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Talking the Talk:

NEW ZEALANDERS REMEMBER THE VIETNAM WAR

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1998

**TALKING THE TALK:
NEW ZEALANDERS REMEMBER THE VIETNAM WAR**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment
of the requirements for the Degree
of
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Abstract

From 1964 to 1972, almost 4,000 New Zealand military personnel served in Vietnam, most in an active combat role. The war was a politically and socially divisive issue for New Zealanders in general, but it can be argued that its greatest impact has been on the veterans themselves. This thesis will establish, analyse and explain what some of these New Zealander remember about the Vietnam War, why they remember it this way, and what the factors are which may have influenced this. Oral testimony has been chosen as the main form of evidence.

The thesis is divided into a detailed discussion of the methodology used in relation to the collection and analysis of the oral testimonies, a short introduction to some of the New Zealand Vietnam veterans interviewed, ten chapters which present the evidence, and a final section which analyses the evidence and suggests conclusions.

References to the Australian and American experiences during and after Vietnam are made where relevant to provide a comparative element and to establish context.

Chapter One is an introduction to the origins, components and commemoration of New Zealand's military traditions from the Boer War to the conflicts in Malaya and Borneo during the 1950s and 1960s. Chapter Two summarises the political and diplomatic rationale for New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam and the military contribution that New Zealand made. Chapters Three to Eight recount why New Zealanders went to Vietnam and what they found there, allied relationships, the

culture of the New Zealand soldier in Vietnam, the experience of combat and associated psychological and behavioural responses, and coping and stress release mechanisms including the use of alcohol, sex and aggression. Chapter Nine relates the experiences of veterans when they returned home, and Chapter Ten is a discussion of how the Vietnam War is remembered in New Zealand today. Much of the analysis of the evidence is presented in the final section, as are some conclusions.

Although only a small percentage of the New Zealanders who served in Vietnam are represented here, some patterns relating to how and why they remember Vietnam can be established. It is suggested that several versions of New Zealand's traditional military mythology have had a significant impact in relation to some veterans' motivations for going to war, what they experienced during their service and, in particular, the experience of coming home. The mythologies of the American and Australian experiences of Vietnam may also be an influencing factor. This thesis is intended to offer a brief glimpse of the dynamic relationship between the above factors and the process and construction of memory.

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Thanks also to my father, Dr Brian Challinor, who proof-read the manuscript and made helpful suggestions. My biggest thanks go to my family and my partner Aaron, who have supported me unfailingly.

List of Acronyms

NB: This list only includes acronyms which appear in the text more than once

ALP	Australian Labor Party
AOTB	(New Zealand) Agent Orange Trust Board
AOTF	(New Zealand) Agent Orange Trust Fund
ANZAC	Australia/New Zealand Army Corps
ANZUS	Australia, New Zealand, United States Treaty
ARVN	Army of the Republic of (South) Vietnam
AFVN	Armed Forces Radio Vietnam
AVFNM	Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial
CMT	Compulsory Military Training
CND	Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament
CSM	Company Sergeant-Major
DRV	Democratic Republic of Vietnam
EVSA	(New Zealand) Ex-Vietnam Services Association
FAC	Forward air controller
1AFH	1st Australian Field Hospital
1ALSG	1st Australian Logistic Support Group
1ATF	1st Australian Task Force
1NZATTV	1st New Zealand Army Training Team Vietnam
1NZEF	1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force
1NZSMT	1st New Zealand Services Medical Team
FRAT	Free Radical Essay Technique (drug test)
GI	Government Issue (slang for U.S. soldier)
IWD	Ivan Watkins Dow (New Zealand chemical company)
MACV	(U.S.) Military Assistance Command Vietnam
MP	Military Policeman
MOS	Military occupation specialty
NCO	Non-commissioned officer
NEWZAD	New Zealand Army Detachment Vietnam (aka NZADV)
NVA	North Vietnamese Army
NZBC	New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation
NZST	New Zealand Surgical Team (Civilian)
NZ V Force	New Zealand Force Vietnam
PTSD	Post-traumatic stress disorder
PX	Post-exchange (U.S. military store)
R&R	Rest and recreation (leave taken outside Vietnam)
RAAF	Royal Australian Air Force
RAN	Royal Australian Navy

RAR	Royal Australian Regiment - battalions of the RAR are abbreviated 1RAR, 2RAR, 3RAR, etc.
RinC	Rest-in-country (leave taken within Vietnam)
RNZAF	Royal New Zealand Air Force
RNZIR	Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment
RNZSC	Royal New Zealand Signals Corps
RSL	(Australian) Returned Servicemen's League
RSA	(New Zealand) Returned Services' Association
RTNZ	(Date of) return to New Zealand
2NZATTV	2nd New Zealand Army Training Team Vietnam
2NZEF	2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force
SAS	(New Zealand) Special Air Service
SEATO	South-East Asia Treaty Organisation
US	United States of America
VA	(U.S.) Veterans' Administration
VC	Vietcong
VD	Venereal disease
VVA	Vietnam Veterans of America
VVAA	Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia
VVANZ	Vietnam Veterans' Association of New Zealand
VVMF	(U.S.) Vietnam Veterans' Memorial Fund
WO	Warrant Officer, Class 1 or 2, ie. WO1, WO2

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'We were known to the enemy as the grey ghosts. We could be here, and we could be there.'

'Sniper'

INTRODUCTION.

During the 1960s, the U.S. deliberately raised the political and military stakes when it actively interfered in and escalated what was essentially a Vietnamese civil war. However, America was not the only nation to have been dragged into the quagmire the conflict became. New Zealand was one of six nations allied to the Americans in Vietnam. The other five were Australia, South Korea, Thailand, the Philippines, and South Vietnam. Their enemies were the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), who were the formally organised arm of the Vietnamese communist military, and the Vietcong, the communist Vietnamese guerillas. The war did not end until March 1973 when the last U.S. troops left South Vietnam. Approximately 2.7 million US service personnel served in Vietnam throughout the conflict.¹ Between 26 September 1945, the date of death of the first American to be killed in Vietnam, Lieutenant Colonel Peter A. Dewey,² and the withdrawal of the last U.S. combat troops from Vietnamese soil on 29 March 1973, 57,939 Americans died.³ Australia's military commitment to Vietnam lasted from May of 1965 until December of 1972, over 59,000 Australians serving there and 508 dying as a result.⁴

New Zealand sent 3,890 troops to Vietnam,⁵ 37 of whom were killed there.⁶ The war was the first involving New Zealanders which had been 'lost', it had a divisive impact on New Zealanders which was out of proportion to the number who actually

served there, and it can be argued that the most profound effects of the war have been experienced by the veterans themselves. This thesis will establish, analyse and explain what some New Zealand soldiers remember about the Vietnam War, why they remember it this way, and what the factors are which may have influenced this.

Australian military historian Jeffrey Grey writes, 'A nation's willingness to participate in war is predicated upon its population's perceptions of the national experience of previous conflicts.'⁷ Within the terms of reference of this thesis, however, it is not so much the willingness, based on past experiences of war, of New Zealand as a nation to participate in the Vietnam War which will be considered, but the perceptions of those specific individuals who volunteered to go. Were they influenced by New Zealand's military mythologies, or traditions, established in earlier wars, and to what extent? And if they were, what impact did Vietnam have on New Zealand soldiers' belief in and acceptance of those mythologies, both during the war and after? Other factors will also be considered, including the life experiences of New Zealand Vietnam veterans after Vietnam, and the impact on New Zealand veterans of the post-Vietnam mythologies of other western allies which served there. It must be noted that the reconstruction of events in Vietnam from an historically accurate perspective is not the primary aim of this thesis, although a factually correct foundation for events did have to be established in order to detect any deviation from, or reinterpretation of, that foundation as revealed by the testimonies collected for this study.

In *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend*, Alistair Thomson states that memory has been criticised as an unreliable historical source because it can be distorted by the 'deterioration of age, by personal bias and nostalgia, and by the influence of other, subsequent versions of the past.'⁸ As this thesis is about how New Zealand veterans remember Vietnam, the processes and dynamics of remembering and the impact of this on the veterans' testimonies therefore need to be discussed at least briefly. Thomson suggests that it is essential to establish why individuals construct their memories in particular ways, and that the process of remembering can be a 'key to understanding the ways in which certain individual and collective versions of the past are active in the present', maintaining that the actual 'distortions' of memory can themselves be a valuable resource.⁹ Factors which can 'distort' memory include the beliefs, or mythologies, and associated expectations which a person may have incorporated into his or her life before, during and after the event being remembered.

In *Talking History: A Short Guide to Oral History*, Megan Hutching writes that psychologists describe two types of memory systems: short-term and remote, or long-term. Short-term memory becomes impaired with age due to a decrease in effective brain function, while remote memories, those of childhood events, for example, are recalled more effectively because they were stored in an 'intact brain'. This implies that older people should be able to remember events which occurred many years ago more accurately than something which happened yesterday. But

the individual's subsequent experiences, and may be influenced by things such as the media or a romantic notion that "things were much better then".¹⁰ Historians Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth maintain that memory as manifested in oral testimony is often 'trustworthy in two specific instances: for the unique event, which makes a powerful impression upon the interviewee, and the regularly repeated, perhaps even hum-drum events or routines.'¹¹ On the other hand, Paul Thompson, in *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, describes how the human brain discards information about specific events over time, but that 'the initial discarding is by far the most drastic and violent, and it affects any kind of contemporary witness.' He also maintains that 'accurate memory is...much more likely when it meets a social interest or need', and that 'a willingness to remember is essential.'¹²

Memory is therefore subject to failure, especially in older people, considerable distortion due to a variety of influences, the impact of personal agendas when remembering, and the interviewee's desire to confront what is being remembered, or not. It is easy to see why the validity of oral testimony as historical evidence has been criticised at times. However, many of New Zealand's Vietnam veterans are not old. Most are aged around 50 years, the war only 25 or 30 years behind them, and as such are unlikely to be experiencing the memory loss that can afflict the elderly. But the memories of Vietnam veterans are subject to other less tangible, but nevertheless very powerful, dynamics of remembering which have been influenced by having volunteered to fight in an unpopular and politically and morally dubious

New Zealand Government, the U.S. political administration, and the Vietnamese themselves, of having been ignored at best and ostracised at worst when they came home, and of having to suffer the ongoing mental and physical effects of the war without support or recognition.

These dynamics of remembering have been described by David Lowenthal in his erudite study, *The Past is a Foreign Country*. In his discussion of memory as a way of knowing the past, he writes, 'Various types of recall, willed and unbidden, learned and innate, reveal diverse aspects of things past, combining to reflect our past as a whole. The need to use and reuse memorial knowledge, and to forget as well as to recall, force us to select distil, distort, and transform the past, accommodating things remembered to the needs of the present.' He also maintains that 'Remembering the past is crucial for our sense of identity...to know what we were confirms who we are.'¹³ For Vietnam veterans, knowing their past makes them part of a special group then and now. For some today, this may be relatively unimportant compared to other aspects of their lives, but for others, their identity as Vietnam veterans may be a very dominant and integral feature. It is therefore essential that their memories of Vietnam, as a basis for their identity, are kept as vibrant, significant and as 'real' as possible. As is quoted in Lowenthal, 'Everybody needs his memories. They keep the wolf of insignificance from the door.'¹⁴

Lowenthal, however, notes the non-confirmability of memory:

The subjective nature of memory makes it both a sure and a dubious guide to the past....[But] [e]ven an error of memory involves the

recall of something, however distorted; no memory is totally delusive. Indeed, a false recollection firmly believed becomes a fact in its own right....Particular memories often do turn out to be wrong or even invented, but we remain confident about most of them because they are congruent; they hang together too well to be dismissed as illusions. And we cannot impeach all our memories...or present experience would make no sense....No one else can wholly vindicate our own unique experience of a past. Memories proved wrong or inaccurate are thereby not dispelled; a false recollection can be as durable and potent as a true one, especially if it sustains a self-image.'

U.S. Vietnam veteran and military advisor Colonel David H. Hackworth relates the above dynamics of memory to war veterans:

War stories present two problems to authors striving for The Truth. First of all, if you live long enough to tell them, and have enough of an audience to practice telling them *to* through the years, war stories become just that - stories. Just as time distances the story teller from the events themselves, so do the repeated tellings. Gradually the stories are embellished in places, honed down in others until they are perfect tales, even if they bear little resemblance to what actually happened. Yet the storyteller is completely unaware of how far he may have strayed from the facts. Those countless tellings have made the story The Truth.¹⁵

Or, in the simple words of oral historian Ronda Jamieson, 'Truth is the perception of the individual.'¹⁶

Lowenthal also discusses the different types of recall. 'Each type of recall subtends its own perspective on the past. Instrumental memory lacks involvement; its schematized past simply points toward the more important present. Reverie recalls particular feelings and encourages us to compare past with present states of being. Total recall immerses us willy-nilly in the past; the present is hag-ridden by previous events so consequential or traumatic that they are relived almost as though

they were still occurring.’¹⁷ For some Vietnam veterans, the latter two types of recall appear to be the most prevalent. An example is the sentiment that some veterans hold that their time in Vietnam was the best of their lives because of the comradeship experienced there.

Memory is also subject to forgetting, deliberately and inadvertently, as well as revision. ‘[R]ecollections are malleable and flexible; what seems to have happened undergoes continual change. Heightening certain events in recall, we then reinterpret them in the light of subsequent experience and present need....Just as we forget or elide scenes that initially failed to strike us, we exaggerate those that did....We mask diversity and collapse countless earlier images into a few dominant memories, accentuating any impressive characteristic and exaggerating its splendour or fragility.’ Lowenthal concludes his discussion of memory by writing, ‘The prime function of memory, then, is not to preserve the past but to adapt it so as to enrich and manipulate the present.’¹⁸

Lowenthal is referring to the ‘present’ of the individual which again raises the issue of self-image. American historian E. Culpepper Clark considers the psychological dimension of history in a paper titled ‘Reconstructing History: The Epitomizing Image’:

The act of remembering is therapy for the psyche, a Proustian search for lost time. It takes our individuated acts in any given moment, especially any bad things we have done, and connects those acts with the wholeness of our being in time, a wholeness expressed in our nobler, loftier senses of self. It is protective and restorative, and although it admits of negative self-disclosure, (conceding bad things

about one's self), even negative disclosures bend to the higher imperative of self-knowledge through self-justification....Finding a past that one can live with, and coming to terms with the past - these necessary acts of the well-adjusted person require that the past not simply be rediscovered but redeemed.¹⁹

This is particularly relevant to many Vietnam veterans who consider that some of the things they did, or were required to do, in Vietnam were 'bad', and who need to go through this process to enable themselves to somehow 'close' off that part of their lives and 'move on'.

Alistair Thomson expands on David Lowenthal's writings in his work relating to

Australian veterans of the First World War:

We compose our memories to make sense of our past and present lives. 'Compose' is an aptly ambiguous term to describe the process of memory-making. In one sense we 'compose' or construct memories using the public languages and meanings of our culture. In another sense we 'compose' memories that help us to feel relatively comfortable with our lives, which gives us a feeling of composure. We make or repress memories of experiences which are still painful and 'unsafe' because they do not easily accord with our present identity, or because their inherent traumas or tensions have never been resolved. We seek composure, an alignment of our past, present and future lives. One key theoretical connection, and the link between the two senses of composure, is that the apparently private process of composing safe memories is in fact very public. Our memories are risky and painful if they do not conform with public norms or versions of the past. We compose our memories so that they will fit with what is publicly acceptable, or, if we have been excluded from general public acceptance, we seek out particular social contexts which affirm our identities and the way we want to remember our lives.²⁰

Thomson maintains that an examination of the composure of memory can show how legends (referred to as mythology in this thesis) 'work' by 'providing general meanings and identities which help individuals to comprehend and articulate their experiences. There is no neat correlation between legend and experience, but rather a complex and dynamic negotiation between memory, personal identity and public meanings and identities. The negotiation often occurs in a social situation, through which affirming, collective identities - including national identities - are constructed. Sometimes the official or dominant legends do not "work" for the individual.'²² It is suggested here that this has been the case for some New Zealand Vietnam veterans.

Australian military historian Jeffrey Grey writes, 'Every nation defines itself in part through certain national myths, stories which contain a nation's and a people's image of themselves within their own history. Wars are among the great mythic experiences which help nations to define themselves.' New Zealand is no exception to this. But what is a myth? In modern times the word often has negative connotations, implying that the subject of the mythology is untrue or based on fiction. The sixth edition of the *Concise Oxford Dictionary* lists a myth as a 'Traditional narrative usu[ally] involving supernatural or fancied persons etc. and embodying popular ideas on natural or social phenomena etc.; allegory (*Platonic myth*); fictitious person or thing or idea.'²³ Australian historian Jane Ross, however, defines a myth as being:

a legend built up as an ideal-type out of what the myth-makers themselves, for whatever reasons, deem to be the most important features of the experience. To them, as to later propagandists, the truth or otherwise of the myth in any particular instance is probably irrelevant. What matters to them is that an essence is expressed, a distillation of important truths. This ideal type then ceases to be descriptive, or to claim to be descriptive: it becomes an ideal type in another sense, meaning the good for which one should strive; or, more cynically, the official line which should be put about as being the real case even if no more than lip-service is paid to it.²⁴

It is this definition of the word 'myth' which will be employed throughout this thesis and, together with other factors, it is the impact of mythology as defined by Ross on how and why New Zealand Vietnam veterans remember the war which will be explored.

The thesis is divided into a detailed discussion of the methodology used in relation to the collection and analysis of the oral testimonies used as evidence, a short introduction to some of the New Zealand Vietnam veterans interviewed, ten chapters which present the evidence, and a final section which analyses the evidence and offers a conclusion. References to the Australian and American experiences during and after Vietnam are made where relevant to provide a comparative element and to establish context.

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contribution made by New Zealand. Chapters Three to Eight recount why New Zealanders went to Vietnam and what they found there, allied relationships, the culture of the New Zealand soldier in Vietnam, the experience of combat and associated psychological and behavioural responses, and coping and stress release mechanisms including the use of alcohol, sex and aggression. Chapter Nine relates the experiences of veterans when they returned home, and Chapter Ten is a discussion of how the Vietnam War is remembered in New Zealand today. Much of the analysis of the evidence is presented in the final section, as are some conclusions.

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- ¹ *The Vietnam War Day by Day*, edited by John S. Bowman (London, 1989), pp. 44, 220.
² Stanley Karnow, *Vietnam: A History* (London, 1983), pp. 139-140.
³ *The Vietnam War Day by Day*, p. 220.
⁴ Australian War Memorial, *Australians in Vietnam 1962-73*, (Canberra, 1996), p. 5.
⁵ Ministry of Defence, *Brief History of the New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972* (Wellington, 1973), p. 14.
⁶ Mike Subritzky, *The Vietnam Scrapbook: The Second Anzac Adventure* (Papakura, 1995), p. 3.
⁷ Jeffrey Grey, 'Vietnam, Anzac and the Veteran', in *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, edited by Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey, and Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), p. 63.
⁸ Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living with the Legend* (Melbourne, 1994), p. 227
⁹ *ibid.*, p. 228.
¹⁰ Megan Hutching, *Talking History: A Short Guide to Oral History* (Wellington, 1993), pp. 58-59.
¹¹ Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth: 'Elite' Oral History* (London, 1983), pp. 17-18.
¹² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 101, 103-104.
¹³ David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), pp. 194, 197.
¹⁴ The character of 'Mr Sammler' in Saul Bellow's *Mr Sammler's Planet* (1970), quoted in *ibid.*, p. 198.
¹⁵ Col. David H. Hackworth and Julie Sherman, *About Face: The Odyssey of an American Warrior* (New York, 1989), p. 9.
¹⁶ Ronda Jamieson, 'Moral History: The Conflict Within', *Oral History Association of Australia*, No. 13 (1991), p. 21.
¹⁷ Lowenthal, p. 204.
¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 208, 210.
¹⁹ E. Culpepper Clark, 'Reconstructing History: The Epitomizing Image', in *Interactive Oral History Interviewing*, edited by Eva M. McMahan and Kin Lacy Rogers (New Jersey, 1994), p. 19.
²⁰ Alistair Thomson, 'A Past You Can Live With: Digger Memories and the Anzac legend', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No. 13 (1991) p. 13.
²¹ Thompson, p. 110.
²² *ibid.*, p. 17.
²³ *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English*, Sixth edition, edited by J.B. Sykes (London, 1976), p. 721.
²⁴ Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger: the Australian Soldier in Two World Wars* (New South Wales, 1985), pp. 12-13.

METHODOLOGY

Oral testimony has been chosen as the main form of evidence for this study for several reasons. The first, and foremost, is that there are too few documentary or published sources available to allow the depth and type of analysis required for this thesis topic. It became evident in the preparation stage of the study that, due to the nature of the topic, oral testimony would have to be specifically collected and that it would become the most important and appropriate source of evidence. Secondly, I wanted to add to the historiography of New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam, not merely re-present what little there already is, although some of what is available has been used to evaluate the oral evidence I have collected. Finally, I saw the study as an opportunity to permanently record the memories and experiences of at least some of New Zealand's Vietnam veterans.

In *By Word of Mouth: 'Elite' Oral History*, Seldon and Pappworth define documentary evidence as being 'material produced at the time as part of a policy process, and which itself is instrumental in that process', such as 'reports of meetings, background papers and reports, and communications (telegrams, letters, directives, memoranda, etc), or reports of communications between people.' They make a distinction between documentary evidence and what they refer to as reported evidence by defining the latter as 'material abstracted from that continuing policy process, and either remaining inert...or communicated to third parties who have no

inter-relationship with that process or world.' Reported evidence can be contemporary, including diaries and personal letters, or retrospective, as in histories, biographies and autobiographies. According to Seldon and Pappworth, when reported evidence is communicated verbally, it can be called oral history, defined by them as 'information transmitted orally, in a personal exchange, of a kind likely to be of historical or long-term value.'¹

I was unable to locate much documentary evidence at all in relation to the experiences of New Zealanders in Vietnam, and little has been used in this study. The Alexander Turnbull Library had several items in their collection which related to anti-war protest, but only one contribution from a Vietnam veteran, which concerned psychological operations and was not particularly relevant, although the accompanying photographs were useful.² I also went to National Archives, but it was clear that the material relating to the Vietnam War was not the type of evidence I was searching for. The Kippenberger Military Archive and Library at Waiouru had more material, mainly photographs and several private video tapes, although I had to wait for 18 months before I received the photographs I had ordered. I also contacted the New Zealand Defence Force regarding access to Personal and Restricted Files but, after discussions with staff there, decided that they were unlikely provide the sort of evidence I was looking for, and that the time and money required to investigate them would not justify the result. The veterans themselves were more forthcoming with documentary evidence, particularly photographs,

although none of them appears to have kept a diary of his tour. If there are diaries and letters, they were not made available to me. In 1997 I was loaned the original 161 Battery Charge Book for the period 20 December 1966 to 29 May 1968, plus two Artillery Signal Log Books, which were unexpected windfalls.

There are two issues regarding the use of documentary evidence which need to be raised here. The first is that, as Seldon and Pappworth point out, 'Both documentary and reported evidence are prone to distortion through being committed to paper "for the record"'. Memory and conscious editing also play an important role in both.³

Historian David Collier also notes that, 'Documentary evidence can be just as suspect as any oral record.'⁴ In *The Voice of the Past*, Thompson describes and illustrates in detail how and why documentary sources such as newspapers, private and official correspondence, autobiographies and memoirs, biographies, histories, official statistics, photographs and film, can also be subject to bias and distortion, whether they are produced during or immediately after the event, or years later.⁵

Therefore, if documentary evidence had been used as the main source in this study, had enough been available, it would not necessarily have been any more reliable or accurate than the oral testimony is, although additional documentary evidence could have been used to cross-check the oral testimonies more extensively and perhaps to better or more conclusive effect.

The second issue is that the subject of this thesis is how New Zealand Vietnam veterans remember the war, why they remember it that way, and what may have

influenced that remembering. Diaries and letters home written by veterans in 1967 would only have recorded what veterans experienced and thought then (possibly already with bias and distortion), although it would be useful to compare any changes in recollection or attitudes. The passage of time since the war and what the veterans feel and remember today has been essential, in terms of this study at least, as it has been this period which appears to have allowed the re-composing of memory to occur. So apart from the two or three memoirs available, the only way to obtain evidence regarding veterans' memories and beliefs today was to ask them. Documentary evidence was therefore never going to have a central role in this study, quite apart from the fact there is little available.

As oral testimony *is* integral, it is necessary to consider what are the advantages and disadvantages of using it as evidence. Thompson maintains that oral history, as well as giving historical research a human element, 'offers a challenge to the accepted myths of history, to the authoritarian judgment inherent in its tradition. It provides for a more radical transformation of the social meaning of history.'⁶ However, the use of oral testimony as a useful and valid historical source has been criticised by traditional documentary historians, despite the fact that, as a source of historical evidence, 'oral history is as old as history itself.'⁷ Seldon and Pappworth discuss in detail a range of criticisms of oral history which they group under the headings, 'the shortcomings of the interviewee, those of the interviewer, and those inherent in the nature of interviewing itself.' These criticisms include the unreliability of memory,

which has already been discussed, deliberate falsification of testimony and distortion of perspective for a range of reasons, and misrepresentation of the evidence by the researcher.⁸ Poor interview technique and lack of rigorous analysis of the evidence have also been cited as potential problems in the use of oral testimony.⁹

On the other hand, Thompson argues that the realisation of oral history's full potential will bring a 'change in the way in which history is written and learnt, in its questions and its judgements, and in its texture', as well as providing new evidence in existing fields of historical study.¹⁰ Seldon and Pappworth write that oral evidence can be of particular benefit by providing extra information in relation to already-documented events, by increasing knowledge of individual personalities and roles, and personal and organised relationships, and by supplementing, and aiding the interpretation of, documents. Further, the potential benefits of interviewing include the possibility of access to personal documents, further information after the interviews, insight into an interviewee's personality and thought processes, and atmosphere and colour. They also stress that 'The benefits that oral history can provide depend on whether the area of research contains full documentary evidence or whether documentary evidence is poor, non-existent, or simply not available',¹¹ as in the case of the experiences of New Zealand's Vietnam veterans.

It is considered by some historians that the problems of using oral testimony are most evident when researching military history.¹² Glyn Harper, author of *Kippenberger: An Inspired New Zealand Commander* (1997), writes, 'One of the

main reasons for the reluctance of military historians to use oral sources has to do with the very nature of the modern battlefield. The key characteristic of a modern battle, for those who are participants, is confusion. Smoke, noise, fear, manoeuvrability of forces: all these add to the confusion experienced by the combatants so that no one person is in total control of events or has a complete picture of what has transpired during the action.' However, it needs to be noted that the battlefield is not the only arena where these factors can conspire to cause confusion. Large scale fires, plane crashes, earthquakes, the Blitz during the Second World War, and the sinking of the *Titanic* are all examples of events during which most participants would not have initially gained a complete picture at the time. Harper also cites the unwillingness of participants to recall painful experiences, and the syndrome of over or under inflating one's role in the event, as problems associated with using oral testimony to research military history. Again, and as Harper admits in relation to the latter problem, all of these possibilities are likely to arise during the collection of oral testimony regarding many areas of historical research. Although Harper did use oral sources in his book about Kippenberger, mainly because he found that some vital information could not be obtained anywhere else, he cites several prominent and widely published military historians whose recent works, for the above reasons, feature little or no oral sources at all, including Australians Jeffrey Grey and David Horner.¹³

However it appears that that oral testimony is becoming more acceptable as a source for military historians, particularly when researching modern wars. Ian McGibbon, who also used oral sources in his comprehensive history, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II - Combat Operations* (1996), which followed on from *Volume I - Politics and Diplomacy* (1992), writes, 'Oral history is an important secondary source for the Korean War history. It provides flavour, and as such personalises the story. It also can point in directions that can be followed up in the documentary records. I believe that for any historian working in a similar area, such personal witnesses must be an important source, to be weighed against material gained from other areas. They provide an opportunity to test conclusions and to gain new insights.' McGibbon's preferred primary sources were unit war diaries and Army and Navy files, but he also used oral testimony from 57 Kayforce veterans as well as a limited number of personal letters and diaries. Although he considers that, 'Like all historical evidence, oral history evidence must be treated with scepticism and due regard to its provenance', he nevertheless found that:

In a general sense, the interviews I have conducted allow me to write with more authority and confidence about the conditions that were experienced by the men. They contribute, in short, to that broad underlay of knowledge that allows useful conclusions to be drawn about events or developments. More specifically, I use the material in a similar way to the personal diary entries, with due regard to the differing perspective between immediate and distant (in time) observation. Personal comments, whether written or verbal, can help to enliven the manuscript. Wherever possible, I introduce individual viewpoints to illustrate or emphasise the points I am making.'¹⁴

Harper and McGibbon are two New Zealand military historians who have effectively used oral sources in their research, but what of those authors who have focused specifically on New Zealand's involvement in the Vietnam War? There are really only two publications to date which include forms of oral testimony and these are Colin Smith's *The Killing Zone: The New Zealand Infantry in Vietnam* (1995), and Claire Loftus Nelson's *Long Time Passing: New Zealand Memories of the Vietnam War* (1990). But Smith and Nelson use oral testimony infrequently and only as far as it illustrates salient points in their texts, and without analysis or comparison with documentary evidence, and the results are difficult to assess as being 'successful' or 'failed' examples of the use of oral testimony. But what are the criteria for judging what is successful and what is not, and who should be the judge? *The Good War* (1984) by Studs Terkel, for example, contains no analysis at all, but received reviews such as the one by Clancy Sigal of *The Guardian* which describes Terkel as 'One of the sharpest witnesses of our time, with the eye of a police reporter and the heart of a poet...In *The Good War* he has come close to producing an international war canvas of Tolstoyan breadth, concentrated detail and depth of feeling...magnificent.'¹⁵

One has to look at Australia and America for published works which rely extensively on oral sources in relation to the Vietnam War. Gary McKay's *Vietnam Fragments: An Oral History of Australians At War* is possibly the best Australian example to date. Although McKay does not discuss how he evaluated the reliability

of the evidence he collected, or even if he did, he does present a comprehensive range of testimonies from 52 veterans of Vietnam, men and women and civilians, including, 'nurses and doctors, Qantas cabin crew and pilots, men who had served in the Army, Air Force and Navy in helicopters, artillery batteries, maintenance divisions, and ships carrying troops.'¹⁶ Harper describes *Vietnam Fragments* as an excellent study exploring the personal experiences of people at war, and writes, 'Very rarely have oral history sources been used in detail to explore other aspects of military history such as battlefield tactics, logistics and supply, levels of command or military commanders.'¹⁷

Two American oral history collections, *Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam 1945-1975: An Oral History* (1989) by Harry Maurer, and *To Bear Any Burden: The Vietnam War and Its Aftermath In the Words of Americans and Southeast Asians* (1985) by Al Santoli, are both very comprehensive, informative and thought-provoking. Like *Vietnam Fragments*, both use testimony from a wide range of participants to tell the story of the war, but neither provide much, if any, analysis of that testimony. However these three oral history collections are all considered to be 'best sellers'. There are a considerable number of more 'academic' American publications based on oral sources, in which testimony is rigorously analysed, repeatedly assessed for validity, internal consistency and context, and in which the conclusions drawn from that analysis are used to provide meaning for the veterans' experiences and for the war itself. These include Lloyd B. Lewis's *The Tainted*

War: Culture and Identity in Vietnam War Narratives (Westport, Connecticut, 1985), *Parallels: The Soldiers' Knowledge and the Oral History of Contemporary Warfare* (Hawthorne, New York, 1992) by J.T. Hanson, A. Susan Owen and Michael Patrick Madden, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (North Carolina, 1993) by Christian G. Appy, and Jonathan Shay's *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* ((New York, 1994). These works, while perhaps not at the top of the best seller list, all use oral testimony to its fullest and most methodologically-tested potential. This raises the question, which will not be answered here, what is 'good' oral history? Is it Gary McKay's popular and widely read *Vietnam Fragments*, or Lloyd B. Lewis's *The Tainted War* with its complex and innovative analysis and interpretation aimed at a much smaller audience of specialists?

There are, of course, examples which have used oral sources to somewhat dubious effect. Australian journalist Stuart Rintoul's *Ashes of Vietnam : Australian Voices* (Victoria, 1987) is considered, by some Australian academics and Vietnam veterans alike, to be one such example. Again, Rintoul has not analysed the oral testimony he collected, but instead of producing an informative and rich collection of experiences such as *Vietnam Fragments*, he appears to have opted for a result which is more sensational than well-researched. Australian historian Jeffrey Grey cites *Ashes of Vietnam* as the 'best' example of poor use of oral testimony when he writes, 'Some of the work which presents what we might characterise as the

“veteran as time bomb” school is simply thoroughly bad, sloppy in its methodology and intended to prove a predetermined thesis.’¹⁸

For this study, 48 New Zealand Vietnam veterans currently living in New Zealand, plus two who reside in Australia, were interviewed between March of 1995 and June of 1997. In February of 1995 I contacted the secretary of the local Hamilton Vietnam veterans’ group (Hamilton V-Force Vets) and briefly outlined my research. I was invited to attend the next meeting at which I gave a short talk regarding the aims of my doctoral research and my hope that a book would be one outcome of the study. From that meeting I was able to arrange five or six interviews over the next few weeks. During those interviews I was given the names and phone numbers of other veterans who may be interested in being interviewed, which I followed up. By December of 1995 I had carried out tape-recorded interviews with 20 veterans, including two who were still serving in the Army.

In December of 1995, I placed a request in *Contact*, the magazine produced by the New Zealand Ex-Vietnam Services’ Association (EVSA). From this I received written or telephoned offers from a further 35 veterans who were interested in being interviewed, including some who live in the South Island and the two in Australia. As I was unable at that time to travel that far to interview people personally, I wrote to those who live beyond driving distance to suggest interviews by correspondence. Six potential interviewees did not reply to my letters, presumably because they did not want to go to the effort of putting pen to paper, or could not (although one

veteran who has Huntington's Disease dictated his responses to his wife), or had specifically wanted to be visited in person, which reduced the number to 29.

Ultimately 39 interviews were tape-recorded, 11 were done by correspondence, and all were completed by June 1997.

Interviewees were solicited rather than selected, that is, I did not start the interviewing process with a specific list of Vietnam veterans whom I wanted to interview, and I relied on a more random 'snowball' or 'word of mouth' method. I felt unable to employ a systematic approach to obtaining potential interviewees for several reasons. Firstly, I had been warned at my first meeting with the Hamilton V-Force Vets to 'tread carefully' if I asked for interviews as many veterans remain sensitive regarding their Vietnam experiences, and wary of people asking them questions about it. Even among those veterans whom I did interview, some believe that they have been misquoted in the past, particularly by newspaper and television journalists, and after previous studies carried out by Massey University¹⁹ some feel that they did not receive adequate feedback and that what they had contributed had been misconstrued or manipulated to serve perceived hidden agendas. To have actively pursued interviews, I believe, would have jeopardised the success of that phase of my research. New Zealand Vietnam veterans are a rather closed community and word of a 'pushy', 'nosy' or inconsiderate researcher may have encouraged them to close ranks.

Also, I ran out of local veterans who were willing to be interviewed, hence my request in *Contact* late in 1995. There was not a huge response to this, although *Contact* is a national publication sent to approximately 1,500 EVSA members, and I felt unable to decline offers without risking the potential problems of a too-small sample, or a sample which did not include enough military occupation specialties (MOSs) from which to establish any patterns or draw any real conclusions. Placing advertisements for interested contributors in larger publications such as *The Herald* and *The Dominion* would probably have attracted a larger number of veterans, but I would not have had the time or the money to follow these up.

When I did follow up seven or eight veterans who had initially verbally expressed an interest in being interviewed, I experienced difficulty in several cases. While most apologetically explained that they had changed their minds, two suggested that I 'piss off' or similar, and one wanted me to telephone him twice a week for the next few weeks to see what sort of mood he was in and whether he would agree. I did not pursue these potential interviewees. Veterans who had received severe wounds while serving in Vietnam appeared to be particularly reticent about contributing to the study.

Interviewing subjects at random invites the risk of unrepresentative sampling.

