to the end of NS and a large exodus on posting, courses and extended leave when the unit returned from Singapore in 1973. 1975 was a year of building and we subbies were accommodated with various tasks that tested our initiative, problem solving and leadership skills.

I was allocated several Escort Officer roles with visiting foreign Senior Officers or Military Attaches along with other tasks in rural Queensland. But as our Platoons grew, we were given more substantial tasks. As an example, my Platoon ran a relay for the Lions Club of South East Queensland carrying their banner from Roma to Burleigh Heads. These tasks were formative, they built character, they built confidence and they built your team. You did everything with your Platoon as you were one with them. This was exactly the reason we were given these tasks. I owe a lot to George and Tony Hammett for doing what they did. When we deployed to Butterworth in November 1975, I had a full Platoon and we were good.

I will focus on my time at the School of Infantry as my involvement with George, there helped me to look at myself differently. My initial discussion with George was when I joined him in December 1977 when he was Senior Instructor at Specialist Wing and I was posted on promotion to Captain as one of his Officer. Instructors. He was the first to acknowledge that this job was not straightforward. When the 'TIB 28 Division' organisation was applied in 1975; it impacted the capabilities and equipment tables of our Infantry Battalions. There were a few anomalies, 'bits that didn't fit in'.

Therefore, at Specialist Wing it was an administrative convenience to lump these together into one Section or Sub-Wing. It was an 'odds and sods' element covering everything that didn't slide easily into Mortars, Pioneers or Signals until things clarified and we could make separate provision later. It saved the requirement for direct command from the Wing HQ and so for my sins I was entrusted with Anti-Tank, Machine Guns, Tracking (both visual and dogs) and Small Arms which included Coaching and Sniper training. Anti-Tank and Machine Guns I knew well from my time as Weapons Platoon commander in the Battalion.

I had done an Anti-Tank course at the School of Infantry at Warminster in the UK in 1977 and had been trained on the use and tactical deployment of the MILAN Anti-Tank Guided Weapon. Later training on 'TOW' with the US Army 25 ID in Hawaii never eventuated. As part of the course in the UK, I had also deployed to BAOR with a NATO Role Rifle Company to join the Anti-Tank defence at a reserve demolition. George knew all that, but he kept this information just between us. But the other functions were aspects of soldiering that I was not intimately familiar with.

However, I had an array of ranks from Corporals to Warrant Officers and a very impressive pool of talent to; *'do the business'* as they said. On that basis I felt like I would end up as a figurehead rather than one who became actively involved in the many courses that we conducted and I had already been given the impression that I was there to sign off on Course Reports more than anything. But George put a challenge to me and gave me the most inspiring talking to I have ever had.

He acknowledged that it was not a Section where its components fitted together well. He pointed out that there was an incredible array of staff with an enormous range of background and experience gained from many years in the Battalions of the Regiment. Bernie LeSueur, Broom Matthews, Buck Clements, Barry Seeley to name just a few.

These guys had been in Malaya, South Vietnam, Coral, Balmoral you name it they were in it. He added that it would be an incredible learning experience to oversee the many functions we had responsibility for and to draw on the 'technical' expertise of these legends and to understand what they did.' *Use them, be with them'*, he said.' *Ask questions and see what they do and how they do their jobs. Take the opportunity to learn from them'*. I also got the impression that if told to *'F**k Off Sir'*, I was probably being too interested.

It was a humbling experience to come away knowing that he gave me his full support. Every one of our courses where he gave an opening address, he acknowledged the staff to the students as the custodians of the 'subject matter' with the 'expertise to deliver and in that statement recognised the wealth of the accumulated knowledge and experience available to them. We had the responsibility of imparting knowledge based on years of experience to those who attended our courses and gained the qualifications necessary to do their jobs at their units as we had done. We took our responsibilities very seriously but we knew that those who completed our courses were the best we could return to the units to assume appointments where their qualification was required and to train others.

The challenge went well and it was pleasing to see how the components adjusted to their respective positions within the Wing. In time the 'odds and sods' dispersed or joined. Small Arms and Snipers combined and set up as a separate Section, the dogs were discharged and the trackers briefly joined the sniping group then left once their functions had been absorbed. Anti-Tank and Machine Guns had a lot in common as crew served, centrally managed assets. But life in the Section was not all long hours and hard tasking.

We had our moments and look back now and laugh at what happened on the many occasions where things did not quite go as expected. One such incident occurred during a fire power demonstration that we ran in conjunction with Depot Company to give either Officer Cadets or Staff College students exactly what an Infantry Company could do followed by Support Company capabilities.

Mortars, Machine Guns and Signals were straightforward, Pioneers a bit more complex, but Anti-Tank required a variety of firing points and targets depending on the weapon being fired. During rehearsals all weapons were fired to engage targets at suitable ranges and to ensure that the effect at the target end was as spectacular as possible. The 106 mm RCL and the 84 mm Carl Gustav were impressive but George was a little disappointed with the 66mm LAW.' *We should be able to do a little better than that, make a bigger bang'* George said. Pioneers then leapt to assist by setting up a Battle Noise Simulation kit using one slab of TNT (dynamite) and a bottle of fuel at the target. We then fired the 66 and the Pioneers hit the clacker at the same time causing an impact that was immediate and most impressive.' *Go with that'* he said with that grin of his.' *We shall show the bastards'*.

Come the day of the demonstration, spectator areas packed, all systems go. All serials went well and the students were clearly impressed. Then came time for the Anti-Tank weapons. 106: *'Stand by, Firing now'*. A huge bang, huge back blast, huge dust cloud and a major impact on the target with pieces of vehicle blown all over the place. 84: *'Firing now'*. Another big bang, big back blast, big dust cloud and an impressive hit on the target. Finally, the 66: *'Firing now'*. There no bang, no back blast, no dust cloud but a huge sheet of flame and explosive impact on the target.

Then from the firing point a plaintive call: *'Misfire'*. George didn't miss a beat. Head back and a loud belly laugh and it was all behind us. No recrimination, no abuse. He had been there himself. 'Best laid plans.' Unfortunately, I was posted in late September 1978 to an Army Reserve unit in Melbourne. Before I left, George and I had a debriefing session and he gave me my PR 19. Coming from him, that report set me up where I felt I did not belong. He had endorsed me in the best way and I was speechless.

We then had a conversation where he defended his comments which I will never forget. Among his musings, he told me that for him, *'Service makes the man and it is a dynamic process as one matures, gains greater understanding and awareness and greater responsibility that there are times when we need to stop and understand exactly who we are and what we stand for and to never move unless you have a firm base or one foot on the ground. To do otherwise leave you extremely vulnerable'*.

He left this *'Soldiering when reduced to its basic elements was soldiering at its best. It forces junior commanders to think for themselves, to improvise, to problem solve and to take initiative'*. These have never left me. To him there was learning to be had in just about everything we did. It never ends. He was right. We stayed in touch and I met up with him briefly in Tully in 1984 when my Company went through. I and my officers and I spent the whole exercise in the field. Not because George would have wanted it that way, but because we did it anyway. He has left us now, but he hasn't. He, his poetry and his life experience in uniform have affected us in so many ways. We will never see his like again.

Don Tate. (Private Retired) A narrative of courage, compassion and justice. There are moments in a veteran's life when you need someone to stand beside you, not behind you. For Don Tate, George Mansford was that man.

In 2008, Don Tate was copping hell from elements of the veteran community; vilified, attacked, dismissed. For years, surviving members of the 2nd D & E Platoon had struggled to have their Vietnam War service officially recognised.

Administrative failures had distorted or obscured their service records, denying proper recognition and causing emotional distress. The loneliness of that fight was crushing, the isolation unbearable. Then, on 21 April 2008, George's email arrived. In that moment, Don knew he wasn't alone anymore. George didn't mince words: *'It is beyond me to understand the spite and lack of logic that elements of our veteran community demonstrate.'*

He was angry; not at Don, but for him. He saw the injustice clearly and wasn't afraid to call it out, regardless of who might take offence.' *I am always angry at the attacks on your efforts to find justice and recognition,'* George wrote.' *I am very much appalled at the treatment you have received, not only in recent times, but the whole sad story of negligence and questionable leadership you experienced in Vietnam'.*

What struck Don most, was George's compassion. He acknowledged Don's suffering; mental and physical; and validated his fight for justice.' *You have much to be proud of','* George wrote.' *Your personal suffering, mental and physical, have been more than most.'* Coming from George Mansford, a man who'd earned his stripes the hard way that meant everything.

George's support proved prophetic. Just weeks later, on 29 May 2008, Dr. Mike Kelly formally acknowledged the combat history of the 2nd D & E Platoon, confirming they had indeed existed and participated in significant operations with the Australian Task Force. He highlighted their bravery, cohesion and effectiveness in battle; particularly during a successful ambush against a larger enemy force. Major General McLachlan followed with a personal letter to Don Tate, offering an apology for years of administrative failures that had denied him proper recognition. The letter acknowledged Don's injuries, the hardships he endured after returning home and the failure of record-keeping systems.

It affirmed his service in The Royal Australian Regiment and recognised the contributions of the 2nd D & E Platoon, even though their formation had not been formally documented. That's who George was. He stood up for what was right, irrespective of who it was or what it cost him personally. He had the moral courage to support those being wronged, even when it was unpopular, even when it made him a target. George would always go into bat for the little Aussie battler, for anyone being vilified unjustly. He never walked past injustice; he confronted it head-on. He was a soldier's soldier.

That's why we loved him. That's why his legacy endures. As George Mansford's legacy grew, it became clear that his leadership transcended military boundaries. He was known for his audacity and tactical brilliance, as well as being a steadfast advocate for justice. When he encountered bullying or intimidation, especially from veterans targeting fellow soldiers, George stepped in without hesitation.

In one instance, older veterans attempted to ostracise a younger soldier involved in a controversial operation. Rather than stay silent, George called a meeting to confront the bullying. Every soldier deserves respect, regardless of past actions, he declared, reinforcing a culture of support. George believed every soldier's story mattered and that the Unit's strength was built on mutual respect. His legacy lies not only in battles won but, in the lives, he touched and the principles he upheld. He taught that true strength lies in lifting others and standing against injustice, inspiring generations of soldiers.

Jim Hammett. (Colonel Retired) My reintroduction to George occurred in September 1989, by virtue of a cunning surprise attack that he executed on me with the precision of a well-planned ambush. He had become aware that I was a young soldier in 1 RAR, having joined the Battalion several months earlier. Delta Company, of which I was a member, had been assigned to a dreaded; 'duties week'.

It was a Friday and I was dixie-bashing in the ORs Mess; arguably the worst duty a young digger could cop; but I took solace in the fact that I was not rostered for any weekend duties.

Just before lunch; just as the mountain of dirty industrial pots, pans and cauldrons I was to clean were reaching their peak; I was accosted by the breathless Company runner, who advised me with a degree of malicious delight that I was required to attend the RSM's office immediately. This was never welcome news. On arriving at the RSM's office (via a quick polish of my boots and a fresh uniform shirt), I was met with a pace stick to the chest and a demand to know why I had been summoned by a Brigadier. All of which was very confusing to me, as I had no idea what he was talking about. He directed me to get into a staff car parked outside, whereupon the driver deposited me at Jezzine Barracks, headquarters of 11th Brigade.

There, I was met by George Mansford as I exited the car. We retired to the Mess and I spent an afternoon utterly enthralled and captivated by this Brigadier who did not act like a Brigadier at all; and not just because the afternoon involved a steady flow of beer. He was able to put me at ease despite the highly unorthodox circumstances I found myself in. Thus, was born an unlikely friendship (and sometimes partnership in various escapades) that would last for another thirty-seven years.

Although that magical afternoon was not without consequences; on being returned to 1 RAR, the RSM had expressed his displeasure to CSM Delta Company regarding the impropriety of a junior soldier escaping ORs Mess duties to spend an afternoon drinking beer with a Brigadier. The CSM expressed his displeasure to me by awarding me Saturday in the ORs Mess bashing dixies again, as well as the bonus privilege of being on the Battalion's 24-hour Guard on Sunday.

An Enduring Mateship. From that point forward, George maintained an active interest in my career and the state of the Regiment according to those who were serving in it. He and Helen, his lovely wife; opened his house and his hospitality to the errant visitors I regularly inflicted upon them, ranging from Battalion mates to Platoon groups harbouring up overnight in his bottom paddock after 25-kilometre route marches to his property, to veterans of Somalia, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan.

All these visiting cohorts of young Infantrymen departed George's property, 'Wundurra', with the same sense of awe and respect and a degree of bewilderment that such a legendary figure took such a genuine interest in their views on Infantry soldiering. That was George; never content to be a monument, always determined to remain a mentor, a mate and a living link between the Regiment's past and its future.

My visits to George – be they with troops in tow or solo missions, were never mere courtesy calls; they were pilgrimages to a wellspring of memory, wisdom and unvarnished truth. I remember George vividly, not as a distant figure of authority, but as 'Warrie'; the soldier's soldier whose reflections on the past carried the weight of lived experience and the clarity of hard-won understanding. Here are but a few of those memories:

Living History: Links to the 1st AIF Men. George once told me, during an evening when nostalgia had loosened his tongue, about watching the 1st AIF men gather for their reunions when he was just a boy. He spoke of the camaraderie he witnessed; something deeper than friendship forged in mud and blood and shared sacrifice.

That brotherhood, he said, stayed with him forever. It became the standard against which he measured all subsequent bonds of service. Those old diggers', with their quiet dignity and unbreakable mateship, planted a seed in young George Mansford that would grow into a lifetime of devotion to the soldiers he led.

Lucky Charm. Over the years a curious series of coincidences emerged as a pattern that did give me pause to wonder if George had magical powers. In December 1992, I and some mates from 1 RAR visited George at 'Wundurra'. We were bemoaning the fact that we diggers' were 'koalas' – not to be sent overseas or shot at, damning the complete lack of operational opportunities that saw us perpetually on exercise, year in year out.

George counselled us wisely – assuring us that our time would come, but to be careful what we wished for and to make sure we took our training seriously. Two weeks later the Battalion received orders to deploy to
Somalia.

In September 1999, by which time I was RSO 2 RAR, Signal Platoon 2 RAR harboured up in his bottom paddock on the way back from a road run that we had conducted to the Daintree region to test our VHF and HF communications proficiency in mountainous jungle. At the barbecue on his deck that evening, it was only natural that the young soldiers complained about the fact that they had missed Somalia and Rwanda and that they were cursed by being in a peacetime Army.

George provided them the same counsel that he had given me seven years earlier. The next morning as we were packing up to leave, OPSO 2 RAR rang George and told him to pass on to us that we needed to be back in Townsville immediately, if not sooner.

Eight days later we landed in Dili with the first push of INTERFET. Early May 2006 saw me now as OC A Coy 1 RAR. I visited George and noted to him that 'A/1' appeared to be the only sub-unit in the Regiment that wasn't on the list of those warned for scheduled deployments anywhere. Two weeks later, the A Coy Group sailed passed the Yarrabah Peninsula (and George's property) en route to East Timor as the Landing Force of the Amphibious Task Group for the reintervention into East Timor.

After that, I stopped complaining to George that deployments were scarce. Despite this, seven of my eight deployments occurred at short notice, immediately following a visit to 'Wundurra'. It became a running joke between us – every time I scheduled a visit, he would caution me to ensure that my kit was packed and my affairs were in order.

Supporting deployed troops. Over the course of the years that I knew George, my Section/ Platoon/ Company benefitted from both invitations to his property and 'care packages' that he thoughtfully sent whenever we were deployed. These typically comprised of a box of new socks (he must have had an agent in a clothing store somewhere) and another box of 'ancillaries' such as curry powder, hot sauce, newspapers; magazines and craftily concealed plastic hip flasks of rum. These 'care packages' were always very well received by the troops.

Linking the past to the present:

AATTV and Modern Operations. During our Iraq training mission in 2015/16, George was instrumental in convincing the AATTV Association to bestow us with permission to 'carry their shield and motto forward'.

So, we adopted the motifs of the AATTV as our shoulder patch and flag.

We replaced the Montagnard crossbow with Kalashnikovs, added Arabic text that translated to 'Persevere' and a crossed boomerang and fern leaf that depicted the ANZAC composition of the Iraqi Training Teams.

Commitment to developing Army Officers. For many years George was a fixture at The Royal Military College Duntroon, where he would routinely address the senior (and soon to graduate) class on junior leadership and the practical realities of their responsibilities as junior officers. These lectures were highly anticipated and always well received – one of the primary lecture theatres was renamed 'the Mansford Theatre' in recognition of his influence.

Given the success of his involvement with junior officers, in the early 2010s the invitation was extended to include an address to the student body at Australian Command and Staff College (which prepares Majors for promotion, unit command and senior staff appointments).

George's inaugural (and last) presentation at Staff College has become legend. He reiterated to the audience their sacred responsibilities to focus on their troops and detailed how Army was facing two enemies – those that were to be found in Afghanistan and those who were to be found in Canberra: arrogant officers who were little more than *'careerist, self-serving political worms who sought promotion over all else'*.