Fortunately, I did seem to obtain a reasonable cross-section of ranks, MOSs, and ages in Vietnam (see Appendix D). Eight interviewees had done more than one tour of duty in Vietnam, some with the same unit and some with others, but for

statistical reasons they have been listed under their first tour in the appendix. Rank in Vietnam ranged from Private to Colonel, with representations from most others between, and I interviewed more non-commissioned officers (NCOs) and officers than I did privates and gunners. While the majority of the veterans interviewed were infantrymen (29), I also talked to some who had served with 161 Battery, the New Zealand Special Air Service, the 1st New Zealand Services Medical Team (1NZSMT), the 1st New Zealand Army Training Team Vietnam (1NZATTV), a military chaplain, and New Zealand personnel seconded to the 1st Australian Logistic Support Group (1ALSG), the Royal Australian Signal Corp (RASC), and the Australian aviation outfit 161 Reconnaissance Flight. Twelve interviewees served approximately three years in the military altogether, eight between six and ten years, and 29 had long-term careers of 20 years or more. Ages while serving in Vietnam ranged from 20 to 41 years old.

Ex-infantrymen are a little over-represented in this study, although the infantry had the highest numbers in Vietnam, and some other MOSs are under-represented.

There are also more ex-infantrymen from certain infantry companies than there are from others. Although there are representations from every company, there are more from Victor 5, with Victor 3 and 6 close behind, and Whiskey 2 (see Appendix D). This was perhaps an effect of the 'word of mouth' method of obtaining interviews. But taking into account the range of respondents in terms of rank, previous experience, and MOS, I consider that the random method of inviting

veterans to approach me rather than me selecting and actively pursuing them has been justified.

Another problem with not specifically selecting interviewees is, as noted by Harper, that, 'the wrong type of people may be willing to talk. By this is meant that those who are willing to do the talking may have had the least to do with the action in question.'²⁰ This did not appear to occur during this study because almost every person who had served in Vietnam experienced fear, tension and stress relating to the possibility of life-endangering encounters whether they wanted to or not, regardless of their MOS, due to the nature of the war. No one interviewed had been stationed in a completely safe area and all were at risk of being shot or injured by mines.

The small number of veterans I interviewed, 50 altogether, is 1.3 percent of the 3,890 New Zealanders who served in Vietnam. While 1.3 percent is perhaps not a large enough number on which to base the definitive study of the experiences of New Zealanders in Vietnam, the material collected does represent a range of experiences and opinions, if not the complete range, enough to allow at least some analysis. To have attempted to interview all New Zealand veterans of Vietnam would have been highly unrealistic. Alistair Thomson's book *Anzac Memories* is based on testimony from three of only 21 Australian First World War veterans (from an Australian Expeditionary Force of 330,000²¹) whom he interviewed for his project, a much smaller proportional sample than that which has been used here.²²

However, it is quite possible that there are some veterans whom I did not interview who did have completely different experiences to those whom I did interview.

There are several specific groups of veterans whom I did not interview. The most obvious of these are the people who did not come forward to be interviewed. From what I could gather from more communicative veterans, the main reasons for veterans not wanting to be interviewed would be: their experiences are still too painful for them to examine and share publicly; they did not trust me not to misuse what they might tell me; they were afraid that someone *else*, for example, the media, might use my research against them; they thought it would be a waste of time because nobody would be interested in reading a thesis or buying a book about what they did in Vietnam; and, the war was 30 years ago and they have put it behind them. Most of these reasons suggest that, for these veterans, not wanting to be interviewed was not because they had perhaps done something unique or very unusual in Vietnam, but because they perceived that their experiences would be received unfavourably or that it would be painful for them to share them. Not being able to interview this group of veterans was a drawback regarding this study, however this is a problem that all historians who use oral testimony encounter.

Other groups of New Zealanders who were involved in the Vietnam War which I did not include in this study are: civilians, including women, who served with the New Zealand Surgical Team (NZST), the Red Cross, the Salvation Army, and other civilian aid teams; wives and family of service personnel; service and civilian

personnel who transported the New Zealanders to and from Vietnam; New Zealand war correspondents; and politicians or protesters from the era. This was due to an early decision to deliberately exclude these groups and limit my research to New Zealand male service personnel stationed in Vietnam. Another small group which I excluded is the veterans who returned home after their Vietnam tours and joined the anti-war movement, as also occurred in the U.S. and Australia. The inclusion of representatives from this group would have added another valuable dimension to the study, but none of the veterans I interviewed became involved in the anti-war movement or mentioned anyone who had. In fact, the situation was quite the opposite for many.²³

I found that I had to specifically design, or modify existing, documentation for this study, including a release form, two variations of a set of tailored questions, and a short description of what the study was about. The release form I used (see Appendix A) was a combined and adapted version of one in use by the History Department of the University of Waikato, and one which appears in Megan Hutching's *Talking History*.²⁴ At tape-recorded interviews I had the interviewee sign the release form, then I signed it, then took it away to photocopy and posted a copy to the interviewee for his records. With correspondence interviews, I sent two copies of the release form, both already signed by me, and asked the interviewee to send one back with his responses.

I used two very similar sets of questions (see Appendices B and C), one for tape-recorded interviews which was used as a guide for myself and the interviewee, and a modified version for correspondence interviews which asked slightly more 'probing' and open questions, as I would not be present to guide the interviewee. It was important to design the questions so that both tape-recorded and correspondence interviewees were asked about the same issues, but without making the correspondence set too much like a questionnaire, which would not have elicited very detailed or thoughtful answers.²⁵ Both versions are based on a series of questions designed by Gary McKay when he was researching *Vietnam Fragments*,²⁶ and both forms start with basic, 'closed', information-gathering questions such as in what year did the interviewee go to Vietnam, how long was his tour, how old was he at the time, what was his rank, etc, then both move onto more 'open' questions like what were his first impressions on arrival, and was it what he had expected.

I also prepared a short outline of the study to explain what I was researching, and why, and what the information I obtained was going to be used for, going to some lengths to assure interviewees that I would respect their confidentiality if this is what they wanted, and the anonymity of any material given to me, whether it was all or only part of their testimony, where requested. After I had arranged a tape-recorded interview, I sent the interviewee a package containing an outline (if he had not already seen one), a questionnaire, an endorsement of my study from the History Department, and a letter confirming the date, time and place of the

interview. Correspondence interviewees received an outline, the appropriate questions, two release forms, an endorsement, and a covering letter.

Circulation of the questions prior to the interview was done deliberately for several reasons. The first was to attempt to establish trust prior to the interview. In his journal article, 'Thoughts About "The Compleat" Oral Historian', Dale E.

Treleven writes, 'There is far greater likelihood of an interview of substantive content if the seeds of rapport and trust are sown many days before the interviewer engages the "Record" button on a tape machine.'²⁷ Oral historian Ronda Jamieson agrees, maintaining that 'Interviewees need advance notice of what is likely to be covered.'²⁸ I was concerned that interviewees might expect questions about controversial issues such as the killing of wounded prisoners (particularly since Rod Eder's novel, *Deep Jay*, had been released early in 1995 alleging such acts and had attracted considerable controversy and negative feeling), and I felt it necessary to indicate clearly that I would not be asking questions about such incidents. Some interviewees did volunteer information but, I suspect, would not have if I had asked for it.

I also wanted to introduce interviewees in advance to the types of questions that I would be asking, some of which were quite personal and potentially sensitive, for example, 'Did you visit prostitutes?', so that there would be no 'surprises' or embarrassing moments during the interview. I debated for some time about including this type of question, but decided that I would because I suspected that

some interviewees may not bring such subjects up with me voluntarily.²⁹ However, if interviewees were made aware in advance that such topics would be broached, I felt that they would be more comfortable and forthcoming with their responses. This was important for the study, I believe, because testimony relating to issues such as recreational activities while on leave would be somewhat one-dimensional without the inclusion of topics like sex, excessive alcohol consumption and perhaps even being arrested for 'misbehaving'. Most interviewees were happy to comment, and those who were not deliberately steered themselves clear of the 'tricky' questions, which I took as an indication not to pursue those subjects. But generally the responses were valuable and illuminating. An issue related to this was the possibility that some veterans may have wanted to be interviewed in private, that is, without their wives or partners present. Providing the questions in advance gave them an opportunity to think about and arrange this and it appears that a significant number of veterans did want to be interviewed privately.

In response to the hypothetical question, 'Did circulating the questions in advance give interviewees the opportunity to 're-compose' or tailor their answers to fit their own agendas?', my answer is no. I believe that if this did happen, it was going to happen anyway. And if indeed it has happened, then that testimony offers an ideal opportunity to look at how and why people remember past experiences the way they do, which is, after all, the topic of this thesis. Some interviewees obviously had thought about the questions in advance, which was indicated by comments along the

lines of 'I thought long and hard about this question', although they did not subsequently appear to have rehearsed their responses. A few had even made a few notes of dates and operations, although more had just gathered together books and photo albums for me to look at. Others clearly had not considered the questions to any great length before their interviews, some, for example, having several attempts at remembering what year they went to Vietnam, and several appeared not to have read the questions at all. The veterans who had done the most pre-interview preparation were generally those who had held more senior rank in Vietnam, and those who have been or are involved in the campaign to have service in Vietnam officially acknowledged and/or compensation paid for health problems arising from that service.

My role, as the interviewer, was to invite responses from interviewees, based on the questions most had seen in advance, and to guide the interview. I am aware that my gender, physical characteristics and, at times, my age had an impact on some of the veterans I interviewed (several said, 'I thought you would be a bit younger!').³⁰ For example, some interviewees, I suspect, avoided swearing in deference to me, as they no doubt would in the presence of other women, but others used the word 'fuck' frequently, as if I was 'one of the boys'. I relaxed or formalised my own language as appropriate. Similarly, some interviewees described scenes of death and mutilation as delicately as they could, and referred to matters of sex in a similar

way (if at all), while others appeared to relish telling me the gory and coarse details, but I believe that only a few deliberately attempted to shock me.

Seldon and Pappworth, and Collier, point out that some interviewees can be awed by who they are interviewing. Collier writes that it is 'difficult not to be touched by a sense of respect and awe when interviewing someone who has experienced events which are only known as research to the interviewer.'³¹ This did not happen to me, just as very few interviewees appear to have been awed by my status as a post-graduate university student. Some were initially suspicious at what they thought my predetermined views might be, perhaps remembering the anti-war stance taken by some university students during the war, and wanted to know what I would be 'getting out of it', but most appeared to be pleased that someone was interested in hearing about their experiences.

Thompson stresses that preparation for an interview is essential, writing that, 'the more one knows, the more likely one is to elicit significant historical information from an interview'.³² Seldon and Pappworth agree, but point out that 'One obviously does not want to intimidate interviewees with one's vast knowledge of the subject (which they might regard as academic, and slightly bogus), nor to be set in one's thinking with one's conclusions already formed....It is best to reveal that you know enough about the subject to make the informant feel he is talking to someone competent and interesting, without appearing to be showing off.'³³ In terms of background knowledge, I prepared extensively for the interviews. This included

familiarising myself with as many New Zealand publications and documents relating to Vietnam as I could, including newspapers of the day, and every New Zealand documentary, current affairs programme and archived private video, as well as archived private photographic collections. I also familiarised myself with the infantry operations in which New Zealanders were involved, and associated maps, and I made sure I knew the names and functions of most of the more common weapons used in Vietnam, place names and locations of relevant military establishments, fire support bases and hospitals, as well the jargon used by New Zealanders during their tours. I also had a reasonable amount of knowledge of the perceived Australian and American experiences in Vietnam, gained from books and films.

Most of this background preparation proved very useful during the interviews.

When interviewees became aware that I had that knowledge, they spoke more freely and openly. Some interviewees assumed that I had no knowledge at all and seemed to enjoy explaining everything in detail, and others appeared to assume that I had as much knowledge as they did as no explanations were offered at all. There were of course some things I had to ask to have explained to me. Although most interviewees, except for several senior officers, had poor recollection of the names, dates or durations of the operations they were involved in, my swotting up on these helped me put their experiences into context in terms of how long they were away from Nui Dat Base, where they were, and what the outcome of the operations had

been, etc. Particularly useful was knowing the names and functions of weapons, and the language and abbreviations which were commonly used.

Most of the interviews took place at veterans' homes, although one took place in a pub, two in workplaces, and two others were held at the Taradale RSA in Napier. I usually went to the veterans rather than them coming to me, except in two cases when veterans came to my home to be interviewed because they were in Hamilton on business. The interviews held at interviewees' home were the most straight forward in terms of the practicalities of taping an interview, although I often had to ask that music or a television be turned down, or a computer if we were talking in an office. On some of the tapes there are some very nice recordings of budgies singing. Most of these interviews went smoothly, although during one, the interviewee's wife sat in and quite often contradicted what he had to say, but made some useful comments as well. Interviews carried out in homes generally took about an hour and a half, although some were occasionally longer or shorter. The shortest interview I did was in a home. It took 20 minutes, mainly because the interviewee gave monosyllabic answers no matter how hard I tried to draw him out, even though he appeared quite happy to be interviewed.

The two RSA interviews in Napier were rather difficult, as was the one done in the pub, in terms of noise, although both RSA interviews were done in a private room, not a bar. The pub interview, which was the veteran's choice of location, was in fact of such poor sound quality, which I discovered with heart-stopping horror when

I played the tape at home after the interview, that I had to redo aspects of it again in a second interview at the veteran's home. This was one of my first interviews and, to my detriment, I had not made myself very familiar with my new tape recorder.

The first Napier interview in March of 1996 was the most difficult of all, for several reasons. It had been arranged as a result of the request I had placed in *Contact* at the end of 1995. A veteran from Napier had responded, saying that he knew a few veterans in the area who were happy to be interviewed as a group. I agreed but when I arrived, there were nine veterans altogether, including three or four who had served in the same company in Vietnam. Although this turned out to be a goldmine for me in terms of the content of their testimony, the actual interview was a trial. It lasted for over four hours, with frequent breaks when I turned the tape over during which trips were made to the bar for another beer, etc. The consumption of alcohol by most of them during the interview certainly, I believe, enriched their testimony, but it also encouraged them to interrupt and talk over one another, and among each other when somebody else was talking, and to laugh uproariously and loudly during another person's testimony. They also tended to wander off the questions, particularly down paths of reminiscence along the lines of 'What about that time when we...', although this often provided useful material. I had to work hard at keeping the group to the general questions, although it did not matter in which order the questions were addressed, and ensure that I heard complete stories or opinions, and obtained any clarification of those that I needed.

Also, some veterans talked more than others and I had to make a point of specifically asking the less verbal ones for their comments when I could.

On the other hand, interviewing such a large group had advantages. Thompson writes, 'The presence of others at an interview...has a marked effect. Boasting and exaggeration may be reduced, but the tendency to conform will be greatly increased.'³⁴ I am not in a position to judge whether the participants in the first Napier interview refrained from exaggerating (although several did paint rather colorful and 'larrikinish' pictures of themselves), as I did not do any comparative individual interviews, but they did not appear to make an effort to conform. In fact, there were several arguments when they questioned each others' memories of certain events if those versions did not match their own. The biggest advantage of the large group was, in my view, that they perhaps felt that they had safety in numbers and therefore possibly provided some testimony, which was supported by others in the group, which they might not have if they had been interviewed individually. For example, at one point, there was what could almost be considered a 'round of confessions' where five or six veterans talked about things which had happened in Vietnam in which they had been involved but which they had not discussed at all outside their specific Vietnam units prior to the interview. One veteran, after another interviewee had made a similar 'confession' to his, responded by saying to the other interviewee, 'I actually felt good when you said that though...and, you know, I been holding on to that. Nobody here knew about that.'³⁵

Some interviewees were at times uncomfortable when they considered that others were either telling me too much, or were relating experiences with which they could not identify. For example, when one veteran began to talk about a very controversial issue, he was interrupted by another interviewee who pointed at the tape recorder and said, 'Hey, do you want to leave that on, the tape?'³⁶ The first said 'No, no, this can come on, I'm not worried.'³⁷ When controversial issues were being discussed, interviewees regularly checked with me by asking again whether I would be using names, to which I replied no. Another veteran, after a controversial experience was related, said, 'I personally am reluctant to accept some things that happened there that did happen, like what you guys were talking about, I'm reluctant to accept that but I know it happened because you guys don't bullshit.'³⁸

Another feature of this group interview was the fact that it appears to have given the participants an opportunity to talk about Vietnam experiences which they had never discussed among themselves before, as a group of veterans, even though they meet socially on a regular basis. The following section of the transcript demonstrates this (note that NM served only three years in the Army and left straight after Vietnam, and 'Babe' is the nickname of one of the interviewees):

MP But you know, [talking] puts things in perspective as well. I've been out for ten years and in the area here for ten years and I've seen most of you guys on the average about once a fortnight or once every three weeks or whatever, this is the first time in that ten years...

ANON That we've all talked.

MP That I've ever bloody talked like this.

'Steve D' Yeah. Babe, that's what Babe said before...

NM These guys have been alright because you jokers have been in the Army and you could go to your mess and talk about it. I...

MP But that's the whole thing, we didn't talk about it.

'Steve D' We don't usually talk about it there either. That's what Babe said.

MP If one of us has got a problem, we can certainly talk about it.

HE That's why I rung Deborah up and I said I think we might have about half a dozen.

'Steve D' Babe said before...this is the first time *ever*, that's he's ever heard any of us talk about our things in Vietnam.

NM Yeah, well, you can't talk to anyone.

'Steve D' No, but...

[About three people say 'even amongst ourselves']

'Steve D' Down there on a Friday night we don't usually talk about bloody contacts or anything like that.

NM No, I know that, but I thought you'd talked yourselves out sort of thing and I thought, well, I'm not going to say anything.

Several of these veterans stated after the interview that they had found the experience cathartic and of assistance in allowing them to get their own personal experiences into perspective. The second Napier interview, in July of 1996 with three different veterans at the same RSA, had similar dynamics but was less 'volatile' and a lot easier for me to manage as the interviewer. The second interview also seemed to focus on different themes, for example, post-war mental and physical health problems, probably because one of the veterans interviewed has experienced, and has very strong views about, these particular problems. I gained the feeling from the first Napier group that no one was going to admit that he had had serious problems with, for example, PTSD, in front of his friends, although none of them were particularly scathing of other veterans they had known who had experienced such problems.

About information given in an interview situation off-the-record, oral historian Lesley Alves writes, 'Off-the-record information, while frustrating, can be of help to the historian in providing clues about the person, the situation, or the community and can give insights that are not apparent from other sources - but only provided it is used with care and sensitivity.'³⁹ Some information was made available to me deliberately off the record because interviewees did not want it recorded or used and attributed to them. This material usually related to controversial issues, such as the identification of people who had committed 'atrocities' discussed anonymously during the interview, and other sensitive matters such as sexual behaviour. Several interviewees commented after their interviews regarding their belief in the 'conspiracy theory' surrounding the alleged unwillingness of New Zealand governments to admit involvement in the supply of chemicals to the U.S. military during the war, and their view that this is preventing veterans from receiving the compensation they deserve. These interviewees fear that openly commenting on the theory will get them into 'serious trouble' from the government, or reduce their chances of receiving compensation even further.

When I was given testimony that I was asked not to use, I turned the tape recorder off if this was requested, and if it was not, I have not used the information in a way which can be attributed to any one person, or as concrete 'quotable' evidence. The one time I have, because the information was particularly pertinent, I wrote the incident up, disguised or removed all identifying material, and sent a copy to the

interviewee for approval, which I was given, along with a thank you for the tasteful and sensitive way I had presented the incident. Because some comments were made off the record, I can not use them as direct quotes but they were useful in building up a picture about certain events or views or opinions and gave me leads to pursue in subsequent interviews.

Most of the interviews followed the same general pattern. After introductions if I had not met the veteran before and general settling in, I set up the recording equipment while I talked a little about the study and about issues of confidentiality. I also reminded interviewees that they could withdraw some or all of their testimony at any time before the thesis was finished, or could change or add sections if they wanted to. On the release form, interviewees had the option of using their real names when their testimonies were to be used in the study, or an alias chosen by themselves or by me, or no name at all. Over half chose to use their real names, although several requested anonymity regarding certain subjects. Aliases chosen by me which appear in the thesis have a first name followed by an initial. We then signed the release form and the interview began. I attempted to establish a casual and informal (although professional) atmosphere, pointing out that our approach to the questions could be flexible in terms of the order in which they were raised, as well as additional topic areas. Keeping in mind Thompson's advice that an interview is, '*not* a dialogue, or a conversation...[and] it is not an occasion which calls for

demonstrations of your knowledge or charm',⁴⁰ I also advised that I would only be interjecting for clarification or to ask further questions.

I usually started with the basic 'closed' questions because these gave me context in relation to the interviewee, and the interviewer a chance to 'warm up' if he was not used to or comfortable with being tape-recorded. In two or three cases, interviewees launched straight into the issues that they thought were important, even before I had turned the tape recorder on. When this happened, rather than interrupt, I started the tape-recorder and listened until they had said whatever it was they wanted to 'get off their chests', then I introduced the initial questions, going back to the other issues later if they had not been recorded. Because of the logical order of the questions, I often did not need to ask the next one as it naturally arose from the previous response. The fact that the interviewee had his own copy of the questions also reduced the need for me to interrupt. Some interviewees did want to talk at length on particular subjects not directly related to the questions, for example, several described specific contacts in extreme and protracted detail, complete with sound effects and verbatim renditions of what everyone involved said at the time. This sort of a story is known as a 'warrie' which, although good for background 'action' information, I felt did not, in some cases, warrant 20 minutes worth of tape. If this happened, I would try and pick up a thread of the interviewees' story and connect it to the next related question on the list, and move them on but most interviewees

who digressed tended pull themselves up sooner rather than later and took themselves onto the next question.

In most cases, the interviewees spoke freely about their feelings and emotions regarding specific events, and if they appeared not to want to, I did not pursue the issue. When a response appeared to be required from me, I said something brief like 'That must have been hard for you', or something similar. If interviewees became emotional we either took a break and turned the tape-recorder off, or I 'looked at my notes' while I waited for them to resume speaking. If an interviewee made a statement in relation to dates or places, or specific events, which I knew to be erroneous, I usually did not comment, but on one or two occasions, I did. One example is an ex-officer who, when I asked him about 'fragging' (the murder of one's own superior officer), he stated that 'our circumstances were nowhere near that sort of carry on and I like to think that the New Zealand character is such that that sort of thing doesn't happen.' The day before I had interviewed an enlisted man from the same company who had told me that 'frag' threats had been made to officers and NCOs in the company on several occasions, so I mentioned this. The interviewee, after pausing for few moments, then proceeded to discuss the relevant incidents, although he requested anonymity should that information be used.

There appears to be some debate among oral historians regarding the challenging of interviewees' testimony. Canadian historian Peter Oliver maintains that the oral historian, while avoiding an openly adversary posture, 'should not hesitate to

challenge the answers he receives and to probe,⁴¹ while Seldon and Pappworth write, ‘The danger of over-assertive interviewing...is that the informant can become defensive and unforthcoming, reacting, rather than openly recalling’, although they also state that ‘provided you can prove its genuine relevance to your work, no interviewee should mind answering any question, even about sensitive matters, including relationships, death and personal belief.’⁴² In the above example, although this tactic of presenting evidence contrary to his own could have upset the interviewee, I felt that the issue was worth pursuing.

In retrospect, while I obtained some very rewarding results, my interviewing technique was less than perfect at times, especially during the earlier interviews. For example, although I tried to restrict my responses to non-verbal ones, I note that I did interject unnecessarily by saying ‘Right’ and ‘OK’ repeatedly when interviewees were speaking if they looked like they wanted a response. I also occasionally asked leading questions. For example, if I asked a question such as ‘Why did you go to Vietnam?’, and there was no immediate response, I at times went on to ask something like ‘Was it for adventure, the challenge, a sense of duty?’ Some interviewees said no outright if they had gone for a different reason, and others said ‘Yes, but really it was because...’, but there is the possibility that I did put words into people’s mouths on occasion. As well, I sometimes indicated my approval or acceptance of something an interviewee said when I should have made no response at all. For example, when interviewees told me about acts of war which

had been committed, I said on at least one occasion something like ‘Well, it was a war, wasn’t it?’, which is my personal belief, instead of responding neutrally, if at all. Although not strictly a leading question, this sort of response from me may have encouraged interviewees to say the things they perceived that I wanted to hear, rather than what they really feel or believe. Possibly the biggest error I made during the interviews was on two or three occasions when side two of a tape had finished and the interviewee was still speaking, I did not start a new tape. While in most instances this did not matter as the interviewee was talking about something not completely relevant by then anyway, on one occasion it did. I had to telephone the interviewee at a later date, but could not use the information he gave me because it was off the record.

After the interviews, I usually stayed for a cup of coffee and a chat. The veterans would often ask me more about the study, why I had chosen the topic, and whether what they had said was similar to what other veterans had said. We would also look at photo albums and other memorabilia at this stage as well. When I got home I labelled and checked the tapes straight away and several days after the interview I sent a letter of thanks including comments on what I found to be particularly useful in their testimony, plus a copy of the release form for their records. Also, I have kept each interviewee up to date with the progress of the study every six months with a report.

After each interview I attempted to transcribe the tape or tapes immediately but found that this was easier said than done and soon fell behind. The transcribing took between six and eight hours per hour of tape, depending on the speaking style of the interviewee, and most tapes were around one and a half hours long. The tapes from the first Napier interview were extremely time-consuming. Because oral testimony was the main source of evidence for this study, I transcribed the tapes in full and word for word, including every 'um', 'ah', and 'you know'. I also left in all slang, swear, fumbled for and mispronounced words, grammatical errors, my questions and responses, and I punctuated and accented where appropriate, then listened to the tape against the completed transcript to check for accuracy. I did not formally index the tapes beyond the first two or three as I did not have time. When I came to use sections of the transcripts in the text of this thesis, I went through the transcripts and stuck colour-coded sticky notes corresponding to my subject areas all over them, an unsophisticated but, I found, satisfactory system.

All of the veterans whose interviews were tape-recorded were sent a typed copy of their interview transcription and reminded that at any point they would be free to make changes or withdraw their contribution for any reason. Only one person withdrew, because he felt that seeing his experiences in print would be too traumatic for himself and his family (I returned both the tape and the transcript of his interview to him), and two others changed small sections, one because he considered in retrospect that he had been a little harsh regarding some of his views

of other veterans, and the other because he has business dealings with several Australian companies which he felt may be compromised by some of his testimony.

When I used sections of the testimonies in the thesis, I edited them slightly by reducing very frequently used phrases such as 'you know', 'type of thing', and 'um' and 'ah', except where they have some sort of significance to the delivery of the testimony. Any ellipses are indicated by (...), and occasionally I have added a 'joining' word enclosed in square brackets after an ellipsis, and I have not identified mispronounced words by using *sic*. Testimony from the correspondence interviews has been used in the text complete with punctuation and spelling as it appears in the interviewees' responses. Any quotes over 100 words have been indented. To have formatted the many quotes of over 50 would have significantly interrupted the reading of the text. For convenience and expedience, I have referred to the 49 veterans whose testimonies are used in this thesis as, for example, 'some', or 'most', or 'many', rather than the more wordy and repetitive 'some veterans interviewed for this study', or 'most veterans interviewed for this study'. I am of course only referring to the veterans interviewed, and not to all New Zealanders who served in Vietnam.

Thompson considers that there are three basic methods for checking the reliability of oral testimony. These are the assessment of internal consistency, cross-checking with other sources, and placing the evidence in a wider context. However, he writes that 'while these are useful guidelines, it must be emphasised there are no absolute

rules to indicate the reliability of oral evidence, any more than that of other historical sources.⁴³ While I have applied these methods to the oral testimony I have collected as far as possible, the lack of other sources to establish factual accuracy has been a problem. However, the point of this thesis is not to expose which veterans lied in their testimony and which did not, but to explore what may have influenced the memories they have of their war experiences today, as illustrated by their testimonies.

The first issue I had to consider when evaluating the evidence concerned the veterans' personal agendas, or motives, for coming forward to be interviewed, and how these agendas may have influenced their testimonies. As Seldon and Pappworth write, 'The more strongly people feel about a subject, or the stronger their sense of rightness, or of having been misunderstood, and so on, the more their evidence is likely to be distorted.'⁴⁴ Agendas became quite clear during most of the interviews and, for many interviewees, were closely related to the fact that I was intending to write a book. I expect that they assumed that such a book would be widely distributed and read and that they would be speaking publicly and for posterity. The agendas can be divided into several categories, although some veterans' motives overlapped. The first includes those who were seeking a forum through which they could air their grievances about issues such as war-related illnesses, including PTSD and physical health problems, which they do not believe have been or are being adequately addressed; the treatment they perceive that they received from the

Government, the public of New Zealand, and the military when they came home from Vietnam; and the lack of official acknowledgment for their efforts in during the war. A second, quite large, category included veterans who wanted it to be known that they had served in Vietnam and had not come home with any of the above health problems; that they were living normal and healthy lives; and that they had 'got over' the war and moved on. There were also several groups of veterans, including those from 1NZSMT, who specifically wanted to be interviewed so that there is at least some form of public record of their contributions in Vietnam. The SAS veteran spoke for the same reason. 4Troop NZSAS was subsumed within the Australian command structure, and details of their involvement in Vietnam remain within Australian records, apart from an eight-page chapter in W.D. Baker's *Dare To Win: The Story of the New Zealand Special Air Service* (1987). Also, many of the interviewees expressed a desire to have the 'real' story of New Zealanders in Vietnam told, with its elements of victory, professionalism, disillusion, frustration, and official betrayal, as well as to tell their stories 'before it is too late'. I did not ask when 'too late' would be, but I assume it is related to the advanced rate Chapter at which New Zealand Vietnam veterans are dying (see Chapter 10). It also appears that a small number of veterans wanted to be interviewed simply because their colleagues had been interviewed. Finally, some interviewees took the opportunity during their interviews to be vindictive regarding people they had served with in

Vietnam, including officers and NCOs, as well as current and past politicians and anyone else they perceived had wronged them.

I checked for internal consistency both during each interview and when going through the transcript later. Thompson writes, 'If an informant has a tendency to mythologize or to produce stereotyped generalisations, this will recur throughout an interview',⁴⁵ and it did in a considerable number of testimonies, but generally without contradictions or anachronisms. Within each testimony, the recollection of events, and views and opinions, remained more or less constant, apart from the two group interviews at Napier, the first having markedly more inconsistencies than did the second. During the interview, language, volume of voice, body posture, and eye contact were indications of how subjective or factually accurate an interviewee's testimony was regarding certain issues as it was being delivered.

I also used the few documentary sources I located to cross-check aspects of the oral testimony. However, as many documentary sources are equally subject to bias and distortion, I do not consider that this was a particularly effective method of establishing the reliability of the oral testimony. Of the two memoirs by New Zealand Vietnam veterans I used, Colin Sisson's *Wounded Warriors: The True Story of a Soldier in the Vietnam War and the Emotional Wounds Inflicted* (1993), and Gary Brooker's *Two Lanyards in Vietnam* (1995), the latter was most useful as it was written during Brooker's tour of Vietnam and purportedly had no changes made to it before it was published. There were few discrepancies between the oral

testimonies and Brooker's book. *Wounded Warriors* was of less value. Based on 'dairies [sic], memories and research from the Australian War Memorial,'⁴⁶ it includes some material which appears in the oral testimonies, particularly the emotional trauma experienced by some Vietnam veterans, but appears to be intended as more of an advertisement for Sisson's business which involves conducting seminars in 'Rebirthing'. Other books written by Sisson include *Your Right to Riches*, and *Winged Thoughts From the Heart*. I also used Rod Eder's *Deep Jay*, a work of fiction, and John Broughton's two plays, *Michael James Manaia* (1994) and *Te Hokinga Mai (The Return Home)* (1990), which all reflected the oral testimonies to a very close degree. Eder and Broughton were both infantrymen in Vietnam. Mike Subritzky's *The Vietnam Scrapbook: The Second ANZAC Adventure* (1995) was also relatively useful, although mainly a compilation of 'warries'. The similarities between these sources and the oral testimonies suggest perhaps that either the authors of the documentary sources and the veterans whom I interviewed have very accurate recollections of Vietnam, or that the memories of the veterans who wrote or contributed to these works (with the exception of Gary Brooker), and the veterans I interviewed, have been subjected to similar distortions and bias over the years. Brooker's diary-based book concerns itself with his immediate experiences in Vietnam, and without interviewing him now, there is no way of knowing whether his memories, beliefs and opinions have changed since the war. S.D. Newman's book, *Vietnam Gunners: 161 Battery RNZA, South Vietnam, 1965-71* (1988), and Colin Smith's *The Killing Zone: New Zealand Infantry in Vietnam*

1967 to 1971 (1995), were also used. Newman was an officer serving in the Army when he wrote his book, and an element of bias is evident - the book is a relatively 'clean', official account of the battery and its achievement in Vietnam but he does refer to two of the firing errors made by the battery which resulted in allied casualties. Colin Smith's book also indicates bias by portraying the New Zealand infantry as an extremely effective, professional, and feared force, as indicated by the title. While this may or may not be an accurate portrayal, he neglects to mention the 'acts of war' and other less 'professional' aspects of the New Zealanders' behaviour in Vietnam, stating in print at a later date that he does not believe that New Zealanders indulged in such behaviour (see Chapter 10).

Other sources used to evaluate the oral testimonies are several original 161 Battery documents, private and official photographs and videos, two reports on the New Zealand military contribution to Vietnam written in 1973, the 12 interviews recorded for the National Radio series, *Boxing A Wind Named Charlie* (1990). The charge book for 161 Battery for the period 20 December 1966 to 29 May 1968 supports the oral testimonies where claims are made that gunners were frequently charged for a range of 'misbehaviour', but it pertains to 161 Battery only, none of the infantry companies, and only for an 18 month period. The two Artillery Signal Log Books, which are records of 161 Battery at Fire Support Bases Flinders and Peggy in July and December of 1969 respectively, are informative and, while not particularly helpful in evaluating the oral testimonies, they provide a glimpse of the

hour to hour movements and activities of the battery and encounters with the enemy. But, again, there is no guarantee that everything which occurred was recorded. On December 29, one entry reads, '1 pheasant KIA', but whether this refers to a bird or a Vietnamese civilian is unclear. The official, or New Zealand Army, photographs and videos (transferred from film) again appear to be sanitised views of the New Zealanders in Vietnam, produced 'for the record', as are the two reports, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972: A Report on the Chief of General Staff's Exercise 1972* (1973), and *Brief History of the New Zealand Army in South Vietnam 1964-1972* (1973), the latter produced by the Public Relations Department of the Ministry of Defence. Private, and particularly candid, photographs are more revealing, but they are also subject to distortion. For example, Photograph 2 in Appendix G has clearly been posed to portray a particular image of how the subjects saw themselves. The oral testimonies collected for *Boxing A Wind Named Charlie*, although comprehensive and informative, were clearly produced for posterity and possibly edited and 'directed' as a result, but comments from the 'ground' troops interviewed did have some relation to the oral testimony collected for this study.

Using one testimony to evaluate another was more useful than using the above documentary sources, particularly regarding testimonies from interviewees who had served in the same company or unit. In this way, individual discrepancies could be detected and, in some cases, a discrepancy given a context. This method also

allowed themes to emerge, and there are some very strong themes common to almost all of the testimonies, although there are some major variations as well. It is noteworthy that a significant number of the testimonies included hearsay, but although I could trace this through the testimonies, I could not usually locate the source. Perhaps the only way to do this would have been to have interviewed all surviving New Zealand Vietnam veterans. The strong presence of hearsay is interesting in itself as in several cases it appears to have taken on the proportions of a myth, as in the example of 'fragging' discussed in Chapter 8.

Finally, I considered the oral testimonies in a wider context. Thompson suggests that 'An experienced historian will already have learnt enough from contemporary sources about the time, place, and social class from which an interview comes to know, even if a specific detail is unconfirmable, whether as a whole it rings true.'⁴⁷ As New Zealand documentary sources are few and far between, I used Australian and American documentary sources to do establish a general picture of the experience of the Vietnam War, keeping in mind of course the differing national perspectives, particularly those based on the conscript experience. There is a further 'wider context' which is more important to this study, and this relates to the beliefs and expectations that the veterans whom I interviewed grew up with regarding military service, masculinity, loyalty to and from one's country, and the events that have occurred in their lives during the 25 to 30 years after the war. These issues will be examined in the conclusion of this thesis.

In evaluating the testimony, it is evident that there is a difference between the oral and written responses, although this was at times subtle. It is possible that interviewees who responded by correspondence spent more time thinking about their answers, although several commented to the effect that their comments were 'straight off the top of my head', but, as mentioned earlier, this is not necessarily a drawback in the context of this study. The disadvantage of interviews by correspondence is that I was not there to ask interviewees to elaborate on answers or to follow leads given in earlier responses. While most of the written responses received were full, and addressed all of the questions thoughtfully and in detail, several did not. One or two gave rather abbreviated responses, and one veteran, who wrote on the actual question list I had sent, responded to the first section of questions adequately, but wrote only yes, no, or pass, next to the rest. The testimony of these veterans, while not very detailed, still provided 'grist for the mill' and contributed to the overall patterns I was able to establish from the evidence as a whole.