He then damned 'that type of Officer to hell.' His speech was very well received by about half of the student body. It was less well received by the other half and the Directing Staff (DS). George was not invited back the next year and he declined later enticements by Chief of Army to return.

We Will Remember: Passing the Baton to Australia's Youth. From 2014 to 2019, George played a central role in the 'We Will Remember' public-speaking campaign across North Queensland schools, an initiative he co-founded with Innisfail educator Patrice Honnef. Supported by the Australian Army, the Cassowary Coast Regional Council and senior national figures including Sir Peter Cosgrove, the programmes brought together students from more than twenty schools to deliver short speeches on the meaning of service, sacrifice and the ANZAC legacy. 'Regional Heats' across all age categories were held locally, with each school's winners attending the grand final in Innisfail, where students delivered their speeches before large audiences and discerning judging panels.

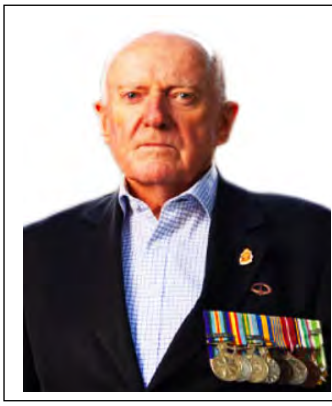
George served as guest speaker and mentor at every one of these events, alongside other distinguished guests such as Keith Payne VC AM. In its later years, category winners were flown to Canberra to present their speeches again; this time to Senior Officers and the Regimental Sergeant Major of the Army at The Royal Military College, Duntroon. This programme reflected George's lifelong commitment to educating the next generation and ensuring that the spirit of remembrance remained not a dusty relic, but a living, active tradition carried forward by young Australians who understood what it meant.

The Rifleman's Lunches: A New Kind of Brotherhood. In late 1993, following 1 RAR's Somalia deployment, George noticed a troubling pattern. The young men who returned from Baidoa were not finding their place within the established veteran community. The Vietnam generation had its own deep networks, forged over a decade of conflict and an uneasy post-war period, but the newer veterans; those from Somalia and subsequently Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan; often drifted on the margins, unsure of where they belonged.

George refused to let that stand. Drawing on the same instinct that had guided him through a lifetime of soldiering; know your people, understand your people, value your people; he founded what became known as the Rifleman's Lunches. Initially held at the Cairns RSL on the last Friday of every month, these gatherings were deliberately simple: a meal, a table and a place where rank, age and era meant nothing.

What mattered was shared service. The lunches grew quickly and the concept spread nationwide. Somalian veterans sat beside men who had fought in Vietnam, Malaya and Korea. In recent years, younger soldiers from more recent deployments joined in. The Cairns RSL later acknowledged the significance of these lunches, noting that they had become a vital bridge between generations and a cornerstone of veteran support in the region.

Rifleman's Lunches continue to this day – a testament to George's lifelong commitment to remembrance, connection and the welfare of those who served. For George, the Rifleman's Lunches were not social events. They were an act of stewardship; an effort to ensure that no soldier, regardless of when or where they served, ever felt alone. In creating a space where veterans could talk freely, laugh loudly and share the unspoken truths of service, he helped rebuild a sense of belonging that might otherwise have been lost. I miss him terribly.



Kel Ryan (Lieutenant Colonel Retired - Honorary Colonel 51 FNQR). George Mansford was a central figure in the raising and formative years of 51FNQR. He remained a role model for the successful development of the unit.

My service background with PIR and SASR meant that I had not served with or near George Mansford, but was certainly aware of his reputation and influence across the Australian infantry world. My wife Jan knew Helen very well and shared a love of sewing while we were posted in Townsville at 11 FF Gp and then as 2 IC 1 RAR.

That bond drew me into a close relationship with George Mansford which, I know aided my keen interest in becoming CO 51 FNQR. While posted to Ops Branch in Army Office as a newly promoted Lt Colonel I became aware of the proposal to raise an RFSU based in Cairns. George was Commander 11 FF Gp at the time and became aware of the proposal to raise a separate reserve unit to become the nation's third RFSU.

This proposal was quickly put to bed after strong intervention from George and Major General Kevin Cooke AO RFD ED who was CRES (Chief of Reserves) at the time. Next, a proposal was floated to re-name 51 IRC as the North-East Regional Force Surveillance Unit. Again, George and Kevin Cooke vehemently sought to focus the attention of Ops Branch on the reality of manpower and what was achievable in Far North Queensland and the Cape. Again, sanity prevailed. A word about Maj Gen Kevin Cooke is warranted here. A prominent Melbourne solicitor, Commander 2 Division and at the time, Chief of Reserves (CRES). He and George developed a close relationship which was of great benefit in the establishment and early success of 51 FNQR and the place of military reserves within the ADF at the time.

Prior to leaving Army Office on posting to 51IRC/51FNQR I was asked to meet with the Chief of Operations (COPs). George had formally requested that 51 FNQR be presented with its Colours. This, for a variety of reasons, was being opposed by Ops Branch Army Office. I knew what the meeting was about so I quietly listened to the admonition that 'Colours' were not to be on my agenda. Needless to say, 51 FNQR, was presented its Colours in 1987 by the Acting Administrator of the Commonwealth. Present were the CGS, Maj Gen Kevin Cooke and representatives from across the Army and civic leaders, including those from Cape York and the Torres Strait communities. George gained much satisfaction that day!

While George was Commander 11FF Gp based at Jezzine Barracks in Townsville he remained living across Trinity Inlet in Cairns. In my frequent visits to this OP, we would often contemplate the future of 51 FNQR. We were agreed that 51 FNQR was not to become a 'straight leg' Infantry Battalion. How would it develop in the long term? How should we harness the known enthusiasm for membership of the unit in the communities and the islands in the Torres Straits?

How do we capture and envelop into the unit the history of the Torres Strait Light Infantry while many WW2 veterans of that unit remained alive? All this, while not losing focus on the traditional membership and leadership that had kept 51 IRC soldiering in the Cairns and Tablelands area. George was ever alert to the challenge that faced us in those early days. His presence was not overpowering. But he was 'there', encouraging and suggesting but not interfering. He was a COs ideal Commander! I will forever cherish our relationship and friendship. Kel Ryan

Ash Gunder AM. (Colonel Commandant 51 FNQR) I assumed command of 51FNQR in January 2000. George was Honorary Colonel. I made a point of heading out to his property soon after arrival in Cairns. He and Helen welcomed me, the RSM and the ADJT with open arms. He greeted me with *'G'day Sunray'*.

It was my first experience of the enjoyment of sitting on George and Helen's veranda. All who had that experience would recall how entertaining, funny and thought provoking those sessions were. George sharing opinions, making judgements, remembering his mates and joking around while Helen gracefully tended to guests and added the truth to some of the tales.

George accepted every invitation to visit the Battalion; on ceremonial occasions he spoke with humour and gravitas, when visiting soldiers in the field he mentored easily and meaningfully. He was an integral part of the Battalion family; so much so that I pleaded with him to extend his time as Honorary Colonel. Even after he later relinquished the role, he was admired and respected as our Battalion Elder remaining closely engaged and interested in all aspects of Battalion life. He is honoured with a training facility named after him at Porton Barracks in Cairns; he was the senior officer who opened the Battalion Depot in Atherton and is acknowledged in the Battalion Walk of Remembrance.

Now I am the current Honorary Colonel of 51FNQR. In the early part of my tenure, it was reassuring to have George as a mentor once again. I turned to George for help in getting the Australian War Memorial to agree to the emplacement of a commemorative plaque for 51 Battalion. George's personal relationship with Kim Beazley won the day. It was my honour to work with 51's Padre and RSM and the Army team that supported George's funeral. I spoke to many soldiers from other parts of Army during rehearsals who felt deeply privileged to be able to commemorate George's service.

As for those of us who knew him personally his passing broke our hearts. I cherish my memories of George; the veranda sessions, the Mess dinners and listening to him pass his experience on to other soldiers. When I walk in the AATTV Grove of Remembrance in Canungra I always sit by George's tree to reflect on his service and our friendship. Vale George Love of country led you.

Luke Gosling OAM MP. Luke Gosling is an Australian politician and former Army officer. Service, in and out of uniform, is a vocation; a calling. We were reminded of this on Monday as we read some of the 103,000 names on the honour roll at the Australian War Memorial during the Last Post ceremony.

But some names are not yet embossed on bronze plaques; some heroes are still with us. One of those outstanding Australians is Brigadier 'Warrie' George Mansford AM; a living legend to the Army, to the Australian Defence Force and to the veteran community.

Brigadier Mansford is a decorated soldier, a patriotic defender of democracy and freedom and an accomplished poet and author of the book. The 'Mad Galahs'. He is a truly great Australian. He was born in Guildford in Western Australia in 1934. Brigadier Mansford enlisted in the Regular Army in 1951 and soon after joining the Army served in the Korean War with the 1st Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment.

Then as a rifleman in the 2nd Battalion of The Royal Australian Regiment in the Malayan Emergency, from 1955 to 1957; and then on a second tour there from 1959 to 1961. These were as well as tours on the Thailand border, in Vietnam, in Papua New Guinea and in Singapore. He was commissioned from the ranks in 1964 and served for four decades before finally retiring in 1990; incidentally, the year that I joined the Army. On his illustrious service record, Brigadier Mansford raised and commanded the Army's Battle School, now named the Jungle Training Wing, in Tully in Far North Queensland.

The centre re-minds its trainees of the rigours of past Australian deployments in South-East Asia. Soon after joining, I was attached to the 1st Battalion The Royal Australian Regiment, to one of their Infantry Platoons, as part of what the Defence Academy; ADFA, here in Canberra; called 'motivational training'.

I recall travelling to Townsville and then up to Tully to join in with the jungle training. It was very wet, muddy and stinking hot; it was a great eye-opener to the demands of close country patrolling, fighting and soldiering. Near the Wing headquarters in Tully there hung a sign with a motivational quote from 'Warrie' George which simply said: 'The oath to serve your country did not include a contract for the normal luxuries and comforts enjoyed within our society. On the contrary, it implied hardships, loyalty and devotion to duty, regardless of rank.

That sense of service as a noble end in and of itself is something I admired immensely in George Mansford's ethos. It's a Kennedy-esque sentiment, a world away from the current recruitment theme that asks what the ADF can do to benefit the recruit; to kick start their career and serve their needs.

At one Remembrance Day, George asked whether we honoured our past properly or if we paid only lip service to old-fashioned-sounding words like 'honour' while inwardly cringing at their use. He posed that question and said: 'We make men without chests and expect of them virtue and enterprise. We laugh at honour and are shocked to find traitors in our midst.'

That's as CS Lewis so aptly observed. By that definition, Brigadier Mansford is as broad-chested a man as I have ever known: honourable, loyal and brave; an exemplar like the thousands whose boots sank into the Tobruk sands or those who fired with frost bitten fingers in Korea or those who fought infection, dengue and the enemy lurking behind ankle-catching vines in the oppressively humid jungles of South-East Asia, where Australian patriots have signed up to serve. They are heroes, all of them and models for us all to emulate; as George Mansford himself certainly is. He once wrote, 'Our precious way of life is worth fighting for. ' God bless you and keep you, George. Your duty is done.

Garry Adams. (Sergeant Retired)**.** Garry, a 22-year veteran of Vietnam and Singapore, knew George Mansford well. Garry remembers, that there was a time, in between his return from Vietnam and departure for Singapore that A Company, 6 RAR was blessed by having George Mansford as Company Commander.

George was indeed a soldier and leader we all admired greatly. He was 100% a 'No Frills' soldier which was just what we needed after our 12-month tour of Vietnam. He was no parade ground soldier and shambled around looking like he had slept in his uniform.

He much preferred the bush to the parade ground and that is where we spent a good deal of our time. We spent some time in the High Range Training Area doing various exercises at both Company and Battalion level and since we had a number of reinforcements in 6 RAR there was to be a Battalion exercise in a more challenging jungle type environment and that was to be held in the Mount Spec Training Area. Mount Spec was so much different to the High Range.

It was indeed a tropical paradise complete with leeches, 'Wait a While' vines and the dreaded Gympie Bush with its broad leaves that would leave a sting like a branding iron. Of course, lots of rain to go with the heat and humidity. It was in this paradise that the Battalion honed its skills until the exercise came to an end and the trucks started to arrive along a narrow muddy road to take the individual companies out to a staging area down on the coastal flat-lands.

Then George announces to his wet and weary A Company warriors *'The other companies can have the trucks, A Company is better than them, we are walking out, across country'*. No bitching, no mutterings of discontent as the trucks rolled past with sniggering diggers on board with a few catcalls telling us they hoped we enjoyed our walk. So off we go, not following the road but scrub bashing through tangles of vines and thick bush laced with 'Wait a While' as we headed towards the escarpment which was still some distance away.

Finally, after hours of bush bashing, we reach the escarpment which was no gentle slope we could walk down. It was very steep, almost vertical in places but fortunately laced with large vines that we used to climb down. Even when we reached the bottom with still some distance to go. On the final march in even George admitted that maybe the trucks would have been a better option. We were tired, wet and muddy when we finally arrived in the staging area. But we were also exceptionally proud of what we had done. That's the sort of man he was, a leader who instilled the warrior ethos to all under his command. We were tired but proud and even many years later I look back and would not change a thing.

ENDURING LEGACY

To truly honour the legacy George Mansford created through a lifetime of unwavering commitment and dedication to serve his soldiers in the Australian Army, it falls to all of us who knew him to carry forward his stories; but more importantly, to ensure that the lessons learnt by thousands of diggers' are not lost to the passage of time, but are preserved and passed on to future generations.

George Mansford's life was not measured in medals or rank, but in the countless lives he touched, the standards he upheld and the values he embodied. He represented a generation that understood service not as a career, but as a calling; men and women who placed duty before self, who led by example and who never forgot that the true strength of any military force lies in the character and preparedness of its soldiers.

The real measure of the man lives on through our collective memories, through the institutions he helped shape, through the traditions he preserved and through every soldier who carries forward the lessons he taught. His indelible footprint has been laid across decades of Australian military history; from the jungles of Vietnam to the lecture halls of Duntroon, from the quiet support given to deployed troops to the solemn ceremonies honouring the fallen.

Yet there is still much work to be done. The mantle of remembrance, of maintaining standards, of refusing to let mateship and service be diminished by time or circumstance; this now rests in the hands of those who follow. George Mansford's legacy is not a monument to be admired from a distance. It is a living challenge to each generation: to serve with integrity, to lead with compassion, to remember those who came before and to prepare those who come after. The torch has been passed. It is now our sacred duty to ensure it continues to burn brightly. **Lest We Forget**

A Special Band of Heroes
Always together for challenges to come
Never faltering in your bond 'One for all and all for one'

I sense in you the true spirit of our Great Southern Land
Reaching out as you all stride forward in step together
For this is my farewell - With a proud salute for each of you

EPILOGUE

Farewell to a Legend. The boy from the Aboriginal mission at Guildford, who enlisted at seventeen with five schoolmates from Bassendean, had journeyed through Korea's frozen hills, Malaya's steaming jungles and Vietnam's rice paddies to become one of Australia's most respected military leaders.

George Mansford's life embodied the Australian soldier's ideal: a leader who never asked troops to endure what he wouldn't endure himself, who valued mateship above rank and who understood that military service's true measure wasn't medals or promotions but lives saved and values preserved. From Private to Brigadier, he remained fundamentally unchanged; a digger's digger who happened to wear stars.

His legacy lives in multiple dimensions. The Jungle Training Centre at Tully continues training soldiers to standards he established, saving lives through realistic preparation he insisted upon. His published works; from '*Junior Leadership on the Battlefield* ' to '*The Spirit of Australia'*; educate new generations of leaders while giving voice to the warrior's experience.

The Northern Surveillance Force he championed demonstrates that character transcends background and that competence matters more than origin. His greatest legacy may be simpler and more profound: he showed that leadership requires knowing your people, understanding their circumstances and genuinely valuing their contributions. These principles, demonstrated daily through four decades of service and thirty-six years of advocacy, created bonds that death cannot sever.

Somewhere in the historical record are soldiers who didn't thrive under Mansford's demanding leadership. Men who found his standards too harsh, his communication too blunt, his expectations unrealistic. Subordinates who experienced his temper rather than his mentorship. Soldiers who left the Army because they couldn't meet the bar he set or couldn't endure the culture he created.

These voices are largely absent from this work; not because I doubt their existence, but because I didn't pursue them. A more complete historical account would seek out these perspectives, would ask hard questions about the costs of his leadership style and would examine whether his methods, however effective for many, failed or damaged others.

The Private Man. George Mansford's personal life; his marriages, his relationships with his children, the tensions between military duty and family obligations; receives minimal attention in these pages. This reflects both the limits of my knowledge and the boundaries I chose to respect. But it also means this portrait is incomplete. The demands he placed on himself and his soldiers inevitably affected those who loved him.

The long deployments, the absolute commitment to duty; the intensity he brought to everything; these qualities that made him an exceptional soldier may have made him a difficult husband and father. A critical biography would explore these tensions honestly, would speak with family members about the costs of his service and would examine how the warrior ethos he embodied affected those closest to him. This work does not do that and readers should understand what's missing as a result.

The Institutional Perspective. George was often at odds with military bureaucracy, sceptical of 'careerists' and critical of decisions he saw as compromising operational effectiveness. This work largely accepts his perspective, presenting him as a principled warrior fighting against institutional mediocrity. But institutions have their own logic, their own necessities and their own legitimate concerns.

A more balanced account would examine whether his scepticism sometimes blinded him to valid institutional needs, whether his certainty about operational matters left room for legitimate disagreement and whether his contempt for 'Staff Officers' and 'Headquarters Wallahs' was always justified. Perhaps some of the bureaucratic decisions he opposed were necessary compromises in a complex organisation. Perhaps some of the officers he dismissed as careerists were competent professionals doing difficult jobs. Perhaps his certainty about training standards, while generally vindicated, occasionally crossed into inflexibility. These questions deserve exploration. This work does not provide it.

The Complexity of Command. Combat leadership involves impossible choices: when to risk lives for mission success, when to push exhausted troops harder, when to enforce discipline that seems harsh but may save lives later. George made thousands of such decisions over four decades. Some of those decisions inevitably, were wrong. Some risks didn't pay off. Some training pushed too hard. Some disciplinary actions were too severe. Some judgments about people were mistaken.

A complete account would examine these failures alongside the successes, would explore the consequences of his mistakes and would ask whether the costs of his leadership approach; however effective overall; were always justified. This work celebrates Mansford's successes without systematically examining his failures. That's a limitation readers should recognise.

The Limits of Memory. Much of this account relies on oral testimony from men remembering events that occurred decades ago. Memory is unreliable, especially for combat experiences and traumatic events. Stories grow in the telling. Legends accumulate around respected figures. The line between what actually happened and what veterans believe occurred blurs over time. I have included stories I cannot verify because they reveal important truths about how George was remembered and what he meant to those who served with him. But readers should understand that oral tradition preserves emotional truth and cultural meaning more reliably than factual accuracy.

Some of the stories in this book are probably embellished. Some details are likely wrong. Some assessments are shaped more by affection and respect than by objective analysis. That doesn't make them worthless; they capture something real about George's impact and legacy; but it does mean they should be read as testimony rather than verified history.

An Invitation to Future Researchers. If you are a military historian, a biographer or a researcher interested in Australian military culture, I encourage you to build on this foundation:

- Interview soldiers who didn't thrive under Mansford's leadership
- Examine classified operational records I couldn't access
- Speak with family members about the personal costs of his service
- Analyse his decisions with critical distance I couldn't maintain
- Compare his leadership style and outcomes with other commanders of his era
- Assess his published works within broader military literature
- Explore his Indigenous heritage and its impact on his identity and career

The materials I've gathered, the contacts I've made and the testimony I've collected are available to serious researchers. I will assist anyone attempting a more comprehensive account, even if it complicates or contradicts the portrait presented here.

The Essential Truth. Despite these limitations, I believe this work captures something fundamentally true about George Mansford. He was an exceptional soldier who earned extraordinary respect from those who served with him. His leadership saved lives through realistic training others considered too demanding.

His writing gave voice to the warrior's experience with honesty others lacked courage to attempt. His advocacy for veterans and Defence families continued long after retirement, when easier paths were available.

The testimony of dozens of soldiers; from Privates to Generals, from Korea to Vietnam, from the 1950s to the 2010s; is remarkably consistent in its assessment of his character, competence and impact. That consistency across time, rank and circumstance suggests this portrait, however incomplete, captures the essence of which George was and what he meant to those who knew him. This is not the whole truth. But it is a true account of a life well lived in service to Australia and the soldiers he led.

A Critical Reflection: The Questions Not Asked. This work is a tribute, not a critical biography. That choice was deliberate, but it comes with costs that readers deserve to understand.

The Absent Voices. I sought out those who respected George Mansford, who served with him successfully and who wanted to preserve his memory. This approach captured the essence of how he was remembered by those who valued him most, but it inevitably created blind spots.

A Final Reckoning. The olive tree bearing his name in Pellana, Greece, stands beside one dedicated to his mate Tony Hammett; two warriors, side by side, roots intertwined in foreign soil as their lives were intertwined in service. It is a fitting symbol for a man whose influence reached wherever soldiers gathered, wherever veterans needed support, wherever the Defence Family required a voice.

George kept faith with his mates, looked after those who served and never forgot that duty came first. He asked the same of those who follow: Keep the faith and look after your mates. The patrol is complete. The warrior rests. The lessons endure, the standards remain and the spirit lives on in all who knew him and all who will learn from his example. Stand easy, old mate. Your work here is done.

I understand now what those hard men gave us. The training that seemed merciless was mercy itself; it equipped us to survive not just combat, but life. The mental discipline they demanded became resilience that carried us through grief, loss, hardship and quiet battles fought long after the uniform was hung away. When civilian life presented challenges; failed relationships, financial hardship, death of loved ones, erosion of health and youth; we drew upon what they built.

The mental toughness that got us through the final kilometre with full pack got me through heart attacks, depression, chemotherapy, financial difficulties and raising four sons as a single parent. The refusal to quit on the training ground became refusal to surrender to despair in civilian life. My parents instilled values, ethics and never-give-up mentality that formed my earliest foundation. Yet George and his generation refined those qualities into something battle-tested and enduring.

They gave us skills and mental attitude that prepared us not just for war, but for everything that followed. We survived the ravages of time long after leaving the military's embrace because of what they built in us. They gave us more than military skills; a framework for living that valued loyalty, honoured commitment, demanded honesty and never permitted surrender. That code has served me every day since I left the Army. For that, I remain forever grateful and shall never forget.

CONCLUSION

The life of Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM spans ninety-one years of Australian history; from the Great Depression through World War IIs shadow, the Cold War's conflicts and into the twenty-first century's uncertainties. His trajectory from an Aboriginal mission community to the Australian Army's senior ranks reflects individual merit and determination while illuminating the evolution of Australian society and military institutions.

The Man and His Names. George Lyon Mansford was known by many names; George to family, 'Warrie' or 'Boss' to soldiers, 'Snow' to old mates; yet he remained fundamentally the same person regardless of rank or circumstance his whole life.

This consistency defined his character: the Private soldier who slept in Korean trenches and the Brigadier who commanded brigades shared identical values, identical commitment to mates, identical refusal to accept comfort his troops couldn't share. He inhabited two roles with equal dedication: warrior and poet. As warrior, he fought in three wars, commanded at every level from section to brigade and established training standards that saved countless lives. As poet, he authored five major works that educated leaders; captured the warrior's experience and gave voice to soldier's sacrifices. These identities weren't separate but complementary; his combat experience provided authenticity to his writing, while his literary sensibility added depth to his leadership.

Korean War Memorial

The Necessity of Realism. Mansford's commitment to realistic training emerged from bitter experience. In Malaya, he witnessed how poor preparation cost Australian lives; accidental clashes resulting from inadequate weapon handling, failed ambushes caused by untested equipment, casualties from preventable mistakes.

These experiences convinced him that training must replicate combat conditions as closely as possible. At Tully, this philosophy manifested in demanding physical standards, austere living conditions and training scenarios that induced genuine stress.

Critics questioned whether such demanding training was necessary. His response was consistent: soldiers deserved training that prepared them for combat realities and leaders who prioritised comfort over effectiveness betrayed their obligations. The validation came from operational deployments; soldiers who completed Tully training consistently reported that skills learned there saved lives in combat.

The Obligation of Leadership. George embodied leadership through personal example, never asking soldiers to do anything he wouldn't do himself. His progression from Private to Brigadier provided unique perspective on military life at all levels. Unlike officers who entered through direct commissioning, he had lived the enlisted soldier's experience; carrying heavy loads, sleeping on the ground, following orders from officers both competent and incompetent.

Malayan Memorial - South Australia

This background informed his leadership approach. He understood what soldiers needed from leaders because he had been a soldier needing leadership. He knew which leadership behaviours earned respect and which generated resentment.

He recognised that authority derived from demonstrated competence rather than merely from rank. Yet Mansford's leadership extended beyond tactical competence. He genuinely cared about soldiers' welfare, demonstrated through practical actions rather than symbolic gestures.

When soldier's faced personal crises; financial difficulties, family problems, bureaucratic obstacles; George intervened personally, using his knowledge of systems and his willingness to fight bureaucracy to achieve results. His advocacy for military families, particularly widows, reflected understanding that service obligations extended beyond uniformed members to their dependents. He worked with Legacy, assisted individual families' navigating bureaucratic systems and argued publicly for policies that recognised families sacrifices. This advocacy continued throughout his retirement, demonstrating that for Mansford, service to the Defence Family was lifelong commitment rather than professional obligation ending with retirement.

Vietnam Memorial – Canungra

The 'Warrior Poet' synthesis. His literary contributions distinguished him from many military leaders. His five major works: *'Junior Leadership on the Battlefield', 'The Mad Galahs', 'The Spirit of Australia' (collected poetry), 'A Warrior's Farewell – Homeward Bound' and 'Duty and Consequence'*; combined tactical instruction, narrative storytelling and poetic expression to capture the warrior's experience with unusual depth.

Junior Leadership on the Battlefield became essential reading for Australian Infantry Officers, blending tactical doctrine with psychological insight. Unlike purely technical manuals, it addressed the human dimensions of combat leadership; how to maintain soldier's morale under stress, how to make decisions with incomplete information, how to balance mission requirements with concern for subordinates welfare.

The Mad Galahs provided unflinching portrayal of advisory warfare in Vietnam, drawing on Mansford's AATTV service to illustrate the complexities of working with allied forces. The Spirit of Australia (collective poetry) that gave voice to soldiers experiences across generations, addressing themes of service, sacrifice, mateship and remembrance with emotional honesty that resonated with veterans and civilians alike. His final work, Duty and Consequence, published when he was eighty-eight, addressed contemporary challenges facing the Australian Defence Force. Even in his final years, George remained engaged with military issues, concerned about standards, worried about institutional changes that might compromise effectiveness.

AATTV Memorial Canungra

Measured Outcomes and Institutional Legacy. Mansford's principles produced tangible outcomes:

Training Effectiveness. Soldiers who completed Tully training consistently reported better preparation for combat operations. Unit commanders noted improved performance in jungle operations among Tully graduates. The specific skills emphasised; navigation under difficult conditions, immediate action drills, weapons discipline; proved directly applicable in operational theatres.

Lives Saved. While impossible to quantify precisely, the consensus among veterans of Somalia, Rwanda, East Timor, Iraq and Afghanistan was that their Tully training experiences contributed significantly to tactical success and thereby saved lives.

Despite the environmental differences between the jungles of Tully and deployed theatres, the crucible of the Battle School had already provided troops with the ability to accept adversity and hardship as the norm; to maintain the battle discipline that ensured that individual and collective responsibilities were met; to accept rapidly changing situations, confusion and time constraints - and to thrive under pressure. The skills learned and resilience developed in the jungles of Tully is equally relevant to African sprawl, rugged and broken Timorese terrain, Iraqi cities or Afghan mountains. George knew that the lessons of the Battle School would apply anywhere.

Institutional Influence. The Jungle Training Centre at Tully continued operating decades after his departure, training thousands of soldiers to standards he established. His training methods influenced Australian Army doctrine more broadly, with emphasis on realism and high standards extending beyond jungle warfare to other training contexts.

Leadership Development. Officers and NCOs who trained at Tully or served under his command carried forward his principles throughout their careers. They applied his emphasis on knowing, understanding and valuing people to their own leadership. This transmission of values across generations extended his influence far beyond his personal service.

Literary Legacy. Mansford's published works continue educating new generations of leaders. '*Junior Leadership on the Battlefield*' remains relevant decades after publication because its insights into human behaviour under stress are timeless. His poetry continues giving voice to the warrior's experience, ensuring that lessons learned through sacrifice are preserved and transmitted.

Complex Character: The Man behind the Legend. Understanding George Mansford requires acknowledging his complexity. He was simultaneously a hard-bitten warrior who wept for fallen mates, a demanding leader who demonstrated genuine compassion, a father figure to countless officers while grieving his lost son and a legend whose stories grew with each telling yet remained grounded in documented truth. These weren't contradictions but completeness; evidence of a life lived fully and honestly.

His childhood at the Aboriginal mission taught lessons about character transcending background. His losses; two wives, a son, countless mates; created capacity for empathy that made his support for grieving families genuine rather than performative. His progression through ranks from Private to Brigadier provided perspective that few senior officers possessed.

Enduring Relevance. As Australia navigates uncertain strategic future, his example provides guidance grounded in hard-won experience:

People Remain Central. Despite technological advances and military effectiveness ultimately depends on soldiers training, morale and resilience. Leaders who prioritise systems over people, who accept lower standards for administrative convenience, betray their obligations and compromise capability.

Realism Matters. Training that doesn't replicate combat stress fails to prepare soldiers for operational realities. The gap between peacetime comfort and wartime demands can be fatal. Leaders must insist on realistic preparation even when it is difficult, expensive, or unpopular.

Standards Are not Negotiable. Excellence requires uncompromising standards applied equally regardless of rank, background, or circumstances. Leaders who accept mediocrity or lower standards to avoid difficulty create cultures that fail when tested.

Service Extends Beyond Self. Military service creates obligations that transcend individual careers; obligations to mates, to families, to the institution, to the nation. These obligations do not end with retirement but continue throughout life.

Leadership Is Earned. Authority may derive from rank, but respect must be earned through demonstrated competence, genuine concern for subordinates and willingness to share hardships. Leaders who demand respect without earning it create resentment rather than loyalty.

The Final Measure. Brigadier George Lyon Mansford AM served Australia for forty years in uniform and thirty-six years in retirement advocacy. He was involved in three wars, rose from Private to Brigadier, raised a family and established training institutions that saved lives, authored works that educated leaders and advocated tirelessly for veterans and their families.

His service spanned the frozen trenches of Korea, the dense jungles of Malaya and Vietnam, the training grounds where he forged the next generation and the quiet battles fought in offices and phone calls on behalf of those the system had forgotten. Yet the true measure of his life isn't found in honours received or rank achieved.

The measure is found in soldiers' who survived combat because of what he taught them, veterans who received assistance because he fought bureaucracy on their behalf, widows who navigated difficult systems because he provided guidance, leaders' who applied his principles throughout their careers and mates who knew they could depend on him absolutely.

It lives in the young Officer who remembered his words during a crisis, in the Widow who finally received her entitlements; in the Soldier whose life was saved by a drill practiced at Tully and in the countless quiet moments when his example guided others toward doing what was right rather than what was easy. Mansford's life demonstrated that military service can be calling rather than merely career; that leadership requires both strength and compassion, that mateship creates obligations lasting beyond death and that one person committed to principles and willing to fight for them can make profound difference.

His final message to the Regiment captured the essence of his philosophy: Keep the faith and look after your mates. These weren't empty platitudes but distillation of a life lived in service, testament to a man who understood leadership's complexities, friendship's depths, love's power and loss's pain. He never asked his soldiers to endure what he wouldn't endure himself, never accepted comfort his troops couldn't share, never compromised the standards that kept soldiers alive. From the frozen hills of Korea to the steaming jungles of Malaya and Vietnam, from the training grounds of Tully to the quiet advocacy of his retirement years, he remained fundamentally unchanged; a 'Digger's Digger' who happened to wear stars.

Memorial Trees. Two trees now stand as living monuments to his legacy, separated by thousands of kilometers, yet united in purpose and meaning. In Pellana, Laconia, Greece, at the Hellenic ANZAC Memorial (HANZAC), an olive tree bears George Mansford's name alongside that of his dear mate, Brigadier Tony Hammett. The memorial itself stands as testament to the enduring bonds between Greece, Australia and New Zealand; nations whose soldiers fought side by side in two World Wars, who shared sacrifices forged friendships that transcend borders and generations.

The Brigadiers' Olive Trees' in Pellana, Laconia, Greece

The olive trees' ancient symbol of peace, wisdom and endurance, could not be more fitting for a man who embodied all three qualities. Its roots reach deep into Greek soil, the same earth that nourished the warriors of Sparta and sheltered Allied soldiers during the desperate battles of 1941. Each spring, the tree blossoms with delicate flowers and each Autumn it bears fruit; olives that will be harvested and pressed into oil throughout the months of November to February the following year.

The cycle of life continues and nourishment that has sustained Mediterranean peoples for millennia. The tree stands beside Tony Hammett's memorial olive, their branches intertwining as the lives of these two warriors intertwined through decades of service, their roots drawing from the same earth as their friendship drew from the same well of shared experience and mutual respect.

Half a world away, in the tropical humidity of Canungra, Queensland, another tree bears George Mansford's name. At the Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (AATTV) Spiritual Grove, native Australian trees form a living memorial to those who served with the Team; that small, elite group of Advisors who worked directly with South Vietnamese Forces under conditions of extraordinary danger and isolation. Here, among species indigenous to the Australian landscape, George's tree grows alongside those commemorating his mates from that unique and demanding service.