Some of the oral testimony used in this thesis is extremely sensitive and as such has required very careful use. Lesley Alves writes, 'As historians using oral evidence, we are ever mindful that we are dealing with living people in living communities. Not only must we avoid charges of libel, but we must also be sensitive to people's feelings.'⁴⁸ The controversial material which I was given was only provided on the strict understanding that the interviewees would remain anonymous, and this

agreement had been maintained. I consider that the release form signed at each interview was helpful in providing interviewees with a sense of security. The majority of the veterans interviewed for this study are employed or run their own businesses, have families and children at school, and hold positions of responsibility in their communities. To reveal the sources of some of the testimony in this thesis could, for some at least, invite censure and ostracism from a community unable to see the veterans' experiences in the context in which they occurred. For some veterans, the negative experience of coming home from Vietnam could be repeated. The interviewees' status as former service personnel also puts them in a somewhat precarious position. Some have stated that they witnessed or are aware of incidents which occurred in Vietnam which could have been classed as contraventions of the Geneva Convention and military law. This could cause legal repercussions for these veterans today. Also, the testimony of some interviewees, should their names be revealed, could impact on other Vietnam veterans who were not interviewed for this study. For example, one interviewee stated that in his section in Vietnam, wounded enemy were routinely killed rather than captured. If that interviewee's name and company were to be revealed, then the assumption could be made that the whole company implemented this informal policy, when this in fact may or may not be correct. Indeed, the behaviour of all of the New Zealand infantry companies could be questioned, which would invite condemnation from any veteran who had not witnessed or been involved in such incidents.

Every effort has therefore been made to retain the anonymity requested by some interviewees in relation to some or all of their testimony. In relation to some testimonies, I made an arbitrary decision to impose anonymity regarding issues which I consider could be detrimental to the interviewees should their name be used, whether it was requested or not. I have also removed all dates, ranks and names mentioned in testimony which may reveal the identity of a company or individual. However, maintaining anonymity has made some aspects of presenting the evidence difficult. Testimony from interviewees who chose to be totally anonymous was straightforward as I simply referenced their comments as ANON followed by the date of their interview, but testimony from interviewees whose names were used in other parts of the thesis was more problematic. In these cases, I have referenced their comments with an interview number (not corresponding to the order in which the interviews were carried out), followed by an interviewee number if the testimony originated from a group interview. Even this could compromise the identity of interviewees, and implicate other interviewees in the group by association. For that reason, this thesis may require restricted access if it is placed in a public repository. However testimony still had to be referenced in a manner which would indicate that the testimony was genuine and traceable, and this has been done in relation to the actual tapes and transcripts of the interviews.

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- 1 Anthony Seldon and Joanna Pappworth, *By Word of Mouth: 'Elite' Oral History* (London, 1983), p. 4.
 - 2 See Alexander Turnbull Library, MS-Papers-4350, and PAColl-1728 Dawe Collection.
 - 3 Seldon and Pappworth, p. 5.
 - 4 David Collier, 'The Dilemma of Oral History Revisited: The Problems in Practice', *Oral History in New Zealand*, Vol. 2 (1989), p. 8.
 - 5 Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford, 1978), pp. 91-100.
 - 6 *ibid.*, p. 18.
 - 7 *ibid.*, p. 19.
 - 8 Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 16-17, 19, 22-25, 32-33.
 - 9 Collier, p. 9.
 - 10 Thompson, p. 66.
 - 11 Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 36-52.
 - 12 *ibid.*, p. 148.
 - 13 Glyn Harper, 'Penetrating the Fog of War: The Use of Oral History in Military History Research', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No. 15 (1993), pp. 38-41.
 - 14 Ian McGibbon and Ben Schrader, 'Writing It Down: The Historian and Oral History', *Oral History in New Zealand*, Vol. 6 (1994), p. 5.
 - 15 Studs Terkel, *The Good War: An Oral History of World War Two* (Middlesex, 1984), back cover.
 - 16 Gary McKay, *Vietnam Fragments: An Oral History of Australians at War* (New South Wales, 1992), back cover.
 - 17 Harper, p. 40.
 - 18 Jeffrey Grey, 'Getting Into the Books: Vietnam as History in Australia', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (New South Wales, 1992), pp. 64, 67.
 - 19 See Carol Vincent, Nigel Long, & Kerry Chamberlain, *Health, Mental Health and Well-being of New Zealand Vietnam Veterans* (Massey University, 1991); Kerry Chamberlain, Lorna Davin, Nigel Long & Carol Vincent, *New Zealand Vietnam War Veterans Twenty Years On: Vol. I: Mental Health, Physical Health, and Stress, Vol. II: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and its Effects* (Massey University, 1994); Carol Vincent, Nigel Long & Kerry Chamberlain, *Vietnam Veterans' Family Programme: Nga Whanau a Tu - Final Report* (Massey University, 1994).
 - 20 Harper, p. 38.
 - 21 Bill Gammage, *The Broken Years: Australian Soldiers in the Great War*, Penguin edition (Victoria, 1975), p. xvii.
 - 22 Alistair Thomson, *Anzac Memories: Living With the Legend* (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 7, 12.
 - 23 I did conduct a telephone interview with one New Zealand veteran who, after several tours of Vietnam, subsequently joined the New Zealand anti-war movement. Unfortunately, he has requested that his testimony not be used in this thesis.
 - 24 Megan Hutching, *Talking History: A Short Guide to Oral History* (Wellington, 1993), p. 7.
 - 25 See Thompson, pp. 167-172; Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 73-75, and Collier, p. 10., for discussion on the different models of questions which can be used to elicit oral testimony.
 - 26 McKay, p. 281.
 - 27 Dale E. Treleven, 'Thoughts About "The Compleat" Oral Historian', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No. 12 (1990), p. 4.
 - 28 Ronda Jamieson, 'Moral History: The Conflict Within', *Oral History Association of Australia*, No. 13 (1991), p. 22.
 - 29 See Wendy Lowenstein, 'You Just Don't Ask Questions Like That', *Oral History Association of Australia Journal*, No. 14 (1992), pp. 40-43, for discussion of the uses and drawbacks of asking interviewees 'personal' or 'sensitive' questions.
 - 30 See Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 32, 62, and Thompson, pp. 115-116, 181 for discussion on the impact of the interviewer.
 - 31 Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 28-29. Collier, p. 9.
 - 32 Thompson, p. 166.
 - 33 Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 67, 81.
 - 34 Thompson, p. 116.
 - 35 Interview 28/1.
 - 36 Interview 28/4.
 - 37 Interview 28/2.
 - 38 Interview 28/7.
 - 39 Lesley Alves, "'Don't Record This...': Private and Public Sensitivities", *Journal of the Oral History Association of Australia*, No. 16 (1994), p. 86.
 - 40 Thompson, p. 178.

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- ⁴¹ Peter Oliver quoted in *ibid.*, p. 182.
⁴² Seldon and Pappworth, pp. 82-83.
⁴³ Thompson, p. 134, 209-211.
⁴⁴ Seldon and Pappworth, p. 125.
⁴⁵ Thompson, p. 210.
⁴⁶ Colin Sisson, *Wounded Warriors: The True Story of a Soldier in the Vietnam War and the Emotional Wounds Inflicted* (Auckland, 1993), inside cover.
⁴⁷ Thompson, p. 211.
⁴⁸ Alves, p. 186.

THE VETERANS

Following are short profiles of some of the veterans whose oral testimony has been used in this thesis, including total duration of military service, and military occupation specialty. This is to give their testimony context in terms of previous military experience, as well as to avoid having to introduce each interviewee as his testimony appears in the text. Obviously, only the veterans who did not request anonymity are mentioned here

Fred Barclay served in Vietnam for 13 months from November 1968 to December 1969 with 4Troop NZSAS. 4Troop operated with the Australian SAS based at Nui Dat, the Australian and New Zealand military base in Phuoc Tuy Province. Barclay was a Sergeant and 30 years old during his tour. He had served in the Army for ten years before he went to Vietnam, four years with the infantry during which he did a tour in Malaya, then six with the SAS. Barclay's Army career lasted 28 years.

Ted Brooker, a 28 year old Captain in Vietnam, flew Sioux helicopters from June 1968 to February 1969 with the Australian aviation outfit 161 Reconnaissance Flight also based at Nui Dat. His job was reconnaissance flying around Phuoc Tuy Province in support of New Zealand, Australian and U.S. infantry and artillery. Brooker had been in the Army for around ten years before Vietnam but he left three years after he came home to serve in the Territorials until 1996. Brooker's tour was

cut short after nine months when he was shot out of the sky and medevaced back to New Zealand.

Richard Cairns was a Private in Victor 5 Company which, like all of the New Zealand infantry companies, was based at Nui Dat. Aged 20, he served in Vietnam from May 1970 to May 1971, was shot during a contact in October 1970 but was able to recuperate at 1 Australian Field Hospital (1AFH) and complete his tour. Cairns joined the Army a little over a year before he served in Vietnam, and recently retired as a senior officer.

Gordon Dalziel was already a veteran of Borneo before his first six month tour of Vietnam with Victor 1 Company from May to December 1967. He was 21 years old. In November 1968 he went back to Vietnam with Whiskey 2 Company for a second 12 month tour. An M60 machine-gunner, his rank during both tours was Private. Dalziel left the Army not long after he returned from his second tour, having served for six and a half years.

Murray Deed, cook for Victor 6 Company, was 22 years old during his tour from May to December 1971. A Corporal, he spent much of his time at Nui Dat Base feeding the rest of the company when they were in and also while they were on operations. He and his assistants would prepare fresh food such as bread and pies to be flown out to the company on resupply helicopters. When he was not doing this he would occasionally go on patrol himself and carry out other regular base duties. Victor 6's tour was cut short by several months when the New Zealand Government

started withdrawing the New Zealanders from Vietnam in December 1971. Deed left the Army after eight years when he had completed and 'paid back' his chef apprenticeship.

Dave Douglas did two tours of Vietnam, also with Victor 1 and Whiskey 2 Companies in 1967 and 1968 to 69 respectively, and was also a veteran of Borneo. He was 22 when he went to Vietnam the first time, and a Lance Corporal and section commander during his second tour. Douglas had been in the Army for about two years before his first tour of Vietnam. He was called up by ballot for National Service in 1965, quite liked the life, and stayed on. In June 1969 Douglas was seriously wounded during a contact and medevaced back to New Zealand. While he was recuperating, he was discharged from the Army.

Brendan Duggan served in Vietnam with Victor 2 Company which did a six month tour from December 1967 to May 1968. Duggan was 22 years old and a Private, a rifleman and a scout. He had been in the Army for just over three and a half years and had spent the six months before Vietnam in Borneo. Duggan left the Army five months after his Vietnam tour, having served for five years.

Peter Earsman, a Sergeant with the Royal New Zealand Signal Corps (RNZSC), was attached to 110 Signal Squadron, RASC, in Saigon for ten months from September 1967. 110 Signal Squadron was a communications centre which serviced Nui Dat base and the Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) base at Vung Tau, and, through American relays, was also connected to other military bases in Vietnam.

Although Earsman was stationed in Saigon, most New Zealand signals personnel in Vietnam operated directly with the New Zealand artillery unit 161 Battery, or the infantry companies. Earsman was 26 years old during his tour and had been in the Army for eight years. After Vietnam he served for another 11 years, and now lives in Australia.

Harry Ellison served with Victor 5 Company during 1970 and 1971. He was Private and an M60 machine-gunner in Vietnam and had a long-term career with the Army.

Terry Findlay was a Lance Bombardier with 161 Battery at Nui Dat during a 12 month tour from September 1969. He was 22 years old and had been in the Army for eight months before he went to Vietnam. He had enlisted in February 1969 specifically to go to there and would have been in Vietnam in July, only five months later, if he had not got appendicitis and missed the flight. He went in September instead. Five months after he came home from Vietnam Findlay left the Army, having served for exactly two years and one day.

Allan Grayling was also a gunner with 161 Battery and did a 12 month tour from May 1970 to May 1971. 161 Battery was based at Nui Dat but operated in support of the infantry much of the time away from the base at fire support bases in Phuoc Tuy Province. Aged 20 when he went to Vietnam, Grayling had been in the Army for about a year. He left six or seven weeks after he came home with a 'Category K' discharge which allowed short-term enlistments to be discharged early because

they were surplus to requirements and the battery was due to be withdrawn from Vietnam.

John Hall, 35 years old during his tour, was a Major and commander of Victor 3 Company from May 1968 to May 1969. He had been in the Army for 16 years prior to Vietnam, had done his officer training at Duntroon in Australia, and had already served in Malaya. Hall retired from the Army in 1979, after a 30 year military career.

Peter Hotop was also a company commander and Major. Thirty-three years old, he commanded Whiskey 1 Company in Vietnam from December 1967 to December 1968. Hotop had served in the Army for about 15 years before Vietnam, and stayed in for a further 16 afterwards.

Bruce Liddall was a Private with Victor 3 Company and served in Vietnam from 1968 to 1969. Originally with a regimental signals platoon, he volunteered to go to Vietnam with the infantry. He was a rifleman for the first half of his tour, and the platoon signaller for the second half. Liddall had a long-term career with the Army.

Bill McNeish, a Sergeant with Victor 4 and veteran of Malaya, served in Vietnam from May 1969 to May 1970, and also continued his service career after he came home.

Hardie Martin also had a long-term Army career and was a Private with Victor 3 Company, a rifleman and platoon radio operator. Martin was originally with the RNZSC but, like Bruce Liddall, volunteered to go to Vietnam as an infantryman.

Nigel Martin joined the Army on a short-term enlistment. He was also a Private with Victor 3 Company, and carried the M60 machine-gun. Martin left the Army soon after he came home from Vietnam.

Garrie Mills was an infantryman, a Private, and did two tours of Vietnam, one with Victor 2 Company from 1967 to 1968, and a second with Victor 6 Company from May to December in 1971. He continued with his Army career after he came home.

John Moller, a Lieutenant in Vietnam, was a platoon commander with Whiskey 2 Company in 1968 and 1969. He was 25 years old. Moller's tour was cut short after nine months when he had to be medevaced out of Vietnam when he developed severe physical health problems. He recuperated at the British Military Hospital in Singapore and was then posted to 28 Commonwealth Infantry Brigade in Malaya. Moller had been in the Army for about eight years before Vietnam, having joined when he was 16, and altogether served for 17 years.

Dave Orbell enlisted with the Army for a four year engagement, originally as a draughtsman with the electrical mechanical engineers. It was suggested to him that if he wanted to go to Vietnam he should transfer to the Battalion Intelligence

Section at Papakura and go as an intelligence clerk. He did, and completed a Counter-Intelligence course at Burnham, but did not enjoy it. He finally went to Vietnam as an infantryman with Victor 3 Company from 1968 to 1969. He was a Private and 21 years old during his tour.

Tom Palmer went to Vietnam for 12 months in May 1967 with 1NZSMT stationed at Bong Son in Binh Dinh Province. Palmer had served with the Royal New Zealand Air Force (RNZAF) for 18 months before he went but had served 12 years before that with the Royal Air Force in Britain. He was 31 years old during his tour of Vietnam, a Sergeant, and his jobs included emergency medical technician, anaesthetist, diagnostician and, when the sun went down, machine gunner and radio operator. After he came home, Palmer continued to serve in the RNZAF and was posted to the specialised Aviation Medicine Unit/RNZAF Airborne Rescue Team with which he enjoyed an illustrious career, eventually becoming the commanding officer. Palmer left the RNZAF in 1985.

Bill Peachey was an infantryman, a Private, with Victor 6 Company in 1971, and had a 20 year military career with the New Zealand Army.

Richard Pepper, a Warrant Officer Class 2 (WO2) from the Royal New Zealand Army Air Corps, did two tours of Vietnam. The first was for 12 months from February 1969 with Headquarters Company at 1ALSG stationed at Vung Tau in Phuoc Tuy Province, and the second was a shorter tour with C Troop 3rd Squadron/4th Cavalry U.S. Army, an American tank unit. Altogether Pepper spent

18 months in Vietnam. He was 44 years old during his first tour, a veteran of Korea, and his career with the New Zealand Army lasted for over 30 years.

Mike Perreau served in Vietnam with Whiskey 1 Company from 1967 to 1968. He was a Private and a company and platoon radio operator. Perreau was originally with the RNZSC but volunteered to go to Vietnam as an infantryman, and continued his military career when he came home.

Laurie Pilling commanded 1NZATTV, based at Chi Lang in the Mekong Delta, for ten months from 1971 to 1972. He was 30 years old and a Major. Pilling's tour was originally to be for 12 months but was cut short when he was sent from Vietnam to Staff College in Britain. He served in the New Zealand Army for 20 years and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

John Pointon served in Vietnam from March 1970 to March 1971 as a Military Policeman (MP) attached to 1ALSG at Vung Tau. A Sergeant, he was 25 years old and had served in Malaya previously. In Vietnam, Pointon's duties included working at the Australian/New Zealand military prison at Vung Tau and patrolling the town monitoring the military-approved brothels and the women who worked there, as well as being involved in anti-vice duties including allied drug use and the black market. In his role as an MP, he also provided protection for convoys in the area, and assisted with the formal identification of bodies brought in to 1AFH and the U.S. 36th Evacuation Hospital, also at Vung Tau. Pointon had been in the Army since 1965, and continued to serve for some time after Vietnam.

Harry Shaw was a military chaplain, or Padre, in Vietnam from May 1969 for six months. He was 41 years old and a Chaplain Class III which was equivalent to a Major. Tours for Military Chaplains were originally 12 months long, but the Army changed its policy during Shaw's time there so his tour was reduced. In Vietnam he was responsible for the two New Zealand infantry companies and the battery wherever they were operating, as well as New Zealand Headquarters personnel in Saigon, military staff at the civilian hospital at Bong Son, and staff and wounded personnel at 1AFH.

Des Sluce served with 1NZSMT as a Sergeant from May 1968 to May 1969, and was 30 years old. He was a medic and treated civilians and had seen active service in Malaya previously. Sluce was in the Army for five years before Vietnam and had also served in the RNZAF for three and a half years. After he came home from Vietnam, he served in the military for a further ten and a half years.

Gerald Southon did two tours of duty in Vietnam, the first for 12 months with 161 Battery during 1966 and 1967, and the second as an infantryman with Victor 5 Company during 1970 and 1971.

John Treanor was 21 years old and a Lance Corporal with Whiskey 2 Company for 12 months during 1968 and 1969. He had been in the Army for five years before Vietnam, and served for a further 17 after he came home.

Ken Treanor went to Vietnam as a Staff Sergeant (and, later, as a WO2) for a 12 month tour during 1968 and 1969 with 1NZSMT. He was 36 years old. Treanor had served in the Army for 9 years prior to Vietnam and continued for a further 13 afterwards. In 1972, he went back to Vietnam for a further 12 months working with the civilian NZST which was based at Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province.

Colin Whyte was a Staff sergeant and medic in Vietnam with 161 Battery and was 36 years old when he went in March 1968. He was originally there for a 12 month tour but was blown up by a mine after six months and medevaced back to New Zealand to recuperate. Whyte had been in the Army for ten years prior to Vietnam and served for a further ten after he came home.

CHAPTER ONE: Anzac heroes; military traditions and mythology in New Zealand.

Before the evidence is presented in the following chapters, it is necessary to consider what the myths are which might have encouraged New Zealanders to go to Vietnam, prevailed upon their behaviour while they were there, and influenced their memories over the years after the war. To simplify matters, these myths will be considered in two basic categories. The first is the 'public mythology' which was disseminated to and received by the majority of New Zealanders who never went to war, and which has maintained, traditionally at least, that war is a noble and ultimately glorious institution and that New Zealand soldiers are gallant, brave, heroic, self-disciplined, and chivalrous. The second is the 'soldiers' mythology', their perception, from the battlefield, of what war is 'really' like. However it is not the intention here to critically analyse these myths, consider in depth their genesis or their relationship to reality, how they were promulgated, or to what extent they have shaped New Zealand nationalism in past years.

New Zealand historians such as John McLeod, Christopher Pugsley, Keith Sinclair and, in particular, Jock Phillips, have written to varying extents about the impact of New Zealand's military traditions and mythology on New Zealand nationalism and national identity, and their works are the sources for the following representation of New Zealand's martial mythology. Their conclusions, well-founded or not, have

been drawn from the same history as that of other New Zealanders, or at least those belonging to the hegemonous culture, including many of those who served in Vietnam, and as such can be assumed to some extent to reflect the beliefs and expectations of New Zealand Vietnam veterans.

It has been argued that the public mythology of New Zealanders at war originated with the New Zealand military contribution to the Boer War.¹ Phillips writes that ‘The departures of the early contingents were remarkable rituals of public enthusiasm’, and describes the public farewell of the first New Zealand Contingent on 21 October 1899 by a dockside crowd of between 40 and 50,000 New Zealanders as follows:

[Wellington] harbour was full of steamers containing bands which played patriotic music. Premier Seddon looked forward to [the New Zealand soldiers] displaying “bravery, decision and coolness”. Robert Stout made the mistake of hoping publicly that the war would be over before the contingent arrived. There were cries of “No!” from the crowd. Victory was not what they wanted but rather that our boys should prove their mettle, and show themselves “neither children nor gods, but men in a world of men”. An estimated 10-12,000 people journeyed on boats to the heads “bent on seeing the very last of the little band of New Zealand’s own!”²

At the Dunedin send-off for the 4th and 5th Contingents in March 1900, Premier Seddon described the soldiers as ‘as fine a body of men, wonderfully even as to size, and as perfect in physique as it falls to the lot of the most favoured of our race to be.’ This idea that New Zealand soldiers were physically superior, which rapidly became a part of the mythology, was reinforced when the New Zealand contingents

arrived in South Africa. The *New Zealand Evening Post* quoted a British officer as saying, 'These colonial troops are a splendid body...I don't suppose there is a man under six feet, and I should say quite half of them go up to 6 ft. 4 in. or 5 in.' (The average height, in fact, of the 1st Contingent at least was 5 ft. 9 and a half inches.) Furthermore, according to a New Zealand correspondent, the Colonial Brigade was the talk of the town on 27 October 1900 when its men rode through Pretoria 'in their shirt sleeves, their tunics strapped across the saddle, grim and determined - no quarter, no prisoners', and even the New Zealand horses did not 'flap' under pressure. The New Zealanders might have been grim, determined and tunicless, but their mental and physical toughness did not preclude them from having impeccable manners. An observer wrote that when dining in Capetown, he overheard a stranger remark, 'Look at those Yeomanry. They are behaving simply like children, whilst over there are several of the New Zealand men who are setting everyone an example in good manners.'³

Deeds of New Zealand heroism, bravery and initiative were widely reported in the papers at home. There was the incident on 21 February 1900, for example, when a kopje (small hill) was being defended by 70 New Zealanders and 30 men from the 1st Yorkshire Regiment. When the British commander fell the New Zealanders rallied the Yorks, charged down the hill and repelled the Boers. Several New Zealanders died heroes and the kopje was named New Zealand Hill, this episode the most famous of several heroic stands made by New Zealanders in South Africa. By

the time the Boer War ended in 1902, 6,495 New Zealanders (and 8,000 horses⁴) had served there, 70 men had been killed in action, 25 were killed accidentally, 133 had died of disease, and a further 166 were wounded.⁵ The Boer War overall, according to Phillips, 'established a mythology about the military virtues of Pakeha males which in its broadest principles remained unchanged for the next 50 years - a mythology which structured national self-perceptions and affected behaviour.'⁶

The cadet system for New Zealand boys, which had been operating in New Zealand since the 1870s, had received a considerable boost in popularity during the Boer War. The scheme was further consolidated by the Physical Drill in Public and Native Schools Act of 1901 which parliamentarians and educationalists saw as further encouraging and legitimising the military training already introduced in schools by the Education Act of 1877. Junior and Senior cadet training, based specifically on the Defence Force's infantry manual, was intended to make boys brave, loyal, disciplined, and able to handle a rifle and ready to volunteer for active service if need be. The Defence Act of 1909 gave the cadet movement even more impetus by making the scheme an integral part of New Zealand's defence plans. In 1912, when the Junior Cadet system was at its peak and had almost 30,000 members, the compulsory aspect of the scheme was made voluntary because it was feared that forcing military training onto boys at too young an age would reduce their enthusiasm for such training later when it was perceived to be more important. The numbers of Junior Cadets dwindled rapidly, although Senior Cadet numbers

remained high because that scheme was still compulsory.⁷ Compulsory military training of young men in New Zealand remained, in the form of National Service, until December 1972.⁸

New Zealanders went to war again in 1914 and by the end of the following year, 45,567 New Zealand men had volunteered to join the Army to go overseas as the 1st New Zealand Expeditionary Force (1NZEF). Once again they were farewelled by crowds as equally enthusiastic, at least initially, about this new conflict as they had been about the war in South Africa 15 years earlier. For many New Zealanders who were not overseas fighting, the campaign at Gallipoli in April 1915 was the highlight of the First World War, reinforcing the image of the heroic, gallant and resilient New Zealand soldier which had emerged from the South African conflict. When news of the New Zealanders' exploits at Gallipoli reached home, Prime Minister Bill Massey immediately arranged a patriotic demonstration in Parliament grounds, government offices were closed, school children were given a half-holiday, and flags were flown. Newspapers were full of the 'adulation, the pride and hyperbole attached to the 8,000 New Zealanders at Gallipoli, derived from the feeling that they had proved the manhood of their people', and examples of New Zealand bravery and daring such as the attacks on Chunuk Bair and Quinn's Post instantly became legend.⁹

Gallipoli also established the famous legend of the Anzacs. The Australia and New Zealand Army Corps, consisting of the 1st Australian Division plus the New

Zealand and Australian Division commanded by Major-General Sir Alexander Godley, was formed in November 1914 in Egypt.¹⁰ The Anzacs' 'baptism of fire' was at Gallipoli and the mythology which evolved from the legend maintains that the Australians and New Zealanders fought side by side as comrades in arms to repel the enemy, united by the common goals of victory, a shared pioneering and colonial spirit, and the military superiority born of such a heritage.¹¹ The deeds of the Anzacs at Gallipoli were to become fundamental to the military traditions and mythology of both nationalities.

Of the 8,566 New Zealanders at Gallipoli, 2,721 men died over a nine month period and 4,752 were wounded.¹² During the Somme offensive on the Western Front in September of 1916, 1,560 New Zealanders were killed and 5,440 became casualties in over a period of only 23 days.¹³ By the time the armistice was signed in 1918, a total of 124,211 Maori and Pakeha served in the New Zealand armed forces, about 50 percent of all men of military age in the country. Over half of these, or 58,000, were wounded or killed and more than 16,400 died. Phillips writes that 'Despite the awful cost the Great War did not destroy the importance of the martial virtues in the New Zealand male stereotype. Far from it. Although the joyful enthusiasm which greeted the outbreak of war soon evaporated and the country eventually became aware of the ghastliness of war, people continued to regard their soldiers as heroes, whose triumphant manhood was seen as proving New Zealand's very nationhood. Instead of undermining the role of war in defining male achievement, the Great War

established the soldier as the shining personification of the New Zealand male, and indeed of New Zealand itself.¹⁴

In 1939 New Zealanders once again went to war. Before conscription was re-introduced in July 1940, 59,644 men had volunteered. Of the 105,000 who served overseas with the 2nd New Zealand Expeditionary Force (2NZEF), 5,999 died and a further 16,543 became casualties.¹⁵ New Zealand soldiers were used as an 'elite force at difficult and demanding battles in North Africa and Italy',¹⁶ and campaigns such as the battle for Crete produced New Zealand heroes such as Charles Upham, twice winner of the Victoria Cross.

News of New Zealand victories and defeats were reported in newspapers in the same sanitised manner as they had been during the First World War. One war correspondent, for example, described the 2NZEF as a 'highly flammable, fast-moving, terror-striking thing which nothing and nobody could resist.' The achievements of its men were 'fantastic', according to the headline in a national newspaper. Yet the same war correspondent noted at the end of the war that there had been a 'rosy censorship and a style of presenting official "news" which makes it appear that everything is elaborately right and perfect with the most perfect of all divisions, no-one ever laughs, no-one ever cries, no-one ever grumbles and no-one ever dies.'¹⁷ Phillips maintains that in terms of the mythology of the Second World War, 'The traditions built up from the Boer and Great Wars were by now well entrenched. The men knew what New Zealanders at war were supposed to be like

and these expectations must have coloured both their perceptions and their behaviour....Traditions are developed and enriched, rather than transformed.’¹⁸

To commemorate the perceived success of New Zealand soldiers overseas, and the sacrifices that the people of New Zealand considered they had made to help achieve that success, New Zealanders built memorials to provide enduring and permanent reminders and inspiration. Virtually every town in New Zealand has a war memorial of some sort, whether it is an elaborate affair in the middle of the main street, or a small neglected country hall somewhere, badly in need of painting and repair. Some of the oldest memorials are the most decorative and grandiose.

Commemorators of the Boer War favoured solid, ornate stone or marble obelisks or statues of troopers which impart an imperialistic and somewhat self-congratulatory pride in New Zealand’s contribution towards keeping the Empire safe, rather than sadness at the deaths of those who did not come home.¹⁹

After the First World War, a far more tragic and devastating experience for New Zealanders than the conflict in South Africa 12 years earlier, hundreds of memorials were erected in New Zealand. As those who had died during the war were buried overseas, there was ‘no grave at home that relatives could visit and grieve over. Instead, the war memorial functioned as a surrogate tomb, standing in place of distant headstones.’ While some wanted memorials as a reminder of the dead and others thought symbols of victory would be more appropriate, most agreed after considerable debate that what was needed were monuments that would reflect the

ideals of the war itself and would be 'ornamental, not utilitarian; they would communicate an idealistic and heroic view of the war.'²⁰

After the Second World War ended, the style of New Zealand's war memorials changed to reflect the growing overseas trend towards much more utilitarian memorials (although some memorials to the First World War were simply adapted to include Second World War details). This change was also influenced by the New Zealand Government which considered that the dead of the Second World War should not be remembered by duplicating the monuments of previous wars, advising local authorities that only utilitarian memorials would be subsidised by national funds. While a few monuments were erected, the majority of memorials built were in the form of something useful such as buildings or facilities which would serve the community. Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, authors of *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials*, write, 'When New Zealanders erected war memorials after two world wars, they did so in the belief that they were building permanent monuments. They hoped to keep alive for eternity memories of glorious deeds and sacrifice. A common inscription was "Their name liveth for evermore". This was a vain hope. Each generation reads into war memorials its own political and social concerns.'²¹ It is perhaps significant, therefore, that very few memorials to post-war conflicts have been built.

Memorials to wars after 1945 may be scarce but Anzac Day remains as an annual reminder of New Zealand's military traditions. New Zealand's military

achievements have been officially celebrated since Anzac Day was first declared a legal holiday in New Zealand in 1922. Commemorating the Australian and New Zealand landing at Gallipoli on April 25, 1915, Anzac Day was the most solemn and widely attended day of annual commemoration in the nation during the decade following the First World War.²² The solemnity and importance of Anzac Day is something that most New Zealanders have grown up with, even if, as children, its ideology was perhaps not really understood. Children were deliberate targets for the messages inherent in the commemoration of Anzac Day, and were intended to recall and be inspired by the sacrifices of New Zealanders who came before them, as well as be aware that they too may some day be called on to do the same.²³ However one study of the impact of the First World War on New Zealand children suggests that for many young New Zealanders, military and imperial indoctrination, including Anzac Day, was effective 'only to the extent that it appealed to children and conformed to their ideas of what was fun or interesting or exciting at the time.'²⁴ Children, in other words, simply did not understand what war really meant. Unfortunately the study does not address the question of the long-term impact of imperial and patriotic indoctrination on older New Zealand children. Knitting socks for the 'boys at the front' at age seven is one thing, but serious and intense training with real weapons, tactics, and military maneuvers at age 17 or 18 appears to have had an entirely different impact altogether.