The AATTV Grove is more than a memorial garden; it is a sacred space where the spirits of warriors are honoured and where their service is remembered in the most Australian of ways; through the land itself. The trees planted here are not exotic imports but native species: eucalyptus, wattle, bottlebrush and other flora that have evolved over millions of years to thrive in Australia's harsh climate. Like the soldiers they commemorate, these trees are tough, resilient and deeply rooted in Australian soil.

AATTV Grove Canungra

George's tree in the AATTV Grove stands within sight of the Jungle Training Centre at Canungra, where he once served as an instructor and where he developed the Mine and Booby Trap Course that saved countless lives in Vietnam. The proximity is significant; his memorial tree grows in the shadow of the institution where he trained soldiers, where he passed on the hard-won lessons of

Malaya and his own AATTV service, where he insisted on realistic preparation even when it was difficult and uncomfortable. Students passing through Canungra today can visit the Grove, stand beneath his tree and understand that the demanding training they endure was shaped by men like George Mansford who knew from personal experience, what inadequate preparation cost in lives.

The AATTV Grove serves another purpose beyond commemoration. It is a place of reflection and remembrance, where veterans gather on significant anniversaries, where families come to feel close to loved ones who have passed, where serving soldiers can contemplate the legacy they have inherited and the standards they are expected to uphold. Beneath George's tree, old soldiers tell stories of the man they knew; the Officer who slept in the rain rather than accept comfort his troops couldn't share, the trainer who insisted on uncompromising standards, the advocate who fought bureaucracy on behalf of veterans and their families. The tree witnesses these gatherings, shelters these conversations and in doing so becomes part of the living tradition it commemorates.

These trees stand as living memorials; roots deep in Greek and Australian soils, branches reaching toward skies half a world apart, fruit nourishing all who draw upon them. Like the trees, George Mansford's influence continues growing, spreading, sustaining those who knew him and those who will learn from his example. His words echo in training areas across Australia, his standards guide new generations of leaders, his poetry gives voice to warriors who struggle to express what service means.

The olive tree and the native Australian tree, separated by oceans and continents, united by the men they commemorate, remind us that true legacy transcends geography, that service creates bonds stronger than distance and that a life lived with integrity and purpose continues to bear fruit long after the warrior has laid down his burden. In Pellana and Canungra, in Greece and Australia, the trees stand watch. They will outlive us all. And as long as they stand, George Mansford's legacy lives.

George Mansford kept faith with his mates, looked after those who served and never forgot that duty came first. He asks the same of those who follow. The heavenly patrol is complete. The Warrior rests. But the trees grow on, season after season, their roots deepening, their branches spreading, their fruit sustaining all who gather beneath them. The legacy endures; not in marble or bronze, but in living wood and green leaves, in the rustle of wind through branches, in the shade provided to weary travellers and in the fruit that nourishes those who hunger for examples of leadership, service and unwavering commitment to duty.

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METHODOLOGICAL NOTES

Source Verification and Cross-Referencing. Where sources conflict, preference has been given to:
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Contemporary documentation (war diaries, operational reports, letters)
Corroborated testimony from multiple independent sources
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Limitations and Gaps. Some aspects of Mansford's service remain undocumented or inaccessible due to:
Classified operational details (protected under National Security provisions)
Personal correspondence (if exists, not available to researchers)
Complete personnel file (subject to privacy restrictions)
Detailed records of some assignments (incomplete archival preservation)
Full documentation of post-retirement advocacy work (maintained informally)

URL Accessibility
All URLs were active at time of manuscript compilation (March 2026)
Where multiple URLs relate to a single source, the most stable/authoritative URL is provided
Institutional pages without specific dates represent ongoing collections and resources
Physical archives require in-person access or official research requests

ARCHIVAL RESEARCH LOCATIONS.

Researchers seeking additional information may contact:
Australian War Memorial Research Centre Treloar Crescent, Campbell ACT 2612 https://www. awm. gov. au/

National Archives of Australia Queen Victoria Terrace, Parkes ACT 2600 https://www. naa. gov. au/
The Royal Australian Regiment Association Contact through regional branches or National Headquarters
Legacy Australia National and state branches https://www. legacy. com. au/

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SOURCES

This bibliography represents the documented sources available at the time of publication. Additional materials, personal recollections, photographs and documentation continue to emerge. Readers with additional information are encouraged to contact the author at: abalinx@gmail.com All efforts have been made to acknowledge sources appropriately and to respect copyright, privacy and institutional access restrictions. Any omissions or errors will be corrected in future editions upon verification.

APPENDIX A:
SERVICE HISTORY

ENLISTED SERVICE (1951-1964)

- 1951-1953 2 RAR — Private/Signaller
- 1953-1955 1 RAR (Korea 1954-1955) — Private/Signaller
- 1955-1957 2 RAR (Malaya 1955-1957) — Corporal
- 1959-1961 1 RAR (Malaya 1959-1961) — Sergeant
- 1961-1964 3 RAR (Papua New Guinea) — Sergeant

COMMISSIONED SERVICE (1964-1990)

- 1964-1965 2 RAR — Second Lieutenant (Pl Comd)
- 1966-1967 AATTV — Captain
- 1969-1970 Central Queensland — HQ Major (SO3)
- 1979 HQ DSG FNQ — Lieutenant Colonel (SO2 Coordination)
- 1984-1986 Active service positions — Colonel
- 1987-1990 11th Brigade — Brigadier

OPERATIONAL SERVICE

- 1954-1955 Korea 1 RAR — Static phase, Kansas Line
- 1955-1957 Malaya 2 RAR — Counter-insurgency operations
- 1959-1961 Malaya 1 RAR — Counter-insurgency operations
- 1966 Vietnam 6 RAR — Phuoc Tuy Province (June 1966)
- 1966-1967 Vietnam AATTV — Advisory duties, Duc My/Binh Ba
- 1967-1969 Canungra Battle Wing — Captain (Instructor)
- 1969-1970 Central Queensland — HQ Major (SO3)
- 1970-1971 6 RAR — Major (Company Commander, A Coy)
- 1971-1973 1 RAR — Major (Company Commander, B Coy)
- 1973-1975 6 RAR — Major (Operations Officer)
- 1976-1978 Infantry Centre — Major (Instructor)
- 1979 HQ DSG FNQ — Lieutenant Colonel (SO2 Coordination)
- 1980-1982 Jungle Battle School, Tully — Lieutenant Colonel (CO)
- 1983 11 Field Force Group — Lieutenant Colonel (Dep Commander)
- 1984-1986 Active service positions — Colonel

RESERVE SERVICE (1984-1990)

- 1984 Transferred to Army Reserve — (promoted to Colonel)
- 1986 Retired — from Regular Army active service
- 1987-1990 11th Brigade — Brigadier (Commander)
- 1990 Final retirement — From Army Reserve (December)

SIGNIFICANT COMMANDS

- 1965-1966 Assault Pioneer Platoon, — 6 RAR
- 1970-1971 A Company, — 6 RAR
- 1971-1972 B Company and Operations Officer, — 1 RAR
- 1973-1975 Operations Officer, — 6 RAR
- 1980-1982 Jungle Battle School, — Tully
- 1987-1990 11th Brigade

POST-RETIREMENT SERVICE (1990-2026)

- 51st Battalion, Far North Qld Regt — Honorary Colonel,
- Wet Tropics Advisory Group (1999-2010s) — Chairman,
- The Royal Military College, Duntroon — Guest Lecturer,
- Veterans and military families/Author and poet — Advocate

APPENDIX B:
HONOURS AND AWARDS

BRIGADIER GEORGE LYON MANSFORD AM SERVICE NUMBERS - 52028 / 2/3593

NATIONAL HONOURS

Member of the Order of Australia (AM)
Category: Civil Division
Date of Award: 26th January 1976
Citation: For service to veterans and to the community
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Confirmed

COMMEMORATIVE MEDALS

Centenary Medal
Date of Award: 2001
Reason: Awarded to mark the Centenary of Federation
Citation: For contributions to Australian society
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Confirmed

OPERATIONAL SERVICE MEDALS

Australian Service Medal 1945-1975
Clasps: KOREA, MALAYA, VIETNAM
Period of Service: 1954-1967
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

Korea Medal
Period of Service: 1954-1955 (1 RAR)
Theatre: Korean Peninsula
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

General Service Medal
Clasp: MALAYA
Period of Service: 1955-1957
(2 RAR), 1959-1961
(1 RAR)
Theatre: Malayan Emergency
Authority: United Kingdom/Commonwealth
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

Vietnam Medal
Period of Service: 1965-1967 (6 RAR, AATTV)
Theatre: Republic of Vietnam
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

Australian Active Service Medal
Clasp: VIETNAM
Period of Service: 1965-1967
Theatre: Republic of Vietnam
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

LONG SERVICE AND EFFICIENCY MEDALS

Defence Force Service Medal
Qualifying Service: 15+ years
Total Service: 35+ years (1951-1986 Active; 1986-1990 Reserve)
Authority: Commonwealth of Australia
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service)

Additional Long Service Awards
Note: Specific long service medals for 35+ years total service
Status: Entitled (based on confirmed service record)

2026 Sources: Complete official record held by Department of Defence.

52028 - ENLISTED SERVICE NUMBER
1951-1964 (13 years) Private to Sergeant
Status: Enlisted soldier/Non-Commissioned Officer
Assigned when he enlisted as a Private on 17 September 1951
Used throughout his enlisted service in Korea and Malaya
Standard format for enlisted personnel of that era
Retained through promotion to Corporal and Sergeant

2/3593 - OFFICER SERVICE NUMBER
Period: 1964-1990 (26 years) Rank Range: Second Lieutenant to Brigadier Status: Commissioned Officer
Assigned when he was commissioned from the ranks in 1964
New number issued upon completing Officer Cadet School at Portsea
The 2/ prefix indicates commissioned officer
Used throughout his officer service including Vietnam, Tully command and promotion to Brigadier

APPENDIX C:
CHRONOLOGICAL TIMELINE

1934 Born 19 August, Guildford, Western Australia;
1939 World War II begins; father re-enlists;
1946 Family relocates to Bassendean;
1949 Leaves school; joins Post Office;
1950 Joins Citizens Military Forces;
1951 Enlists Australian Regular Army;
1951-53 Recruit training and initial service with 2 RAR
1954-55 Korea: 1 RAR, Private/Signaller;
1955-57 Malaya (First Tour): 2 RAR, promoted to Corporal;
1959-61 Malaya (Second Tour): 1 RAR, Sergeant;
1961-64 Papua New Guinea: 3 RAR, Sergeant;
1964 Commissioned as Second Lieutenant;
1965-66 Vietnam: 6 RAR, Lieutenant (Assault Pioneer Commander, deployed June 1966);
1966-67 Vietnam: AATTV, Captain (Duc My Ranger Training Centre, Binh Ba);
1967-69 Canungra: Instructor (developed Mine and Booby Trap Course);
1970-71 6 RAR: Major (Company Commander, A Company);
1971-73 1 RAR: Major (Company Commander. B Company and Operations Officer);
1972 Exercise Treble Change, Papua New Guinea;
1973-75 6 RAR: Major; Singapore and Enoggera Brisbane
1974 Parachute Company; acquires *'Bluey'* the mascot;
1975 Promoted to Lieutenant Colonel; establishes Jungle Training Centre, Tully;
1975-78 Commands Jungle Training Centre, Tully (first command tour);
1980-82 Commands Battle School, Tully (second command tour);
1983 Serves as Deputy Commander, 11 Field Force Group;
1984 Promoted to Colonel; transfers to Army Reserve;
1986 Retires from active service;
1987 Promoted to Brigadier; assumes command of 11th Brigade;
1988 Publishes 'The Mad Galahs';
1990 Retires from Army Reserve (December);
1994 Publishes 2nd edition of 'Junior Leadership on the Battlefield';
1999 Becomes Chairman, Wet Tropics Cassowary Advisory Group;
2001 Awarded Centenary Medal;
2003 Oral history interview, Australian War Memorial (26th March);
2004 Oral history interview, UNSW Australians at War Film Archive;
2011 Interview at 'Wundurra' (April) – Peter Adamis;
2014 Publishes 'The Spirit of Australia': Poetry and Short Stories;
2014 Visits Jungle Training Wing, Tully;
2022 Publishes 'Duty and Consequence'; and
2026 Deceased 19th February (age 91).

OPERATIONAL SERVICE SUMMARY

1954-1955 Korea (11 months: 31st March 1954 – 19th February 1955);
1955-1957 Malaya - First Tour (2 years: with 2 RAR);
1959-1961 Malaya - Second Tour (2 years: with 1 RAR);
1966 Vietnam - 6 RAR (Lieutenant - deployed June 1966);
1966-1967 Vietnam - AATTV (Captain, advisor duties)
Total operational service; and approximately 7 years across three wars and five operational deployments.

SERVICE NUMBERS: Enlisted (1951-1964): 52028 Officer (1964-1990): 2/3593

APPENDIX D:
PUBLISHED WORKS OF GEORGE MANSFORD

MILITARY MANUALS

Junior Leadership on the Battlefield

- 1st Edition: 1983, Headquarters Training Command, Australian Army
- 2nd Edition: 1994, ISBN 0642202931
- Definitive manual on combat leadership blending tactical doctrine with human insight; became essential reading for junior officers and NCOs

NOVELS

The Mad Galahs - - Published: 1988
- Semi-fictionalised account of advisory warfare in Vietnam
- Drew on Mansford's AATTV service to portray realities of working with South Vietnamese Forces

POETRY AND SHORT STORIES

The Spirit of Australia: Poetry and Short Stories - - Published: 2014
- Collection capturing the soldiers experience with literary depth
- Includes poems on service, sacrifice, mateship and remembrance

A Warrior's Farewell – Homeward Bound

- Publication date unknown; widely circulated in manuscript form
- Poem used in military memorial services across Australia and internationally
- Addresses fallen warriors directly; provides comfort to bereaved families

LATE-CAREER WORKS

Duty and Consequence

- Published: 2022 (at age 88)
- Addresses contemporary challenges facing the Australian Defence Force
- Demonstrates continued engagement with military issues into final years

AVAILABILITY

Mansford's published works remain available through:

- Regimental Books Australia
- Books on War Australia
- National Library of Australia
- Australian War Memorial Research Centre
- Military unit libraries and associations

NOTE: This appendix lists major published works. Mansford also contributed articles to military journals, Regimental publications and veteran newsletters throughout his career and retirement.

APPENDIX E:
GLOSSARY OF MILITARY TERMS

GUIDE FOR NON-MILITARY READERS

MILITARY UNITS AND FORMATIONS

AATTV - Australian Army Training Team Vietnam (1962-1972) Elite Advisory Unit working directly with South Vietnamese Forces. Small, highly selective unit where Mansford served 1966-1967 as Captain, conducting advisory duties at Duc My Ranger Training Centre and Binh Ba.

RAR – The Royal Australian Regiment The Infantry Regiment of the Australian Army, established in 1948. Comprises multiple numbered Battalions (1 RAR, 2 RAR, 6 RAR, etc.).

1 RAR - 1st Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment First Battalion of the Regiment, formed 1945. Mansford served with this Unit in Korea (1954-1955 as Private/Signaller) and Malaya (1959-1961 as Sergeant).

2 RAR - 2nd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Second Battalion, formed post-WWII. Mansford's first posting (1951-1953 as Private/Signaller) and later service in Malaya (1955-1957 as Corporal).

3 RAR - 3rd Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Third Battalion. Mansford served in Papua New Guinea (1961-1964 as Sergeant).

6 RAR - 6th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Sixth Battalion, raised in 1965 specifically for Vietnam deployment. Mansford served multiple tours: as Assault Pioneer Platoon Commander (1965-1966), Company Commander A Company (1970-1971) and Operations Officer (1973-1975).

8/9 RAR - 8th/9th Battalion, The Royal Australian Regiment Linked Battalion formed by amalgamation. Had mascots including 'Stan the Ram' (John MacArthur) that inspired 6 RAR to acquire 'Bluey' the cattle dog.

51 FNQR - 51st Battalion, Far North Queensland Regiment Army Reserve Infantry Unit based in Far North Queensland. Formed 1936, disbanded post-WWII and re-raised 1950. Motto: 'Ducit Amor Patriae' (Love of Country Leads Me). Mansford served as Honorary Colonel and later Battalion Elder.

PIR - Pacific Islands Regiment Papua New Guinea Military Unit led by Australian officers and senior NCOs during the trust territory period. Mansford's 2 RAR Platoon conducted training exercises against 1 PIR in 1965.

RFSU - Regional Force Surveillance Unit Specialised Units for surveillance and reconnaissance in remote areas, particularly Northern Australia. Mansford championed their establishment, famously presenting the commander with a fully formed Company before official approval.

CMF - Citizens Military Forces. Part-time Volunteer Reserve Force (predecessor to current Army Reserve). Mansford's initial service in 1950 before enlisting in Regular Army on 17 September 1951.