To recapitulate, the public military mythology has maintained that war is righteous and honourable, that New Zealand soldiers are gallant, courageous, virtuous, and physically and emotionally resolute, that the deeds and sacrifices of New Zealand's soldiers deserve to be memorialised in stone, and publicly and nationally commemorated on Anzac Day. But what of that other mythology, the one of the soldiers themselves, based on what soldiers really think and do at war? Or perhaps 'traditions' is a better term, although these traditions had possibly gained the status of myths by the time they had been handed on to following generations of New Zealand soldiers. Although some soldiers were undoubtedly courageous, virtuous and emotionally resolute some of the time, and perhaps a few were most of the time, it is clear that most soldiers were ordinary men who demonstrated ordinary and natural behaviours, and the evidence clearly suggests this. During the Boer, First and Second World Wars, bad behaviour and moral or military failures were often simply not reported or openly acknowledged.²⁵

One reality of war which was not widely reported in the newspapers of the day and definitely not incorporated into the public mythology was the fact that New Zealand men were not quite as keen to rush off to war and die for the Empire as had been expected. Although the initial positive response to join up for both world wars is undeniable, conscription was introduced in August 1916 and again in July 1940. It has been suggested that the men who volunteered for the First World War increasingly did so 'less out of an enthusiasm for war than under new forms of

social pressure' such as public recruiting meetings and appeals, newspaper editorials, and white feathers and hate letters in the mail. The men who questioned the rightness of the Second World War also suffered social ostracism, more white feathers, and eventually imprisonment without right of appeal.²⁶

The furlough mutiny of 1944 in New Zealand is evidence that the war-weary soldiers themselves were losing faith in the public mythology which had perhaps initially encouraged them to go to war, and demonstrably resented the fact that only lip-service was being paid to it by the New Zealanders who had stayed at home. The furlough scheme was intended to give long-serving New Zealand soldiers a temporary rest by bringing them home for three months leave, and on July 12, 1943, 6,000 soldiers arrived back in New Zealand.²⁷ The three months were extended by a series of delays to early January 1944, at which time a significant percentage of men in the draft decided that they were not going to return overseas. While some sailed later, 432 were subsequently officially dismissed from the 2NZEF for misconduct and subordination. Most men had returned home 'under the impression New Zealand was doing her bit and found instead a nauseating state of affairs. They found large numbers of fit men protected from going overseas, and on top of that earning big wages. Watersiders, and miners, and others made them want to vomit. Many of the well-paid essential industries were not even working properly for the war.'²⁸ They also felt that New Zealanders appeared 'not much interested about the war. The women especially have a greater interest in what they're going

to do tonight, or tomorrow night, and the lovely time they're having or going to have. The men talk about having got in so many hours' overtime and the pay they're getting for it, and how they drew such and such a pay last week...people just don't seem to be interested.'²⁹

It appears from these testimonies that New Zealanders at home during the Second World War, relatively ignorant or perhaps just unheeding of the demands and difficulties of soldiers at war, were more interested in getting on with their lives and doing the sorts of things that normal people do. And this, in fact, is just what New Zealand soldiers did when they were out of the combat zone during the First and Second World Wars. John Mcleod writes, 'The New Zealand soldier's lifestyle out of the line [during the Second World War] could not be described as angelic; he was renowned for enjoying the temptations of foreign countries, including excessive quantities of alcohol and women, while ignoring the minor regimental irrelevancies of dress and saluting.'³⁰ Behaviours associated with gambling, brawling, stealing, and racism also caused problems. New Zealand soldiers became notorious overseas for their drinking, womanising and indiscipline, behaviours which have been immortalised by their own less widely publicised and upheld mythology of themselves. But the New Zealanders were not alone in these activities - the Australians were also infamous for this sort of behaviour.³¹

Excessive alcohol consumption by New Zealand soldiers serving during the First World War was a problem which manifested itself even before the troops had left

the country, resulting in numerous complaints from the public observing behaviour on troop trains and, ultimately, the adoption of six o'clock closing of hotels. But this was perhaps more of a reflection of New Zealand society at the time, rather than behaviour exclusive to young men off to war. Six o'clock closing was supposed to deny the soldiers alcohol and help them to avoid the even worse temptation of visiting prostitutes after dark. Despite these efforts to 'assist' New Zealand troops, their behaviour in relation to drinking steadily deteriorated after they got overseas to the extent that men were banned from going into Cairo and a wet canteen was opened in camp. The men continued to go into town, returning drunk, and when the canteen raised its prices they pulled the tent down, stole the beer and destroyed the canteen to 'pay off old wrongs.' The excessive drinking habits of New Zealand soldiers were clearly acknowledged to be a problem by New Zealand military authorities, who tried to curtail them but with less success than they had hoped.³²

Alcohol abuse was no less of a problem during the Second World War. As a result, in Italy, the New Zealanders' discipline out of combat 'fell away, paralleling the decline in their morale and battle discipline...It was a state of affairs that the New Zealand officers seemed powerless to stop; in fact, a number condoned the men's behaviour or participated in it.' This was a far cry from the sentiments of New Zealand commanders who maintained earlier in the war that although it was inevitable that their men would need to 'let off steam after months in the desert and

the dangers and tensions of front line service', probably by getting drunk, such behaviour could never be condoned.³³

Despite the public mythology which insisted on maintaining otherwise, the rate of venereal disease (VD) among New Zealand soldiers, usually contracted from prostitutes, reached epidemic proportions during the First World War. The rate of hospital admissions for all allied troops in England in the first six months of 1917, for example, was 34 in 1,000, but the New Zealanders in Egypt reported 134 infected men per 1,000 for the same period. The problem was perceived to be so bad that Ettie Rout, dedicated leader of a group of New Zealand women working in Egypt known as the Volunteer Sisterhood, came to the conclusion that chastity was 'quite impracticable' for most soldiers. She subsequently made it her personal mission to get prophylactics issued at minimum cost in an effort to prevent soldiers from taking home unwelcome souvenirs to unsuspecting loved ones. The New Zealand public had extreme difficulty accepting that their boys were the notorious 'roots' that the evidence was suggesting,³⁴ and Ettie Rout subsequently became the most hated woman in New Zealand during the First World War.³⁵ The incidence of VD during the Second World War was again high among New Zealanders, specifically during 1941 and 1942 when New Zealand troops were in Cairo and Syria respectively, and particularly in Italy in 1945 when almost 7,000 cases were reported, a considerable percentage of the 2NZE. ³⁶

Stealing was also considered a particular problem by New Zealand military authorities during both world wars. In *On the Fringe of Hell: New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War*, Chris Pugsley writes, 'Thieving was endemic, but not looked upon as such, unless it was money or you were caught stealing from your mates. Clothing, equipment and military stores were fair game.' Peer-administered retribution for being caught stealing from other soldiers was evidently often more severe than the official punishment,³⁷ an indication perhaps of the strong code of mateship which had developed. During the Second World War the New Zealanders' propensity for stealing anything and everything and selling it on through the black market earned them the name 'Freyberg's Forty Thousand Thieves', a sobriquet some New Zealanders accepted with pride.³⁸

Another somewhat anti-social New Zealand behaviour, brawling, was often a result of excessive alcohol consumption. When New Zealand soldiers were not fighting each other, they were usually united in their aggression against most other nationalities they encountered, military or civilian. One of the more famous incidents of aggression and racist behaviour by New Zealand troops was recorded in Egypt during the First World War. The Wazzir riot occurred on Good Friday in 1915 when inebriated New Zealanders and Australians set fire to the brothel area in Cairo, destroying several buildings and Egyptian property, and injuring many. When military police arrived, they were abused and pelted with missiles by the Anzacs and the fire brigade's hoses were cut. The military police shot and killed

two of the rioters and several others were wounded. Typically, the Australians and New Zealanders blamed each other for starting the riot.³⁹

An important aspect of soldiering for New Zealanders during both world wars appears to have been comradeship. In *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand Soldier in World War II*, John McLeod quotes a veteran as saying, 'Comradeship...existed throughout all units and all men and still exists among all men who wear the RSA [Returned Services' Association] badge today. Often my mind goes back to the good friends who never returned. My most abiding memory perhaps is the great spirit of togetherness...If only such a spirit could be found in peacetime.'⁴⁰ While this statement is no doubt tinged with nostalgia, it is clear that mates were very important. Phillips writes that during the First World War, 'the community of mates had its own moral code and set of loyalties. One was the principle that there should be 'no stealing among ourselves, only from Army stores or officers - a law that appears to have been obeyed only spasmodically, especially behind the lines. Another was the principle that men should shield their mates if possible from the wrath of officers.'⁴¹ Many officers during both wars, regardless of the concept of egalitarianism which has been described as 'The most fundamental and persistent historical myth about [New Zealand] society',⁴² came from the upper socio-economic class and were perceived to be better educated than enlisted men. The realisation for enlisted men that officers in many cases were entitled to privilege and promotion because of their social status, not their ability to lead in wartime, caused

resentment and bitterness. McLeod maintains that during the Second World War, some officers compensated so much that their close relationships with enlisted men resulted in poor discipline, particularly in Italy.⁴³

If New Zealanders at war could not live in harmony among themselves, the situation was worse when it involved Australians. Despite the legend of Anzac, which maintains that New Zealand and Australian soldiers were brothers in arms who shared a common history and pioneering spirit, the reality was that they were not. Although events at Gallipoli established the Anzac legend, the campaign was allegedly fraught with Australian incompetence to the extent that New Zealander Lieutenant-Colonel W.G. Malone publicly and scathingly criticised the Australian leadership, and seriously considered requesting that the Australian commander be court-martialled.⁴⁴ In fact, throughout the two wars the only real bond shared by New Zealanders and Australians appears to have been their united criticism of the British military performance, a New Zealand/Australian sentiment still evident when the two forces served with the British in Malaya during the 1960s.⁴⁵ In reality, the term 'Anzac' did not indicate a 'close and indistinguishable union of the two forces. Rather, it emphasised the uniqueness of each of each of the nationalities, Australian and New Zealand, working together, but highly individual and increasingly proud to be so.'⁴⁶ Gallipoli identified that although New Zealand and Australian troops shared some common bonds, and could and did fight side by side effectively, the Australian way was not always the New Zealand way.⁴⁷ Later conflicts which

involved both nationalities as allies, including the Vietnam War, indicate that New Zealand and Australian troops continued to experience considerable difficulty co-existing, especially when fighting the enemy was not an immediate focus.

Aspects of the soldiers' mythology, previously shared only privately among veterans, became more public after both world wars, particularly after 1945. Films which depicted the horrors of war, such as *All Quiet on the Western Front* based on Erich Maria Remarque's novel of the same name published in 1929, were becoming increasingly popular overseas. But New Zealand books displaying similar sentiments which had appeared during the 1930s were initially seen by some as critical of the men who fought during the First World War. The books described in powerful terms aspects of soldiering which could not be ignored. The first was *Passport to Hell*, written by woman journalist Robin Hyde in 1936 about the experiences of James Douglas Stark, a New Zealand hero of the First World War. Stark was not the 'modest Anglo-Saxon gentleman of legend', but of American Indian and Spanish descent, and a 'drifter and a thug, a delinquent [with a] hot temper and pugilistic habits' which had repeatedly sent him to prison. Even worse than this, Stark admitted in the book to excessive illicit drinking, frequent brothel visits, swearing and gambling, all while overseas on military service. Then came John A. Lee's autobiographical novel *Civilian Into Soldier* a year later, which demonstrated that 'There was no gentlemanly chivalry at war - "All was atrocity and the game was to survive".' Lee's hero, John Guy, also drank, whored, gambled and swore to

excess. These books implied that the public mythology of the New Zealand soldier as gentleman was flawed. Archibald Baxter's book, *We Will Not Cease*, which shockingly described his experiences when he was imprisoned in New Zealand for conscientious objection during the First World War, and the ghastly treatment he received when he was subsequently sent to the front in France, appeared in New Zealand in 1939. Although Hyde, Lee and Baxter had let the cat out of the mythological bag, their books had little impact at the time. The public refused to accept that what they believed about war and New Zealand soldiers, and therefore themselves, was erroneous.⁴⁸

After the Second World War considerably more New Zealand novels and memoirs were published, such as Jim Henderson's *Gunner Inglorious* (1945), and Francis Jackson's *Passage to Tobruk* (1943). Few of the books glorified war, several described (rather daringly) the excitement and passion of killing, and most emphasised the senseless waste of young lives. All still found 'redeeming elements in the war experience and [saw] it as a revealing test of manhood.' However, the emphasis on what made a good soldier was changing. Swearing, drinking and whoring became acceptable, as long as they were in response to severe battle stresses, stealing and playing the black market were seen as 'entrepreneurial'. Mateship was paramount and a compensation for the idiotic aspects of war, and officers were, although modest, brave, cool and competent, always approachable and equally as keen on, and capable of, hard drinking as were their men. After the

disruption of the Second World War, which came less than a generation after the war of 1914-1918, the public was now prepared to accept a modified version of the mythology. Soldiers no longer had to be tall, heroic gentlemen, but could be short (but strong), slightly reckless, and display 'larrikin' behaviour, due to the extenuating circumstances of the war, as long as they got the job done. This change of attitude, according to Phillips, was a 'revolution in the public mythology from the early years of the century. The culture of the male community - repressed, kept under and out of the public eye - was at last allowed to come out into the open.'⁴⁹

The public mythology of the New Zealand soldier suggests that veterans should have been, if not revered, then at least treated with dignity, respect and gratitude. This was not always the case and was evident even at the end of the Boer War. For example, the last New Zealand contingent had 'the misfortune to arrive in South Africa a week after peace was declared, returning to no cheering crowds. Coming back on the *Britannia*, a ship previously used to transport Boer prisoners, [the soldiers] suffered from acute over-crowding, appalling food, unhygienic conditions, and outbreaks of disease. The few who saw these men when the ship docked were shaken by the soldiers' thin and pallid condition. The New Zealand public would shower favours on those early contingents who upheld the nation's military manhood; they had little interest or concern in those who merely served.'⁵⁰

The situation was similar after the First World War. As more and more shiploads of maimed and wounded men arrived in Wellington at the close of 1918, the cheering

of the dockside crowds was replaced by shocked and silent staring. Even the unwounded returning soldiers were 'unlikely heroes, diffident and laconic, only wanting to pick up civilian life where they had left off.' Many of the wounded and ill spent long years after the war recovering, or adapting to life with terrible scars or withered or missing limbs, or confined to back bedrooms where they coughed up the remnants of gas-poisoned lungs, or in mental institutions. Although most soldiers were publically welcomed back into their communities, they were reminded that those who had worked at the home front during the war considered themselves to be the "heroes and heroines" who had stayed behind', and that they had also made an important contribution to the war effort.⁵¹

The years after the First World War were bitter and frustrating for many veterans. They felt alienated from civilians and found jobs difficult to find and retain, even though there was plenty of work. The New Zealand Repatriation Department, a very progressive concept in its day, was not established until 1919. While it was successful in helping to place 27,000 veterans in jobs, it was dismantled in 1922, illustrating how little the long-term effects of the war were understood. War pensions and disability allowances were available for veterans but it was often difficult for them to prove that disabilities and illnesses were war-related, especially when doctors accused them of malingering. The considerable number of men suffering from PTSD (shell shock or neurasthenia as it was called then) experienced particular difficulty. There were no specific medical facilities for men with this

condition, the Government deciding that by the time appropriate facilities were built, the sufferers should all have been cured or have pulled themselves together. Other health problems such as alcoholic behaviour were viewed as character faults and, as such, not related to war service. Even the land settlement scheme for veterans, a potentially good idea, was unfortunately ultimately disastrous when implemented. Owners sold land to the Government for the scheme at hugely inflated prices, the land was given to veterans in blocks too small to farm effectively, and many veterans had no previous farming experience and were physically unfit. By 1935, 29 percent of the rehabilitation farms had failed, and by 1940, the value of most farms had fallen by 34 percent. New Zealand historians Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton write that 'while New Zealand society poured money and energy into putting up hundreds of expensive war memorials by which to remember the dead soldiers, the live ones largely became the forgotten victims of the war in the years that followed. The story of the World War One veteran in New Zealand is one of betrayal.'⁵²

Veterans of the Second World War experienced similar problems when they came home to a nation weary of war and unable to understand the true impact that such an experience could have on its participants. In 1985, 10,070 New Zealand Second World War veterans were still receiving disability allowances for war-related PTSD. Many of these veterans suffered for years after the war without any financial or medical assistance at all before they sought help, unhappy, alienated, branded as

malingers, and unable to work. For these men, asking for help went directly against the mythology of what a New Zealand man should be.⁵³ Like veterans from the earlier world wars, Second World War veterans were also the victims of a public mythology which was inherently shallow. Initially treated as heroes when they returned home, the adulation soon disappeared when the public realised that the veterans were not 'supermen, but just ordinary men, many physically and mentally scarred by their experience....While the reputation of the New Zealand fighting man remained intact, the returned men were increasingly regarded as bores, as symbols of the past.'⁵⁴

After 1945, the Cold War loomed. Redmer Yska writes, 'At the end of 1948, the international political situation remained volatile, with New Zealand's Commonwealth allies talking with alarm about the threat of a Third World War to come out of the Soviet Union. New Zealand was preparing to take up arms in the newly declared Cold War with as much alacrity as in 1939'. In 1949, the New Zealand public voted by referendum in favour of peacetime conscription which would train 18 year old males in readiness for contributing to New Zealand's contribution to Commonwealth defence.⁵⁵

Jayforce, the name given to the New Zealand men and women who served in Japan from early 1946 until the end of 1948 as part of the Commonwealth component of the allied occupation force, had only recently returned home. Jayforce initially numbered 4,000 all ranks, mainly infantry but with artillery, engineer, medical,

ordinance, signals and provost support,⁵⁶ and also involved the New Zealand Women's Army Auxiliary Corps and the RNZAF. Jayforce was composed of volunteers from the New Zealand civilian population who had responded to Army recruitment advertisements to join the Japan Section of 2NZEF,⁵⁷ conscripts selected from the last reinforcements for the 2NZEF, and volunteers from the existing 2NZEF. While the rest of the 2NZEF looked forward to returning to New Zealand after their long war service, Jayforce underwent extra training before deploying to Japan by troopship in February 1946 for an initial six month tour of duty.⁵⁸

Jayforce operated in areas including Hiroshima and was responsible for internal security, recovery of arms and ammunition reserves, disposal of enemy weapons, and management of repatriation centres 'wherein Japanese troops from the lost overseas empire returned for medical treatment, processing, and lectures on the new Japan, before being readmitted to civilian life.'⁵⁹ Despite the popular belief that service in occupied Japan was a 'paid holiday',⁶⁰ held by many New Zealanders at home and, initially at least, by some members of Jayforce itself, New Zealand service personnel in Japan were at times bored. Jayforce also had to supply its own resources, which many New Zealanders found to be inadequate. Shipping and supply was 'unsatisfactory' and 'chaotic', and resulted in a decline in morale. Clothing was in short supply, some men having to wear second-hand uniforms, gumboots and sandshoes, the food, tinned meat and dehydrated vegetables, was regarded as awful, and accommodation generally inferior.⁶¹ For many, even the

temptations of the clean, medically inspected Japanese brothels for occupation troops, which gave the term 'official hospitality' a truly generous interpretation, were no consolation, and they wanted to come home.⁶² This possibly contributed to the relatively high rate of indiscipline and crime among New Zealanders in Japan, the worst misdemeanours considered to have been 'black-marketeering' and forming sexual relationships with Japanese women. Incidences of assault, robbery, absence without leave, alcohol abuse, VD, careless driving, and insubordination and dereliction of duty were also high. New Zealand historian Laurie Brocklebank suggests that such indiscipline was a primary result of inadequate leadership in Japan.⁶³ The first Jayforce draft returned to New Zealand after six months and was replaced by a reduced strength of 2,400 men who had enlisted in New Zealand, and for whom conditions in Japan were considerably improved in response to earlier complaints. By October 1948, all of Jayforce had returned to New Zealand and been demobilised.⁶⁴

Jayforce came home unacknowledged and unrecognised from largely unpublicised overseas service. The New Zealand Government in 1995 finally acknowledged that Jayforce had been involved in active service in a dangerous war zone, and belatedly issued medals of recognition, including special memorial medals for the 16 servicemen who died in Japan. Some Jayforce veterans consider that the medals are inferior to those issued to veterans for the period 1939-1945 because they are a different design, and have refused to accept or wear them as a protest against the

refusal of successive New Zealand governments to acknowledge their service for almost 50 years.⁶⁵

The next major international military campaign in which New Zealand was involved was Korea, the western allied response to the Soviet Union's attempts at territorial expansion, or the 'Cold War'. The New Zealand contribution was Kayforce, comprising over the duration almost 4,000 regular force personnel and, predominantly, civilian volunteers.⁶⁶ Kayforce included a field artillery regiment, a signals troop, a light aid detachment, and a transport platoon, and served in Korea as part of the United Nations force from 1950 to 1957.⁶⁷ Members of Kayforce did tours of between 18 months and two years, and were rotated and replaced individually, unlike the other United Nations forces which were replaced by battalion or unit. The actual war in Korea, at times referred to as the 'Forgotten War' because it and its participants attracted little public regard or interest for its duration,⁶⁸ ended in a rather precarious 'draw' in July 1953,⁶⁹ but reduced numbers of allied forces were required to stay on in Korea in a garrison role until 1957 when the last of Kayforce came home.⁷⁰

Korea was a cold and miserable war which claimed 33 New Zealand lives, five during or after the armistice negotiations which began in 1951. The bleakness of the war was matched by the indifference of the New Zealand public to its veterans when they returned home. New Zealand military historian Ian McGibbon writes, 'Although the United Nations certainly achieved its initial objective of preserving

the Republic of Korea, the outcome did not grip the imagination in the way that the end of the Second World War had in 1945.⁷¹ Jack Hudson, a veteran of Korea, recalls that there were 'no celebrations when we returned because of course...we only returned in dribs and drabs...not like when they used to come back on big ships', and Bill Grupen, another veteran, remembers that he 'just came home and that was the finish...You got nothing official from the army. It was, nobody wanted to know really, about you coming home.' It appears that many Kayforce veterans shared this type of experience, and believe that their contributions in Korea went officially and publically unrecognised, contrary to what they had expected would happen when they had enlisted.⁷²

Even before the last of Kayforce had returned home, the New Zealand Army, together with British and other Commonwealth troops, became involved in another conflict, this time in Malaya. 'The Emergency' arose when the Malayan communist party's long campaign of industrial war and intimidation against the British administrators and planters in Malaya erupted into open warfare. In 1955, New Zealand's newly formed SAS unit was deployed to Malaya as part of the Commonwealth Strategic Reserve. The SAS returned to New Zealand in December 1957 and was replaced in Malaya by the much larger 1st Battalion of the New Zealand Royal Infantry Regiment (RNZIR) the following March. Deployed in the Malaysian states of Perak and Kelantan, the New Zealanders began to learn the very difficult and highly skilled art of effective jungle warfare against an indigenous

guerrilla enemy. 1st Battalion was replaced at the end of 1959 by 2nd Battalion RNZIR, which remained on active operations in Malaya until the Emergency ended in July 1960, only seven New Zealanders having been killed over the five-year period.⁷³

New Zealand maintained a military presence in Malaya after 1960, 1st and 2nd Battalions amalgamating to form a new 1st Battalion RNZIR stationed at Terendak Camp near Malacca with Australian and British battalions. The 'Confrontation' in Malaysia began in 1963, lasting until mid-1966 and involving British, Gurkha, Australian, New Zealand and Malayan troops. The conflict spread to Borneo in 1965 and the New Zealanders went with it, becoming involved in concentrated reconnaissance work along the Brunei/Borneo border.⁷⁴ After the Confrontation ended, 1st Battalion returned to Terendak Camp in Malaysia. When New Zealand veterans of Malaya and Borneo eventually did return to New Zealand, their efforts overseas, like those of the veterans of Jayforce and Kayforce, went largely unacknowledged.

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The military mythologies which are part of New Zealand's history had their genesis in the Boer and First World Wars, but can be seen to have arisen from two different views, or experiences, of those wars. The public mythology was a product of the way some New Zealanders, who did not go to war, perceived the exploits and achievements of the New Zealand men who did. Memorials to the glory of war

were built, Anzac Day became an official day of commemoration, and male children were inculcated with militarism via the Cadet scheme. The mythology, or traditions, of the soldiers themselves reveal a different side of war. For many, the rhetoric of war faded as they fought more and more brutal battles, and was replaced by an instinct for personal survival together with the pursuit of stress release by any means and 'making the most' of the time they had away from combat and, possibly, home.

However it is evident that elements of the public mythology were also inherent in the soldiers' version, including the concepts of mateship, personal resilience and adaptability, competence as soldiers, the assurance that being a soldier was acceptable, and, most importantly, the right to be regarded as a hero. But this latter aspect, in particular, proved to be a part of the rhetoric that was not applied in reality. Preparations for the return of New Zealand soldiers from the Boer, First and Second World Wars were inadequate, and, after an initial flurry of public celebrations, days off, and self-congratulation, the veterans were quickly forgotten. New Zealand soldiers who served in post-war conflicts have fared similarly. Veterans of Jayforce, Kayforce, Malaya and Borneo have all returned to a nation ignorant of, or indifferent to, their efforts. This has served to further alienated these veterans from the people whom the mythologies traditionally maintained would support them.

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 - 2 Phillips, pp. 142-143,
 - 3 *ibid.*, pp. 144-146, 150.
 - 4 Gary Clayton, *The New Zealand Army: A History From the 1840's to the 1990's* (Wellington, 1990), p. 66.
 - 5 Christopher Pugsley, *Gallipoli: The New Zealand Story*, Sceptre edition (Auckland, 1990), p. 12.
 - 6 Phillips, pp. 143-144. See also Sinclair, pp. 125-142.
 - 7 Deborah Challinor, 'Children and War: a study of the impact of the First World War on New Zealand children' (unpublished M.A. dissertation, Waikato University, 1993), p. 10.
 - 8 Clayton, p. 176.
 - 9 Phillips, pp. 158, 163-164.
 - 10 Christopher Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell: New Zealanders and Military Discipline in the First World War* (Auckland, 1991), p. 19.
 - 11 Phillips, pp. 165-166.
 - 12 Pugsley, pp. *On the Fringe of Hell...*, pp. 161-162.
 - 13 Clayton, p. 98.
 - 14 Phillips, pp. 159, 163.
 - 15 John McLeod, *Myth and Reality: the New Zealand Soldier in World War II* (Auckland, 1986), pp. 18, 82.
 - 16 Phillips, p. 198.
 - 17 McLeod, pp. 13-14.
 - 18 Phillips, p. 199.
 - 19 *ibid.*, p. 48.
 - 20 *ibid.*, pp. 70, 82.
 - 21 *ibid.*, pp. 138-139, 155, 157. Maclean and Phillips
 - 22 Maureen Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916-1939', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 15, (1981), p. 97.
 - 23 Maureen Sharpe, 'Anzac Day in New Zealand 1916 to 1939: Attitudes to Peace and War', (unpublished MA thesis, University of Auckland, 1981), p. 8.
 - 24 Challinor, pp. 42-43.
 - 25 McLeod, pp. 10-17.
 - 26 Phillips, pp. 159, 198.
 - 27 McLeod, p. 140.
 - 28 Maj. J. C. White, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 138.
 - 29 Pte. A. J. Ashworth, quoted in McLeod, p. 141.
 - 30 McLeod, p. 120.
 - 31 See Jane Ross, *The Myth of the Digger: Australians in Two World Wars* (New South Wales, 1995).
 - 32 Phillips, pp. 72-73, 185-186.
 - 33 McLeod, pp. 120, 132.
 - 34 Phillips, pp. 187-188.
 - 35 Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell...*, pp. 51-52.
 - 36 McLeod, p. 135.
 - 37 Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell...*, p. 24.
 - 38 Phillips, p. 209.
 - 39 Pugsley, *On the Fringe of Hell...*, pp. 31-32.
 - 40 Second World War veteran quoted in McLeod, p. 11.
 - 41 Phillips, p. 181.
 - 42 Bob Consedine, 'Inequality and the Egalitarian Myth', in *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, edited by David Novitz and Bill Willmott (Wellington, 1989), p. 172.
 - 43 McLeod, pp. 156-169.
 - 44 E.M. Andrews, *The Anzac Illusion: Anglo-Australian Relations During World War I* (Cambridge, 1993), p. 52.
 - 45 Ross Eastgate, 'Legacy of ANZAC's tenuous ties', *The Courier-Mail* (Australia), 25 /4/97, p. 11.
 - 46 Christopher Pugsley quoted in *ibid.*, p. 11.
 - 47 Pugsley, *Gallipoli...*, p. 26.
 - 48 Phillips, pp. 193-198.
 - 49 *ibid.*, pp. 198-211.
 - 50 Phillips, pp. 142, 152.
 - 51 Pugsley, *Gallipoli...*, pp. 355-357.

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- ⁵² Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton, *In the Shadow of War, New Zealand Soldiers Talk About World War One and Their Lives* (Auckland, 1990), pp. 245-252.
- ⁵³ Alison Parr, *Silent Casualties, New Zealand's Unspoken Legacy of the Second World War* (Birkenhead, 1995), pp. 14-21.
- ⁵⁴ McLeod, p. 191.
- ⁵⁵ Yska, pp. 15-16.
- ⁵⁶ Laurie Barber, *Red Coat to Jungle Green: New Zealand's Army in Peace and War* (Lower Hutt, 1994), p. 127.
- ⁵⁷ Harold Stone, *The Jayforce Experience* (Auckland, 1994), pp. 23-25, 122-128, 138-161.
- ⁵⁸ Barber, pp. 127-128.
- ⁵⁹ *ibid.*, p. 129.
- ⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 131.
- ⁶¹ Laurie Brocklebank, *Jayforce: New Zealand and the Military Occupation of Japan 1945-1948* (Auckland, 1997), pp. 40-41, 54.
- ⁶² Barber, p. 132.
- ⁶³ Brocklebank, pp. 176, 182-86, 192.
- ⁶⁴ Barber, pp. 132-133.
- ⁶⁵ *New Zealand Herald*, 25/4/97, p. A1.
- ⁶⁶ Ian McGibbon, *New Zealand and the Korean War: Volume II, Combat Operations* (Auckland, 1996), p. 362.
- ⁶⁷ Barber, p. 136.
- ⁶⁸ Rosanne Elizabeth Wood, 'Korea: the Neglected New Zealand Veterans, an Oral History Study', (Unpublished MA thesis, Waikato University, 1994), pp. 2, 116.
- ⁶⁹ McGibbon, p. 370.
- ⁷⁰ Barber, p. 140.
- ⁷¹ McGibbon, pp. 362, 370.
- ⁷² Wood, pp. 117-119.
- ⁷³ Barber, p. 142.
- ⁷⁴ For one of the very few New Zealand accounts of the border war, see Robert Gurr, *Voices from a Border War: 1 Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment, 1963 to 1965* (Melbourne, 1995).

CHAPTER TWO: The reluctant hawk; the road to Vietnam and New Zealand's contribution.

After Malaya and Borneo, the next international conflict in which New Zealand became involved was the Vietnam War. It has been suggested by historian David McCraw that the New Zealand Government sent troops to Vietnam for three inter-related reasons:

The first, and by far the most important, was that New Zealand depended for its security upon the United States and must give a high priority to maintaining its relationship with that country. The maintenance was believed to involve giving support to American regional security policies. The second [reason] was that Communist governments in Southeast Asia would pose a strategic threat to New Zealand's security. Thus when the United States became involved in preventing the rise to power of a Communist government in South Vietnam, two imperatives to New Zealand involvement reinforced one another. In addition, New Zealand had developed the habit of co-operation with its other ally, Australia, in regional security matters, and Australia's enthusiasm for involvement became a third factor in New Zealand's policy.¹

In McCraw's view, therefore, Prime Minister Keith Holyoake committed New Zealand troops to Vietnam to maintain and strengthen New Zealand's defence alliances. However, when Holyoake announced to the New Zealand public on 27 May 1965 that an artillery battery would be going to Vietnam in a combat role, it is unlikely that he foresaw the political and social upheaval which would result from his administration's decision, even if it had been made in the perceived best interests of New Zealand's security. The following day, in fact, he confidently stated, 'We

believe the great majority of the people in this country will support the Government's decision that a combatant unit should take its place alongside the forces of South Vietnam, the United States and Australia and a growing number of countries who pledged to support South Vietnam.'²

The Americans wanted as many allied flags flying in Vietnam as possible. Not wanting to be seen as intervening alone in what was essentially a Vietnamese civil war, the U.S. sought the active support of other nations to give the American presence in Vietnam international credence and vindication.³ After being refused assistance by the South-East Asia Treaty Organisation (SEATO), U.S. President John F. Kennedy looked toward the ANZUS alliance, the mutual defence pact formed between Australia, New Zealand and the U.S. in 1951. The Americans canvassed both Australia and New Zealand for their support late in 1961 and, at an ANZUS Council meeting in May 1962, the Australians responded by offering to send military advisers, small arms, and ammunition to Vietnam. New Zealand did not make a firm response at the time but after a visit to New Zealand several days later by the U.S. Secretary of State, Holyoake advised that the request would be considered. But Holyoake ultimately did not respond, an indication of his ongoing reticence toward making a military commitment to Vietnam, and his desire to see the situation resolved politically rather than with force.⁴

Neither New Zealand nor Australia were in a position to ignore the American requests for assistance in South Vietnam. Both colonial nations had matured within

the economic and military ambit of the global power Britain, and had closely identified themselves with the British imperialism. But Britain's decline in international power during the 1950s and its desire for membership of the European Economic Community meant that Australia and New Zealand no longer had a guarantor for their economic and military security.⁵ Both nations, therefore, turned towards the U.S. to fulfill this role, securing the patronage and support of the Americans via several alliances, including ANZUS in 1951 and SEATO in 1954.

It was essential to both New Zealand and Australia that they retained American support as a basis for the development of their international foreign policies.

Australia appears to have been far more enthusiastic about fulfilling its reciprocal obligations to the U.S. than was New Zealand. The immediate objective behind the Australian commitment to Vietnam was to 'tighten the American alliance beyond the loose bonds of ANZUS',⁶ in an effort to reinforce Australia's defences against the spectre of communist expansion.⁷ It was this objective which led the Australians to initially despatch an Army training team to Vietnam in July 1962, and to subsequently increase their military commitment to a full battalion by May 1965.⁸ The Australian Prime Minister's announcement six months earlier, advising that selective conscription would be introduced to expand the Australian Army, was possibly in anticipation of meeting expected American requests for Australian ground troops in Vietnam.⁹ The provision of the battalion in 1965 was considered

then, as it is now, to be the biggest single step by which Australia came to be committed to the war in Vietnam.¹⁰

The Americans courted the New Zealand Government for assistance in Vietnam as aggressively as it did the Australians, but New Zealand did not respond with quite the same level of enthusiasm, a policy which earned this country an international reputation for being 'the most dovish of the hawks.' It has been suggested that, 'As one of only two Western democracies to send combat forces to support the United States in Vietnam, New Zealand certainly qualified as a "hawk", but, unlike Australia, New Zealand leaders never offered the United States the effusive backing embodied in Australian Prime Minister Harold Holt's famous "all the way with LBJ" remark.'¹¹

New Zealand's interest in Southeast Asia after 1945 was a result of the political acceptance of an allied strategy for the containment of communism. Like the Americans and the Australians, New Zealand saw Southeast Asia as a serious gap in the front against communism. The conflict in Vietnam between the French and the Vietminh was not seen as the product of an awakening Vietnamese nationalism but as further evidence of the communist desire for world domination, already evident elsewhere. The threat of communist expansion, and the possibility that this might directly impact on New Zealand, was taken very seriously, and had been since the late 1940s. Redmer Yska writes that:

Archive material from the late forties and early fifties shows that both Labour and National used the Prime Minister's Information Section,

later known as the Publicity Division of the Tourism and Publicity Department, to run an elaborate and unacknowledged propaganda campaign against the perceived threat of communism. It was no secret that the civil service 'thought police' already had full control of broadcasting news and weekly NFU news reels. But it is less widely known that the bureaucrats planted anti-communist tracts in national and metropolitan newspapers and monitored and orchestrated opposition to communist 'front' organisations such as peace groups opposing war in Korea.¹²

At the same time, New Zealand policy-makers also set about ensuring that, should a communist advance and attack eventuate, New Zealand would have the security of military assistance from several international powers. New Zealand had already signed the Canberra Pact with Australia in 1944 which pledged both countries to work together in the post-war Pacific,¹³ and further strengthened this alliance by commitment to ANZUS seven years later. The New Zealand Government had welcomed the Geneva Agreement in 1954, and in the same year agreed to the establishment of a Commonwealth Strategic Reserve (CSR) stationed in Malaya, a region where communist unrest was evident, to which it would contribute forces. Also in 1954, New Zealand signed the Manila Treaty, the basis for the SEATO alliance. It was envisaged that New Zealand forces in the CSR would be available for SEATO action as well as United Nations or Commonwealth operations.¹⁴

New Zealand was therefore highly dependent in the late 1950s and early '60s on other more powerful nations for economic and military security, and not in a position to renege on alliance obligations. New Zealand historian Roberto Rabel

gives a slightly broader summary of the factors which led New Zealand to commit to Vietnam than does McCraw:

There is broad agreement that intervention in Vietnam grew out of the intersection of major trends in New Zealand's external relations after 1950: a growing reliance on the United States as the guarantor of New Zealand's security, symbolised by the ANZUS agreement; a corresponding shift in principal alliance orientation away from Great Britain, despite the continuation of traditional ties to Britain and the Commonwealth; closer cooperation with Australia in regional affairs; a burgeoning fear that the spread of communism in Southeast Asia constituted a strategic threat to New Zealand; and the related acceptance in the mid-1950s of a New Zealand security commitment in that region, embodied in the shift to a strategy of "forward defence" in Southeast Asia and membership of SEATO. These general developments during the 1950s provided the conceptual and geopolitical context within which policy makers in Wellington responded to escalation of the Vietnam War in the following decade, eventually drawing New Zealand into that conflict because of broader alliance commitments and the overarching logic of the security policies which sustained them.¹⁵

The Americans first approached New Zealand for assistance in November 1961 after their own decision to substantially increase aid to Vietnam.¹⁶ However, the New Zealanders decided that the vital issue, as far as they were concerned, was 'not the need to restore stability in South Vietnam, but to preserve our position with the United States as our major ally.' It was also recommended that New Zealand should 'attempt to dissuade the United States from intervening in force with combat troops.' In an effort to reinforce this non-military stance, the civilian NZST was despatched to Qui Nhon on the coast of South Vietnam in 1962. This was interpreted by the United States as a clear sign of increased New Zealand interest in Vietnam, and the desire for a military commitment from New Zealand was

informally but clearly stated early in 1963. During a visit to Wellington, the U.S. ambassador took pains to emphasise 'the importance which the United States attached on political grounds to having other respectable countries such as New Zealand associated with the operation in Vietnam.' At a SEATO meeting in Paris later that year, the American Secretary of State explicitly requested of the New Zealand Defence Minister that New Zealand 'put more uniformed personnel' into South Vietnam. Holyoake agreed to send a small team of military personnel to South Vietnam, though in a non-combat role. A team of 25 New Zealand Army Engineers was subsequently detached to assist with reconstruction work in South Vietnam.¹⁷

Subsequent American requests to New Zealand for military assistance peaked in December 1964 with a letter from Johnson to Holyoake. Holyoake seriously considered responding by reminding President Johnson that New Zealand had only very limited military resources and that New Zealand's primary military commitment remained in Malaysia. But New Zealand's stand against military involvement was being undermined by Australia's active support for American escalation of the war, and their decision of January 1965 to offer a full battalion for Vietnam service. The Holyoake administration began to fear that alliance relations would be seriously weakened by a failure to follow suit. Holyoake's delayed response to Johnson's request suggested that the Engineer detachment already in Vietnam could be increased, but that the Government would defer a decision 'until

it is possible to see more clearly what our people would be willing to support in military terms.' At a tripartite conference in Honolulu in March 1965 instigated by the Americans, the New Zealanders put forward their view that involvement in Vietnam would lead to ultimate disaster. The view was given 'short shrift' and the New Zealanders came home with the conviction that the U.S. was on the brink of introducing ground forces into Vietnam and that the Australians were preparing to do the same. A month later, the New Zealand Government was advised by the Americans that the decision to expand ground forces in Vietnam had been made. The Australians confirmed their offer to send a battalion on the same day.¹⁸

The increased American commitment to Vietnam was accompanied by renewed pressure on New Zealand. This, together with fears of the withdrawal of American military and economic support, plus a visit to New Zealand by U.S. Special Envoy Henry Cabot Lodge in April 1965, finally persuaded Holyoake to agree to a military contribution from New Zealand.¹⁹ The decision had already been made by the time the New Zealand Government received a formal South Vietnamese request for New Zealand troops on 10 May 1965. It was agreed later that month that a New Zealand artillery battery would go to Vietnam for active service.²⁰ On May 12, Holyoake stated publicly that, 'If South Vietnam falls to the Communists, it will then be the turn of Thailand and Malaysia and every other small country in the area. In this eventuality the threat to New Zealand would be that much closer to home and if we are not prepared to play our part now, can we in good conscience expect our allies

to help later on? Communist terrorism must be halted....New Zealand's vital interests are at stake in this war.²¹

Public reaction to the decision was pronounced, and there was more 'significant opposition than to any combat involvement since the Second World War', but it has been suggested that because communist activity in Southeast Asia was viewed by many New Zealanders as a possible threat, the public was prepared to accept the Government's decision.²² 161 Battery left for Vietnam in July 1965. Over the next eight years the New Zealand Government remained reluctant to expand the New Zealand military presence in Vietnam, and kept combat involvement to the minimum level considered necessary to satisfy U.S. expectations and ensure ongoing U.S. interest in economic and defensive alliances with New Zealand.²³ In 1967 two infantry companies were sent to join 161 Battery, followed by a services medical team, an Army training team, an SAS troop, and various personnel who served directly with the Australian forces.

By the late 1960s, it was becoming clear that the U.S. was not going to win the war in Vietnam, and that the war itself was having a devastating impact on America as a nation. Richard Nixon, who succeeded President Johnson in November 1968, had already begun, before his election, to look for ways to extract the U.S. from the quagmire that Vietnam had become. The strategy chosen was 'Vietnamisation', and this became a cornerstone of Nixon's campaign promise of a 'peace plan' to end the war. Simply put, 'Vietnamisation' was the gradual process of turning the conflict

over to the South Vietnam armed forces and withdrawing U.S. troops, and it began in June 1969.²⁴ Obviously, New Zealand could not, and did not want to, remain in Vietnam if the U.S. was withdrawing its own troops. The Holyoake administration subsequently implemented a plan for New Zealand's own gradual withdrawal, which conformed closely to the Australians' programme of departure.²⁵ By December 1972 the last New Zealanders had left Vietnam with the departure of both New Zealand Army training teams.²⁶ Although Norman Kirk's Labour Party staunchly opposed the war, it was not responsible for the initial withdrawal of New Zealand troops from Vietnam. The Labour Party in fact was not elected into power until November 1972, immediately after which it called the training teams home.²⁷ Norman Kirk did implement a substantial programme of aid to Vietnam, including assistance for Vietnamese students to study in New Zealand, a policy which was continued by the National Government when it returned to power in 1975.²⁸

New Zealand sent 3,890 military personnel, known collectively as New Zealand Force Vietnam (NZ V Force) to serve in Vietnam. The Army provided 3,801 personnel, 61 came from the Air Force, and 28 from the Navy. Of these, 37 were killed in action or died of wounds between June 1964 and December 1972, and 187 were wounded. The highest number of New Zealand military personnel in Vietnam at any one time was 543, or ten percent of the New Zealand Army's total strength, in November 1968.²⁹

New Zealand's first military contribution to Vietnam was a small non-combatant team of Engineers, the New Zealand Army Detachment Vietnam (NEWZAD,³⁰ or NZADV,³¹ depending on which source is consulted), which consisted of two officers and 20 other ranks. The team arrived in South Vietnam in June 1964 to assist with reconstruction and development. A small headquarters element, an officer and two other ranks, was established in Saigon to command NEWZAD, to liaise with the Vietnamese and United States authorities, and provide New Zealand administration and communications support. The Engineers worked in and around the town of Thu Do Mot in Phuoc Tuy Province on civil aid projects such as the construction of bridges, a civil guard building, guard posts, security accommodation, a market place and rooms for a school. The team also repaired the ceilings of a local hospital and built a camp for Chieu Hoi (defecting Vietcong guerillas) before being withdrawn to New Zealand in June 1965, one month after the New Zealand Government increased its military commitment to South Vietnam by sending 161 Battery in a combat role.³²

The main body of 161 Battery, which consisting of 123 personnel, flew to South Vietnam by RNZAF C-130 Hercules in July 1965. They were accompanied by Headquarters Vietnam Force on their way to Saigon (which lost one member killed in an enemy attack there in December 1965³³), and the logistic element V Force.

Although 161 Battery was in theory ready for combat in February 1965, Regimental Headquarters planners considered it to be inadequately configured for 'the positional

warfare of the Vietnam campaign.’ It was a four-gun battery designed for air operations in Borneo, and it was felt that a six-gun battery would be more appropriate. Six guns had initially been planned for but advice received from the Australians stated that the Americans were supported by four-gun batteries. By the time the mistake was discovered, it was too late. Holyoake had made his announcement and 161 Battery was to go as soon as possible. Preparations for deployment were kept secret but gunners likely to go to Vietnam with the Battery knew at least two weeks before Holyoake’s announcement on 27 May that they were ‘probably’ going. However, the Battery was unable to provide a full strength at the time due to ongoing training commitments in New Zealand, and volunteers were called on from postings throughout New Zealand to fill the ranks. Advertisements were also placed in civilian newspapers for short-term enlistments.³⁴ Ultimately, approximately only half of the reconstituted artillery unit destined for Vietnam was derived from the original 161 Battery. Soldiers from other units, engineers, signallers, Service Corps personnel, infantrymen and medics, volunteered. Personnel from corps other than artillery were given appointments where detailed knowledge of gunnery was not essential. Pre-deployment and in-theatre training prepared the men for their active service role.³⁵

The Battery was initially based at Bien Hoa township in Bien Hoa Province near Saigon attached to the U.S. Army’s 173rd Airborne Brigade. It remained there for 12 months providing close fire support for the Brigade and its two other infantry

battalions, the 1/503d and the 2/503d. 161 Battery also supported 1st Battalion, Royal Australian Regiment (1RAR) which joined the Brigade in June 1965. A year later, the Battery left Bien Hoa and the 173rd Airborne Brigade to join the 1st Australian Task Force (1ATF) at Nui Dat Base in Phuoc Tuy Province.³⁶ 161 Battery served continuously with Royal Australian Artillery field regiments at a number of fire bases in support of Australian and New Zealand infantry units until being withdrawn by the New Zealand Government in May 1971. During the Battery's seven year deployment in Vietnam, personnel rotated in and out on individual 12 month tours of duty, similar to the American system, with approximately 150 officers and men passing through the unit annually. Four members of 161 Battery were killed on active duty in Vietnam and one gunner died out of battle.³⁷

New Zealand's combat strength in Vietnam was increased in May 1967 by a rifle company of 182 men, designated Victor 1, which included a mortar section and an assault pioneer section. The Company came from the 1st Battalion RNZIR, part of the CSR stationed at Terendak Camp in Malaya. Like 161 Battery, most New Zealand infantry companies which served in Vietnam included volunteers from other army corps, and short-term enlistments. Later in 1967, Victor 1 Company was joined by Whiskey 1 Company, also from 1st Battalion. In March 1968, the tradition of the Australian and New Zealand Army Corps (ANZAC), initiated at

Gallipoli during the First World War, was revived when Victor 1 and Whiskey 1 merged with 2RAR to form the 2RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Infantry Battalion.³⁸

The New Zealand infantry companies were deployed on operations throughout Phuoc Tuy Province and spent most of their tours in the field, returning to Nui Dat Base for several days between operations which could last for several months. The companies were involved in patrols and ambushes throughout their tactical area of responsibility in Phuoc Tuy Province, as well as the training of regular army units from the 18th Division of the Army of the Republic of [South] Vietnam (ARVN) from November 1969 to April 1970.³⁹ Unlike the gunners who used the individual rotation, or 'trickle', system, infantrymen went to Vietnam as an intact company, keeping that configuration throughout their tours. There were six Victor Companies and three Whiskey Companies. All completed 12 month tours, except for Victor 1 and Victor 2, both of which did 6 months, and Victor 6, which did eight months before it was withdrawn (see Appendix E for the dates of each company's tour). Whiskey 3 Company was withdrawn without replacement in November 1970 and Victor 6 Company was withdrawn without replacement in December 1971. Victor and Whiskey Companies lost 29 members killed in action in Vietnam.⁴⁰

New Zealand also sent military medical teams to Vietnam. 1NZSMT was formed under the auspices of the U.S. Military Provincial Health Programme late in 1966.⁴¹

The aim of this programme was to increase aid to South Vietnam by providing 'medical and surgical care and health for the civilians of South Vietnam and to

develop and expand the Vietnamese capability to look after their own people.’⁴² The team was drawn from the three military services and eventually included medical officers and NCOs, and administrative and technical staff. 1NZSMT arrived in Vietnam in 8 May 1967 and was initially based at Qui Nhon in Binh Dinh Province, but later moved to Bong Son where the new Bong Son Impact Hospital opened on 26 June 1969.⁴³ The team also ran dispensaries at Phu My, Ho An, and Tam Quan in the same region. Bong Son was the focus of frequent enemy attention and was garrisoned by ARVN troops and U.S. Military Assistance Command Vietnam (MACV) advisors. The U.S. 1st Air Cavalry Division and, later, the 173rd Airborne were also based near 1NZSMT.⁴⁴ Several of the New Zealanders were recommended for U.S. awards for medically assisting the Americans. Unfortunately, for ‘diplomatic’ reasons, these awards were never received.⁴⁵

1NZSMT treated Vietnamese civilians for war and non-war related medical problems. Enemy casualties were not officially treated, but team members were aware that some of their patients were Vietcong. The team were armed and were responsible for their own defence in the event of an attack. An attack never eventuated, possibly because of the team’s liberal attitude toward who they treated.⁴⁶ 1NZSMT also trained Vietnamese medical orderlies and nurses. Unfortunately, this exercise was not considered to have been very successful because of the lack of available time in which to do the training, the language and cultural barrier, the fact that the training was not recognised by the Vietnamese authorities, and the high rate

of conscription of medically trained South Vietnamese.⁴⁷ 1NZSMT was withdrawn in December 1971, having lost one member killed in action in 1970. A female nurse from the civilian NZST at Qui Nhon, which worked in Vietnam from 1963 until the fall of the South in 1975, also lost her life.⁴⁸

The New Zealand SAS also served in Vietnam. The 1st Ranger Squadron was notified in October 1968 that it was to form a 26 man unit, designated 4Troop NZSAS, to operate with the Australian SAS in Phuoc Tuy Province. The usual New Zealand SAS troop numbered 12, but 4Troop was required to be organised and equipped along the same lines as an Australian unit and therefore had 26 members, including a small administrative element. The unit left New Zealand in November 1969 for Terendak Camp in Malaya for training, then deployed to Nui Dat in Vietnam in December.⁴⁹ The primary role of 4Troop in Vietnam was to gather intelligence in support of 1ATF. A secondary role was to conduct small offensive operations using five-man patrols.⁵⁰ 4 Troop NZSAS returned to New Zealand in February 1971, one member having been killed in action in January 1970.⁵¹

The New Zealand Army also despatched infantry-training teams to Vietnam, 1NZATTV late in 1970, and a second, 2NZATTV, early in 1972. 1NZATTV included 28 men and was based at Chi Lang (close to the Cambodian border in the south), providing leadership training to South Vietnamese Territorial Force officers. The 18 personnel of 2NZATTV were integrated into an existing training unit of US Special Forces at Dong Ba Thin, further north near Cam Ranh Bay, to train Khmer

Republic (Cambodian) light infantry battalions. Both training teams were withdrawn from Vietnam in December 1972.⁵²

Some New Zealanders who served in Vietnam had been 'borrowed' from one New Zealand Army corps for duties in another, or were directly attached to 1ATF units.

For example, 16 signallers from RNZSC were individually detached for communication duties with 161 Battery in Vietnam, supporting mainly 1RAR.⁵³

Other New Zealanders were attached in various capacities to 1ALSG and, to a lesser extent, to American units. New Zealand also sent pilots. Approximately 30 RNZAF helicopter pilots flew Iroquois troop-carrying helicopters and gunships in Vietnam with the Australian Air Force, or flew as forward air controllers (FACs) for artillery units with the U.S. Air Force. Also, four New Zealand Army pilots did tours with 161 Reconnaissance Flight, an Australian unit, based at Nui Dat Base.⁵⁴

Another group of New Zealanders who served in Vietnam were the military chaplains. New Zealand military chaplains usually ministered to men of all religious faiths, and, in theory, did not carry arms although some did, albeit discreetly.⁵⁵

New Zealand was unable to make an independent national effort in Vietnam because of financial constraints affecting the operation of its military services. The Army in particular used British equipment which was generally not compatible with that of the Americans and the Australians. Also, New Zealand had other military commitments in Malaysia and Singapore. Manpower limits were already somewhat stretched and, because New Zealand was not actually at war with Vietnam,

Territorial and Reserve forces could not be called upon. As well, New Zealand insisted on paying its own way in Vietnam, despite very generous offers of equipment and other aid from the Americans. Simply put, New Zealand could not afford to make a large, independent contribution. It was ultimately decided that most equipment used by New Zealanders in Vietnam would be drawn from American sources, including personal weapons, with payment being made on a capitation basis, but that the New Zealanders would provide their own clothing.⁵⁶

Because the New Zealand Army was unable to provide full support for its personnel in Vietnam, it was arranged for New Zealanders to be stationed in the same area as the Australians, for 'logistic, tactical doctrine, and historical reasons.' NZ V Force was commanded overall by the commander of the New Zealand Army Force Far East, who delegated command authority to the commander of NZ V Force. NZ V Force was affiliated to 1ATF at Nui Dat which was under the operational control of the commander, United States Military Assistance Command, Vietnam.⁵⁷ However in practice, the New Zealanders worked more closely in all areas with the Australians than they did with the Americans. At times this alliance was uneasy as it was discovered that 'dissimilarities in policy and procedure between associated forces can produce considerable difficulties.' Also, NZ V Force felt that it was inadequately represented as there was 'no suitable joint council to which it could attach itself', and at times the 'consultation between New Zealand and the Australians was noticeably lacking.' Further, the New Zealanders found it difficult

to maintain their national identity, although they worked hard to overcome this problem. Essentially, NZ V Force was reliant on U.S. and Australian facilities and resources for most aspects of its tour in Vietnam, and at times this caused difficulties both at a Headquarters level as well as among personnel in the field.⁵⁸

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U.S. intervention in what was essentially a civil war in Vietnam was based on the American's increasing fear of communist expansion. America had been politically involved in Vietnam, albeit covertly, since the end of the Second World War, implementing a policy of ever-increasing financial and military aid. In the early 1960s, the situation in Vietnam had reached a point where the U.S. felt compelled to deploy combat troops. In an effort to secure international approval for its actions, the U.S. approached several of its alliance partners to make at least a symbolic military contribution in Vietnam. Australia and New Zealand, at that point both dependent on ongoing military and economic support from the U.S., and aware of the potential threat which advancing communism posed to their territories, agreed. Of the two nations, Australia demonstrated markedly more enthusiasm for military intervention in Vietnam, offering assistance almost as soon as requests from the U.S. were received. New Zealand was considerably more reluctant, agreeing to the commitment of combat troops only under extreme pressure and the possibility of U.S. withdrawal of support in other areas.

New Zealand's military contribution to Vietnam was not extensive in comparison to those made by the Americans, or even the Australians. It was only ever meant to be a token contribution, more important politically than it was in military terms.

Because of military commitments in other theatres, and training requirements at home, the New Zealand Army was not in a position to provide an independently maintained contribution in Vietnam. NZ V Force was therefore compelled to rely on extensive assistance from the Americans and the Australians. Despite the revival of the Anzac tradition in 1968 when the New Zealanders became officially affiliated with the Australians, or possibly because of it, relations between the two military forces in Vietnam were not always ideal. For many New Zealanders who served in Vietnam, the disparities between historical military traditions and what actually happened in Vietnam and afterwards were to become rather evident.

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- ¹ David McCraw, 'Reluctant Ally: New Zealand's Entry into the Vietnam War', *New Zealand Journal of History*, Vol. 15, (1981), p. 49.
 - ² *The Press*, 28/5/65, p. 1.
 - ³ *The New Zealand Herald*, 12/1/91, Section 2, p. 1.
 - ⁴ McCraw, pp. 50-51.
 - ⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 49-50.
 - ⁶ Gregory Pemberton, 'Australia's Road to Vietnam 1945-1965', in *Vietnam Remembered*, edited by Gregory Pemberton (New South Wales, 1990), pp. 34-37.
 - ⁷ Peter Edwards, 'Some Reflections on the Australian Government's Commitment to the Vietnam War', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), p. 5.
 - ⁸ Ian McNeill, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War', in *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, edited by Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey, and Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), pp. 19, 33.
 - ⁹ Pemberton, pp. 34-35.
 - ¹⁰ Edwards, p. 1.
 - ¹¹ Roberto Rabel, "The most dovish of the hawks": New Zealand alliance politics and the Vietnam War', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, p. 14.
 - ¹² Redmer Yska, *All Shook Up: The Flash Bodge and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties* (Auckland, 1993), p. 23.
 - ¹³ W. David McIntyre, 'From Dual Dependency to Nuclear Free', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, edited by Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland, 1992), p. 529.
 - ¹⁴ Rabel, p. 3.
 - ¹⁵ *ibid.*, p. 15.
 - ¹⁶ McCraw, p. 51.
 - ¹⁷ Rabel, pp. 16-17.

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- ¹⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 20-22.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 23.
- ²⁰ McCraw, p. 59.
- ²¹ Prime Minister Keith Holyoake, 12 May 1965. Radio New Zealand Archives tape T 431. Quoted in Claire Loftus Nelson, *Long Time Passing: New Zealand Memories of the Vietnam War* (Wellington, 1990), p. 17.
- ²² Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972: A Report on the Chief of General Staff's Exercise 1972* (Wellington, 1973), p. 16.
- ²³ Rabel, p. 24.
- ²⁴ 'Vietnamisation' had a highly negative effect on American troops in Vietnam. Drug abuse increased as did racial incidents and tensions, and fraggings, the practice of soldiers attempting to kill or killing their own officers and NCOs. Protests in the United States increased, some with Vietnam veterans participating. There was a general sense among the U.S. troops of uselessness and hopelessness as morale declined. Linda Reinberg, *In the Field: the language of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1991), p. 234.
- ²⁵ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, p. 31.
- ²⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Brief history of the New Zealand Army in South Vietnam 1964-1972* (Wellington, 1973), p. 12.
- ²⁷ Alan McRobie, 'The Politics of Volatility, 1972-1991', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, 2nd edition, pp. 385-386.
- ²⁸ Nelson, p. 58.
- ²⁹ Ministry of Defence, *Brief History...*, p. 13.
- ³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.
- ³¹ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, p. 12.
- ³² Ministry of Defence, *Brief history...*, p. 5.
- ³³ Ken Treanor, *New Zealand Military Medics 1964 to 1971*, 2nd edition (Christchurch, 1997), p. 15.
- ³⁴ John Hall, 4/2/96.
- ³⁵ S.D. Newman, *Vietnam Gunners: 161 Battery RNZA, South Vietnam, 1965-1971* (Wellington, 1988), pp. 21-23.
- ³⁶ Ministry of Defence, *Brief history...*, pp. 5-6.
- ³⁷ Mike Subritzky, *The Vietnam Scrapbook: the Second ANZAC Adventure* (Papakura, 1995), p. 3.
- ³⁸ Ministry of Defence, *Brief history...*, p. 7.
- ³⁹ Shane Harold Capon, 'A Symbolic Presence?: New Zealand's involvement in the combat training of South Vietnamese and Cambodian troops, 1968-1972' (unpublished DPhil thesis, Waikato University, 1997), p. xxviii.
- ⁴⁰ Subritzky, p. 3.
- ⁴¹ Treanor, p. 17.
- ⁴² Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, p. 74.
- ⁴³ Ministry of Defence, *Brief history...*, p. 10.
- ⁴⁴ Treanor, pp. 26, 28, 32-33.
- ⁴⁵ ANON, 17/4/96.
- ⁴⁶ ANON, 28/12/95. Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
- ⁴⁷ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, p. 76.
- ⁴⁸ Subritzky, p. 3.
- ⁴⁹ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, pp. 78-79.
- ⁵⁰ W.D. Baker, *Dare to Win: the story of the New Zealand Special Air Service*, (Melbourne, 1987), pp. 87-88.
- ⁵¹ Subritzky, p. 3.
- ⁵² Capon, p. xxviii.
- ⁵³ Laurie Barber, *Swift and Sure: a History of the Royal New Zealand Corps of Signals and Army signaling in New Zealand: To Commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Corps on June 1 1996* (Wellington, 1996), p. 181.
- ⁵⁴ Nelson, p. 25.
- ⁵⁵ Interview with Dr Laurie Barber in Pat Craddock, *Boxing a Wind Named Charlie*, National Radio, (Wellington, 1990)
- ⁵⁶ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, pp. 28, 39-41.
- ⁵⁷ Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966* (New South Wales, 1993), p. 71.
- ⁵⁸ Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army...*, pp. 15, 36-37, 43, 50-51, 56.

CHAPTER THREE: A tiger by the tail; why New Zealanders went to Vietnam and what they found there.

New Zealanders went to Vietnam for a variety of reasons. Some went to continue family military traditions, and others went because they were professional soldiers and it was their job. Many went because they wanted to test their training and skills, and others were looking for a challenge. Some felt that they could make a significant contribution to the civilian situation there, especially in the health field, and others considered it their duty as New Zealanders to go. For some, the desire to help stop the spread of communism was paramount. Others were bored with home service, and still others went to avoid 'trouble' at home.¹

The histories of some New Zealand veterans suggest that their decisions to go Vietnam may have been influenced by family traditions, and the wider military mythology of New Zealand nationalism.² For example, 'Bob P's father fought at Ypres, the Somme and Passchendale during the First World War, and the fathers of 'Bill M', Gordon Dalziel and John Moller all served during the Second World War.³ John Pointon's uncles also served in the Second World War, and Bill Peachey's father had been in the Mounted Rifles.⁴ Terry Findlay, who joined the Army specifically to go to Vietnam, went at least in part because his father had been 'on Crete and that during the war, and I wanted to be as good as him.'⁵ Gerald

Southon recalls that although he and his friends went to Vietnam for adventure, and that 'thinking about Queen, God and Country, that was nowhere near our minds really', he was also influenced by his family's military traditions. 'We'd heard a lot of stories from our uncles about the Second World War and the Maori Battalion and all these other ones in the RSA,...[but] they hadn't painted the gory side of the war, you know? Everything that they said was always about the hard case things that happened.'⁶ 'TW Washburn's' extended family also have a strong military tradition, having fought in every international conflict in which New Zealand has been involved, from the Boer War to Vietnam. Interestingly, all of them had the same first name as he does. He remembers, 'We sat by my father and them, they'd talk about their experiences over there....I thought, I can better my father. He can take on a tank with a fucking bayonet, my father! Oh, bullshit! Beautiful, though, eh?...I don't know why I joined, but I thought that that's where it all come from. We're warriors in our family.'⁷

It appears that many Regular Force soldiers went to Vietnam simply because being a soldier was their chosen profession, going to war was part of the job, and, for most, Vietnam was an opportunity to test their soldiering skills.⁸ Peter Hotop went because, 'as a professional soldier, it was expected of me.'⁹ Fred Barclay also went for the same reason. 'We were regular soldiers being paid by the tax payer and that's where we should have been.' Barclay also remembers that as a member of the specialised and rigorously trained SAS, not testing his skills was like 'being a bus

conductor and not being allowed to clip tickets.’¹⁰ Similarly, Brendan Duggan recalls, ‘We were trained professional soldiers, we had spent years in the jungle training without trying out our lessons, Vietnam was our “opening night”. Now we could see the results of our training....I was very proud of being a soldier, being in the ’Nam was what I wanted. The politics or policy of my government did not enter my head, I just wanted to do my job with my mates.’¹¹ Bill McNeish remembers that as an Army instructor prior to Vietnam, he felt he needed to go because ‘if the opportunity’s there to try out what you’re doing, or what you’ve been teaching, then you’ve got to take it.’¹²

Another veteran, an ex-gunner, went to Vietnam because ‘I was a regular soldier and it was a war. Sometimes I’m tempted to dress up my motivations with talk of defending democracy, etc., but the truth is that I was a young soldier who wanted to prove himself to himself and have an adventure. I had joined the Army before we even heard of Vietnam, expecting to see out all of my service in peacetime. When the chance came to get involved in some action...I jumped at it. Vietnam or Venezuela, it would have all been the same to me.’¹³ Gordon Dalziel also went because he was a professional soldier and it was part of his job. ‘If they’d told me to go to Thailand, I would have gone to Thailand. It was just another country, another experience.’ Dalziel had already had a brief encounter with the situation in Vietnam while he was still serving in Borneo. He was on radio watch one night, when ‘we happened to be on the same frequency as the Americans, and they must

have been in a contact and we were trying to send a signal to one of our outfits that we had up on the border, and the Yanks come up on our frequency [and said] we've got a war going on here. And...I said, so have we, but the trouble is, we've won our bastard!' ¹⁴ Peter Earsman, a career soldier, recalls:

Why did I go? This is a question I have asked myself many times in the years since. My sons have also asked from time to time. I would like to say patriotism but that doesn't quite make. It is probably an amalgam of things. I was (regrettably) fairly ignorant of politics at the time. I probably felt it my duty. Testosterone no doubt played a part. Adventure. Some desire to put all those years of training into use. No real thought of saving the Free World or anything like that. There was no sense of wanting to kill anybody. Very few soldiers of my acquaintance (probably none) are sociopathic, which one would need to be to want to go to a foreign country for the express purpose of killing people. Soldiers are, at the end of the day, just fairly ordinary people. ¹⁵

One ex-infantry officer recalls that he did not particularly want to go, or not go, to Vietnam, but 'part of the notion of [military] service is you serve wherever they tell you.' ¹⁶ A veteran of 1NZSMT and, later, 1NZATTV, recalls a similar sentiment. He was selected, and 'It was part of the job and away I went. I had no feelings one way or another at that stage....I guess being single it was a chance to go and do something you'd been training for.' ¹⁷ Another medic went because he was 'utterly bored with home service, and I felt that a Vietnam experience would be helpful in my service career - it was!' He does recall feeling guilty because he left his family at home, but the meaningful work he did in Vietnam was some compensation for this. ¹⁸ One senior member of 1NZSMT also went because he had already had considerable previous experience with military medicine, felt he had a contribution

to make, and had become disenchanted with his civilian job.¹⁹ Des Sluce, also a medic, volunteered because he considered he had the 'right trade', was in the 'right place', did not have a family at that point, and felt that the Vietnamese needed his talents 'more than healthy Kiwi kids did.'²⁰ Ken Treanor, who initially went to Vietnam with 1NZSMT, then returned later for a second tour with the civilian NZST, went because of 'The challenge of the job, and the prospect of doing some good.'²¹

Not everybody who volunteered for Vietnam went in the role they had initially hoped for. One veteran, who eventually served with 161 Battery, recalls:

It was quite funny. I didn't really want to go to Vietnam but then my wife and I were reading the paper, seeing the news and that, and we saw that particular picture of the little girl running away from a napalmed village. And at that stage the Medical Corps had a services medical team over there, and the Red Cross had a surgical team that I couldn't have got on either, so I applied to go with the Army medical team to Vietnam...to deal with the civilians. And I put my application [in] and some clever clerk sent it back and said that I couldn't apply to go [with] a unit, I must just apply for the service in Southeast Asia. And so I applied for service in Southeast Asia, and they attached me to the Battery, but I found out later that the people at Medical Depot, which is at Burnham but I wasn't there, I was at the hospital, were saving the medical team jobs for their own people because it was a lot safer....So they, having got a sucker that had applied for service in Southeast Asia, they could fill the post with a fighting unit, and keep the other job vacant for one of their clerks or so on....So I was tricked into it.²²

Bill Peachey went to Vietnam because he wanted to experience the challenge, and to do 'something for, you know, New Zealand. Even though I can't get in the Olympic Games, I've done something, I've done something for the country.'²³

Other New Zealanders, whether they were Regular Force or they specifically enlisted for a short-term period of three years, also went to 'prove themselves', for the travel and adventure, and because their friends were going.²⁴ Bruce Liddall recalls, 'Remember, we're the age of the war babies, right? Most of us were born in the '45, '46, '48 era, so we grew up on warries on the movies and I think it was something we wanted to do. You had to experience it yourself, you know? You see it on TV, or on the movies...and when the chance came, I think, well, we all took it.'²⁵ For Murray Deed, 'I guess in those days, I mean, we didn't have the big OE, so for us it was the big OE....it was the thing to do.' He remembers the impact of the protesters who demonstrated at Christchurch Airport before Whiskey 6 left for Vietnam from Burnham Camp:

We left in the middle of the morning, it was dark... We went through the back way, we had a police escort right through, there was police cars on every corner and we went to Christchurch Airport through the back way. They cut a hole in the fence, we went through the fence, they had the Hercules sitting on the runway with the engines running and we just went straight up the back and in the door and took off. And guys had family there waiting in the terminal which they didn't see.... We were really angry... But in hindsight we understand, we're a bit more tolerant now than we would have been in those days.²⁶

John Treanor was also 'hassled' about going to Vietnam before he left,²⁷ and Colin Whyte was abused by people in the main street of Upper Hutt before he went because he was wearing his uniform.²⁸

It appears that only a relatively small percentage of New Zealanders went to Vietnam with the specific aim of fighting communism. 'Andrew B', who joined the

Army for a short-term enlistment was one of those who did. 'I had done my National Service, then I volunteered...to join the Regular Force of course for the specific purpose of serving in Vietnam, because at that stage I believed that we had to fight the war....I believed very much in the, what is now probably the propaganda, but the theory, the domino theory, that the communists had to be stopped somewhere, and much better that we fight them there than in Australia or in New Zealand and so, yeah, it was the domino theory and we had to do our bit to stop the...tide.'²⁹ Personal anti-communist sentiments also contributed to Dave Orbell's decision to go to Vietnam,³⁰ and as far as Tom Palmer is concerned, his entire service career has been spent either 'actually fighting the communists in one shape or another or training to fight them anywhere in the world.'³¹

Prime Minister Keith Holyoake went to some lengths to publicly maintain that all New Zealand military personnel who served in Vietnam had volunteered to go,³² but evidence suggests this may not necessarily have been quite the case for some soldiers. S.D. Newman, author of *Vietnam Gunners*, writes, 'The Regular Force troops were told that they were being posted to Vietnam on active service with 161 Battery. Because a general mobilisation was not in force they had the right to protest such a posting or to leave the Army',³³ and people evidently did protest the posting, as 'some [men] declined to go on compassionate grounds.'³⁴ Although these men did not go to Vietnam, it is possible that others who did, did not particularly want to.

It appears that officers in the New Zealand Army may in practice have had less choice than enlisted men regarding whether or not they went to Vietnam. John Hall recalls, 'The long service Regular, if he was fit for duties, not... disqualified from that point of view, age bracket and rank-wise, really had no option, and didn't expect an option.' He believes that if he had 'pushed the point' about not wanting to go (which he did not), 'it would have been thoroughly embarrassing....The system could *possibly* have made compassionate arrangements. If I had have had some...compassionate reason for not going, then so be it, but chaps went with pregnant wives, they went with, you know, all the things that go on with family life and what have you, and the system just cannot make too much leeway for that sort of thing. You were in it.' He also considers that to have declined to go to Vietnam would have destroyed any chances of future promotion.³⁵ Harry Shaw also recalls, 'They were volunteers, but in a lot of cases they were compulsive volunteers. In other words, if my future's in the Army, I've got to go whether I want to or not....So in a sense it was volunteer, but it was almost a compelled, a compulsion that they had to go to continue their career.'³⁶ Richard Pepper, already a veteran of the Korean War, remembers, 'I was *posted* to Vietnam to further my expertise in modern armour tactics and vehicles and helicopter operations. I was given exactly five minutes to make up my mind whether I desired the *posting* - I went.'³⁷ Ted Brooker was invited to go to Vietnam, but emphasises that the word invited should be in inverted commas as he was the only pilot available at the time. At the time he had no idea where Vietnam was or what to expect, assuming that 'it was just a

bloody overgrown Fiji or Tonga or something like that', and literally had to make his own arrangements to get there as he was not part of a regular New Zealand unit going to Vietnam.³⁸

John Treanor went to Vietnam because 'It was assumed that we would go, or that I would go. I was drafted from one sub-unit into the work-up company, which was D Company in Terendak, and that must have been the new Whiskey, Whiskey Company. So I was transferred from the Signals Platoon, in which I was a radio operator, and it was assumed that I...would have no reservations about going.' But Treanor did have some reservations, recalling, 'I think my reservations were about getting killed!'³⁹ 'Sniper' was told by an NCO during training at Burnham, 'you can't get out of it. He said, you're in the Army and you're going to Vietnam and that's that. Don't bother getting married because it won't work.'⁴⁰ In Harry Ellison's experience, most people who joined the Army at the time knew where they would ultimately be going, because 'They were part of a crew and they said, right, this group's going there, and individual people weren't asked.'⁴¹ However, Hardie Martin, Garrie Mills, and 'Bob P' can all remember being personally asked, Mills recalling, 'If you didn't want to go there was no hassles whatsoever.'⁴²

The New Zealand Army, unable at the time to provide enough troops from existing Regular personnel to fulfill its commitment in Vietnam, looked elsewhere, both within the Army and outside it, for people willing to serve there. However, one ex-infantry officer recalls, 'The volunteers, as it was colloquially put, weren't actually

queuing up....I mean we had people who went there three times. That doesn't happen if you've got a lot of volunteers.'⁴³ Newman implies that there were plenty of reserve soldiers who were happy to go to Vietnam, writing, 'Many volunteers, especially from the Territorial Forces, entered the Army for Vietnam service. To do this they entered on a three year engagement which saw them being trained, posted to Vietnam, and then demobbed.'⁴⁴ However John Hall remembers that 'there were ads in the paper for short term service engagements for the Regular Force for the specific purpose of going to Vietnam...and that's where the bulk of the numbers of the chaps that actually went there were made up from, from those chaps.'⁴⁵

While volunteers from other areas of the Army may not have been as numerous as has been suggested, there is also evidence indicating quite marked competition among soldiers in Regular Force units who were eligible to go. Mike Perreau remembers that when the first New Zealand infantry company was preparing to deploy to Vietnam, 'it was real cut-throat, down to scrapping...to make room for yourself or whatever',⁴⁶ and Murray Deed, who served with Victor 6, the last Company to go to Vietnam, recalls, 'I mean, there were so many guys, cooks of our age that...would have just about killed you to go. Everyone, we just volunteered, we just wanted to go. We didn't think too much about the consequences. It was the gung ho sort of thing, you know.'⁴⁷ 'Bob P' said yes when he was asked to go to Vietnam in 1969, because 'at that time there was talk of New Zealanders pulling out and everybody's aim was to get over there.'⁴⁸

For some New Zealanders, particularly those who had not previously served in a similar environment and climate, the physical conditions in Vietnam were difficult to adjust to. Vietnam is a fertile country, classified as a 'rainforest' zone, with mountains and plains, deep valleys, lush emerald fields, and flat, treeless grasslands. There are small pockets of desert in places but, before the war, almost four-fifths of the land was covered with trees and thick vegetation. Vietnam is tropical and its climate is greatly affected by monsoon weather. From November to April, the winter monsoons blow dry from the northeast and the temperature can range from reasonably pleasant to cool, but during May to October the summer monsoons from the southeast bring tremendous heat, humidity, malaria-ridden mosquitoes and torrential rains.⁴⁹ Soldiers in the field spent their tours either covered in a layer of thick red dust, or knee-deep in sticky red mud. The rain and dampness got into everything and rotted clothes and skin. It was common practice for many soldiers not to bother wearing underwear because it fell apart from the constant dampness and caused skin infections and the dreaded crutch rot.⁵⁰

Phuoc Tuy Province, on the coast of South Vietnam and near Saigon, was the operational area where most New Zealand and Australian troops were deployed, and was chosen because it met the criteria established by the Australians prior to their entry into the war. These criteria were: 'First, the area should be of significant enemy activity so that there should be no thought that the [Australian] force was not doing its share; secondly, the area should not be contiguous to the borders of

Cambodia, Laos, or the Demilitarised Zone; thirdly, the area allocated to the task force, and with which Australia's national effort could be readily identified, should be geographically distinct; and fourthly, it should offer reasonably secure access to shipping and independence.⁵¹ 1ALSG was based in Vung Tau, a shallow-water port and seaside resort town with a peacetime population of approximately 45,000 at the end of a peninsula extending into the South China Sea.⁵² 1ALSG was directly linked by road to Nui Dat Base, where the majority of the Australian and New Zealand task force combat troops were based. Nui Dat, a hill rising sharply from the surrounding flat countryside, was on Provincial Route 2 which bisected Phuoc Tuy Province from north to south. At the bottom of the hill were the company lines and associated accommodation, a maintenance area, an airfield and a helicopter landing pad, and enough room to fight should the base come under heavy attack. Some small villages, or hamlets, existed in the area, but Nui Dat was not immediately adjacent to any heavily populated areas, a condition required by the Australians. It allowed room for 1ATF to deploy, yet it was close enough to the province capital, Ba Ria (eight kilometres away), to offer protection and afford easy liaison with the province chief.⁵³