HEADQUARTERS AND COMMANDS

HQ - Headquarters Command Centre for military Units at various levels (Battalion, Brigade, Division, etc.).

11 FF Gp - 11th Field Force Group Major formation in Northern Australia based at Jezzine Barracks, Townsville. Mansford served as Deputy Commander (1983, as Lieutenant Colonel).

11th Brigade - 11th Brigade. Brigade formation responsible for Far North Queensland and Northern Australia. Mansford commanded as Brigadier (1987-1990), his final military appointment.

DSG FNQ - Deployable Support Group Far North Queensland Command element responsible for coordination in Far North Queensland region. Mansford served as SO2 Coordination (1979, as Lieutenant Colonel).

Army Office - Former name for Australian Army Headquarters. Central command and administrative headquarters in Canberra (now Army Headquarters). Location of senior decision-makers Mansford sometimes criticised as 'Canberra Suits.'

ADFA - Australian Defence Force Academy. Tertiary education institution in Canberra providing under graduate education for future officers. Mansford briefed Officer Cadets here in 1989.

RMC – The Royal Military College. Officer training institution at Duntroon, Canberra, where officers complete their final training. Mansford was a regular guest lecturer on Junior Leadership; the Mansford Theatre was named in his honour.

CRES - Chief of Reserves. Senior officer responsible for Army Reserve Forces. Major General Kevin Cooke held this position and worked closely with Mansford on 51 FNQR development.

RANKS (Listed from Lowest to Highest)

ENLISTED RANKS (Non-Commissioned Personnel)

Private (Pte) - Entry-level soldier. Basic rank upon completion of recruit training. Mansford held this rank 1951-1955, serving in Korea with 1 RAR.

Lance Corporal (LCpl) - Junior Non-Commissioned Officer First leadership rank, typically Second-in-Command of a Section (8-12 soldiers).

Corporal (Cpl) - Non-Commissioned Officer. Section Commander responsible for 8-12 soldiers. Mansford held this rank in Malaya 1955-1957 with 2 RAR.

Sergeant (Sgt) - Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Platoon Sergeant, second-in-command of 30-40 soldiers. Mansford held this rank 1959-1964, serving in Malaya with 1 RAR and Papua New Guinea with 3 RAR.

Staff Sergeant (SSgt) - Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Specialist or senior Platoon Sergeant position.

Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) - Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Company Sergeant Major (CSM), senior enlisted leader of a Company (100-120 soldiers).

Warrant Officer Class 1 (WO1) - Senior Non-Commissioned Officer Regimental Sergeant Major (RSM), senior enlisted leader of a Battalion (600-1,000 soldiers). Jim Husband served as RSM of 6 RAR when 'Bluey' the mascot was acquired.

COMMISSIONED OFFICER RANKS

Second Lieutenant (2Lt) - Junior Officer Entry-level commissioned officer rank. Mansford received this rank upon commissioning from the ranks in 1964 after completing Officer Cadet School at Portsea.

Lieutenant (Lt) - Junior Officer Typically commands a Platoon (30-40 soldiers). Mansford held this rank during early Vietnam service with 6 RAR as Assault Pioneer Platoon Commander.

Captain (Capt) - Company Grade Officer. Company Second-in-Command or specialist position. Mansford held this rank during AATTV service (1966-1967) as Advisor.

Major (Maj) - Company Grade Officer. Typically commands a Company (100-120 soldiers). Mansford commanded A Company 6 RAR (1970-1971), B Company 1 RAR (1971-1973) and served as Operations Officer 6 RAR (1973-1975) in this rank.

Lieutenant Colonel (Lt Col) - Field Grade Officer. Typically commands a Battalion (600-1,000 soldiers). Mansford commanded Jungle Training Centre/Battle School at Tully (1975-1978, 1980-1982) in this rank.

Colonel (Col) - Senior Field Grade Officer. Senior Staff Officer or Brigade Second-in-Command
position. Mansford held this rank 1984-1986 in various staff positions.

Brigadier (Brig) - General Officer. Typically commands a Brigade (3,000-5,000 soldiers). Mansford's final rank, commanding 11th Brigade (1987-1990).

TACTICAL ORGANISATION (Smallest to Largest)

Section - 8-12 soldiers led by a Corporal or Sergeant. Basic Tactical Unit of the Infantry. The fundamental building block of Infantry operations.

Platoon - 30-40 soldiers composed of 3-4 Sections plus headquarters element. Led by a Lieutenant with a Sergeant as Second-in-Command (Platoon Sergeant).

Company - 100-120 soldiers composed of 3-4 Platoons plus support elements (mortars, anti-tank, etc.). Led by a Major (OC) with a Captain as Second-in-Command and a WO2 as Company Sergeant Major.

Battalion - 600-1,000 soldiers composed of 3-4 rifle Companies plus support Companies (headquarters, support, administration). Led by a Lieutenant Colonel (CO) with a Lieutenant Colonel or Major as Second-in-Command and a WO1 as Regimental Sergeant Major.

Brigade - 3,000-5,000 soldiers composed of multiple Battalions plus supporting Units (artillery, engineers, signals, logistics). Led by a Brigadier.

Division - 10,000-20,000 soldiers composed of multiple Brigades plus division-level support. Led by a Major General.

APPOINTMENTS AND POSITIONS

OC - Officer Commanding Officer in command of a Sub-unit (usually Company level). Mansford served as OC A Company 6 RAR and OC B Company 1 RAR.

CO - Commanding Officer. Officer in Command of a Unit (usually Battalion level or higher). Lieutenant Colonel Tony Hammett was CO of 6 RAR during Mansford's time as Operations Officer.

2IC - Second in Command Deputy Commander at any level, assumes command in CO's absence. Mansford served as 2 IC of 6 RAR under CO Tony Hammett.

RSM - Regimental Sergeant Major. Senior enlisted soldier in a Battalion (WO1), responsible for discipline, standards and welfare of all enlisted personnel.

CSM - Company Sergeant Major. Senior enlisted soldier in a Company (WO2), responsible for Company discipline, administration and enlisted personnel welfare.

OPSO - Operations Officer Staff Officer. Responsible for planning and coordinating operations. Mansford held this position in 6 RAR (1973-1975) as a Major.

ADJT – Adjutant. Principal Staff Officer assisting the CO with administration, discipline and personnel matters.

QM - Quartermaster Officer or senior NCO responsible for supplies, equipment, logistics and accommodation.

SO2 - Staff Officer Grade 2. Mid-level Staff Officer position (equivalent to Major rank). Mansford served as SO2 Coordination at HQ DSG FNQ.

SO3 - Staff Officer Grade 3. Junior Staff Officer position (equivalent to Captain rank).

DS - Directing Staff Instructors (SI) and controllers who run training courses and exercises, responsible for safety and training outcomes. Mansford served as DS at Canungra and commanded DS at Tully.

Honorary Colonel - Ceremonial appointment Senior retired officer maintaining connection with reserve unit. Mansford served as Honorary Colonel of 51 FNQR after retirement.

TRAINING ESTABLISHMENTS

Canungra - Land Warfare Centre, Canungra, Queensland Primary Australian Army training facility for jungle warfare and general infantry skills. Located in sub-tropical environment. Mansford served as instructor (1967-1969), developing the Mine and Booby Trap Course.

Tully - Jungle Training Centre/Battle School, Tully, Queensland Specialised jungle warfare training facility established by Mansford in tropical rainforest environment. First course conducted 1980. Mansford commanded 1975-1978 (first tour) and 1980-1982 (second tour). Known for demanding, realistic training standards.

Portsea - Officer Cadet School, Portsea, Victoria (1951-1985) Training institution for National Service Officers and commissioning-from-ranks officers. Mansford attended here in 1964 when commissioned from Sergeant to Second Lieutenant.

Duntroon – The Royal Military College, Duntroon, ACT. Premier officer training institution for career officers of the Australian Defence Force. Mansford was regular guest lecturer on leadership; Mansford Theatre named in his honour.

Singleton - Infantry Centre, Singleton, New South Wales. Central training and doctrine development facility for Australian Infantry. Mansford served here (1976-1978) as instructor in Specialist Wing.

Puckapunyal - Army Base, Puckapunyal, Victoria Major training facility in central Victoria used for armoured and mechanised training.

Enoggera - Enoggera Barracks, Brisbane, Queensland Major Army base in Brisbane, home to several RAR Battalions. 6 RAR was based here during Mansford's service as Operations Officer.

Holsworthy - Holsworthy Barracks, Sydney, New South Wales Large Army base in Sydney's southwest. Mansford served here during the Pentropic Battalion experiment era.

Jezzine - Jezzine Barracks, Townsville, Queensland Former headquarters of 11th Brigade (now closed). Mansford commanded 11th Brigade from here 1987-1990.

Lavarack - Lavarack Barracks, Townsville, Queensland Major Army base in Townsville, home to 3rd Brigade and supporting units.

Watsonia - Watsonia Barracks, Melbourne, Victoria former Army base where Mansford, as a young soldier, was ordered to remove roofs from migrant huts; an experience that disgusted him and shaped his views on treatment of migrants.

OPERATIONS AND CAMPAIGNS

Korean War (1950-1953) United Nations military action against North Korean and Chinese Forces following North Korean invasion of South Korea. Australian commitment included ground troops (3 RAR initially, then 1 RAR and 2 RAR in rotation), Air force and Navy. Mansford served 1954-1955 during static phase after armistice on Kansas Line with 1 RAR.

Malayan Emergency (1948-1960) Counter-insurgency campaign against communist terrorists (CT) in Malaya (now Malaysia). Australian Forces conducted jungle operations alongside British and Commonwealth Forces. Mansford served two tours: 1955-1957 with 2 RAR as Corporal and 1959-1961 with 1 RAR as Sergeant.

Confrontation - Indonesian Confrontation (1963-1966) Undeclared war between Indonesia and Malaysia over formation of Malaysian federation. Australian Forces deployed to Borneo for counter-insurgency operations along Indonesian border.

Vietnam War - Australian involvement (1962-1973) Counter-insurgency and conventional operations in South Vietnam supporting Republic of Vietnam against communist insurgency and North Vietnamese Forces. Australian commitment centred on Phuoc Tuy Province with Task Force base at Nui Dat. Mansford served 1965-1967: initially with 6 RAR (deployed June 1966) then with AATTV as Advisor.

INTERFET - International Force for East Timor (1999) UN-authorised peacekeeping mission to East Timor following independence referendum. Australian-led Multinational Force. Many Mansford-trained soldiers deployed.

Somalia - Australian deployment (1992-1993) UN peacekeeping mission to Somalia. Soldiers from 1 RAR deployed; led to establishment of Rifleman's Lunches as Mansford noticed these veterans weren't integrating into existing veteran community.

OPERATIONAL TERMS

Contact - Engagement with enemy forces 'making contact' means encountering and engaging the enemy. Can be deliberate (planned ambush) or unexpected (chance encounter).

Ambush - Surprise attack from concealed position Primary tactical method in jungle warfare, attacking enemy from hidden positions along likely routes of movement. Mansford's training emphasised ambush tactics.

Harbour - Temporary defensive position Overnight or temporary position where troops rest while maintaining security through sentries and defensive perimeter. Harbour drills were standard training.

RV – Rendezvous. Predetermined meeting point for tactical movements, used for coordination when elements operate separately.

Fire and Movement - Tactical technique One element provides covering fire (suppressing enemy) while another element manoeuvres (advances or flanks). Fundamental Infantry tactic.

Immediate Action Drill - Rehearsed emergency response. Pre-planned reaction to contact or emergency, executed automatically without orders. Examples: ambush drill, aircraft crash drill. Mansford insisted these be practiced until automatic.

Stand-to - Alert state at dawn/dusk. Period of heightened readiness at times when attacks are most likely (first and last light). All personnel man defensive positions, weapons ready, maximum alertness. Also called 'stand-to routine' or 'morning/evening stand-to.'

SOP - Standard Operating Procedure. Established method for conducting routine operations to ensure consistency and safety. Mansford emphasised SOPs while allowing flexibility for tactical situations.

TAOR - Tactical Area of Responsibility. Geographic area assigned to a Unit for operations. Unit responsible for all activities within TAOR.

Patrol - Small Unit tactical movement. Movement by small groups for reconnaissance, combat, or security purposes. Types include fighting patrols (seek enemy), reconnaissance patrols (gather information) and standing patrols (observation posts).

Recce – Reconnaissance. Gathering information about terrain or enemy through observation.' Do a recce' means conduct reconnaissance.

Sweep - Search operation. Operation to clear area of enemy forces, moving through systematically.

Cordon and Search - Tactical operation. Surrounding an area (cordon) then systematically searching it for enemy Forces or materials.

Casevac Route - Evacuation path. Predetermined route for evacuating casualties from battlefield to medical facilities.
Killing Ground - Ambush zone. Area covered by ambush fire where enemy will be caught and engaged.

Cut-off Group - Blocking Force. Element positioned to prevent enemy escape from ambush or engagement.

Fire Support - Supporting fires. Artillery, mortar, or air support provided to ground forces.

Extraction - Withdrawal from area. Planned withdrawal of forces from operational area, often by helicopter.

WEAPONS AND EQUIPMENT

SLR - Self-Loading Rifle (L1A1). Standard Australian infantry weapon 1960s-1980s. Semi-automatic 7. 62mm rifle, robust and reliable. Mansford trained extensively with SLR and insisted soldiers know their weapons intimately.

M16 - American assault rifle. 5. 56mm rifle used by some Australian Forces in Vietnam, lighter than SLR with higher rate of fire.

Owen Gun - Australian submachine gun. Australian-designed weapon used extensively in WWII, Korea, Malaya and early Vietnam. Known for reliability in jungle conditions.

F1 - Australian fragmentation grenade. Standard hand grenade used by Australian Forces. Mansford's training included extensive grenade practice.

Claymore - M18A1 Claymore mine. Directional anti-personnel mine, command-detonated, projects 700 steel balls in 60-degree arc. Extensively used in ambushes and defensive positions. Mansford developed specialised training in Claymore employment.

Booby Trap - Concealed explosive device. Explosive triggered by victim, designed to kill or maim without direct enemy presence. Mansford created the Mine and Booby Trap Course at Canungra after Vietnam experience, teaching recognition and neutralisation.

Webbing - Personal load-carrying equipment. System of pouches and straps for carrying ammunition, water, rations and equipment. Mansford insisted on realistic loads during training.

Pack - Backpack/rucksack. Large pack for carrying extended operations equipment, rations, spare clothing, etc.

Giggle Hat - Soft jungle hat. Floppy cotton hat worn in jungle operations, provides sun protection and camouflage. Distinctive Australian jungle warfare headgear.

Slouch Hat - Traditional Australian Army hat. Wide-brimmed felt hat with one side pinned up, iconic symbol of Australian military. Worn with dress uniform and ceremonial occasions.

Bayonet - Blade attached to rifle. Close combat weapon attached to rifle muzzle. Symbol of infantry; 'fix bayonets' order indicates imminent close combat.

Entrenching Tool - Folding shovel. Small shovel carried by soldiers for digging defensive positions, latrines, etc.

Machete - Large knife. Heavy knife used for cutting jungle vegetation, clearing fields of fire and camp tasks.

Water Bottle - Canteen Personal water container. Water discipline critical in tropical operations.

Hutchie/Hootchie – Shelter. Half Australian term for individual waterproof shelter (poncho or tarpaulin) used to create temporary shelter (basha).

MEDICAL AND CASUALTY TERMS

KIA - Killed in Action. Soldier killed as direct result of enemy action during combat operations.

WIA - Wounded in Action. Soldier wounded as direct result of enemy action during combat operations.

DOW - Died of Wounds. Soldier who died from wounds received in action, but not immediately on battlefield.

Casevac - Casualty Evacuation. Emergency evacuation of wounded personnel from battlefield to medical facilities. Speed critical to survival.

Medevac - Medical Evacuation. Planned evacuation of sick or injured personnel (non-emergency).

Dustoff - Medical evacuation by helicopter. Term originated in Vietnam for helicopter medical evacuation missions. Call sign 'Dustoff' became synonymous with medical evacuation helicopters.

PTSD - Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder. Psychological condition resulting from exposure to traumatic events, particularly combat. Mansford recognised this in veterans and advocated for support, though term wasn't used during his active service (then called 'shell shock' or 'battle fatigue').

Scrub Typhus - Tropical disease. Bacterial infection transmitted by mites in jungle environments, serious health threat in operations. Common in Pacific theatre and Southeast Asia.

Malaria - Tropical disease. Mosquito-borne disease common in operational areas. Caused severe illness requiring hospitalisation. Mansford contracted malaria during Malayan service.

Dengue Fever - Tropical disease. Mosquito-borne viral infection causing severe fever and joint pain ('break bone fever').

Leeches - Blood-sucking parasites. Common hazard in jungle operations, attach to skin and feed on blood. Constant nuisance in tropical rainforest.

Heat Exhaustion - Medical condition. Condition caused by excessive heat and dehydration during operations. Prevented through water discipline and acclimatisation.

Trench Foot - Medical condition. Condition caused by prolonged exposure to wet conditions, causes tissue damage. Common in sustained jungle operations.