Australian veteran Gary McKay gives a good description of the facilities at Nui Dat:

I didn't realise that the base at Nui Dat would be so big. It was about 10 kilometres in perimeter, and housed two battalions, a special air service squadron and its headquarters, the armoured personnel carrier squadron and its workshops, an Australian field battery of 105mm howitzers, an American battery of 8 inch self-propelled guns and a battery of 155mm howitzers. There was 161 Independent Recce Flight, the First Field Squadron Royal Australian Engineers, a Royal

Australian Electrical Mechanical Engineers field workshop, a Royal Australian Army Service Corps field supply company, the Task Force headquarters and a field ambulance (something between an aid post and a field hospital). In addition there were also minor units such as the military police, the Salvation Army hut, Post Exchange (PX), canteens and the like. At one end of the base there was an airstrip capable of taking Caribou fixed-wing aircraft....The RAAF [Royal Australian Air Force] had a squadron of Iroquois choppers parked there and the army kept their Pilatus Porters fixed-wing aircraft...and Bell Sioux [helicopters] there as well. The battalion lines were located in a rubber plantation like most of the base. There were a few gravel and bitumen roads which served the main units but basically everywhere one looked there was red mud.’⁵⁴

Most New Zealanders deployed to Vietnam by plane, landing either at Bien Hoa Airbase (prior to mid-1966), Tan Son Nhut Airport at Saigon, or Vung Tau Airfield. Allan Grayling remembers flying over the coast of South Vietnam and thinking, ‘The only real description would be a moonscape. It was just craters’,⁵⁵ and, for Gordon Dalziel, the view from the air revealed the destruction of what was a very beautiful country, which he felt was a ‘terrible waste.’⁵⁶

Like other New Zealanders newly arrived in Vietnam,⁵⁷ Richard Cairns experienced a culture shock, not because of the climate or the local Vietnamese culture, but because of the massive U.S. military presence there indicated by the huge numbers of aircraft, and ‘tanks and guns and stuff that, you know, we’d never seen in our Army....Everything was so much bigger, larger and louder than what we had been trained for, perhaps.’⁵⁸ For one veteran, the experience of arriving in Vietnam was ‘Surreal. It looked like a movie set, especially at Vung Tau Airfield where I gained what were literally my first impressions.’⁵⁹

Mike Perreau was nervous on immediate arrival in Vietnam because 'we had our weapons and everything but no bloody ammo or anything for us, and here we are in bloody Vietnam with no bloody ammo....I thought, Christ, what are we meant to do? Go bang bang?',⁶⁰ an unnerving situation also experienced by Nigel Martin.⁶¹

Terry Findlay, on the other hand, found carrying a rifle with live ammunition to be 'a bit of an eye-opener' because 'it started to make you wonder that we were in the real McCoy.' His nervousness was not eased by being told on arrival at Nui Dat that 'nobody's got 365 days to go', which was the standard greeting as each flight came in.⁶² One ex-platoon commander and his men were fully prepared to fight the minute they arrived in Vietnam. 'We came out of the Hercules armed to the teeth, and waiting on the tarmac was the company we were replacing...and they were in their dress uniforms. So we were looking around in the airport even, for a war.'⁶³

John Treanor also remembers, 'I thought that when we landed we were going to have to fight our way off the aircraft. Basically...I think many of the, most of the guys felt that as soon as the aircraft hit the deck, down would come the ramp and we'd have to run off.'⁶⁴ Des Sluce was mortared the night he arrived in Vietnam, something which he had not expected to happen.⁶⁵

For one veteran on arrival, the sight of many Vietnamese wearing the traditional black pyjamas was a rather rude shock because he had been told that 'anyone in black pyjamas was supposed to be an enemy and you get out there and everyone's wearing black pyjamas and you're wondering what's happening and what you're

going to do.’⁶⁶ Similarly, one of the ‘biggest frights’ Colin Whyte received in Vietnam was when he first arrived, because ‘we’d been told what the enemy looked like, they wore black outfits and they had big hats and they had Ho Chi Minh sandals, and we came around to a wide junction in the roads and...there were four men with rifles and big hats and black uniforms and Ho Chi Minh sandals walking towards me! They were the local militia and they dressed the same as the Vietcong did! But it gave me a start.’⁶⁷

Some New Zealand troops had served previously in Malaya and Borneo,⁶⁸ and the physical conditions and cultural differences in Vietnam therefore did not come as a shock. Those who had not served previously but had ‘worked-up’ at Terendak Camp in Malaya, or later at Neesoon in Singapore, had also become acclimatised.⁶⁹ However ‘Steve D’, a veteran of Borneo, found the conditions in Vietnam to be very hot and humid, rather odiferous, dusty, and not very friendly.⁷⁰ Bruce Liddall also noticed the hostility from local Vietnamese as he travelled from the airport to Nui Dat,⁷¹ something also observed by Peter Hotop.⁷² For ‘Bob P’, the smell of Vietnam, which he describes as ‘just a foul stinking place’, was so overpowering that he actually vomited during the drive from Vung Tau airport to the 1ALSG base.⁷³ One 1NZSMT veteran was shocked when he arrived at Bong Son and witnessed conditions in the huge refugee camp located near the team house, and the extreme civilian poverty in general. His method of coping with this was ‘you build a little wall around yourself and ignore that sort of thing. I don’t think you ever

really get used to it, but you learn to live with it.⁷⁴ Ken Treanor remembers a newly arrived member of 1NZSMT who had ‘obviously not been apprised of the doubtful hygiene habits of the rural Vietnamese. He was on the small balcony of the [team] house when he rushed inside and said, where’s my camera. These people are crapping in the street!’⁷⁵ But John Treanor recalls, ‘on the first day we were there, when we drove by truck from Vung Tau to Nui Dat, and looking at some of the villages along the way kind of reminded me of the village that I grew up in, you know, where there was no grass...all the dirt was swept with a manuka broom and there was houses around and kids were running around with snotty noses and bare bums, and you know, things like that. That kind of reminded me and I felt a bit of an affinity with the people.’⁷⁶

Allan Grayling was appalled when he discovered that it appeared that one could ‘literally buy a person’s life with a cake of toilet soap. And...that almost freaked me out at that point because, you know, that’s no price on human life. There’s no value....Life was nothing. I mean life was absolutely nothing and all rules and everything went out the window.’⁷⁷ John Pointon was also ‘initially horrified’ at the apparent cheapness of human life. The Australians, whom Pointon worked with, had adopted the American policy for compensating for the loss of civilian life or damage to property, an arrangement which was evidently preferred by the Vietnamese themselves. For example, if a civilian was accidentally run over and killed by a member of the allied forces, ‘We paid them then and there on the spot.

Amen, here's your money, go. Don't want to know your name, sign here. That was the end of it. It was impossible to operate any other way. A claim for compensation would go on and on for ever.' For Pointon, Vietnam was personally 'a bit of a let down', because he had already served in Malaya, and his job as a MP in Vietnam, he feels, was not as difficult as that of the gunners with whom he had trained prior to Vietnam. He had gone to Vietnam to test his skills and training, and had expected his tour of duty to be 'harder and more horrifying than what I actually found to be the case.' Pointon recalls that while most New Zealanders had little difficulty adjusting to the conditions in Vietnam, he knew one person who had not previously served in Southeast Asia, and who subsequently found Vietnam to be a 'bit of a rude shock.'⁷⁸

Gerald Southon's initial impression of Vietnam was also one of shock, when soon after arrival he saw a fly-blown Vietcong corpse hung at the entrance to a village outside the Bien Hoa Air base. He had difficulty sleeping that night, and can still see the image clearly.⁷⁹ During the Tet offensive in early 1968,⁸⁰ Peter Earsman had a similar experience when he saw a Vietnamese family hung with wire by their necks from the eaves of their home. 'Mum, Dad and four kids ages between the ages of 18 months to about six.' This was not his first impression, but it remains one of the most disturbing images of Vietnam he has.⁸¹

Harry Shaw found Vietnam to be 'a little strange, to start with.' He recalls his first, rather nervous, trip to Vung Tau in a Landrover:

And I thought, I've never been briefed! I don't know what to do! I don't mean at the hospital, I didn't even know what to do there, but I just followed my natural instincts there. But I mean, what, what do you do? This country, I'm told this country, you don't know where the enemy are. They're anywhere, they're everywhere. And I can remember the driver wanting a packet of cigarettes and saying to me, do you mind if I pop in and get a packet of cigarettes? And I said, yeah, no trouble at all, help yourself, go on. And I was sitting there and the people started to surround the 'Rover and I thought, what does a fellow do? What if there's antagonism? Somebody threw something, how am I to know if it's a stone or a hand grenade or what? And I was darned glad when the driver got back and we got out of the place.⁸²

For a considerable number of New Zealanders in Vietnam, disillusionment was something they had to learn to live with. One ex-senior member of 1NZSMT came to the early decision that, in becoming involved in the Vietnam, New Zealand had essentially 'backed a bum steer....I really think we backed the wrong side',⁸³ and for another 1NZSMT veteran, 'At that stage I'd realised that we shouldn't have been there. From a professional soldier's point of view, OK, you're doing what you're trained to do, but from a moral or political point of view, we just shouldn't have been there in the first place. You felt after a while how stupid the whole thing was. I mean, what you were told in New Zealand, and...the reality on the ground, was totally different.' He recalls, for example, an incident involving a 12 year South Vietnamese girl whose entire family had been killed. She was treated and discharged, only to return later, wounded again while carrying ammunition for the Vietcong.⁸⁴ One ex-NCO also discovered that, to his distress, 'I didn't believe in what I was doing and I think with the disappointment of starting off with the hope of helping people and, let's face it, the media had a lot of responsibility for that.

They fed us the poor Vietnamese...this is happening to them and all the rest of it, and there was this great sympathy so I wanted to go over and help the poor Vietnamese but when I got there I found that all I was doing was fighting for something I didn't believe in.'⁸⁵ Another 1NZSMT veteran also experienced this dilemma. 'I swore an oath when I enlisted. Keeping that oath often required a small exercise in schizophrenia because you may be a disapproving patriot, and an enthusiastic serviceman at the same time.'⁸⁶ Harry Shaw, after having to minister to the bodies of two badly mutilated Australian soldiers, can recall 'just seeing these poor devils lying there, just thinking you were forced into this, and what's it achieving? We really shouldn't be here. And so it was the uselessness of it all.' A large part of Shaw's job in Vietnam, as a military chaplain, was talking to Australian and New Zealand troops about emotional and moral issues which were causing them anguish, and he recalls that very few supported the western political *raison d'être* for being there.⁸⁷

The exact nature of New Zealand's role in Vietnam also eluded some New Zealanders. Fred Barclay, for example, remembers, 'I don't think anybody knew what was going on....I thought when we went there we were going to be the people that would help pin-point what [enemy] units and whatever were there, but that didn't happen. It was all a bit hazy.'⁸⁸ For Dave Douglas, disillusionment set in early during his first tour of Vietnam. He had assumed that Victor 1 would be involved in regular patrolling, but they instead found themselves 'digging bloody

holes and building bunkers' for the Australians. This was one of the reasons why he chose to go back for a second tour with Whiskey 2, which he found did meet his expectations.⁸⁹ John Hall felt that 'We were subsumed into the big thing....The nation was saying we don't want to get involved, and if we're going to get involved, it's a token only.' New Zealand's token involvement in Vietnam was a concept that Hall, as a company commander, experienced difficulty with. 'How would you like to write to a Mum and say your lad has died as a token? Not nice.'⁹⁰

Perhaps one of the most frustrating aspects of the war for all allied soldiers there was political interference in military strategy and tactics by U.S. governments.

Allan Grayling remembers, 'They called it a civil war, but we were never allowed to fight it, we were never allowed to win it because of political decisions not to...The troops were never actually allowed to get on and fight the North, which was really what the fight was about. The troops had to sit back and allow these guys to infiltrate whenever they felt like it.'⁹¹ Peter Hotop also believes that 'The main problem was political interference in what was a soldiers' war. Morale also dropped steadily as the Government and people at home failed to support them. Had they been given full support and the battle left to the military leaders I am sure the final outcome would have been quite different.'⁹² Similarly, John Pointon considers that 'Militarily, we could have won. And we could have won at any stage but the political masters said no, no, no, we'll change the rules every time you look like winning. It was economically a very good thing, I might add, Vietnam, for the

Americans. Soon as it stopped, their economy stopped. It was an extremely expensive war because it suited them to have such an expensive war. The wanton waste was something horrendous. I mean, I've never seen anything like it in my life.'⁹³

An ex-infantry officer recalls, 'We fought with one hand tied behind our backs....You go to win, not to maintain a status quo, and if you're going to go on a foreign intervention you have a responsibility to the people that you are claiming to be protecting and you have to deliver. And that wasn't in the formula, the strategic formula of that war. For example, apart from the bombing, the war was never taken to the North. It was politically and artificially constrained to south of the demarcation line. Very difficult to win a war that's a defensive war.'⁹⁴ Peter Earsman also felt that it was illogical for the U.S. not to be 'invading [North Vietnam], but trying to bomb it into submission', and believes that the allies were doomed to lose using this policy.⁹⁵ Before he even got to Vietnam, Laurie Pilling had suspected that the allies would not be able to win because of the military strategies and tactics being employed, and this was confirmed for him soon after he arrived.⁹⁶ Tom Palmer recalls that 'during the bombing of North Vietnam missile sites could not be attacked if they were situated in some area arbitrarily defined by some political advisor in the U.S. These boundaries were announced to the press who published the information. Consequently the NVA quickly moved all their missile sites into those politically "protected" zones.' Palmer believes that 'Politics

“defeated” the Americans, and indirectly their supporters, in Vietnam....The American serviceman was made to “fight” with politically defined limitations placed upon them (*sic*), but not the enemy.’⁹⁷ Ted Brooker observed that these limitations so demoralised U.S. troops that they were unable to fight effectively, and believes that if the troops had been confident that ‘they were there to fight a war to win the bloody thing...they would have won it, end of story.’⁹⁸

At times, the New Zealanders must have wondered if their country was supporting their efforts in Vietnam at all. Nigel Martin’s company, for example, discovered an underground NVA hospital, stocked with New Zealand medical supplies marked Auckland Serum Laboratory, which had, it was discovered later, been sent by boat to Haiphong in North Vietnam for specific use by communist forces. ‘And here we are, we were taking casualties to take this place, and they had all the New Zealand bloody gear!’⁹⁹ Colin Whyte’s unit also found an enemy hospital, three stories underground, which was furnished with medical equipment supplied by the American Quaker society, The Friends of America. Whyte can also recall a period in Vietnam when all allied troops were warned not to use a certain type of American-made grenade because they had been deliberately tampered with at the factory where they had been made in America, and would explode the second the pin was removed, instead of after the standard delay.¹⁰⁰

The New Zealanders were also disillusioned and bitter about the fact that they were the only allied soldiers serving in Vietnam being taxed on what they earned there.

For Allan Grayling, this still ‘leaves a bitter taste.’¹⁰¹ The issue of having to pay tax was made worse for Dave Orbell when the New Zealand dollar was devalued by the Government in 1968. Orbell remembers that the resulting bitterness about this almost caused a mutiny in his company. He recalls sitting on his bed at Nui Dat and angrily telling his Sergeant that he was not going to move, because the New Zealanders were already getting ‘ratshit fucking money now’, although they had volunteered for Vietnam, and were having to fight alongside Australian conscripts who did not want to be in Vietnam but were ‘getting a fortune’ because they were not paying taxes. He and his team mates complained through the official channels with the result that it was decided to pay New Zealand troops a dollar a day, tax free, for every day they served in Vietnam, which Orbell still does not consider was sufficient compensation.¹⁰² Section CB 11 of the Income Tax Act provides for the exemption from taxation of military personnel serving in operational areas. As Vietnam was not defined as an operational area, New Zealanders serving there were not exempt. Since the Second World War, the only conflict in which New Zealanders have been exempt from paying tax has been the Korean War.¹⁰³ John Hall, who can recall the resentment caused by having to pay taxes while on active service in Malaya in 1957, considers that in Vietnam the timing of the arrival of the annual tax return forms by helicopter, ‘in the middle of the most grotty bit of jungle that you could possibly imagine’, was very unfortunate. ‘We were grappling with what the hell to do with these bloody things and it was *completely* out of control, you know.’ Hall remembers that the incident was very annoying and frustrating, but

possibly not as irritating as an episode in 1957 when the New Zealand Army sent a telegram to a shipload of New Zealand soldiers, who had just sailed out of Wellington Heads bound for Malaya, advising them that their overseas allowance had suddenly been reduced by just under 50 percent.¹⁰⁴

While some New Zealanders may have become disillusioned early on during their service in Vietnam, they were confident that their training and professionalism ensured that they were among the most effective troops there. For some veterans, it is clearly important that New Zealand military traditions were upheld in Vietnam. Richard Cairns considers, ‘ I don’t think that we let down the reputation of New Zealanders as good soldiers that had been demonstrated by our forebears from the Boer War all the way through to Vietnam....I would suggest that there is no-one better than the New Zealand soldier,¹⁰⁵ and, for John Hall, ‘the true traditions that come from Gallipoli, from the Boer War and what have you, are lessons well learned’, and which, he feels, were implemented in Vietnam.¹⁰⁶

Laurie Pilling believes that the New Zealanders in Vietnam were ideally trained for that conflict, because ‘New Zealanders are superb soldiers at fighting guerrilla wars. By and large, if you take people from cities, they’re uncomfortable...in the jungle and so on. New Zealanders are outdoor-type people, and they’re pretty much at home in that environment and, if not, quickly adapt to that environment. Our whole training system in the New Zealand Army was based on training the individual ...whereas every person was trained...to a very high level of competence. So at the

section level, they were very very good soldiers.’¹⁰⁷ ‘Andrew B’ also believes that ‘We were exceptionally well-trained....and on a comparative basis of anyone else that served in Vietnam, we were by far the best trained and prepared for it’, even though the New Zealand Army did have to ‘scrape and save and make do with whatever we had to give ourselves a decent training.’¹⁰⁸

Most New Zealand veterans consider that they were the best trained and most professional soldiers in Vietnam because they had volunteered for active service and therefore their motivation was high, and they were trained by experienced personnel who had considerable operational expertise. Also, their training was realistic, intensive, and gave them a wide range of skills, unlike the U.S. Army which often trained its troops as specialists, and they had generally trained together as companies and were therefore able to build up strong team bonds.¹⁰⁹ One ex-infantry training officer recalls feeling sad for other allied soldiers in Vietnam who had not benefited from this system of training, the Americans in particular, because they were not able to experience the bonding and camaraderie that the New Zealanders did.¹¹⁰

Dave Douglas believes that the volunteer status of New Zealand troops in Vietnam made a huge difference to their motivation and performance, compared to that of the conscripts in American and Australian forces. He suggests that ‘all our guys, we were all volunteers, this was the difference....Our guys knew exactly what they were getting themselves into and they had time to get out before they went up [to Vietnam]. It’s not as if they were forced to go, [or] they were actually grabbed by

the scruff of the neck and chucked on the plane, so to speak. They still had options, the options were still there for them to get out. But they all knew what they were getting themselves into.’¹¹¹ Another veteran considers, ‘I would say at that time without a doubt I think the New Zealand soldier would have been the best soldier in world because...our instructors had all been to Malaya and...they knew it all, and we were just so well-trained, it was just second nature.’¹¹² Richard Cairns believes that ‘The Malaya Borneo experience had a direct influence on how we prepared for Vietnam and it was very very good training...[and] I think much of our training, the physical demands that were placed on us, were tougher than many of the things that we actually were asked to do when we got to Vietnam.’¹¹³

Peter Hotop, commander of the first Whiskey Company initially had concerns that ‘some members of the company who had come direct from New Zealand were not as well trained as the “old hands” from the battalion [1RNZIR]...some of the former had only just completed “Infantry Corps Training” before posting to Malaysia.’ He believes in retrospect that these reservations were proved completely unfounded. Hotop also remembers being ‘reminded frequently that Whiskey Company consisted mostly of soldiers who did not make the grade for earlier companies sent over by the battalion and that I could expect trouble.’ He recalls, ‘These doubters were proved so wrong.’¹¹⁴ One ex-gunner recalls that his training was very good, and that even though he was an artilleryman, he was able to ‘join an infantry company and match them in all respects in terms of weapons skills,

patrolling, ambushing and minor tactics.’ His one complaint was that he had not been trained on the actual weapons he would be using in Vietnam. He had been trained using British personal weapons and Italian L5 howitzers and, until he arrived in Vietnam, had never even seen the American M16 rifle, M72 rocket launcher, M79 grenade launcher, M60 machine gun, or the M2A2 howitzers that 161 Battery would be using at times. Even more daunting, he arrived only hours before the Tet offensive of 1968 began, and literally had only 24 hours to learn to use the new weapons.¹¹⁵ Pilot Ted Brooker remembers that although he had been trained for reconnaissance flying, the training was completely inappropriate for the conditions in Vietnam. He believes that the most effective training he received was on the job in Vietnam, and delivered by an Australian pilot as part of their ‘buddy’ system for new pilots.¹¹⁶

New Zealand veterans clearly value the high level of training and competence they believe they demonstrated in Vietnam. One veteran, an ex-infantry officer, believes that the New Zealanders’ view of themselves as supreme soldiers is a product of the mythology of the past, and is an essential part of the ‘internal support system’ and ‘psychological machinery’ required to maintain military effectiveness. However he feels that although the training New Zealand soldiers received prior to their deployment to Vietnam was ‘absolutely brilliant’ in terms of combat drill, apart from marksmanship which he considered to be generally poor, the fact that very little time was ever dedicated to understanding the mind of the enemy was a ‘major

training omission.’ He recalls that in Vietnam, ‘We got offered two...ex-Vietcong scouts. The company commander said I don’t think we need these guys, what do you think? And we agreed with him. What a stupid decision. We had a chance to learn how they thought but we were too arrogant. We were unprofessional. So actually we had quite significant gaps in our training. But that was a very very important gap.’ This veteran also considers that not enough thought or training had been applied to the cultural dimension of dealing with local populations.¹¹⁷ Peter Hotop was also surprised ‘that we did not do more with the local communities to win them over, as we did in Malaya during the Emergency. This I believe was one of the weaknesses of the American way of conducting this type of campaign, albeit a very different war and a different political situation to other “emergencies”’.¹¹⁸ Laurie Pilling believes that ‘ultimately the name of the game is winning the support of the population, and protecting the population, and that’s what you cannot do in a guerrilla war unless you fight fire with fire, use the same tactics.’ He also considers that the New Zealand Army had had enough experience during the Malayan Emergency to have successfully implemented such tactics in Vietnam.¹¹⁹ Conversely, John Moller recalls that although there had been the occasional political or cultural lecture during training, New Zealand soldiers were ‘pretty naive about the political situation in Vietnam, and as far as we knew the official line was the American, which was communism was a threat to Vietnam, and if it fell there would be the

domino effect and all the other countries in Southeast Asia like Malaya and Thailand would fall as well.¹²⁰

On the other hand, Ken Treanor believes that 1NZSMT was given adequate advice prior to deployment. 'In 1968 there was a period of training to prepare the Services Medical team which included intelligence briefings on the current situation, language lessons by a Vietnamese tutor, and handouts to read which gave the background and cultural do and don'ts.'¹²¹ The medical teams may have received a more thorough briefing on Vietnamese culture than did the combat units because the medics would be working more directly with Vietnamese civilians. All Australian combat troops were issued with a copy of a document published by the Australian Military Forces, entitled *Pocketbook South Vietnam*,¹²² and American troops received a similar publication, *A Pocket Guide to Vietnam*,¹²³ both of which describe the culture of South Vietnam. The U.S. version is extensive in its description, while the Australian version is briefer but includes a section on personal security for the Australian serviceman.¹²⁴

New Zealand troops in Vietnam were approximately 50 percent Maori and 50 percent Pakeha,¹²⁵ and there appears to have been mutual respect among soldiers, an appreciation by Pakeha of the specific skills and abilities Maori contributed, and few major internal problems regarding race relations.¹²⁶ Bruce Liddall recalls, 'when you live in a barracks...you're just there and you form those friendships and...I don't think I really ever looked at the colour of a joker's skin the whole time I was

in the Army.¹²⁷ Nigel Martin remembers that it was not until he got out of the Army after Vietnam that he realised there was racial discrimination in New Zealand,¹²⁸ something Hardie Martin also noticed and found 'disgusting'.¹²⁹ John Moller had a similar experience. He remembers, 'having been in the Army since I was 16, I was sort of very used to working very closely with Maori and...in the Army you're colour-blind and there's no racism. I mean, you treated everyone as equal, it didn't matter what colour your skin was. And it was sort of foreign for me when I came out of the Army to see the level of racism that was going on in New Zealand.'¹³⁰ However, relationships between Maori and Pakeha soldiers in Vietnam may not have always been as harmonious as the Americans may have assumed. Terry Findlay recalls that 'some of the [Pakeha] New Zealanders didn't get on well with some of the Maori guys and that. Some of the Maori guys actually went into a stage with the fancy American handshakes with the Negroes and I think they sort of copied them a bit. Like the Americans used to braid their black boot laces, a lot of the Maoris did that.'¹³¹ One ex-platoon commander remembers that the first time his men went on leave in Vung Tau, 'they discovered the American Black Power movement with all its symbology and allegory and imagery, and they fell in love with it, and we actually split for an operation, the platoon split operation-wise. Now that's not acceptable to a platoon commander and harnessing the platoon together again caused a great deal of resentment. It's something you had to watch with the New Zealanders.' He feels that this incident occurred because the New Zealand Army at the time did not have a strong enough belief in 'our own ethos and culture

as a warrior group....We didn't have a really good fabric of ethics to build, to rest ourselves on. [In] that whole dimension to a large extent, we were still a reflection of society.'¹³²

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It appears that while some New Zealanders responded to the popular belief that if communism was not stopped in Southeast Asia it would engulf New Zealand, the majority went to Vietnam to implement their soldiering skills, or simply for adventure. A considerable number also went because they wanted to maintain or emulate family military traditions. While there appears to have been some competition among Regular Force soldiers who wanted to go to Vietnam, the bulk of the volunteers were civilians who enlisted for short-term service. Officers in the New Zealand Army do not appear to have had much choice about whether they served in Vietnam or not but many considered that as officers, they should. Overall, and taking into account that the Army was unable to provide the manpower from existing numbers, there does not appear to have been an overwhelming response from New Zealanders, military or civilian, to rush off to fight in Vietnam.

It seems that most New Zealanders were able to adapt to the physical environment of Vietnam, possibly because many had previously served in Malaya or 'worked up' at Terendak or Neesoon Camps prior to their arrival. Many do not appear to have been prepared for the massive U.S. military presence there, and a considerable number did not know what to expect on arrival, suggesting that pre-deployment

briefings may have been inadequate. It is also clear that many New Zealanders were unaware of the political situation in Vietnam, and the influence which the U.S. had on this, which led to disillusionment in some cases. Some officers considered that the New Zealanders were unprepared for effective interaction with the civilian population, believing that this was a serious training omission. Nevertheless, the majority of veterans consider that their training in general was of a very high and professional standard, and that this combined with their volunteer status made them among the best troops serving in Vietnam. There is evidence to suggest that race relations among the New Zealanders were not always as harmonious as some veterans remember. The New Zealanders' relationship with their American and Australian allies in Vietnam was also not ideal at times either, as the following chapter illustrates.

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- ¹ See Interviews 17 and 20.
 - ² See Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; ANON, 14/9/95.
 - ³ 'Bob P', 5/4/95; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; John Moller, 10/7/95.
 - ⁴ John Pointon, 1/3/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
 - ⁵ Terry Findlay, 2/9/95.
 - ⁶ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
 - ⁷ 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96.
 - ⁸ See also 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Tom Palmer, 13/7/96; ANON, 7/2/96.
 - ⁹ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
 - ¹⁰ Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
 - ¹¹ Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
 - ¹² Bill McNeish, 2/3/96.
 - ¹³ ANON, 22/4/96.
 - ¹⁴ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
 - ¹⁵ Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
 - ¹⁶ ANON, 14/9/95.
 - ¹⁷ ANON, 28/12/95.
 - ¹⁸ ANON, 17/4/96.
 - ¹⁹ ANON, 3/2/96.
 - ²⁰ Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
 - ²¹ Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.

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- 22 Interview 28.
- 23 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- 24 See 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Bruce Liddall, Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95.
- 25 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- 26 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- 27 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 28 Colin Whyte, 2/3/96.
- 29 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- 30 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- 31 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 32 Roberto Rabel, "The Dovish Hawk": Keith Holyoake and the Vietnam War', in *Sir Keith Holyoake: Towards a Political Biography*, edited by Margaret Clark (Palmerston North, 1997) p. 187.
- 33 S.D. Newman (Lt.), *Vietnam Gunners: 161 Battery RNZA, South Vietnam, 1965-71* (Tauranga, 1988), p. 22.
- 34 Ministry of Defence, *The New Zealand Army in Vietnam 1964-1972: a Report on the Chief of General Staff's Exercise 1972* (Wellington, 1971), p. 63.
- 35 John Hall, 4/2/96.
- 36 Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
- 37 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
- 38 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- 39 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 40 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- 41 Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
- 42 'Bob P', 5/4/95, Hardie Martin, Garrie Mills, 2/3/96.
- 43 ANON, 14/9/95.
- 44 Newman, p. 22.
- 45 John Hall, 4/2/96.
- 46 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- 47 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- 48 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- 49 Edward Doyle and Samuel Lipsman, *The Vietnam Experience: Setting the Stage* (Boston, 1981), p. 37.
- 50 Stuart Rintoul, *Ashes of Vietnam: Australian Voices* (Victoria, 1987), p. 15.
- 51 Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan: the Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966* (New South Wales, 1993), p. 182.
- 52 *ibid.*, p. 211.
- 53 *ibid.*, pp. 196-197.
- 54 Gary McKay, *In Good Company: One Man's War in Vietnam* (New South Wales, 1987), pp. 63-64.
- 55 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- 56 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95. See also ANON, 17/4/96.
- 57 See Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Hardie Martin; Bill McNeish, 2/3/96; 'Sniper', 13/7/96; John Moller, 10/7/95; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; Colin Whyte, 2/3/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- 58 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- 59 ANON, 22/4/96.
- 60 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- 61 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- 62 Terry Findlay, 4/9/96.
- 63 ANON, 14/9/95.
- 64 John Treanor, 8/5/96.
- 65 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- 66 ANON, 28/12/95.
- 67 Colin Whyte, 2/3/96.
- 68 Gary Clayton, *The New Zealand Army: a History from the 1840s to the 1990s* (Wellington, 1990), pp. 139-142.
- 69 See Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Peter Earsman, 4/9/95; Harry Ellison, Mike Perreau, Garrie Mills, Bill McNeish, 2/3/96; John Hall, 4/2/96; ANON, 29/8/95.
- 70 'Steve D', 2/3/96. See also ANON, 7/2/96.
- 71 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- 72 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- 73 'Bob P', 5/4/95.

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- 74 ANON, 28/12/95.
75 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
76 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
77 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
78 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
79 Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
80 The Tet offensive, which began on 30 January 1968, was the Communists' biggest and best-coordinated thrust of the war, driving into the centre of South Vietnam's seven largest cities and attacking 30 provincial capitals from the Delta to the DMZ. Allied forces were unprepared for the attack and had failed to take note of intelligence which indicated that some sort of thrust was likely, an error which would be described later as a 'failure ranking with Pearl harbour'. After several weeks of bitter and bloody fighting throughout South Vietnam, the offensive was largely subdued by allied forces, and was considered a US military victory but a psychological and political disaster. *The Vietnam War Day by Day*, edited by John S. Bowman (London 1989), p. 120.
81 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
82 Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
83 ANON, 3/2/96.
84 ANON, 28/12/95.
85 Interview 28.
86 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
87 Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
88 Fred Barclay, 21/5/95.
89 Dave Douglas, 7/6/96.
90 John Hall, 4/2/96.
91 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
92 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
93 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
94 ANON, 14/9/95.
95 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
96 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
97 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
98 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
99 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
100 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
101 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
102 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
103 Letter from Wyatt Creech, Minister of Revenue, to Allan Grayling, President of the Vietnam Veterans' Association of New Zealand, 28/6/95.
104 John Hall, 4/2/96.
105 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
106 John Hall, 4/2/96.
107 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
108 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
109 See Fred Barclay, 21/5/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; 'Bill M', 15/3/95; Harry Ellison, Mike Perreau, 'Steve D', Bill McNeish, Nigel Martin, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; John Hall, 4/2/96; ANON, 29/8/95; Gerald Southon, 'TW Washburn', 'Sniper', 13/7/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; John Moller, 5/7/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; John Treanor, 1/3/97.
110 ANON, 29/8/95.
111 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95. See also John Moller, 10/7/95.
112 ANON, 2/3/96.
113 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
114 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
115 ANON, 22/4/96.
116 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
117 ANON, 14/9/95.
118 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
119 Laurie Pilling, 17/9/95.
120 John Moller, 10/7/95.
121 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
122 Australian Military Forces, *Pocketbook South Vietnam*, Revised edition (Canberra, 1967).

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- ¹²³ U.S. Department of Defense (Armed Forces Information and Education), *A Pocket Guide to Vietnam* (Washington, DC, 1966).
- ¹²⁴ Australian Military Forces, pp. 73-74.
- ¹²⁵ Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
- ¹²⁶ See Fred Barclay, 'Bob P, 5/4/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; John Moller, 7/10/95.
- ¹²⁷ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ¹²⁸ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹²⁹ Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹³⁰ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ¹³¹ Terry Findlay, 4/9/96.
- ¹³² ANON, 14/9/95.

CHAPTER FOUR: Mates, Bloods, and Gooks; allied relationships in Vietnam.

During the Vietnam War, the historical military alliance between Australia and New Zealand was revived when Victor and Whiskey Companies from 1RNZIR were amalgamated with the Royal Australian Regiment. The resulting battalion was named ANZAC to commemorate the occasion when both nationalities served together during the First World War.¹ However, as in the First and Second World Wars, relations between soldiers of the two nations were not always as harmonious as the myth suggests. 'Bob P', for example, thought that the Anzac relationship was something which was not practiced, but which 'suited politicians',² and, as far as Dave Douglas is concerned, the alliance was 'just bloody bullshit.'³ An ex-Lieutenant also felt that the concept of Anzac in Vietnam was more myth than reality. At his level, the Australians and New Zealanders did not work together to any great extent, although he considers that the relationship may have been more pronounced further up the chain of command.⁴

As far as John Treanor is concerned, '[The Australians] had the old big brother attitude. I suppose there was more of them than us, and...it was pretty pointed at times, especially being told if it wasn't for their support, we would not have made it to South Vietnam',⁵ and one ex-infantry officer found the Australians to be at times abrasive, patronising, and patriotically arrogant, particularly with regard to New

Zealand's role in Vietnam.⁶ For John Hall, as a New Zealand company commander, being part of the Anzac Battalion was like being 'a wart on their existing structure.' Although he had a good working relationship in Vietnam with the Australian commanders who had been former class mates, he felt that the Australians in general were 'hard people to live with....they are sometimes the pits, and probably they can say the same thing about us.' He does consider that the Australians were effective soldiers, and recalls the excellent relationship his company had with an Australian cavalry troop they worked with.⁷

At times, the conflict between the Australians and New Zealanders in Vietnam was embarrassingly pronounced. As a result of an article which appeared in a New Zealand Sunday paper late in 1969, declaring that 'New Zealand infantrymen in Vietnam hated being involved with the Aussies', the New Zealand Army felt it necessary to instigate a Ministerial inquiry, which evidently concluded that this sentiment was in fact widely held by the New Zealanders.⁸ This does not appear to have been the first time that the volatile New Zealand/Australian relationship had been noted in either of the nations' newspapers. The reputedly 'most famous Kiwi charge report of the Vietnam War'⁹ also refers to a media article, this time appearing in an Australian paper. On 11 October 1967, a New Zealand gunner at Nui Dat was put on a charge (one of four brought against him on the same day) for striking an Australian officer and saying, 'You were one of those Australian cunts

who wrote to the newspapers say[ing] that Kiwis are fucking shit. Yes, you, you cunt, you were one. Fucking bastard.’¹⁰

Such sentiments appear to have manifested themselves at times through physical conflict, causing lasting bitterness and recriminations, as demonstrated in the following extract from a relatively recent issue of an Australian SAS Association magazine in which an anonymous author writes:

We had quite a time with the Kiwis. The myth of the ANZACS was once again played out in Nui Dat....[A member of the Australian SAS] will retain “fond” memories of the Kiwis though - especially the heroes who beat him to a pulp in a most cowardly fashion. Big victory, ambush a drunken officer at midnight! Nice one! They really hurt us all with that one beating and undid all the diplomatic and conciliatory work that had been put in by a lot of people....The myth of ANZAC was also evident in the so-called ANZAC Battalions of 2, 4, and 6RARs. “Ambush a drunken Aussie” was also a keen sport played out down amongst the rubber in the Battalion lines. Coming home from the movies was a particularly vulnerable time for the young Nashos who would suddenly find themselves set upon by very large Kiwis in the dark, their “Hey boys” being the real identity give-away. 4RAR in particular had a most vexing relationship which the wheels did little to fix. Lets hope than when we go to war again we pay a little more attention to old enmities.