Shell Shock - Historical term for combat stress. Early term (WWI-era) for what is now recognised as PTSD or combat stress reaction.

Battle Fatigue - Combat stress. Mental and physical exhaustion from sustained combat operations. Term used mid-20th century for combat stress reactions.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND SUPPORT TERMS

DVA - Department of Veterans' Affairs. Australian Government Department responsible for veteran entitlements, pensions and support services. Mansford frequently advocated with DVA on behalf of veterans and widows.

Legacy - Legacy Australia. Organisation supporting families of deceased veterans, founded 1923 by WWI veterans. Mansford was active Legacy supporter, particularly supporting widows. Legacy continues operating nationally.

RSL - Returned & Services League of Australia. Veterans organisation providing support, advocacy and social connection for ex-service personnel. Mansford was member and frequent speaker at RSL branches.

TPI - Totally and Permanently Incapacitated. Classification for veterans with severe service-related disabilities preventing employment. Entitled to maximum pension and support.

War Pension - Disability pension for veterans. Compensation for injuries or conditions attributable to military service. Mansford assisted many veterans in obtaining proper pensions.

Repatriation - Veterans' support system. Historical term for comprehensive support provided to returned servicemen and women, including medical care, pensions, employment assistance.

Repatriation Hospital - Veterans' hospital. Hospitals specifically for treating veterans, part of comprehensive repatriation system.

Service Records - Military personnel files. Official documentation of service history, postings, promotions, awards, medical history.

Discharge Certificate - Release documentation. Official document provided upon termination of military service, showing service history and character of discharge.

HONOURS AND AWARDS

AM - Member of the Order of Australia. Australian honour recognising significant service to the nation or community. Mansford awarded AM for service to veterans and military training.

VC - Victoria Cross. Highest military decoration for valour in the British Commonwealth, awarded for extreme gallantry in combat in presence of enemy. Australia's highest military honour.

MC - Military Cross. British and Commonwealth decoration for gallantry in action by commissioned officers and Warrant Officers.

DSC - Distinguished Service Cross. Decoration for distinguished service in operations, typically for sustained superior performance rather than single act.

MBE - Member of the Order of the British Empire. British honour, often awarded for military or civil service. Mansford mentioned several MBE recipients in his stories.

Mentioned in Dispatches - Official recognition. Recognition of gallant or meritorious service in official military reports. Indicated by bronze oak leaf emblem worn on ribbon.

Long Service and Good Conduct Medal - Service recognition. Awarded for 15 years of exemplary service. Mansford would have received this during his 35-year career.

Australian Active Service Medal - Campaign Medal. Awarded for operational service in designated operations (Korea, Malaya, Vietnam, etc.).

Vietnam Medal - Campaign Medal. Specific medal for service in Vietnam operations.

Australian Service Medal - Service recognition. Awarded for service in designated non-warlike operations.

CULTURAL AND SLANG TERMS

Digger - Australian soldier. Affectionate term for Australian soldiers, originating from WWI trench diggers' at Gallipoli and Western Front. Used across all eras; Mansford proudly identified as a digger.

'Warrie' - Mansford's nickname. Used affectionately throughout his career by those who knew him. Also 'Warrie George'.

Mateship - Australian cultural value. Deep loyalty, mutual support and egalitarianism, particularly strong in military context. Core value Mansford embodied and taught.' Look after your mates' fundamental principle.

Larrikin - Irreverent but good-natured person. Someone who challenges authority with humour and audacity while remaining fundamentally decent. Mansford had larrikin streak, particularly in challenging bureaucracy.

Fair dinkum - Genuine, authentic. Australian expression meaning honest, true, or legitimate.' Fair dinkum digger' means genuine, authentic soldier.

Bluey – Nickname. Can refer to red-haired person (Australian irony), blue cattle dog (as with 6 RAR's mascot), or swag (bedroll). Also, traditional nickname for red-headed Australians.

Cobber - Mate, friend. Australian term for close friend or companion. Slightly old-fashioned but still used.

Cobber Digger Mates – A conglomeration of all the above combined for special mates

Hooroo – Goodbye. Informal Australian farewell, particularly common in Mansford's generation.

Bonzer – Excellent. Australian slang for something very good.' That's bonzer!' means 'That's excellent!'

Bastard - Term of endearment (in context). When used among mates, often used affectionately rather than insulting.' Good bastard,' 'old bastard,' 'tough old bastard' are compliments in military culture. Context and tone determine meaning.

Bloody – Intensifier. Mild Australian expletive used for emphasis.' Bloody good,' 'bloody hard,' etc. Considered mild profanity, widely used.

Strewth – Exclamation. Expression of surprise or emphasis. Contraction of 'God's truth.'

She'll be right - Optimistic expression.' It will be okay,' 'don't worry.' Reflects Australian optimism and resilience.

Hard yakka - Difficult work. Strenuous, demanding labor.'Yakka' from Aboriginal language meaning work.

Tucker - Food . Australian slang for food, meals, rations.

Arvo – Afternoon. Australian abbreviation for afternoon.'This arvo' means 'this afternoon.'

Servo - Service station. Gas station, petrol station.

Ute - Utility vehicle. Pickup truck, essential Australian vehicle.

EXERCISE AND TRAINING TERMS

Exercise - Training operation. Simulated military operation for training purposes, can range from small Unit (Section/Platoon) to multi-national scale. Mansford designed and conducted numerous exercises.

FTX - Field Training Exercise. Training conducted in field conditions rather than garrison or classroom. Mansford insisted on realistic FTX conditions.

Live Fire - Exercises using real ammunition. Training with actual ammunition rather than blanks, requiring extensive safety measures. Mansford's training included extensive live fire.

Blank Ammunition - Training ammunition. Cartridges that make noise and flash but don't fire projectiles, used in training exercises to simulate combat.

DS - Directing Staff. Instructors and controllers who run training courses and exercises, responsible for safety and training outcomes. Mansford served as DS at Canungra and commanded DS at Tully.

ENDEX - End of Exercise. Signal that training exercise has concluded and normal operations resume.' ENDEX, ENDEX, ENDEX' announced over radio.

STARTEX - Start of Exercise. Signal that training exercise has commenced. From this point, tactical conditions apply.

AAR - After Action Review. Structured debrief following training or operations to identify lessons learned and areas for improvement. Mansford used AARs extensively to improve training.

Battle PT - Battle Physical Training. Physically demanding training in combat equipment, often including obstacle courses and load carrying. Mansford's training included demanding battle PT.

Route March - Long-distance march with equipment. Marching over distance while carrying full combat loads, builds endurance and unit cohesion. Standard training activity.

Tab - Tactical Advance to Battle. Fast-paced march in combat equipment, often over rough terrain. British/Commonwealth term.

Yomp - Long-distance march. British/Commonwealth term for arduous march with full equipment (similar to 'tab'). Popularised during Falklands War.

Basha - Temporary shelter. Improvised shelter made from poncho, tarpaulin (hutchie), or local materials in field conditions. Essential jungle skill.

Harbour Drills - Defensive routine procedures. Standard procedures for establishing overnight defensive positions, including security, sentry rotation, stand-to routine.

Stand-to Routine - Dawn/dusk alert procedure. Heightened readiness at times when enemy attacks are most likely (first and last light).

Confidence Course - Challenging physical course. More demanding obstacle course designed to build mental and physical confidence through challenging but achievable obstacles.

Assault Course - Combat simulation course. Course combining physical obstacles with tactical scenarios under time pressure, simulating combat conditions.

Battle School - Advanced tactical training. Intensive training facility focusing on realistic combat preparation. Mansford's preferred term for Tully Jungle Training Centre.

Jungle Lane - Tactical training facility. Course through jungle with pop-up targets simulating enemy, trains fire and movement, target acquisition, immediate action drills.

GEOGRAPHIC AND OPERATIONAL LOCATIONS

Phuoc Tuy Province - Vietnamese province Area of South Vietnam where Australian Task Force was based, centred on Nui Dat. Area of operations for 6 RAR during Mansford's service.

Nui Dat - Australian base in Vietnam. Main Australian Task Force base in Phuoc Tuy Province, Vietnam (1966-1971). Established by 6 RAR shortly after arrival.

Long Tan - Battle site in Vietnam. Location of major battle fought by D Company 6 RAR on 18 August 1966, three months after Mansford's arrival. Decisive Australian victory against overwhelming odds.

Duc My - Vietnamese location. Site of Ranger Training Centre where Mansford served with AATTV as advisor to South Vietnamese Rangers.

Binh Ba - Vietnamese village. Location where Mansford conducted advisory duties with AATTV. Scene of later battle (1969).

Kansas Line - Korean defensive position. Main UN defensive line in Korea after 1951 armistice negotiations began. Mansford served on Kansas Line with 1 RAR (1954-1955).

Kapyong - Battle site in Korea. Location of significant battle (23-24 April 1951) where Australian and Canadian Forces stopped Chinese advance. 3 RAR earned US Presidential Unit Citation.

Shoalwater Bay - Training area, Queensland. Large military training area north of Rockhampton used for major exercises including combined arms and amphibious operations. Mansford conducted training here.

Tin Can Bay - Training area, Queensland. Coastal training area used for amphibious and live-fire exercises. Located north of Brisbane.

High Range - Training area. Queensland Australian Army training facility used for live-fire exercises and field training.

Atherton Tablelands - Training region. Queensland Highland area in Far North Queensland used for military training. Cooler climate than coastal areas, suitable for certain types of training.

Torres Strait - Strategic waterway. Waters between Australia and Papua New Guinea, area of 11th Brigade responsibility under Mansford's command. Strategic importance for northern defence.

Cape York Peninsula - Remote region. Northern most part of Queensland, area where surveillance units (RFSU) operated. Mansford championed establishment of surveillance capability here.

Kokoda Track - Historical location, Papua New Guinea Site of crucial WWII campaign where Australian Forces stopped Japanese advance toward Port Moresby (1942). Mansford served in PNG and understood significance.

Moresby - Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea Capital of Papua New Guinea. Mansford served in PNG with 3 RAR (1961-1964).

Terendak - Terendak Camp, Malaysia. Major Commonwealth base in Malaya/Malaysia where Australian Forces were based during Malayan Emergency and Confrontation.

Butterworth - RAAF Base, Malaysia The Royal Australian Air Force base in Penang, Malaysia. Transit point for forces deploying to/from Southeast Asia.

HISTORICAL PERIODS AND CONTEXTS

WWI - World War One (1914-1918). First World War, where ANZAC tradition was established at Gallipoli (25 April 1915) and Western Front. Foundation of Australian military culture and traditions Mansford inherited.

WWII - World War Two (1939-1945). Second World War, where many of Mansford's mentors and early influences served. Pacific theatre particularly significant for Australian Forces. Shaped generation that trained Mansford.

Cold War - Geopolitical tension (1947-1991). Ideological conflict between Western democracies and communist bloc, context for Korea, Malaya and Vietnam. Framework for Australia's forward Defence Policy.

Great Depression - Economic crisis (1929-1939). Severe worldwide economic downturn that shaped Mansford's early childhood at Kinchela Aboriginal Boys Training Home and influenced his understanding of hardship.

Post-Vietnam Era - Period after 1973. Years following Australian withdrawal from Vietnam, characterised by changing military priorities, reduced operational tempo and difficult homecoming for Vietnam veterans. Mansford worked to support these veterans.

Pentropic Organisation - Military structure (1960-1965). American organisational model briefly adopted by Australian Army, replacing traditional British structure. Generally considered unsuccessful; Mansford served during this period and witnessed its problems.

Forward Defence Policy - Strategic doctrine Australian Defence Policy (1950s-1970s) emphasising engagement with allies in Southeast Asia to prevent communist expansion reaching Australia. Rationale for commitments to Malaya and Vietnam.

MEDICAL AND HEALTH TERMS (Additional)

Jungle Rot - Skin infection. Fungal and bacterial skin infections common in prolonged jungle operations due to constant moisture. Painful and debilitating if not treated.

Immersion Foot - Medical condition. Similar to trench foot; tissue damage from prolonged exposure to wet conditions. Common in jungle warfare.

Dehydration - Fluid loss. Dangerous condition in tropical operations. Mansford emphasised water discipline and recognising dehydration symptoms.

Heat Stroke - Serious medical emergency. Life threatening condition from excessive heat exposure. More severe than heat exhaustion, requires immediate treatment.

Acclimatisation - Physiological adaptation. Process of body adapting to tropical heat and humidity. Mansford's training included proper acclimatisation periods.

Prophylaxis - Preventive treatment. Preventive medical measures, particularly anti-malarial medication (Paludrine) taken in operational areas.

Field Dressing - First aid bandage. Sterile bandage carried by all soldiers for immediate treatment of wounds.

Morphine - Pain medication. Strong pain reliever carried for severe battlefield injuries. Administered via syrette (single-dose injector).

Saline - Medical solution. Salt solution used for treating wounds and dehydration.

Stretcher - Casualty transport. Device for carrying wounded. Stretcher drill essential training for all infantry.

LOGISTICAL AND SUPPLY TERMS

Resupply - Delivery of supplies. Provision of ammunition, food, water and equipment to Units in the field. Critical for sustained operations.

Rations - Food supplies. Military food provisions. Can be fresh (when available), 'compo' (composite rations in boxes), or individual meal packs.

Compo Rats - Composite rations. Australian field rations packed in boxes, designed to feed section for one day. Varied quality; some items highly prized, others universally disliked.

Ammo - Ammunition Bullets, grenades and other munitions required for operations.' Ammo count' critical before and after contacts.

Kit - Personal equipment. Soldier's personal gear and equipment.' Full kit' means complete personal equipment.

Stores - Military General term for equipment, supplies and materials held by military Units.

Q Store - Quartermaster's store. Facility where Unit equipment and supplies are stored and issued. Quartermaster (QM) responsible.

Scale of Issue - Authorised equipment . Official allocation of equipment per soldier or Unit 'On scale' means authorised; 'off scale' means not authorised.

Indent - Supply request. Formal request for equipment or supplies through official channels. Bureaucratic process Mansford sometimes circumvented when necessary.

Logpac - Logistics package. Bundle of supplies (ammunition, rations, water, mail) delivered to units in field, often by helicopter.

Water Point - Water supply location. Designated location where water is available for collection. Critical in field operations.

Ammunition Point - Ammunition supply location. Designated secure location where ammunition is stored and issued.

Replen – Replenishment. Resupply of consumed items (ammunition, rations, fuel, etc.).

CEREMONIAL AND TRADITIONAL TERMS

ANZAC - Australian and New Zealand Army Corps Originally WWI formation (1915) now represents broader tradition of Australian and New Zealand military service. ANZAC spirit embodies courage, mateship, sacrifice.

ANZAC Day – 25th April National Day of Remembrance for war dead and veterans, commemorating Gallipoli landing (25th April 1915). Most significant day in Australian military calendar. Mansford regularly attended dawn services and marches.

Remembrance Day – 11th November Day commemorating armistice ending WWI (11th November 1918, 11:00 AM), honouring all who served and died in war. Observed at 11:00 AM with minute's silence.

Last Post - Bugle call. Traditional military bugle call played at military funerals and commemorative services. Signals end of day and farewell to fallen.

Reveille - Bugle call. Morning bugle call signaling start of day. Played after Last Post at ANZAC Day services, symbolising resurrection and continuation.

Ode of Remembrance - Commemorative verse.'They shall grow not old, as we that are left grow old; Age shall not weary them, nor the years condemn. At the going down of the sun and in the morning, We will remember them.' From Laurence Binyon's poem 'For the Fallen.' Recited at memorial services.

Lest We Forget - Remembrance phrase. Traditional response after Ode of Remembrance. Commitment to remember sacrifice of those who served and died.

Colours - Regimental flags. Official flags (Queen's Colour and Regimental Colour) presented to military units, carry battle honours and represent unit history and tradition. Treated with highest respect.

Battle Honours - Campaign recognition. Official recognition of unit's participation in specific battles or campaigns, displayed on Colours and unit insignia. RAR battle honours include Kapyong, Coral-Balmoral, Long Tan.

Trooping the Colour - Ceremonial parade. Formal military ceremony where Colours are paraded before troops. Displays Unit pride and tradition.

Freedom of Entry - Civic Honour. Right granted to military units to march through city with 'bayonets fixed, drums beating and colours flying.' High civic honour recognising Unit's service.

Catafalque Party - Ceremonial guard. Four-person guard standing motionless at attention around Memorial or coffin during ceremonies. Highly disciplined, symbolic of eternal watch over fallen.

Gun Salute - Ceremonial firing. Firing of artillery or small arms in salute. 21-gun salute for highest honours; three-volley salute at military funerals.

Slow March - Ceremonial pace. Very slow, dignified marching pace used in funeral and memorial ceremonies. 60 paces' per minute (versus 116 for quick march).

Rouse - Bugle call. Bugle call sometimes played after Last Post, particularly at military funerals. Signals awakening and resurrection.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND PERSONNEL TERMS

Posting - Assignment to new Unit. Transfer of personnel to different Unit or location.' Posted to 6 RAR' means assigned to that Unit. Postings typically 2-3 years.