However, the Australian author, who recalls, ‘We were always considered by the Kiwis to be uncouth, ill-disciplined, loutish dickheads’, takes pains to state that the Australian SAS troops made some very good friends with members of the New Zealand 4Troop, and writes that ‘Much water has passed under the bridge since then and we hope the relationship between our two units is on a better footing than it was during Vietnam.’¹¹

New Zealand/Australian relations in Vietnam were not always quite this grim, although an element of 'typical Tasman rivalry' appears to have persisted throughout the Anzac Battalion's entire operational period there.¹² 'Steve D' considers that the relationship was 'the same story as the First World War, Second World War, right the way through. [But] if it comes to a bit of a knuckle-up, I'd sooner have an Aussie with me than anyone else.'¹³ Peter Hotop believes that 'Australian and New Zealand soldiers are rather like brothers; they are very competitive and will fight on occasions but woe betide any outsider that criticises either of them. Both sides will jump on the offending party, even if in the middle of an argument. The Australians looked after us well.'¹⁴ Mike Perreau recalls that there was always mutual support between the Australians and the New Zealanders,¹⁵ and Richard Cairns considers that 'we always gained a degree of composure in the knowledge that the Aussies were always around to help us out and I guess they got the same vice versa.'¹⁶

1ATF in Vietnam included approximately 30 percent conscripted National Servicemen.¹⁷ Australia's increased involvement in regional security organisations during the 1950s required that an appropriately-sized, trained and equipped military force be established and made available. To free additional manpower for the Regular Forces, the already-existing national service scheme for training youths was fully suspended in 1960, and a new scheme was adopted in 1964 which provided for

the call-up (by birthday ballot) of Australian males aged 20 for two years' service, which could include deployment overseas.¹⁸

The new conscription scheme was widely protested in Australia as soon as it was implemented,¹⁹ although it was supported by 'the Returned Services' League, government backbenchers, and academic commentators.'²⁰ It is clear that the scheme was also ultimately unpopular with many of the men who were conscripted and subsequently served in Vietnam. During a visit to 1ATF at Nui Dat and 1ALSG at Vung Tau in January 1971, Australian historian Jane Ross observed that national servicemen were not enjoying their time there,²¹ and that 'the most striking feature was their almost complete lack of commitment to the army, to its effort in Vietnam, [and] to being a soldier.' She notes, 'One would not have expected a high degree of commitment to the Australian Government's stated goals of our military presence there, but what was unexpected was the extent of the ironic "sending-up" of almost all soldierly activities...[and] the refusal to take any of it very seriously.'²² On the basis of a survey administered to National Service recruits and discharges from 1969 to 1971, Ross concluded that 'Conscripts did feel deeply and strongly that many features of Army life were quite unpleasant and unnecessary and were enacted merely to fulfill the needs of those who were committed to the system - the regular soldiers. Many conscripts despised regular soldiers - both officers and other ranks - and nearly all demonstrated a surprising degree of alienation from the organisation

which had been their home for nearly two years and by whose rules they had been (nominally at least) living.’²³

The belief that the presence of conscripted soldiers in the Australian Army weakened its military performance is common among New Zealand Vietnam veterans,²⁴ although Nigel Martin considers that Australian conscripts did a ‘pretty good job’ in Vietnam, given their situation, and that the Australians performed well overall.²⁵ Similarly, John Treanor recalls of the Australian conscripts he encountered, ‘I would take my hat off to them. I believe they conducted themselves as well as could be expected given that...the lower rank soldiers were conscripts. I think that they performed magnificently. And...there’s no comparison between them and the American conscripts.’ He did feel that Australian officers were ‘upstarts’.²⁶ Some New Zealanders were sympathetic to the Australian conscripts’ circumstances. John Pointon, for example, felt ‘terrified’ for those he worked with because of their lack of skills and consequent vulnerability,²⁷ and ‘Sniper’ blames the poor performance of conscripts on the Australian Government of the day, because ‘they’re putting all those fellas at risk rather than training them properly, a whole division for say a year or two years, and then sending them up.’²⁸

Peter Hotop considers that the standard of the Australian forces was comparable to that of the New Zealanders, although he believes that the New Zealanders had ‘the edge when it came to professionalism’ because of their volunteer status.²⁹ ‘Steve D’ agrees, but considers that the Australian conscripts did not appear motivated or

interested. He also noticed that the Australian Regular Force soldiers themselves did not treat the conscripted men respectfully, which he feels may not have helped the situation.³⁰ Another veteran, an ex-infantryman, felt sorry for the conscripts for the same reason.³¹ Peter Earsman, who worked with an Australian signals detachment in Saigon, recalls that the Australians were as skilled as the New Zealanders, and that New Zealand/Australian relations in his field were excellent.³² Fred Barclay considers that although Australian operational command of the Australian/New Zealand SAS squadron in Vietnam was very professional and 'not a problem', he regrets that much of the impressive work done by the New Zealand SAS team in Vietnam is recorded in Australian history, because of the command structure, and is not part of New Zealand's military historiography.³³

'Andrew B' considers that the Australians were 'relatively well-trained', but recalls that his company would avoid working directly alongside Australian units whenever possible, particularly during operations which involved tanks, which he remembers as 'absolutely farcical, trying to do tactical operations through the jungle with bloody tanks.'³⁴ During one operation, Bill Peachey's unit encountered an Australian platoon while patrolling. 'They didn't want to be there, even their boss [officer]. And we just walked through the whole company and they didn't stop us or anything. They were just reading and playing cards, out in the bush. And they were supposed to be out patrolling and that but they didn't want to be there so they decided to have a break and there was no sentries or nothing. And that really, you

know, shocked us.’³⁵ Another veteran also observed that ‘a big percentage of the Aussies were National Service who didn’t want to be there. Spent most of their time in Nui Dat. Because of disparate styles of patrol they tended to have more casualties, we always seemed to be being sent in to cover their rears.’³⁶ One ex-gunner considers that the Australians were ‘good soldiers and good mates as long as they were friendly. They were capable of being very pleasant...[But] were in my view harder men than Kiwis....[not] in terms of physical toughness, but in terms of attitude and behaviour. They were harder on prisoners of war and suspect civilians than we were.’ Overall, he felt that ‘Relations between us and the Aussies were as usual, alternating between brotherly love and big punch-ups, depending on the situation and state of sobriety. Generally though, we got on well.’³⁷ Dave Douglas did not think so. In his opinion, the Australians were ‘bloody smartarses’. Douglas considers that the mixed-raced Australians, such as the Aboriginal troops, were very easy to get on with, but that ‘the straight white bloody Aussie, he was just a mongrel.’³⁸ ‘Sam B’ also thought that the Australians he encountered were ‘a pack of arseholes’.³⁹

In Ted Brooker’s experience, the Australians ranged from ‘the best people in the world to the greatest arseholes in the world.’ He believes that this was at least in part because of their inflated opinions of themselves, although he does recall that in his aviation unit the Australians were technically very proficient. Brooker found that he was able to relate better to the conscripts in his unit than the Australian Regular

Force personnel.⁴⁰ Similarly, Murray Deed and his team mates also got on well the conscripts, whom they felt were friendly and helpful, but not so well with Regular Australian Army personnel, particularly the officers. ‘They tried to use their authority over us and we didn’t recognise that authority because we recognised our own officers and...in actual fact we did everything we could to disrupt them if we could....If our officers said we jump, we jumped, but when the Australian officers said jump, we looked the other way.’⁴¹ Nigel Martin recalls that in camp, when passing an Australian officer, he would indicate that he was about to salute, and when the officer responded, he would modify his gesture to something considerably less respectful.⁴² Gerald Southon remembers an incident when he and his friends walked past some Australian officers one day ‘and no-one took any notice, everyone just kept walking down, talking away, and they said, “Excuse me, you Kiwis, don’t you fellas salute officers?” And everyone turned round and said, “No”, and carried on walking.’⁴³ During Hardie Martin’s tour, orders stated at least three times that New Zealand soldiers *will* salute Australian officers.⁴⁴

Despite the obviously less than ideal relationship between Australians and New Zealanders at times, New Zealand veterans recall that in a combat situation, they trusted the Australians more than they did the Americans.⁴⁵ ‘Bob P’ believes that the U.S. troops ‘didn’t have the discipline that the New Zealand and Australian soldiers did have. I mean, the Aussies, I don’t like them a lot but they were easier to...work in with than Americans by and large, though there were some real good Americans

but...the ones I saw, some of them were pretty slovenly, pretty sloppy....The Aussies are very arrogant, same as the Americans, and there was a lot of one-upmanship, but I think when the chips are down...[there is a] better rapport between the Australians and New Zealanders then.’⁴⁶ On the other hand, Terry Findlay recalls, ‘I got on better with Americans than I did with Australians. I didn’t like the Australians over there very much. I think they...sort of treated us like they were big brothers and we were just the little fellas down the bottom....I mean, some Aussies were OK, but generally speaking, yeah, the gunners didn’t get on too well with the Australians [and] I would rather have had the Americans.’⁴⁷

Most New Zealanders appear to have considered the Americans to be socially very nice people and easy to get on with, but that the quality of their training left a lot to be desired, again because many of the U.S. troops had been conscripted.⁴⁸ America had maintained a system of military conscription since the end of the Second World War, and during the Vietnam era, 2,000,000 men were conscripted into the U.S. military, the percentage of conscripts in Vietnam eventually reaching 70 percent of all U.S. combatants there. By the end of the war, 48 percent of those who died in Vietnam were conscripts. American historian, James R. Ebert, writes, ‘Each year a greater share of combat was passed on to the draftees, resulting in the paradox, succinctly noted by Charles Moskos, that “those who are the least committed to the military as a career are the very ones who are the most military in the sense of getting killed or wounded in combat”.’⁴⁹ The American system of conscription

incorporated a 'conscious effort at social engineering', known as 'channeling', which used 'the threat of the draft and the lure of educational and professional deferments to channel men into nonmilitary occupations...believed vital to the "national health, safety and interest".'⁵⁰ The outcome was that so many legal student, occupational and medical deferments were claimed that 15,000,000 Americans were able to avoid being conscripted during the Vietnam War.⁵¹ Those who did not have the means to avoid conscription were generally 'high school dropouts or high school graduates, black and white, without the family resources to sustain them either through technical training, apprenticeship, or four years of college.'⁵² In other words, the poor, uneducated minorities.

This situation was made worse by the misguided but well-meaning advice from a presidential task force which had noted that approximately half of the men called up for conscription had failed the mental or physical eligibility tests, and recommended in 1964 that the 'entrance requirements be lowered and [the military] provide special training to those with mental or social handicaps.'⁵³ By 1965, the military had already begun to lower its military standards in response to the situation in Vietnam, and a year later, the U.S. Secretary of Defense, Robert McNamara, in a very timely manner and taking into account the recommendations of the task force, instituted a programme called Project 100,000 which would lower conscription standards even further and 'offer valuable training and opportunity to America's "subterranean poor".'⁵⁴ However, no 'social uplifting' occurred, little training other

than how to fire a weapon was given, and more and more men with 'terribly low scores on the mental examination' were admitted into the military. American social scientist Christian G. Appy writes, 'The effect of Project 100,000 was dire. The promised training was never carried out....A 1970 Defence Department study estimates that roughly half of the almost 400,000 men who entered the military under Project 100,000 were sent to Vietnam. These men had a death rate twice as high as American forces as a whole. This was a Great Society program that was quite literally shot down on the battlefields of Vietnam.'⁵⁵

New Zealander John Moller believes that for many U.S. conscripts, the culture shock of being sent to Vietnam was 'probably why they got into the drugs in a big way because...it was the only way they could deal with the trauma and horror of the whole thing',⁵⁶ and an ex-infantry officer remembers having sympathy for the American conscript because:

He would do just 16 weeks training...and he'd be sent straight to Vietnam. This could be a city kid who had never seen anything like that and who didn't even know what to expect. God knows what their training was....[and] of course they might train as a large group in America and be put on planes, but they'd be separated as soon as they got to Vietnam because...you're the replacement for three dead here and two here and whatever, and...so they just sort of arrived basically as an individual, not knowing anybody in the unit they were going into. And that's pretty depressing and sad and the guys who were there had bonded sort of thing and as a replacement you were excluded from that. Therefore it was the replacement who got killed all the time....And they were essentially very lonely boys.

This veteran also considers that the difficulties for American conscripts were made worse due to their awareness, through the media, that the war was being openly protested on a huge scale at home. In his view, 'they became disillusioned when they saw, first of all, the numbers of guys getting killed and often killed senselessly, but the biggest effect was seeing their own parents marching against the war, well, not their parents but, you know, middle America marching, and that caused a lot of confusion, and that's what I think led to drugs.'⁵⁷ Peter Hotop also believes that the media must take some of the blame for the difficulties experienced by American forces in Vietnam and afterwards.⁵⁸

For 'Andrew B', 'The senseless waste of American lives did make me angry. Thinking of all that military hardware, all that money, all that technology they had available, and...they didn't bloody well use a fraction of it to train their men to stay alive....It was criminal.' He also recalls that because of the poor quality of U.S. troop training, 'We just prayed that we never had to operate alongside them and have any contact with them. They were utterly and totally disastrous and if ever we did operate with them, I literally feared them more than the enemy.'⁵⁹ 'Sniper' recalls that 'as far as the Americans were concerned, I don't think at any stage we patrolled less than a kilometre away from them because they would shoot anything up, it didn't matter what it was, they would just open up on any movement.'⁶⁰

Another veteran observed that, like some Australian conscripts, the attitude of many Americans was 'I'm here, now send me home.' His company 'Spent a lot of time

picking up equipment they discarded on patrol',⁶¹ as did Dave Douglas's. 'We used to go into bloody areas after they had a contact, we get there and the amount of gear that we had picked up! Weapons, ammo, magazines, packs. They just dropped them and scarpered.'⁶² One of Mike Perreau's most frustrating experiences in Vietnam was 'when you went into an area where the bloody Yanks had been and there was just bloody rubbish everywhere and they've hardly patrolled there anyway.'⁶³ 'Matt G' remembers one operation which his company went on with an American team who smoked in the bush, played their transistor radios at night, and used drugs. The situation was so nerve-racking that his commander withdrew the New Zealand team from the operation early.⁶⁴

Ex-officer John Moller talked to a U.S. captain at one point who confided in him that he was 'scared shitless because he knew he wasn't going to survive because [his] guys were on drugs.' His fear was realised, as ten days later he and his unit were 'wiped out. The VC ambushed them and killed them all, including the officer.'⁶⁵ Fred Barclay spent the last three months of his tour in Vietnam on an exchange programme with the 5th Special Forces (Green Berets) at Nha Trang and remembers, 'Well, I was 30, almost 31 by then, and when I came back I had white hair all over my chest....the standard of the soldiers in the 5th Special Forces...would have been the same standard as a group of basic recruits that were being put out of Waiouru.' He did observe their NCOs were competent.⁶⁶ Significantly, the two U.S. Green Berets he exchanged places with were both killed

on their first New Zealand patrol out of Nui Dat. Barclay considers, as do other New Zealand veterans,⁶⁷ that the Americans were ‘brilliant people, absolutely magic people’, but that conscription and the general attitude of the U.S. military forces toward its personnel created serious problems in Vietnam. ‘I mean, when you call your soldiers Government Issue [GI], well, Christ, you know.’⁶⁸

However, Dave Douglas, and his team mates got on very well with U.S. troops and made a lot of friends, and Douglas feels that some of their Special Forces units were very competent.⁶⁹ Laurie Pilling, commander of 1NZATTV, also considers that the Green Berets were well-trained and professional, as well as ‘far braver than I would ever believe.’ He observed some of them carrying out missions which ‘probably New Zealanders would think twice about’, and recalls that many of these people were very committed to what they were doing in Vietnam. Some were on their ‘second, third, and even fourth tours. It was a way of life to them.’⁷⁰ Richard Pepper noticed that despite their lower standard of training, many U.S. conscripted soldiers ‘demonstrated quite efficient application without true dedication.’ He personally found that the American unit he worked with during his second tour of Vietnam, C Troop, 3rd Squadron/4th Cavalry U.S. Army, gave him maximum support and were ‘without exception, the best [troops] I had ever commanded in combat.’⁷¹

Similarly, an ex-member of 1NZSMT recalls that although the U.S. conscripts were ill-prepared, the MACV staff he observed were competent, especially the pilots.⁷²

The American pilots in Vietnam in fact appear to have impressed many New Zealanders.⁷³ Des Sluce, who also worked alongside MACV staff, recalls that they were 'Very professional. Some conscripts. Very realistic about doing a difficult job under adverse conditions.' He also observed that of the 173rd Airborne Brigade who were stationed near the medical team, the 'Majority were conscripts but volunteered as paratroopers. No desire to be in Vietnam. Good but reluctant soldiers.'⁷⁴ Ted Brooker considers that the three American infantry battalions he worked with were somewhat casual, but as good as Australian infantrymen. However he observed a major difference in attitude between 'the guys that were getting their arses shot at' and those who were not, or, in other words, frontline troops and their superiors. Brooker believes that the former were noticeably more efficient and effective.⁷⁵

Some New Zealanders were disillusioned by the extent of corruption, black marketeering, and manipulation of goods, circumstances, and statistics for personal gain evident throughout the U.S. Army, particularly in base areas. One New Zealand veteran recalls that 'all the old [Americans] that I knew there were only there because they were making money out of the place and were in all the rackets anyway',⁷⁶ and another observed that 'Some personnel were very good at feathering their own nests.' but considers that this is a reality of all wars.⁷⁷ Richard Cairns suggests that for American officers, the Vietnam War was a means by which they could get 'their ticket stamped in a command appointment',⁷⁸ and in Colin Whyte's opinion, the Americans were particularly corrupt, diverting goods gained by

unscrupulous means to the black market, and 'living off graft' in Vietnam.⁷⁹

Another veteran believes that as a result of the American influence, the Australian and New Zealand troops based at Nui Dat were just as guilty of corruption. 'There was so much graft and corruption in both armies, it seemed to be a game to make as much as you could out of your time there.'⁸⁰

The American approach to the war in Vietnam was considered by some New Zealanders to be, at best, inappropriate.⁸¹ Peter Hotop noted that the Americans were 'inclined to try to crack a nut with a sledge hammer',⁸² and in John Hall's opinion, the American approach, which he describes as 'in, out, the flag goes up and we're home by Christmas', was frightening.⁸³ Murray Deed considers that the Americans had relinquished thorough training of personnel for 'the might of military hardware and, you know, blow it up at all costs',⁸⁴ and another veteran believes that the American military philosophy in Vietnam was 'Achieve the aim, to hell with the cost!'⁸⁵ John Moller recalls, 'Well, the Americans had this idea in Vietnam....that they were going to use their high technology and massive fire power to win the war. And that's the other reason of course that they used the defoliation programme. They weren't prepared to go in the bush and mix it one to one with the VC. Their idea was if you took all the trees away then they could bring to bear the massive fire power, and when you see the type of weaponry the Americans used in Vietnam, I mean it was pretty awe-inspiring.'⁸⁶ John Treanor agrees that the American military technology and tactics were not appropriate for the conflict in

Vietnam, mainly because of the dense jungle terrain, but points out that these tactics were very successfully applied during Operation Desert Storm.⁸⁷ One ex-officer recalls that the Americans were at times critical of the cautious approach taken by the New Zealanders and Australians towards combat. He himself considers that the Anzac modus operandi was based on 'common sense' and 'sensible caution', lessons learned from earlier wars.⁸⁸

The Americans were also considered to have had somewhat unusual attitudes towards being in a war zone in general. On one operation, the U.S. unit Hardie Martin's company was working with refused to move until they had received their supply of ice-cream and fresh bread,⁸⁹ and Nigel Martin found it refreshing but somewhat unusual when his team was resupplied by the Americans at one point, but instead of the expected ammunition, they received ice-cold chocolate egg nogs, cigarettes, and shaving gear.⁹⁰ Colin Whyte thought it particularly strange that the Americans used cartoon characters such as 'Daisy Mae', who was depicted as a blonde 'busting out of her blouse [with] torn shorts and all the rest of it', to exhort troops to observe basic safety routines and equipment maintenance.⁹¹

Almost all New Zealanders were aware of the U.S. Army's problem with race relations, particularly between black and white personnel. Nigel Martin and Bruce Liddall also noticed that there were racial divisions which segregated Mexican and Puerto Rican troops.⁹² From his own observations, John Moller recalls:

[The U.S. Army] were using the [black Americans] as cannon fodder, no doubt about that. And eventually the Negroes woke up to the

fact...[that] they were getting a high proportion of people being drafted than was sort of reasonable, and that was the way the Americans did it, that was they way the system worked over there. And they really didn't want to be there fighting an American war. You know, they could see it as a sort of class struggle and they had...some terrible problems in some of the units there where some of the [unofficial] Negro units could not be staffed by white officers, because they were killed, they'd just be fragged [killed by their own men]. And that's not saying the Negroes were bad soldiers or bad people, it was just part of their culture, you know, the way they were treated.⁹³

However, one New Zealand veteran recalls that 'Between themselves they had race relations problems, but they didn't allow that to influence their relationship with us, nor did we allow it to influence us...[U.S. troops] tended to be very interested in us. Black and Hispanic soldiers in particular were fascinated with our racial mix, since so many of the New Zealand troops in Vietnam were Maori. The fact that we didn't appear to have any racial difficulties and didn't display any prejudice towards them visibly impressed the minorities among U.S. forces.'⁹⁴ John Treanor recalls that 'they couldn't understand why two drunken Kiwis, one dark and one light, would be staggering down the street propping each other up!'⁹⁵ Bill Peachey considers that almost all New Zealand soldiers related better to the black Americans than did the white Americans because of the New Zealand attitude towards life in general. 'We didn't, you know, rubbish them because they were black and we were white',⁹⁶ although Murray Deed remembers, 'I think the American Negro used to cringe....[when] the Maori guys used to call us white trash, and we used to call them boy, you know, and black arse.' This evidently caused considerable consternation among black American troops, who were prepared to fight over it,

until they realised the amiable nature of the banter between Maori and Pakeha soldiers.⁹⁷ Mike Perreau recalls, 'we'd put on a show for the Yanks, arguing and bloody swearing at each other and we'd nearly come to blows...[then] the guitar would come out and we'd call the black Americans over and the next minute we'd get the white Americans in, and they'd have a ball, you know, really fantastic.'⁹⁸

Because of the relationships they developed with black American troops, some New Zealanders were invited into bars which were unofficially 'off-limits' to white troops. However, some Pakeha soldiers do not appear to have felt very comfortable during their visits.⁹⁹ 'Sniper' remembers he and a team mate visiting a black bar in Vung Tau with a black American friend named Lucky. He was stopped at the entrance, recalling:

...a big pink hand in my face under my chin, and obviously, to the guy on the door, I was the wrong colour....I still remember this pink hand with its fingers out....And I can remember going through mid-air and I picked myself up again, and....[Lucky] picked me up like a bloody parcel, eh, under his arm, and he walked in, I thought he was going to bash my head against the door, that was the sort of position he had me in, and he walked in the bar there and he said look here, he said, this is my mate and anyone who wants to chuck him out's got to chuck me out as well.

The New Zealanders then drank themselves senseless on cherry brandy, which 'Sniper' still cannot stomach today, and woke up in a U.S. barracks, where they were very well looked after while they recovered.¹⁰⁰

One veteran noted that American minorities, particularly black troops, were 'often bitterly hostile towards Vietnamese and openly offensive towards them. This was evidently reciprocated by the Vietnamese who loathed the "soul men", as they called the blacks.'¹⁰¹ Tom Palmer observed that it appeared that black soldiers 'wanted to make the Vietnamese suffer for whatever they had to endure back in the "world".'¹⁰² One veteran considers that most Americans, not just the black troops, were racist towards the Vietnamese,¹⁰³ and Peter Hotop was 'frequently disgusted with their behaviour on the roads - their speed through villages, complete disregard of civilian traffic, the big brother antics, etc. They did however employ a lot of civilians in all their bases and [the civilians] always appeared very happy in their job.'¹⁰⁴ Fred Barclay personally felt that allowing local Vietnamese who could possibly be Vietcong sympathisers onto allied bases was a particularly unwise policy.¹⁰⁵ 'Steve D' recalls one incident at the Horseshoe, an American fire support base, when a local woman who worked on the base was apprehended one night after curfew. 'They took her away and they searched her and they found a complete map of the Horseshoe and all the areas [where] the gun pits and that were, ...up her kilt.'¹⁰⁶

One 1NZSMT veteran believes that many of the unfortunate incidents which occurred involving U.S. troops and Vietnamese civilians were the product of a lack of understanding on behalf of the Americans 'because they were used to being able to do everything their way, and sometimes it just didn't happen that way.' He can

recall two such incidents which occurred during his tour. The first involved a local Vietnamese school teacher who was sitting outside having his hair cut when 'some guy from the Airborne Brigade went down the road on the back of a truck, let loose with an M16, and blew the top of his head off.' This occurred the day that New Zealander Lt. General Sir Leonard Thornton, Chief of Defence Staff at the time, was to visit the hospital at Bong Son. 'We had to fly Bill Thornton in in a helicopter the next morning, [and] the situation was still going on. By afternoon it had settled down a bit and I drove him back to meet the commanding general who was a long, rangy, miserable looking Texan, and he said he had to go down that morning to the town and sort of make apologies. He said, "I didn't think I was going to get my arse out of there".' The second incident involved a 'grenade which had sort of come out of an American camp somewhere or other and set fire to a Vietnamese house, and the Vietnamese had got a bit upset about it and they were throwing a bit of a demonstration.' Several New Zealanders who were in town at the time were mistaken for Americans and caught up in the demonstration. They were forced to take refuge until some understanding Vietnamese, who knew them, collected them on Honda motorcycles and escorted them to safety.¹⁰⁷

Many New Zealanders appear to have held the troops from the Republic of Korea, known as the ROKs, in high regard in terms of their professionalism, even if some of their tactics did raise a few New Zealand eyebrows. John Pointon recalls that 'there was a pretty healthy respect for the Koreans, who in the majority of cases

kept to themselves.’¹⁰⁸ As far as ‘Matt G’ is concerned, ‘there were some of the nicest guys in that outfit, in the ROKs. They were. They were very polite. Unless they were swearing in their own language of course, and we couldn’t understand it.’¹⁰⁹ Ken Treanor considers that the ROKs were generally ‘well disciplined, and gained a reputation for being tough soldiers’,¹¹⁰ and another veteran remembers that although they were very good at ‘thieving’, the ROKs were ‘Top line soldiers. I believe they put the fear of Christ up the VC.’¹¹¹ Tom Palmer recalls, ‘The Koreans were superb. Very safe when in their area. However, their “methods” would have received condemnation if carried out by “European” troops. Asians deal with Asians in the Asian way.’¹¹² Similarly, Richard Pepper observed that ‘Korean soldiers were inclined to be very cruel when dealing with their enemies. This cruelty was such in our Caucasian way of assessment, [but] they deemed their attitude as being philosophical. Korean NCOs informed me that Asians should be treated as another Asian.’ Pepper feels that despite this, the Koreans were very efficient soldiers, kind people, and good hosts. He also feels similarly about the Thai soldiers in Vietnam.¹¹³

Some New Zealanders also appear to have considerably respected the skills and competency of the Vietcong and the NVA. John Hall recalls that his company very rarely encountered the Vietcong, however. ‘They were all North Vietnamese Army, over and over and over again, little young jokers who...had been sent all the way down from up north.’¹¹⁴ Dave Douglas considers that the enemy were highly skilled

and as effective as New Zealand troops,¹¹⁵ and Terry Findlay recalls that they were respected by most New Zealanders, particularly because of their tenacity and willingness to fight for their country.¹¹⁶ ‘Andrew B’ also had ‘a great respect for the ability of the enemy. I always saw them as other human beings with the same emotions and so on as myself and I never...believed the propaganda, the American propaganda, that...they were just totally duped by the communists and therefore were out of their brains. I believed that they were obviously highly motivated and believed in the cause that they were fighting for and I had a great respect for them, both for that and for their military ability.’¹¹⁷ Similarly, another veteran ‘felt considerable respect for the enemy. They took tremendous battering from our superior firepower and still came up fighting, in a manner I’m not sure I could have managed after the same punishment.’ He also suspects that they were better motivated than South Vietnamese soldiers because they had more faith in their cause.¹¹⁸

John Moller believes that because the enemy had been fighting invaders of their country for such a long time, they were ‘very good at their job. They’d had a lot of practice at it....Very committed soldiers.’ He felt rather sad taking personal documents ‘off dead the VC and...there were photographs of wives and children, and letters. And, a lot of VC, it’s part of their national heritage I suppose, they write poetry, and I’m a poet myself, and it amazed me the amount of poetry that these guys used to write and carry around with them. And when you looked at

them, you know, in the final analysis, you sort of realise that they were human beings too.’¹¹⁹ One ex-infantryman considers that the Vietcong were ‘okay, for enemies’,¹²⁰ and Des Sluce felt no animosity at all. ‘They were doing their job. We were doing ours.’¹²¹

On the other hand, one ex-infantry officer believes that the Vietcong were ‘not very nice people’, an opinion he formed after an incident when ‘The Vietcong were trying to persuade a village elder to comply and he declined, and they cut his granddaughter’s head off. In front of him.’¹²² Ted Brooker came to deeply detest the Vietcong after discovering in a village a family of seven civilians suspended from trees with their stomachs cut open, left to die. Brooker is aware that one child survived, as he was required to bring a doctor in to tend to them. He recalls that the Vietcong ‘did some unbelievably horrible things that *never* got reported.’¹²³ Ken Treanor, a member of 1NZSMT, recalls that the exploits of the Vietcong and NVA ‘caused us a lot of anguish because we had to treat the results amongst the civilian population. If they had stuck to strictly military targets we might have been more sympathetic to their cause.’¹²⁴

While some New Zealanders had little contact with ARVN troops,¹²⁵ many of those who did did not trust them and considered them to be unmotivated, poorly trained, unreliable, and corrupt.¹²⁶ Des Sluce observed that as far as the ARVNs were concerned, ‘Self-interest reigns supreme. “Thou shalt have no other God than me” was the creed. The higher the rank the better the perks.’¹²⁷ Nigel Martin noted that,

like a lot of the American conscripted soldiers, the poorer Vietnamese constituted the bulk of the ARVN, while richer families could buy their way out of the military, or at least choose an easier or more prestigious option such as the White Mice,¹²⁸ the South Vietnamese police so-named because of their white helmets, gloves and shirts.¹²⁹ It was observed by another veteran that 'Everybody who didn't have a rich cousie/bro or reason for not avoiding the draft, these fellows were sent or press-ganged into various ARVN units. Been at war for so long who can blame them?'¹³⁰ Murray Deed recalls, 'We didn't respect [the ARVN], we didn't like them, we didn't really bother to have a lot to do with them because they were poorly led, poorly trained, and they didn't really want to fight for their own country....in the end, we thought what the hell are we fighting for, you don't even want to fight for yourself.'¹³¹ Richard Cairns and his team mates also found the ARVN attitude very irritating at times. 'We used to come out of the jungle having flogged our butts off...maybe somebody's been killed or badly hurt and...you saw all these Vietnamese soldiers poncing around in clean fatigues and cleanly shaven and there's women hanging around them and that sort of thing. It begged the question, what the bloody hell are we doing here?'¹³²

Gordon Dalziel believes that the ARVN simply did not want to fight.¹³³ Laurie Pilling, who trained ARVN officers, observed that:

they had been fighting for, really since the French were there and the people were tired, the soldiers were tired. Their brothers had been killed, the fathers had been killed, people they knew, and they knew it was only a matter of time before they got killed and on many occasions they avoided conflict or situations exposing themselves to an

environment where they were going to get killed....they were combat weary, they'd had enough, and they would fight if they had to but they would prefer not to. And I think that also created problems between the Americans and the South Vietnamese, because the Americans were saying, well, why the hell am I fighting here when the locals are not.¹³⁴

Peter Hotop also had little contact with the ARVNs, but he believes that the 'overall impression was that the ARVN was improving very rapidly but they were not yet in a position to take on the war on their own. The Americans left too early. Even the local village defence units were improving and many of them were being paid for the first time - the organisation was just beginning to catch up. They too were not ready to go it alone though.'¹³⁵

Des Sluce considers that the Regional Forces soldiers, who were the full-time component of the South Vietnamese National Guard and were conscripted for two years, could be very good. They worked in tandem with the Popular Forces (hence the name RF/PFs, or Ruff/Puffs¹³⁶), who were part-time soldiers. Unfortunately if the Regional Force soldiers were too effective, the company would be sent to 'all the bad news areas (lots of VC).'¹³⁷ In the experience of another New Zealand ex-officer, the RF/PFs in some areas 'had no respect for their government and they had no trust in their own troops, and yet they would fight to protect their village from the Vietcong. And you had to admire that. I was always in two minds as to whether we should be there, but this sometimes made me feel that we should.'¹³⁸ John Hall, on the other hand, recalls that some members of the RF/PFs were known to change sides, depending on whether the sun was up or down.'¹³⁹ Ken Treanor also

remembers that the RF/PFs were not highly regarded as soldiers, and would 'sleep on duty and desert as soon as the going got tough.'¹⁴⁰

The attitudes of New Zealanders towards civilians appears to have varied according to how much interaction there was between the two nationalities. Terry Findlay considers that 'most [New Zealanders], if they were honest, would say they were ashamed of the way they treated the Vietnamese...I think we were pretty arrogant...[and] I think we'd say now, if some other foreign troops came to New Zealand and treated our people like we treated them, we would get our backs up and we probably would have been the VC. I think we felt they owed us something.' He believes that this was a result of insufficient training or education regarding the Vietnamese culture, and also because most New Zealanders did not interact with local Vietnamese on a regular basis, which did not help understanding from either perspective.¹⁴¹ Another veteran also felt that some New Zealanders were 'prejudiced' against the Vietnamese, although they 'tended to keep their thoughts to themselves by and large when actually dealing with the Vietnamese, only making disparaging remarks to each other,' unlike the Australians who he felt at times were openly obnoxious.¹⁴² In Peter Earsman's opinion, New Zealanders everywhere 'tend to take out our insularity and national inferiority complex on those over whom we have some control.'¹⁴³

Ken Treanor recalls that there were generally three categories of Vietnamese civilians:

The first were those who lived in Saigon, and to some extent places like Nha Trang, and Da Nang. They were the city dwellers who lived in a world of large noisy populations, and carved out a living working for the military, the black market or tried to make an honest living as traders. Life was fast and furious. The second group were those who lived in the country, the rural and the majority of the population. They worked in the paddy fields, tended their farm animals and tried to carry on their lives amongst the military activity. These were the real Vietnamese people in my opinion. The third group were the refugees who had fled their homes in the north and tried to settle in the south. They lived in shanty towns, cardboard and tin dwellings, raising families and attempted to have a “normal” life. They had no land and had to rely on the local people to support them by giving them space. These refugees, because they had no place of their own, were often the source of many problems. They developed the “Give Me” syndrome, especially when they saw the apparent opulence of the Americans.¹⁴⁴

Unlike Ken Treanor many New Zealand soldiers did not have the opportunity to interact with Vietnamese civilians.¹⁴⁵ ‘Andrew B’ recalls that he ‘deliberately steered clear of [the locals], quite frankly, which is odd because there I was supposed to be fighting the war for them...[but] I didn’t really see it that way. I saw the bigger picture if you like of fighting communism...[and] I didn’t see it as though I was fighting the war for the South Vietnamese.’¹⁴⁶

Apart from when on leave in Vung Tau, New Zealanders were most likely to encounter Vietnamese civilians during village searches, or check points on roads. Brendan Duggan recalls that when these occurred, the Vietnamese were treated with ‘respect and kindness.’¹⁴⁷ ‘Matt G’ found that during village search and destroy missions, during which troops looked for evidence of Vietcong and which could be intrusive,¹⁴⁸ the Vietnamese were ‘very polite’. ‘Some of them were really amazing

when you're...searching these houses, taking their pots off their fires and stuff and digging up their fireplaces. You might be saying, oh, that's a nice looking...boy or girl, they seem like nice little kids, and they'd turn around and say, oh, thank you very much sir. It sort of blew you away that these people could understand what the hell you were talking about....Turn around and have another look and think, Jeez, lucky I didn't swear at them!'¹⁴⁹ Conversely, in similar situations in which Victor 3 was involved, John Hall recalls that the locals would harangue the New Zealanders because the sprays being dumped from airplanes were harming their crops, and that 'the villages and what have you had an awful bloody...feel to them. They were really shrunk down to family, nuclear family type loyalties. The rest was just unstructured, gone. The school teacher, the policeman, you name it, they were gone. The old men, the head men were all old toothless men, they were the next ones to get the chop. Quite frightening.'¹⁵⁰

When Peter Hotop's company worked at check points, they observed that the villagers were 'reluctant to show any sign of friendship or acceptance of what we were doing - in fact they were "anti". Elsewhere, while doing cordon and search operations, they displayed absolute fear. This was probably more in fear of what the Vietnamese authorities would do to them after we left, as many of them had been helping the VC - some were VC supporters....I felt sorry for the local population as they were under continuous pressure from the VC.' Hotop did notice signs of improved co-operation from the villagers after a time, but feels that 'we did not do

enough with them to “win hearts and minds”.’¹⁵¹ While the New Zealanders who did come into contact with Vietnamese civilians had varying views of their trustworthiness, some, like John Hall and Peter Hotop, were aware of their unenviable predicament of living in an almost perpetual war zone, of needing the allies for physical protection and, in many cases, economic subsistence, but at the same time being pressured by the ubiquitous Vietcong to support the communist cause.¹⁵² Allan Grayling remembers meeting a village woman who had six sons. The ARVN took the eldest son for military duty, so the Vietcong took the next eldest. The ARVN then took the next, and so on, until all of the boys had been taken away, three sons fighting on each side.¹⁵³

New Zealanders who had the opportunity to work with the Vietnamese appear to have developed a better understanding of, and attitude towards, them. One 1NZSMT veteran recalls that the Vietnamese civilians were ‘one and the same time objects of pity and annoyance. I saw them as a people who had a terribly hard lot in life without a war complicating things. They were hard to educate out of the habits of centuries, with their way of doing things making situations worse. Yet, they could be ingenious in many ways. Life expectancy short by our standards. I wish I had, or could have, done more for them.’ He believes that in terms of the allied/civilian relationship, more ‘tolerance and forbearance’ was required.¹⁵⁴ Des Sluce saw the civilians as ‘hardy [and] stoical’, and fine people, but ‘innocents abroad’,¹⁵⁵ while Tom Palmer ‘accepted the “slopes” for what they were - victims.