Tour - Period of service. Defined period of service in particular location or position. Vietnam tours typically 12 months; Malaya tours typically 2-3 years.

Deployment - Operational assignment. Assignment to operational theatre or mission.' Deployed to Vietnam' means sent on operations.

R&R - Rest and Recreation. Authorised leave period during deployment. Vietnam R&R typically 5-7 days in Singapore, Bangkok, Hong Kong, or Australia.

Leave - Authorised absence. Approved time away from duty. Types include annual leave, compassionate leave, sick leave.

Discharge - Release from service. Official termination of military service. Can be honourable discharge (good service) or dishonourable discharge (misconduct).

Attestation - Enlistment oath. Formal oath taken when enlisting in military service, swearing allegiance to Sovereign and promising faithful service.

Commissioning - Becoming an officer. Process of receiving commission as officer, transition from enlisted to officer ranks. Mansford commissioned from Sergeant to Second Lieutenant in 1964.

Promotion - Advancement in rank. Official elevation to higher rank with increased responsibility and pay. Mansford promoted from Private to Brigadier over 35 years.

Reduction in Rank - Disciplinary action. Demotion to lower rank as punishment for misconduct. Mansford mentioned being reduced in rank early in career.

Court Martial - Military trial. Formal military legal proceedings for serious offenses. Three types: summary, district, general (increasing severity).

Charge - Disciplinary action. Official accusation of misconduct under military law.' Put on a charge' means facing disciplinary proceedings.

Jankers - Military punishment. British/Commonwealth slang for minor punishments including extra duties, restrictions, loss of privileges.

CB - Confined to Barracks. Punishment preventing soldier from leaving barracks during off-duty hours. Loss of freedom of movement.

Defaulters - Disciplinary parade. Parade of soldiers facing charges or serving punishments.' On defaulters' means facing discipline.

Attestation Date - Enlistment date. Date of formal enlistment, determines service time for pay, leave, pension calculations. Mansford's attestation date: 17 September 1951.

Regimental Number - Service number. Unique identification number assigned to each service member. Remains with member throughout career.

Personnel File - Service records. Official documentation of service history, postings, promotions, awards, medical history and disciplinary actions.

TRAINING FACILITIES SPECIFIC TERMS

Battle School - Advanced tactical training Intensive training facility focusing on realistic combat preparation. Mansford's preferred term for Tully, emphasising combat focus over general training.

JTW - Jungle Training Wing. Formal name for jungle warfare training element at Canungra and later Tully. Mansford served as instructor at Canungra JTW.

LFTC - Land Force Training Centre. Broader term for comprehensive training facilities providing multiple types of training.

Range - Weapons firing facility. Designated area for live-fire weapons training. Types include rifle range, machine gun range, grenade range, mortar range.

Obstacle Course - Physical training facility. Course with physical obstacles (walls, ropes, tunnels, etc.) designed to build strength, agility and confidence.

Confidence Course - Challenging physical course. More demanding obstacle course designed to build mental and physical confidence through challenging but achievable obstacles at height.

Assault Course - Combat Simulation Course. Course combining obstacles with tactical scenarios under time pressure, simulating combat stress.

Rappel Tower - Training structure. Tower for practicing rappelling (fast-roping down) techniques, essential for helicopter operations.

Battle Inoculation - Stress training. Training under realistic combat stressors (live fire overhead, explosions, smoke, noise) to prepare soldiers psychologically for combat.

Field Firing Range - Tactical range. Range where soldiers practice fire and movement in realistic terrain with tactical scenarios.

Jungle Lane - Tactical training facility Course through jungle with pop-up targets simulating enemy positions, trains target acquisition, fire discipline and immediate action drills.

Mine and Booby Trap Course - Specialised training Course Mansford established at Canungra teaching recognition and neutralisation of mines and booby traps based on Vietnam experience.

COMMUNICATION AND SIGNALS TERMS

Comms - Communications Radio and other communication systems.' Comms are down' means unable to communicate.

Radio Operator - Communications specialist. Soldier responsible for operating radio equipment. Mansford's early specialty as signaller in Korea and Malaya.

Signaller - Communications Specialist. Commonwealth term for radio operator or communications specialist. Mansford served as signaller with 1 RAR and 2 RAR.

Net - Radio Network. Group of radio stations operating on same frequency for communication. Battalion Net, Company Net, etc.

Radio Silence - Communications restriction. Period when radio transmissions are prohibited for security reasons (prevents enemy detecting presence or location).

Sitrep - Situation Report. Brief report on current tactical situation, typically transmitted by radio. Standard format for updating higher headquarters.

Contact Report - Enemy engagement report. Immediate report of contact with enemy forces, including location, enemy strength, friendly casualties, actions taken.

Call Sign - Radio identifier. Unique identifier for radio stations. Used instead of actual Unit designations for security. Changes periodically.

Roger - Acknowledgement Radio procedure word meaning 'I have received and understood your transmission.'

Wilco - Will comply. Radio procedure word meaning *'I have received your message, understand it and will comply.'*

Say Again - Request for repetition. Radio procedure requesting repetition of previous transmission. (*'Repeat'* means repeat fire mission in artillery context.)

Out - End of transmission. Radio procedure word indicating end of transmission, no reply expected.

Over - Invitation to reply. Radio procedure word indicating end of transmission, reply expected.

Radio Check - Communication test. Request to verify radio communication quality. Response indicates signal strength (e. g. , 'loud and clear,' 'weak and broken').

VEHICLE AND TRANSPORT TERMS

APC - Armoured Personnel Carrier. Armoured vehicle for transporting Infantry in combat. M113 was standard Australian APC in Vietnam era.

Chopper – Helicopter. Informal term for helicopter, critical for Vietnam operations (transport, resupply, Casevac).

Huey - UH-1 Iroquois helicopter. Primary helicopter used in Vietnam for transport and medical evacuation. Distinctive 'whop-whop' sound. American-supplied to Australian forces.

Slick - Transport helicopter. Helicopter configured for troop transport (versus gunship configuration).

Dustoff - Medical evacuation helicopter. Helicopter configured for casualty evacuation. Call sign became synonymous with medevac missions. Speed critical for saving lives.

Chinook - CH-47 Chinook helicopter. Large twin-rotor helicopter for heavy lift operations, transporting troops, equipment and supplies.

Caribou - DHC-4 Caribou aircraft. Twin-engine transport aircraft used by RAAF in Vietnam for resupply and transport. Could operate from short, rough airstrips.

Hercules - C-130 Hercules aircraft. Large four-engine transport aircraft for strategic airlift.' Herc' used for major deployments and resupply.

Troopship - Military transport vessel. Ship designed to transport military personnel. HMAS Sydney and HMT Georgic mentioned in manuscript as transporting troops to/from operations.

Landing Craft - Amphibious vessel. Vessel designed to transport troops and equipment from ship to shore during amphibious operations.

LSM - Landing Ship. Medium Medium-sized amphibious vessel for transporting troops and equipment to shore.

Jeep - Light utility vehicle. Small four-wheel drive vehicle for reconnaissance and light transport. Later replaced by Land Rover.

Land Rover - Light utility vehicle. British four-wheel drive vehicle used extensively by Australian Army for transport and reconnaissance.

Truck - General transport vehicle. Various sizes of military trucks for transporting troops, equipment and supplies.

MESS AND ACCOMMODATION TERMS

Mess - Dining and social facility. Facility for meals and social activities, separated by rank (Officers' Mess, Sergeants' Mess, Soldiers' Mess/OR Mess). Each has distinct customs and traditions.

OR - Other Ranks Enlisted personnel below Warrant Officer rank (Private through Corporal).

ORs Mess - Other Ranks Mess Dining and social facility for junior enlisted personnel (also called Soldiers' Mess).

Sergeants' Mess - Senior NCO facility. Dining and social facility for Sergeants and Warrant Officers. Distinct culture emphasising professionalism and standards. Mansford would have been member 1959-1964.

WOs' and Sergeants' Mess - Combined senior NCO facility. Full title of senior NCO mess including both Warrant Officers and Sergeants.

Officers' Mess - Commissioned Officers facility. Dining and social facility for commissioned officers. Formal dining nights, Regimental traditions. Mansford joined upon commissioning in 1964.

Mess Dress - Formal uniform. Formal uniform worn for Mess dinners and ceremonial occasions. Different for each rank category.

Mess Dinner - Formal dining event. Formal dinner in mess with strict protocol, traditions, toasts. Important for Unit cohesion and tradition.

Dining-In Night - Members-only dinner. Formal mess dinner for unit members only (no guests).

Dining-Out Night - Dinner with guests. Formal mess dinner where guests are invited.

Guest Night - Social evening with guests. Evening when members may bring guests to Mess for social occasion.

Barracks - Military accommodation. Buildings housing military personnel. Can refer to individual buildings or entire base.

Lines - Unit accommodation area. Area where Unit's barracks and facilities are located.' Company lines' means Company accommodation area.

Married Quarters - Family housing. Accommodation provided for military families, usually on or near base. Quality varied; often subject of complaints.

Single Quarters - Unmarried personnel. Accommodation for unmarried soldiers, typically shared rooms or open-bay barracks.

Barrack Block - Accommodation building. Building housing soldiers, typically multi-story with shared facilities.

Ablutions - Washing facilities. Bathrooms, showers, toilets. Military term for sanitary facilities.

Parade Ground - Ceremonial area. Large paved or gravel area for parades, drill and ceremonies.

Drill Hall - Indoor parade facility. Large indoor space for drill practice and ceremonies during inclement weather.

DISCIPLINE AND CONDUCT TERMS

Defaulter - Person charged with offence. Soldier facing disciplinary charges.' On defaulters' means facing discipline.

Orderly Room - Disciplinary proceedings. Formal hearing before Commanding Officer for minor offences. Also refers to Unit administrative office.

Charge Sheet - Disciplinary document. Official record of charges against soldier, listing offence, evidence and disposition.

Jankers - Punishment duties. Extra work or restrictions imposed as punishment. Can include extra drill, fatigue duties, loss of privileges.

Confined to Barracks (CB) - Restriction of movement. Punishment preventing soldier from leaving barracks during off-duty hours for specified period.

Close Arrest - Serious restriction. Confinement under guard for serious offenses pending investigation or trial. Most severe pre-trial restriction.

Open Arrest - Lesser restriction. Restriction of movement without physical confinement. Soldier continues duties but under restrictions.

Stoppage of Pay - Financial penalty. Deduction from pay as punishment for offence or to recover costs of damaged equipment.

Extra Drill - Punishment activity. Additional drill practice imposed as punishment, often conducted in full equipment.

Fatigues - Work duties. Manual labour duties (cleaning, maintenance, etc.). Extra fatigues imposed as punishment.

Pack Drill - Punishment exercise. Drill conducted while carrying full pack and equipment, physically demanding punishment.

Admonishment - Formal warning. Official verbal warning for minor offence, recorded but less severe than formal punishment.

Reprimand - Formal rebuke. Official written rebuke for misconduct, more serious than admonishment.

Severe Reprimand - Serious rebuke. Most serious form of reprimand, recorded on service record.

Loss of Seniority - Promotion penalty. Penalty affecting promotion eligibility or date of rank, delaying career progression.

INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE TERMS

Recce Platoon - Reconnaissance Unit. Specialist Platoon conducting reconnaissance and surveillance operations. Highly trained in observation, navigation and reporting.

Intelligence - Information about enemy. Processed information about enemy forces, terrain, weather and other operational factors.' Intel' for short.

Int - Intelligence (abbreviated) Short form of intelligence.' Int report' means intelligence report.

CT - Communist Terrorist. Term used for insurgents during Malayan Emergency. Mansford fought CTs during both Malayan tours.

VC - Viet Cong. Communist Insurgent Forces in South Vietnam (distinct from regular North Vietnamese Army). Main enemy in Phuoc Tuy Province.

NVA - North Vietnamese Army. Regular Military Forces of North Vietnam. More heavily equipped and trained than Viet Cong.

Charlie - Viet Cong (slang) American/Australian slang for Viet Cong, from phonetic alphabet 'Victor Charlie.'

Tracker - Specialist soldier. Soldier (often with tracking dog) who follows enemy tracks and signs. Critical capability in jungle warfare.

Tracker Dog - Military working dog. Dog trained to follow human scent trails. Australian tracker teams highly effective in Vietnam.

Scout - Point soldier. Lead soldier in patrol, responsible for detecting enemy and hazards. Highest-risk position requiring exceptional alertness.

OP - Observation Post. Position established for observing enemy activity or terrain. Can be temporary or semi-permanent.

LP - Listening Post. Position established at night to provide early warning of enemy approach through sound detection.

Infiltration - Covert movement. Moving through or into an area occupied by enemy without detection.

Exfiltration - Covert withdrawal. Withdrawing from area without enemy detection.

SPECIALIST ROLES AND TRADES

Pioneer - Combat engineer specialist. Infantry soldier with engineering skills including demolitions, obstacles, field fortifications. Mansford commanded Assault Pioneer Platoon 6 RAR.

Assault Pioneer - Combat engineer. Infantry pioneer specialising in obstacle breaching and demolitions in combat. Spearhead role in assaults.

Sapper - Engineer soldier. Combat engineer specialist (The Royal Australian Engineers). Construct bridges, clear mines, build fortifications.

Medic - Medical specialist. Soldier trained in battlefield medical treatment. Attached to Infantry Companies, highly valued.

Stretcher Bearer - Casualty handler. Soldier responsible for evacuating wounded from battlefield. All infantry trained in stretcher drill.

Armourer - Weapons specialist. Soldier responsible for weapons maintenance, repair and armoury management.

Storeman - Supply specialist. Soldier managing stores and supplies, working in Q Store under Quartermaster.

Driver - Vehicle operator. Soldier qualified to operate military vehicles. Various categories for different vehicle types.

Clerk - Administrative specialist. Soldier handling administrative tasks, records, correspondence.

Cook - Food preparation specialist. Soldier trained in preparing meals for troops. Field cooking challenging in operational conditions.

Signaller - Communications specialist. Radio operator and communications specialist. Mansford's trade early in career.

Mortarman - Mortar operator. Soldier operating mortars (indirect fire weapons). Support weapons Platoon.

Machine Gunner - Heavy weapons operator. Soldier operating machine guns (heavier than section weapons).

Anti-Tank Gunner - Specialist operator. Soldier operating anti-tank weapons (recoilless rifles, missiles).

Sniper - Precision marksman. Highly trained specialist in long-range precision shooting and observation.

FINAL TERMS AND EXPRESSIONS

Duty First - Regimental motto. Motto of The Royal Australian Regiment and title of this manuscript, emphasising primacy of duty over personal considerations. Core value Mansford embodied throughout career.

Ducit Amor Patriae - Latin motto 'Love of Country Leads Me' - motto of 51st Battalion FNQR. Mansford served as Honorary Colonel of this Unit.

Stand Easy - Rest command. Command to relax from attention position; also, traditional military farewell to deceased soldier.' Stand easy, mate' said at graveside.

Final Roll Call – Death. Military metaphor for death, when soldier answers their last muster and joins fallen mates.

Crossing the Bar – Death. Poetic metaphor for death, from Tennyson's poem. Crossing from life to death.

Gone to the Firm Base – Death. Military metaphor Mansford used, referring to secure position where fallen mates await.

Valhalla - Warrior's afterlife. Norse mythology's hall of fallen warriors; metaphor for where deceased soldiers gather. Mansford referenced in poetry.

The Ode - Ode of Remembrance. Short form referring to 'They shall grow not old. . .' recited at services.

Eternal Patrol - Death (naval) . Naval metaphor for death; Army equivalent is 'final roll call.'

Dawn Service - ANZAC Day ceremony. Pre-dawn commemorative service on ANZAC Day, typically beginning at time of Gallipoli landing (approximately 4:30 AM).

Two-Up - Traditional gambling game. Australian gambling game traditionally played on ANZAC Day, involving betting on coin tosses. Legal only on ANZAC Day in most jurisdictions.

Gunfire Breakfast - ANZAC Day tradition Traditional breakfast of coffee with rum served after Dawn Service, commemorating tradition from Gallipoli.

The Breakout - Social gathering Informal social gathering after formal Mess dinner when members can relax protocol.

Smoker - Informal social event Informal gathering in Mess, originally when smoking was permitted everywhere.

Spit and Polish - Meticulous cleaning. Intensive cleaning and polishing of equipment and facilities for inspection.

Bullshit - Excessive emphasis on appearance. Excessive emphasis on superficial appearance over substance. Mansford criticised 'bullshit' while maintaining genuine standards.

Gong - Medal (slang). Informal term for military medals and decorations.' Got a gong' means received a medal.

Fruit Salad - Multiple medal ribbons. Slang for display of multiple medal ribbons on uniform, resembling colourful fruit salad.

Mentioned in Despatches - Official recognition. Recognition of gallant or meritorious service in official military reports. Indicated by bronze oak leaf emblem worn on ribbon.

NOTES FOR READERS

Context Matters: Many military terms have different meanings in different contexts.' Bastard' among mates is affectionate; in a formal context it's an insult.' Contact' in operations means enemy engagement; in administration it means communication. Understanding context is essential to understanding military culture.

Rank and Respect: Understanding rank structure helps readers appreciate the significance of Mansford's rise from Private to Brigadier; a journey spanning the entire rank structure over 35 years (1951-1986). This progression 'from the ranks' was uncommon and demonstrated exceptional ability and dedication.

Australian Spelling and Usage: This manuscript uses Australian English conventions (e. g. , 'honour' not 'honour,' 'organisation' not 'organization,' 'realise' not 'realize'). Australian military terminology also follows British Commonwealth usage rather than American.

Historical Context: Terms and attitudes reflect the periods described (1950s-2020s). Some language considered acceptable then may not meet current standards. The manuscript preserves authentic voice of the era while acknowledging evolving sensitivities.

Abbreviations in Text: When abbreviations first appear in text, they are typically spelled out with the abbreviation in parentheses (e. g. , 'The Royal Australian Regiment (RAR)'). This glossary provides quick reference for readers who encounter unfamiliar terms later in the text.

Military Culture: Military terminology reflects military culture; hierarchical, disciplined, but also egalitarian within rank groups. Understanding the language helps understand the culture Mansford lived and the values he embodied.

Pronunciation: Some terms have non-obvious pronunciation: 'Lieutenant' is pronounced 'lef-tenant' in Australian/British usage (not 'loo-tenant' as in American usage).' Sergeant' drops the first 'e' sound ('sar-jent' not 'ser-geant').

Evolution of Terms: Some terms changed over Mansford's career.' Other Ranks' became 'Soldiers,' 'Repatriation' became 'Veterans' Affairs,' equipment and weapon names changed. The glossary uses terms as they appeared in the periods described.

Respect for Tradition: Military terminology preserves tradition and history. Terms like 'digger,' 'ANZAC,' and 'mateship' carry weight of generations of service and sacrifice. Understanding these terms means understanding Australian military heritage.

PURPOSE OF THIS GLOSSARY

This comprehensive glossary enables civilian readers to fully engage with Brigadier George Mansford's story without requiring military background. It provides not just definitions but context, helping readers understand not only what happened but the military culture and environment in which it occurred. The glossary reflects Mansford's 35-year career (1951-1986) spanning three wars, multiple peacetime postings and the evolution of the Australian Army from post-WWII force through Vietnam era to modern professional Army. Understanding this terminology understands the world Mansford inhabited and shaped.

For military readers, particularly those from different eras or nations, this glossary clarifies Australian-specific terminology and usage from Mansford's period of service, preserving authentic voice and context. For all readers, this glossary is a tool for understanding not just one man's story, but the broader story of Australian military service, values and tradition that Mansford exemplified throughout his remarkable career.

Additional Glossary may be found at the War Memorial website.

APPENDIX F:
SOURCES AND METHODOLOGY

This book draws on multiple sources to construct a portrait of Brigadier George Mansford's life and career.

PRIMARY SOURCES

ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEWS
Australian War Memorial Interview (26th March 2003)
- Topics: Early life, Korea, Malaya, commissioning

'Wundurra' Interview (April of 2011)
- Conducted at Mansford's residence – Peter Adamis
- Topics: Comprehensive career review, reflections on service

UNSW Australians at War Film Archive (2004)
- Interview with Mansford
- Topics: Combat experiences, leadership philosophy

Digital Correspondence
Email
Social Media
RSL newsletters
Association Newsletters

WORKS and WRITINGS

Myths, Fibs, Tall Tales But True
- Mansford's own account of his experiences
- Written in his authentic voice
- Primary source for Chapter 12

Mansford's Last Message to the Regiment
- Dictated to Colonel Jim Hammett
- Delivered posthumously

Published Works
- Junior Leadership on the Battlefield (1983, 1994)
- 'The Mad Galahs' (1988)
- 'The Spirit of Australia' (2014)
- 'Duty and Consequence' (2022)
- Poetry collections and individual poems

Training Manuals and Doctrine
- Army training doctrine influenced by Mansford

SECONDARY SOURCES

Published Histories
- Official histories of Korea, Malaya, Vietnam campaigns
- Unit histories of RAR Battalions
- Histories of AATTV and advisory warfare

Scholarly Works
- Academic studies of Australian military history
- Works on counter-insurgency and jungle warfare
- Studies of military training and leadership

Journalistic Sources
- The Spectator Australia obituary and tributes
- Kapyong articles
- Contemporary news coverage of events
- Abalinx and Associates

Military Records
- Australian War Memorial Research Centre
- National Archives of Australia
- The Royal Australian Regiment Association
- UNSW Australians at War Film Archive

PERSONAL TESTIMONIES

Soldier Testimonials
- Social media
- Post-deployment feedback on training effectiveness
- Reunion accounts and commemorative statements

Colleague Accounts
- Tributes from fellow officers
- Statements from contemporaries
- Legacy organisation records

ARCHIVAL COLLECTIONS

Australian War Memorial
- Research Centre holdings
- Photograph collections
- Oral history archives

Peter 'Bluey' Roberts

National Archives of Australia
- Military service records
- Operational documentation
- Policy and administrative files

State Libraries and Archives
- Western Australian records (early life)
- Queensland records (Tully period, retirement)

Regimental Museums and Archives
- The Royal Australian Regiment Association records
- Unit photograph collections
- Commemorative materials

Methodology. This tribute employs narrative historical methodology, synthesising multiple source types to construct a comprehensive account. Where sources conflict, preference is given to:

1. Mansford's own accounts (oral histories, writings)
2. Official military records (when available)
3. Contemporary documentation (war diaries, letters)
4. Corroborated testimony from multiple sources
5. Published historical works

Limitations and gaps. Where documentation is incomplete, the tribute acknowledges gaps rather than speculating or inventing details. Some aspects of Mansford's service remain undocumented or inaccessible:

1. Classified operational details
2. Personal correspondence (if exists, not available to researchers)
3. Complete personnel file (privacy restrictions)
4. Detailed records of some assignments
5. Full documentation of post-retirement advocacy work

Verification. Key facts have been verified against multiple sources where possible:

- Dates of service confirmed through official records
- Battle/operation details cross-referenced with unit histories
- Awards and honours verified through official lists
- Published works confirmed through library catalogues
- Testimonials corroborated with multiple accounts

AUTHOR'S NOTES

A Digger's Perspective. This is not an objective tribute. It is a personal remembrance of Brigadier George Mansford AM, told from my perspective as a digger who served under him.

During my battle with cancer, I made two promises: to erect a memorial to the Hellenic people and the ANZACs who fought in Greece during World War II and to write about those I served with. The Hellenic ANZAC Memorial now stands in Pellana, with George Mansford's name etched in marble alongside numerous others. This tribute fulfils the second promise.

What This Work Is. George Mansford was, in my opinion, an exceptional leader who always had the interests of soldiers at heart. Like many before me, I sat with him at 'Wundurra' near the Aboriginal mission, listened to his stories and benefited from his counsel. When he spoke of Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam, I listened in the way soldiers have shared their experiences across generations.

Drawing on materials from the Australian War Memorial, The Royal Australian Regiment Association, Parliamentary tributes, personal interviews, George's oral histories, official military records and published works, I have endeavoured to present George Mansford as his soldiers knew him; the leader who served across three wars, established life-saving training standards at Tully and gave voice to the warrior's experience through his published works.

This is a tribute; an act of remembrance and respect for a man who embodied courage, mateship, integrity and service. Where evidence is clear, I have presented it. Where stories cannot be independently verified, I have acknowledged these limitations.

What This Work Is Not. This is not an objective tribute. I did not seek out those who may have disagreed with George Mansford's methodologies and decisions. The result is a work that celebrates rather than critiques; a tribute to a man respected and loved by many.

I have presented George Mansford as his mates, students and friends remember him: as an exceptional leader whose character and competence earned extraordinary respect. Some readers may conclude this work veers into hagiography. That criticism would not be entirely unfair. This is how George's mates remember him; a true account of his impact and the respect he earned.

The Author's Responsibility. I have attempted to maintain certain standards: accuracy of verifiable facts, transparency about sources, honest acknowledgement of limitations, preservation of authentic voices and respect for oral tradition. Where I have failed, the responsibility is mine alone.

Why This Work Matters. George Mansford's generation is disappearing. The men who fought in Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam are in their eighties and nineties now and each year fewer remain. This work preserves one man's story and through it, a piece of Australian military heritage that would otherwise be lost.

The reason for writing this tribute is to ensure that the legacies left behind by George are not for naught and should be read by generations of the future.

The Jungle Training Centre at Tully still operates under his standards. His published works remain essential military reading. His philosophy of knowing your people, understanding people, valuing people continues to influence Australian military culture. May his example inspire, his lessons educate and his legacy save lives.

On Sources and Verification. The stories in this work represent the oral tradition of Australian military service; tales told in Messes, at reunions, around campfires and over beers when old soldiers gather to remember their mates. They are presented in the authentic voices of those who told them, preserving not just the facts of Georgeo's life, but the legend that grew around him and the culture of mateship and storytelling that defines the Australian Army.

Not all these stories can be independently verified, nor should that diminish their value. Oral tradition reveals how a man was remembered, what his mates chose to preserve about him and what truths about character and leadership transcended the specific details of time and place.

Verified First-Hand Accounts. The following accounts come directly from individuals who served with George Mansford and can be verified through personal testimony, service records and documented chronology: Maurice Barwick, Stuart Smith, Ron Llewellyn, Phillip 'Butch' Buttigieg, Phillip Charlesworth, Warren Payne, Garry Adams, Frank Edwards, Don Tate, Jim Hammett, Kel Ryan, Ash Gunder and Neil Weekes. Their observations span decades and multiple contexts, from Platoon service to senior command relationships.

Unverified and Single-Source Accounts. Some stories; such as the bar brawl accounts involving Bert Franks and Frank Moffitt; cannot be independently verified. They may be entirely accurate, partially embellished, or conflated with other incidents. I include them because they capture the culture of mateship and oral tradition, revealing how Georges mates remembered him.

The Value of Oral Tradition. These unverified stories are not fabrications; they are what old soldiers remember and choose to tell about a mate they respected. They preserve the culture of the Australian Army, the bonds between soldiers and the ways that character and leadership are remembered and transmitted across generations.

The oral stories, verified and unverified alike, paint a portrait that is fundamentally true to George Mansford's character. They show a leader who shared his soldiers' hardships, who valued substance over appearance, who fought for those being treated unjustly, who maintained friendships across decades and whose influence extended far beyond his years in uniform.

A Final Word. Where verification status is certain, it has been noted. Where stories come from single sources or cannot be independently confirmed, this has been acknowledged. Where details conflict or remain uncertain, this limitation has been stated clearly.

The stories are presented in good faith, in the authentic voices of those who told them, with respect for both the value of oral tradition and the limitations of memory. They are offered not as definitive historical record, but as testimony to how George was remembered by those who served with him, learned from him and carried his lessons forward. That testimony reveals a fundamental truth: George was a leader whose character, competence and genuine care for his soldiers created bonds that lasted lifetimes and inspired stories that will be told as long as diggers' gather to remember their mates.

Invitation for Contributions. I welcome constructive criticism from researchers, former mates, or readers with additional documentation, corrections, photographs, or recollections. Future editions may include verified corrections and additions with appropriate acknowledgement. Areas where additional information is particularly sought: correspondence, diaries or unpublished writings; photographs from Korea, Malaya, Vietnam or training operations; documentation of post-retirement advocacy work; recollections of those who served with him; publication details of his literary works.

Mates and Duty to Country. *Remember when you were exhausted and your feet were like lead You convinced yourself the night's camp was not too far ahead Haversacks weighed a ton and muscle and bone screamed 'enough' The Sergeant urged us on with 'real soldiers are rough and tough' Empty water bottles, gasping for air and throats that were parched You imagined the cool clear running water at the end of the march Blistered battered feet and with each step more pain did greet*

Well, you volunteered to serve country and that included bloody feet At dusk with your mate, spoon for spoon, devouring a can of food Whispering, sharing, caring for each other and all with similar moods Long sleepless hours in the smothering blackness of night Fear of the unknown and trusting God or luck that all would be right

Waking from fitful sleep with a whispered familiar order of Stand To Quietly, quickly, still drowsy with sleep, you knew what to do From a weapon pit, together, watching and listening Side by side, no matter the danger, to stand fast, me and him Then years later at home, marching behind bugles and drums Mid the waving and cheering crowd are your precious loved ones

Then comes the time to yarn with old mates in restful surrounds The powerful mateship from yesterday still has no bounds From days long gone when you soldiered together in thick and thin Whatever the task and risk, always was the cry of 'count me in' I wouldn't have missed it for all the tea in China or whatever Soldiering for 'OZ' with my mates, hell or high water, always together

George Mansford, July 2015

What I discovered in George Mansford was a man who refused to be only one thing: demanding yet caring, blunt yet poetic, traditional yet innovative. I witnessed the warrior-poet paradox that defined him; enforcing brutal training standards because he believed they saved lives and then writing sensitive poetry exploring loss, love and the soldier's burden.

His authenticity was absolute, speaking truth regardless of career consequences, prioritising soldier welfare over political convenience. His methods saved lives; soldiers who completed his training consistently reported that the realistic preparation he demanded proved invaluable in combat. Across five decades; from Korea-era service to modern counter-terrorism; I saw him maintain relevance through timeless fundamentals, mentoring soldiers with unwavering intensity and commitment.

An Australian who loved his country deeply; that wholeness made him exceptional yet deeply relatable, the digger's digger who lived authentically whilst achieving excellence across multiple dimensions simultaneously.

George taught me that duty sometimes requires accepting tasks you feel unqualified to perform, that mateship means keeping promises even when difficult and that the important thing is to have a go rather than waiting for someone else to do what needs doing.

This is the George Mansford I knew and the man his mates remember. It may not be the whole truth, but it is an account of a life well lived in service to Australia and the soldiers he led.

Peter Adamis

PHOTO ALBUM

George at ‘Wundurra’ Far North Queensland

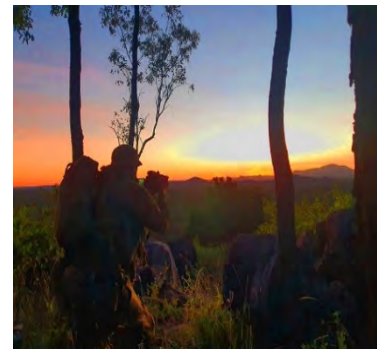
Malay and Vietnam veterans

Overlooking the bay towards Cairns from 'Wundurra'

REUNION OF MATES

Patrolling in Malaya | AATTV Plaque Canungra | Malaya Jungle





51 FNQR

The Bay at ‘Wundurra’ near the Aboriginal mission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Fred Fairhead & George - Cairns RSL Remembrance Day 2021


The 'Little Digger at Euroa Victoria


L-R: Peter Kent, Glenn Willmann, Georgie, Vicki Mansford & George

AUTHOR

Peter Adamis: A Life of Service and Commitment. Peter Adamis is a retired Australian veteran who devoted three decades to the military, rising through the ranks to Warrant Officer.

His career spanned deployments to Malaysia during the Second Malayan Emergency, service in Singapore, training in Papua New Guinea and the United Kingdom and participation in the TELAMON Force deployment to Greece for the 50th Anniversary commemorations of the Battles for Greece and Crete.

Following his military service, Peter successfully transitioned into civilian life, building a career in management and consulting. His commitment to lifelong learning and professional development is reflected in his academic achievements: a Bachelor of Adult Learning and Development, a Postgraduate Degree in Environmental Occupational Health and Safety from Monash University and Diplomas in Training, Public Administration and Management.

An accredited Freelance Journalist, Author and Historian, Peter has published numerous articles and more than thirty books spanning diverse subjects. His published works can be found at abalinx. com under the Books menu section. His research interests include the Mycenaean Empire, Australian
Military History, Asymmetric Warfare, Australian Politics, Artificial Intelligence, Survival Training and the history of his birthplace, Pellana. He is an avid reader of ancient classics and maintains a particular reverence for the works of Homer.

This tribute to George Mansford represents deeply personal work; the fulfilment of a solemn promise to honour one of his military mentors who shaped not only his career but his character and life philosophy. The lessons learned from men like George became the foundation upon which Peter built both his military service and his subsequent civilian achievements.

Born in Pellana, Greece and forged in the traditions of the Australian Army, Peter embodies the bridge between cultures and generations. Committee member and Research Officer for the Australian Hellenic War Memorial in Melbourne. The creator and driving force behind the Hellenic ANZAC Memorial (HANZAC) in Greece.

The project that commemorates the shared sacrifice and enduring bond between ANZAC and Hellenic soldiers during the Second World War. George Mansford continues to serve in spirit as a Guardian of this memorial, a role that reflected both men's commitment to ensuring that the stories of courage, mateship and sacrifice are never forgotten. Through his writing, Peter continues the work his mentors began; passing on the lessons, preserving the memories and ensuring those future generations understand the true cost and meaning of freedom and service.

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