Felt sorry for some of the kids. Didn't get too involved with them. Never became embroiled with any of the females. Some guys thought they were really beautiful.' He recalls that members of his team treated the Vietnamese very well, and adopted a ten year old orphan boy named Mung. 'Everyone paid so much from their wages towards Mung's messing and education. Which was done by the Sisters down the road at the Catholic mission. Wonder where he is today?'¹⁵⁶

One senior 1NZSMT member encouraged an open and friendly relationship with the Vietnamese he worked with. He was taken out 'sort of first-footing' during Tet, the Vietnamese New Year, and also invited, along with the District Chief and the chief Buddhist monk of the area, to officiate at the opening of a renovated Buddhist pagoda, but became rather uncomfortable during the ceremony which included the cutting of a wide yellow ribbon. Both the District Chief and the Buddhist monk had taken small 'snicks' out of the ribbon, and had then passed the scissors to him. 'It was very very embarrassing because I didn't know...what I was supposed to do. Was it somebody else next down the line? [I] made some inquiries and no, it was all over to me so I duly cut the ribbon and said a bit....Not many people have got that one up their sleeve!'¹⁵⁷ Another veteran recalls that he and his team mates got on well with Vietnamese civilians and trusted those that they knew. He considers that this was because they worked with and lived among local civilians, took the time to get to know them, took part in civic projects, and accepted invitations to local celebrations. 'We did a lot of things for them and there's all sorts of letters of

commendation and that floating around I think for the work that the team actually did, so I think, by and by, you know, they did appreciate what we were doing, yeah.’¹⁵⁸

Murray Deed also worked quite closely with several Vietnamese civilians and found those that he knew well to be ‘very sincere sort of honest people.’ He was once invited to a Vietnamese home and treated to a traditional banquet, which was a tremendous experience for him, but one which left him feeling somewhat uncomfortable. ‘There were about a dozen of us I suppose having this meal, and it was an absolutely incredible meal, you know, it was just beautiful. We had crabs and all sorts of dim sims and all sorts of dipping sauces, and it was just simply amazing. And we were sitting there eating and we looked up and there was all these kids looking through these windows looking at us and here’s us, you know.... we felt really terrible, like we’d taken the food out of their mouths or something.’¹⁵⁹

Dave Douglas recalls that he and his team mates became attached to several Vietnamese civilians who lived and worked outside Nui Dat camp, and would provide them with spare food and talk with them. Members of his company also ‘made good friends’ with some of the local Vietnamese whom they had helped to relocate. Douglas feels that these people appreciated the New Zealanders assisting them, although he observed that ‘some of the guys sort of treated them like bloody dirt.’¹⁶⁰ Bill Peachey also had several small friends, a girl aged 11 or 12, and her

younger brother, who would send his sister to the New Zealanders on frequent 'lolly-scrounging' missions (see Appendix G, Photo 1).¹⁶¹

Dave Orbell considers that the Vietnamese people were gentle, and liked their concept of family, their philosophy of life, and their sense of values, but believes that they were terribly corrupted by the American influence, including the U.S. 'Coca Cola machines, Whippy ice cream crap, and their dollar', as well as the prostitution industry which had proliferated to cater for the allied soldiers.¹⁶² Orbell, like most other New Zealanders, felt that he was unable to trust the Vietnamese civilians, essentially because it was impossible to establish who was a Vietcong sympathiser, and who was not.¹⁶³ In John Pointon's opinion, 'There is no difference between a Vietnamese and a Vietcong. There is simply his actions....They all dressed in black pyjamas and if you went around shooting everyone that wore black pyjamas, I think we'd have run out of ammunition and people long ago.'¹⁶⁴ As far as 'Sniper' was concerned, 'everyone was a Vietcong, even the kids.' He feels that he hated the enemy, and believes that this is because of the propaganda used by the New Zealand Army during training. 'When you look back, there was a lot of it. I felt I was indoctrinated, told that they are shit, they are lower than you, they are worse than dogs.'¹⁶⁵

For many New Zealand soldiers, the apparent opportunism, dishonesty, duplicity and lack of gratitude of Vietnamese civilians was disappointing and confusing. 'Bob P' recalls a night-time contact outside the base camp at Vung Tau, when one of the

Vietcong killed turned out to be the Deputy Governor of the province. 'You just didn't know. By day, you could be...my best friend. By night you could be shooting us. It was how it was and you just didn't, you didn't trust them.' Despite this, 'Bob P' considered that he and his team mates got on well with the local Vietnamese. It was therefore very disappointing for him when he was called to a riot at 'The Flags', a soldiers' club at the centre of Vung Tau, and was physically assaulted by a member of a local family he had befriended. The next time 'Bob P' saw these people, they acted as if nothing had happened. He also recalls the time that his unit arranged to have clothes and toys sent over from New Zealand for Vietnamese children in an orphanage run by Catholic nuns. The goods were seen soon after arrival being sold on the streets to the highest bidder. He felt that the Vietnamese 'didn't want us there, it was obvious.'¹⁶⁶ Peter Earsman recalls, 'They regarded us as benign invaders, if that's not an oxymoron. They would exploit us as often as they could, and who could blame them?'¹⁶⁷ and Richard Cairns remembers, '[The Vietnamese] were trying to rip us off and, you know, you'd have your 36 hours leave and you...virtually had to padlock your money away and keep both hands on it otherwise you were going to get ripped off.'¹⁶⁸

During the Chinese Moon Festival, Hardie Martin recalls that the company cooks made traditional moon cakes which were given to children in a local village. While this was being done, some of the children attempted to steal the men's cameras and when the men gave chase, the children ran away, throwing the moon cakes onto the

ground.¹⁶⁹ During one operation near a village, John Moller noticed that 30 or 40 children, who 'all looked pretty miserable and hungry and they had sores all over them', were watching the New Zealanders, who decided to collect some tinned rations to give them. Unfortunately, when the food was distributed, the children 'actually started to riot. They were fighting like animals over it and then the parents came out and they were knocking the kids around, they were kicking them and, you know, in the end it got a bit dicey. And we just fired a couple of shots in the air and told them to piss off, you know? And what had started out as an act of kindness became a bit dicey.' Moller believes that incidents such as this were compounded because the New Zealanders could not speak the Vietnamese language.¹⁷⁰ Murray Deed recalls that his company would visit children at a local orphanage which Victor 6 had helped to build, as well as donate any excess rations to them. From experience, they were aware that the children would try to pick their pockets, so wallets were hidden away and watches were removed before the visit.¹⁷¹ Bill Peachey, also of Victor 6, felt that the children could not be blamed for their behaviour as they were orphans and had not been brought up knowing any other way. He and his friends would put chocolates or lollies in their empty pockets to be 'discovered' by the children, knowing that 'they'd take them and they'd be happy.'¹⁷²

Several New Zealanders remember that some Vietnamese civilians they encountered were openly hostile. One veteran recalls the response he received when he smiled at

a school teacher. 'She looked back at me blankly for a moment before turning her back on me, slowly and deliberately. Respectable young women all over Asia looked down on foreign soldiers, I knew that, but the gesture really hurt and offended me. I had only wanted to be civil.'¹⁷³ Another veteran and a mate were observed one night by motorcycle-riding Vietnamese youths, known as 'cowboys', going into a prostitute's house. The next morning, the New Zealanders had to be escorted 'out the back way' as the word was out that the 'cowboys' wanted to kill them.¹⁷⁴

For many allied soldiers in Vietnam, a particularly distressing aspect of the war was the fact that women and children took an actively combatant role. 'Bill M' recalls, 'You could have five year old boys who'd go and kill you, and you could have an 80 year old lady there that can kill you.' It was not uncommon for young Vietnamese children, prompted by the enemy, to throw grenades at New Zealand and other allied soldiers. For 'Bill M' and others, this was distressing because 'you can't go and chase him and give him a bloody smack on the arse and say go home to your mother and tell them to don't do it again, can you?...But he can kill you just as good as anybody else. People don't understand that.'¹⁷⁵ Bill McNeish recalls an episode not long after he arrived in Vietnam when a Vietnamese child dropped a grenade next to Australian Landrover, with disastrous results.¹⁷⁶ Terry Findlay personally felt sorry for children who were caught up in the conflict, but was aware

that 'there was a big difference between nine year old children in New Zealand and nine year old children over there.'¹⁷⁷

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The relationship between New Zealand and Australian troops in Vietnam does not appear to have been any more cordial than those maintained during earlier wars.

However, a substantial number of New Zealand veterans consider that in general the Australians were competent and reliable soldiers when it mattered. The disharmony between the Australians and New Zealanders does not appear to have been the result of incompatible military ideology or procedure, but possibly more a product of a clash of national characteristics. One reason for this conflict may be that the national character of New Zealanders and Australians is actually not dissimilar, resulting in the intense and at times anti-social rivalry exhibited in Vietnam. While some Australians may well have behaved in a patriotically arrogant manner towards the New Zealanders, evidence from the Australian perspective suggests that at times some New Zealanders may have been as equally as arrogant and pugnacious towards the Australians.

Relations between New Zealanders and the Americans in Vietnam were also not ideal. In direct contrast to what some New Zealanders thought of the Australians, U.S. troops were generally considered to be generous and hospitable people, but clearly inadequate as soldiers, although some New Zealanders admired some of the U.S. Special Forces and almost all were impressed by the American pilots. In cases

where New Zealanders worked intimately with U.S. troops, a more positive opinion of the standard of their soldiering is evident. New Zealanders in general found the American military approach to the war in Vietnam to be unusual, inappropriate, and at times dangerous, although this does not seem to have greatly affected social relationships with the Americans.

Korean troops in Vietnam were considered by New Zealanders to be very efficient, albeit with somewhat cruel and barbaric methods, and good hosts. There was also considerable respect for the enemy, although this sentiment appears to be confined to New Zealanders who possibly had not witnessed evidence of Vietcong cruelty.

The ARVN appear to have been almost universally disliked by New Zealanders, as well as the other allies, and many resented them for their unreliability and lack of enthusiasm for fighting for their own country, seeing them as a military liability rather than an asset. This no doubt resulted in an overt negative attitude towards the ARVN which in turn would not have motivated the South Vietnamese troops' to cooperate with the New Zealanders, Australians and Americans. Some New Zealanders observed that ARVN troops were suffering from chronic fatigue and a lack of appropriate training, but considered that had the western allies not begun to withdraw, a significant improvement would have been imminent.

A significant percentage of New Zealand veterans appear to have been ignorant of Vietnamese culture and therefore unable to relate effectively or positively towards civilians. Some New Zealanders were shocked at and disappointed by aspects of

Vietnamese civilian behaviour which they did not understand. Again, this can be seen as an omission in pre-deployment training. This situation was made worse by the fact that it was almost impossible to establish whether a Vietnamese was a Vietcong sympathiser or not, resulting in constant suspicion and mistrust. New Zealanders who worked closely with the Vietnamese, such as 1NZSMT and some infantry company members whose duties normally kept them at Nui Dat base, were able to develop a better understanding and appreciation of Vietnamese culture. It appears that when this type of relationship developed, the Vietnamese were also able to learn more about the New Zealanders and subsequently came to appreciate the work the New Zealanders were doing for them. Unfortunately, due to the nature of their duties, the majority of New Zealanders in Vietnam were not in a position for this to happen. Essentially excluded from the indigenous culture of the country in which they were fighting, many New Zealanders, particularly the infantrymen, went to some lengths to transplant their own synthesis of New Zealand military and civilian culture and adapt it to their environment in Vietnam.

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- ¹ Ministry of Defence, *Brief History of the New Zealand Army in South Vietnam 1964-1972* (Wellington, 1973), p. 7.
- ² 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ³ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- ⁴ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ⁵ John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ⁶ ANON, 29/8/95.
- ⁷ John Hall, 4/2/96.
- ⁸ Interview 24.
- ⁹ Mike Subritzky, *The Vietnam Scrapbook: The Second Anzac Adventure* (Papakura, 1995), p. 179.
- ¹⁰ 161 Battery Charge Book, 30/12/66-29/5/68, Charge no. 219, 11/10/67.
- ¹¹ 'Working relationships that were not too close', in *Australian SAS Association Magazine*, (no date supplied), p. 34.
- ¹² See Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Mike Perreau, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; Fred Barclay, 21/5/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; ANON, 17/4/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ¹³ 'Steve D', 2/3/96. See also Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.

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- ¹⁴ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- ¹⁵ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- ¹⁶ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ¹⁷ Australian War Memorial, *Australians in Vietnam 1962-1973* (Canberra, 1996), p. 5.
- ¹⁸ Ian McNeill, 'The Australian Army and the Vietnam War', in *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, edited by Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey, Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), pp. 117.
- ¹⁹ Ann Curthoys, 'The Anti-War Movements', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory* (New South Wales, 1992), pp. 90-94.
- ²⁰ Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan: the Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966* (New South Wales, 1993) pp. 23-24.
- ²¹ Jane Ross, 'A Holiday at the War', in *Memories of Vietnam*, edited by Kenneth Maddock (New South Wales, 1991), p. 218.
- ²² Jane Ross, 'The Conscript Experience in Vietnam', *Australian Outlook*, Vol. 29, No. 3 (December, 1975), p. 315.
- ²³ Jane Ross, 'The Australian Army; Some Views from the Bottom', *The Australian Quarterly*, Vol. 46, No. 3 (September, 1974), p. 45.
- ²⁴ See Fred Barclay, 21/5/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; ANON, 22/4/96; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ²⁵ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96. See also ANON, 17/4/96.
- ²⁶ John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ²⁷ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ²⁸ 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ²⁹ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- ³⁰ 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- ³¹ ANON, 2/3/96.
- ³² Peter Earsman, 4/9/95.
- ³³ Fred Barclay, 21/5/95.
- ³⁴ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ³⁵ Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- ³⁶ ANON, 7/2/96.
- ³⁷ ANON, 22/4/96.
- ³⁸ Dave Douglas, 7/6/96.
- ³⁹ 'Sam B', 5/7/95.
- ⁴⁰ Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ⁴¹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ⁴² Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- ⁴³ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ⁴⁴ Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ⁴⁵ See 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- ⁴⁶ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ⁴⁷ Terry Findlay, 4/9/96.
- ⁴⁸ See Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; ANON, 22/4/96; ANON, 17/4/96; Tom Palmer, 13/7/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ⁴⁹ James R. Ebert, *A Life in a Year: the American Infantryman in Vietnam, 1965-1972* (Novato, CA, 1993), p. 17.
- ⁵⁰ Christian G. Appy, *Working-Class War: American Combat Soldiers and Vietnam* (North Carolina, 1993), p. 30.
- ⁵¹ *The Vietnam War Day by Day*, edited by John S. Bowman (London, 1989), p. 220.
- ⁵² John Helmer, *Bringing the War Home: the American Soldier in Vietnam and After* (New York, 1974), p. 5.
- ⁵³ Appy, p. 31.
- ⁵⁴ *ibid.*, p. 32.
- ⁵⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 32-33.
- ⁵⁶ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁵⁷ ANON, 29/8/95.
- ⁵⁸ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- ⁵⁹ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ⁶⁰ 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ⁶¹ ANON, 7/2/96.
- ⁶² Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.

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- 63 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
64 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
65 John Moller, 10/7/95.
66 See also Peter Hotop, 7/96.
67 See Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; ANON, 22/4/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
68 Fred Barclay, 21/5/95.
69 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95. See also Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
70 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
71 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
72 ANON, 17/4/96.
73 See John Pointon, 1/3/95; Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; ANON, 22/4/96; Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97. See also Chapter 6, U.S. casevac, or 'dust-off' pilots.
74 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
75 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
76 ANON, 28/12/95.
77 ANON, 17/4/96.
78 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95. See also ANON, 29/8/95.
79 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
80 Interview 16.
81 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
82 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
83 John Hall, 4/2/96.
84 Murray Deed, 15/1/96. See also 'Steve D', Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
85 ANON, 17/4/96.
86 John Moller, 10/7/95.
87 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
88 ANON, 29/8/95.
89 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96. See also Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
90 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
91 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
92 Nigel Martin, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
93 John Moller, 10/7/95.
94 ANON, 22/4/96.
95 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
96 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
97 Murray Deed, 15/1/95. See also Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
98 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
99 See ANON, 28/12/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; ANON, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
100 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
101 ANON, 22/4/96.
102 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96. See also John Pointon, 1/3/95.
103 ANON, 28/12/95.
104 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
105 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
106 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
107 ANON, 3/2/96.
108 John Pointon, 1/3/96.
109 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
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111 ANON, 17/4/96.
112 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
113 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
114 John Hall, 4/2/96.
115 Dave Douglas, 7/6/96. See also Nigel Martin, Hardie Martin, Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
116 Terry Findlay, 4/9/96.
117 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
118 ANON, 22/4/96.
119 John Moller, 10/7/95.
120 ANON, 7/2/96.
121 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
122 ANON, 14/9/95.

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- ¹²³ Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ¹²⁴ Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
- ¹²⁵ See ANON, 22/4/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/96.
- ¹²⁶ See 'Sniper, Gerald Southon, 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96; Allan Grayling 5/5/95; Bill McNeish, Nigel Martin, Mike Perreau, 2/3/96; ANON, 17/4/96; ANON, 14/9/95; Tom Palmer, 13/7/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ¹²⁷ Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- ¹²⁸ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹²⁹ The White Mice were unpopular with almost everyone in Vietnam, including the Vietnamese, because of their 'corruption and their willingness to be used by almost anyone for political purposes.' Linda Reinberg, *In the Field: the Language of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1991), p. 240.
- ¹³⁰ ANON, 7/2/96.
- ¹³¹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ¹³² Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ¹³³ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95. See also Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹³⁴ Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
- ¹³⁵ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- ¹³⁶ Reinberg, p. 184.
- ¹³⁷ Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- ¹³⁸ ANON, 29/8/95.
- ¹³⁹ John Hall, 4/2/96. See also Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- ¹⁴⁰ Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
- ¹⁴¹ Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
- ¹⁴² ANON, 22/4/96. See also ANON, 29/8/95.
- ¹⁴³ Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
- ¹⁴⁴ Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
- ¹⁴⁵ See Fred Barclay, 21/5/95.
- ¹⁴⁶ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ¹⁴⁷ Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
- ¹⁴⁸ The term 'search and destroy' is defined as 'an offensive operation in which Americans searched an area to find, fix in place, and destroy enemy forces and their base areas and supplies'. The term was dropped by the Americans in 1968 because it was associated with aimless searches and wanton destruction of property. It was then called 'reconnaissance in force'. Reinberg, p. 194.
- ¹⁴⁹ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
- ¹⁵⁰ John Hall, 4/2/96.
- ¹⁵¹ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- ¹⁵² See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Mike Perreau, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96, Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ¹⁵³ Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- ¹⁵⁴ ANON, 17/4/96.
- ¹⁵⁵ Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- ¹⁵⁶ Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- ¹⁵⁷ ANON, 3/2/96.
- ¹⁵⁸ ANON, 28/12/95.
- ¹⁵⁹ Murray Deed, 15/1/95.
- ¹⁶⁰ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- ¹⁶¹ Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- ¹⁶² Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ¹⁶³ See Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; Bill McNeish, Harry Ellison, 'Steve D', Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/96; ANON, 28/12/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; 'TW Washburn', 'Sniper', Gerald Southon, 13/7/96; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; ANON, 7/2/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ¹⁶⁴ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ¹⁶⁵ 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ¹⁶⁶ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ¹⁶⁷ Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
- ¹⁶⁸ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95. See also Nigel Martin, Bill McNeish, 2/3/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- ¹⁶⁹ Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹⁷⁰ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ¹⁷¹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.

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- ¹⁷² Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
¹⁷³ ANON, 22/4/95.
¹⁷⁴ Interview 36/1.
¹⁷⁵ 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
¹⁷⁶ Bill McNeish, 2/3/96.
¹⁷⁷ Terry Findlay, 4/9/96.

CHAPTER FIVE: Ten guitars and one pair of boots; the culture of the New Zealand soldier.

In every international war in which New Zealand has been involved, service personnel have displayed their own unique and distinctive style, and No. 8 wire, 'she'll be right' attitude. The New Zealanders who served in Vietnam appear to have not only continued this tradition, but also ensured that it was not engulfed by the massive American presence which dominated the country and the war.

In *Vietnam Style: Riders on the Storm*, a U.S. series of publications examining the American experience in Vietnam, the introduction begins, 'Vietnam had a style all of its own, ranging from the rainbow tracers pouring out of the guns of Puff the Magic Dragon to the NVA belt buckles worn proudly by the in-country troops, from the smell of napalm in the morning to the graffiti stencilled on flak-jackets and embellishing the sides of APCs [armoured personnel carriers]. If you wanted to stay alive you had better wise up and get hip - and to do that you had to dig the *style*, breathe it in deep and feed on it.'¹ If U.S. post-war films and books about Vietnam are true and realistic indicators, then Vietnam was not just a war, it was a surreal, 365-day, psychedelic, insane, combat-rock *experience*. Everybody had the thousand yard stare², rock and roll was something which one did when one's weapon was set on full automatic³, grunts⁴ all had names like 'Animal Mother', 'Cowboy', or 'the Joker'⁵, and spent their spare time surfing, or banging their beer cans on the bar and

shouting out the lyrics to the Animals' 'We Gotta get Out of This Place', or drifting through a haze of marijuana smoke with the Grace Slick song, 'White Rabbit'.

Literally millions of American service personnel served in Vietnam between 1961 and 1975, taking with them their technology and material wealth, their music, and their beliefs and fears, and creating a unique combat-oriented economy and culture which pervaded the time and the place.

The New Zealanders who served in Vietnam do appear to have 'dug the style'.

However, their style was one which they brought to the war themselves and adapted to fit the environment in which they found themselves. The New Zealand Army was under-resourced during the Vietnam War period, and many New Zealand veterans consider that they were conspicuously under-equipped during their tours, only a few remembering that they had enough of the right type of equipment.⁶ Allan Grayling recalls, 'They never managed to call us out in Vietnam with a single New Zealand person in New Zealand uniform, we were all in bits and pieces of everyone else's'⁷ (see Appendix G, Photograph 2), but Mike Perreau considers that this had a positive effect, because 'the bloody Kiwis looked really bloody rough out there, arms hanging all over them and the bloody various garb and everything on...we looked like, you know, a pack of bloody cut throats. It might have acted as a deterrent at times, an advantage to us' (see Appendix G, Photograph 3).⁸ Some of the equipment which was available does not appear to have been suitable for the physical conditions in Vietnam, as Bill Peachey remembers. 'We had all the webbing from

the Brits and...for being out in the field for a while it didn't suit us, it'd just fall apart. Then we got a lot of American and Australian stuff, we mixed it up and made our own.'⁹ John Treanor, who considers that the New Zealanders were 'a bit of a rag-tag army', recalls that 'We had four different kinds of packs. Some had the old Malaysian bergen which was a kind of rucksack, some of us...carried South Vietnamese packs that you could probably only carry a loaf of bread in, they were too small. Some of us carried American Special Forces frames and adapted New Zealand packs to fit on them, and some of us carried British packs.' Like Peachey, Treanor remembers that much of the equipment used by New Zealanders was 'made up by the guys themselves, rearranged and reconfigured by ripping off bits here and stitching bits on there basically to make the thing.'¹⁰

American military issue clothing was popular with the New Zealanders. One veteran remembers that he and his friends would deliberately wear it 'to upset the Aussies.'¹¹ Bill Peachey and his team mates preferred the U.S. shirts 'because you could have them hanging out and they don't get all tucked up with wearing your webbing and stuff. Most of them used to wear that, shirts that hang out. Plus it was cooler.'¹² John Hall's men also 'used to try and get hold of foreign gear to wear, the American shirt was preferred to the Australian one sort of thing. I used to have to stamp hard in stopping that.'¹³ Colin Whyte remembers that unlike the Americans who seemed to be able to have their gear replaced when and where it broke, 'we used to have to bring our gear back to camp to get it exchanged. If we had a pair of

boots that got ripped or whatever, we used to have to carry them around till we got [back] to camp.’¹⁴ On operations, the New Zealanders were usually resupplied every ten days, including boots, shirts and trousers. However, as far as ‘Matt G’ was concerned, ‘there wasn’t much sense in putting it on a dirty body so you left it off.’¹⁵

Fred Barclay’s SAS team was only issued with one set of camouflage gear per tour of duty and consequently had to wash and mend their clothes after each operation. Also, due to ‘good old bureaucracy’, the SAS wore a different uniform to other New Zealanders in Vietnam, so if ‘you were seen in a bit of a shoot-out or something, [the enemy] knew exactly who you were.’ Barclay can also recall lying in his Second World War-vintage tent on his first night in Vietnam and being able to observe the stars through both the inner and the outer. ‘It was all good kit, you know, sort of thing.’ He also often wondered why visitors from New Zealand ‘could get from New Zealand to Vietnam and back again in a matter of about two days, [but] it could take two months for a letter to get to you.’¹⁶ The lack of resources could be frustrating for New Zealand troops, particularly when official visitors arrived wearing gear not available to the soldiers. One veteran remembers a parliamentary delegation which ‘turned up in gear that we couldn’t fucking get!... We couldn’t get the bloody gear, fucking boots, cam raincoats, socks were as scarce as frigging hen’s teeth, and all these bastards come out in new kit.’¹⁷

While New Zealanders may have been under-resourced in Vietnam, there was still a very strong sense of pride in being part of the New Zealand Army (see Appendix G, Photograph 4). One 1NZSMT veteran recalls that ‘because we wanted to stand out as New Zealanders...we wore the New Zealand uniform all the way.’¹⁸ For Gordon Dalziel during his first tour with Victor 1, ‘we were the first [New Zealand] guys to go up there [and] we wanted to look different from the Aussies, we wanted to look different from everyone else. And we had two cravats, one which we wore in the field which was generally worn around the forehead, right? And another one which was a pure silk one which we wore when we were going out in our, in uniform, this black cravat with a kiwi and a fern and a taiaha through it.’¹⁹ Dave Orbell’s company, Victor 3, also wore black cravats featuring a white Kiwi ‘for functions and out of country R&R [rest and recreation].’²⁰ John Hall also remembers that ‘[the men] wanted to be known as New Zealanders [with] the little tab and the green beret’,²¹ and Hardie Martin would put his green beret on as soon as he returned to Nui Dat camp, because ‘there was no way you wanted to...be identified as an Australian!’²²

Although pride in being a New Zealander was collectively strong, there were also attempts at individuality and a desire to ‘look the part’ of a seasoned and intrepid soldier (see Appendix G, Photographs 5 and 6).²³ Harry Ellison remembers, ‘Every person individualised [their uniforms], whether it was your webbing, whatever was on you....Plus it was easier to recognise a person. You looked at his hat and you

knew it was so-and-so, because you couldn't see the face, of course.²⁴ Trousers were supposed to be worn tucked into boots to keep leeches out, but Bruce Liddall rolled his trousers up 'like the old cowboys did',²⁵ and Hardie Martin recalls that leeches would get into the trousers via the waistband and settle in the crotch anyway.²⁶ Liddall remembers:

There were dress regs laid down, but they were a basis to putting your clothes on, that's really what it was, and your webbing. You know, some people wore their webbing way up here, some hung it low like...in a western, with the webbing hanging around the hips, very loose. Some carried four water bottles, some carried two water bottles on their belts and two on their pack, and four magazine pouches. Some carried bum packs, some didn't, you know?...I think on the first operation you went on you went dressed properly....And after that one you seemed to adapt everything to suit yourself and that was what it was about, because you're only good if you're comfortable.²⁷

Although many New Zealanders added individual touches to their uniforms, one ex-infantry officer insisted that the men in his company wore their uniforms correctly as a matter of discipline. 'I know some of the earlier companies abandoned their jungle hats and wore sweat rags around their foreheads. Ours tried to and were brought back to the common line. I had a soldier who insisted on having his sleeves rolled up. We had a personal tussle once and the end result was he wore it with his sleeves rolled down.'²⁸ Sleeves rolled up in the bush evidently had the effect that pale arms 'stood out like dog's balls.'²⁹ Nigel Martin could not personally see the point of doing up the buttons on his uniform pockets, until he got to Vietnam and discovered how important it was that equipment such as maps and his compass did not fall out and disappear.³⁰

One ex-infantry officer recalls that '[The troops] had their own little sort of dress idiosyncrasies and it might be reflected in the hats, from what I can recall....[and] there was a sweat sort of scarf which they had that you sort of wiped your face with.' He feels that this was a reflection of the men's attempts to stand out as New Zealand soldiers, as distinct from the Australians and the Americans.³¹ U.S. troops usually wore steel helmets, but the Australians would often wear their version of the soft bush hat. Bill Peachey remembers, 'We just had ...jungle hats, the floppy hats, or no hats at all. Sweat bands which we were told never to wear, 'cos the local, the Vietnamese used to wear them. But a lot of them, you know what Kiwis are like, they wore them.'³² Steel helmets were not often worn by New Zealanders, basically because 'nobody wanted to carry them because they're too bloody heavy', although they were worn in American support bases, as required by U.S. regulations.³³ Allan Grayling did not wear his helmet and flak jacket because he felt that it was easier to work without them. He wore instead a sweat rag around his head, and carried 'a couple of bandoliers of machine gun ammunition', considering that this looked more appropriately 'cowboyish' and cavalier.³⁴ Gordon Dalziel believes that as soldiers in Vietnam, 'you [had] to look the part from time to time....You had to look aggressive. It was part of the psyche, I guess.'³⁵

RinC, or two or three days 'off' from the war, normally taken at Vung Tau, appears to have provided an opportunity to display one's sartorial preferences. Gerald Southon remembers that he and his friends would wear love beads, flower leis and

peace signs, the height of youthful fashion at the time, with their civilian clothes when on leave (see Appendix G, Photograph 7). However, ‘They tried to stop us wearing those, eh, the Aussies did....[they] reckoned it was out of uniform even though we were in civvies....And [our Captain] is a very switched on person and he said “Look”, he said, “That is the Maori way, a lei of flowers”, and we were allowed to wear it, and we used to give the old MPs rark-ups, eh!’³⁶

Among the Australians Peter Earsman worked with, there was ‘no dressing up.’ However the Americans he observed ‘tended to dress up a little. Saw one soldier with twin pearl-handled, chromium-plated Colt 45s in tooled leather holsters tied to each thigh. Wyatt Earp, eat your heart out.’³⁷ Many American units had a more flexible standard of dress than did the New Zealanders and the Australians, and personal expression appears to have been much better tolerated by U.S. military authorities. The requirement to wear steel helmets and flak jackets was enforced, many U.S. soldiers treating these items of clothing as a platform on which to display their personal attitudes and beliefs. Michael Herr, war correspondent and author of the acclaimed book *Dispatches*, writes of a soldier he met, ‘On the back of his flak jacket he had once written, *Yea, though I walk through the Valley of the Shadow of Death I shall fear no Evil, because I’m the meanest motherfucker in the Valley*, but he had tried later, without much success, to scrub it off because, he explained, every damn dude in the DMZ had that written on their flak jackets.’ Herr also describes some of the other personal messages he observed. ‘On their

helmets and flak jackets they'd written the names of old operations, of girlfriends, of their war names (*Far From Fearless, Mickey's Monkey, Avenger V, Short Time Safety Mo*), their fantasies (*Born To Lose, Born To Raise Hell, Born To Kill, Born To Die*), their ongoing information (*Hell Sucks, Time Is On My Side, Just You And Me God - Right?*).³⁸

Black American troops had a unique style and culture, some openly active in the Black Panther movement, which John Moller noticed. '[The Americans] had this sort of culture of their own, you know, loud rock and roll music, bright scarves...[Black troops] had beads hanging around their necks and they had headbands and they looked real, the sort of stuff you see on American movies.'³⁹ Murray Deed also observed that black soldiers 'used to wear their Black Panther berets and all sorts of things and their beads and things.'⁴⁰ One U.S. veteran describes his introduction to this culture as follows:

When we landed, the thing that really struck me, getting out at Bien Hoa, was the appearance of the veterans who were getting ready to leave. I remember a lot of blacks, very tall, they all looked like basket-ball players. They were all wearing very faded jungle fatigues with a lot of headbands, Black-Power jewelry, incredibly faded jungle boots, and they were all giving dap. *Dap* was the Vietnamese word for beautiful, and it was [a complicated way] of shaking hands....There were about ten guys that were giving this ritualized form of greeting....I was just so blown away by these guys, they were so impressive. The most impressive thing, besides the fact that they all looked so physically powerful, was that they all looked so experienced. They all had M-16s slung across their shoulders, and it was like a whole new culture.⁴¹

The language of the Vietnam War was also an integral part of the culture. Peter Hotop considers that ‘Any language expert could probably write a book on this subject.’⁴² Several have, including Linda Reinberg’s *In the Field: the Language of the Vietnam War* (1991), a 273 page dictionary, and Gregory R. Clark’s massive 600-page, expansively titled *Words of the Vietnam War: the Slang, Jargon, Abbreviations, Acronyms, Nomenclature, Nicknames, Pseudonyms, Slogans, Specs, Euphemisms, Double Talk, Chants, and Names and Places of the Era of United States Involvement in Vietnam* (1991). John Moller considers that ‘there was a culture in Vietnam where, which was fostered by the Americans, and that was reflected in the language. You know, you talked about slopes and the Cong and Charlie.’ He also observed that, as in earlier wars, ‘there was that sort of psychological use of language, like if you talked about our enemy being wasted instead of killed. You wouldn’t say he was killed, he was wasted. And that was common amongst troops from all the theatres there....they tried to avoid using direct language in respect of what was happening. They’d say, oh, so-and-so got wasted, or so-and-so bought it. You know, you didn’t say, well, he had his bloody legs blown off, you said he bought it, he bought a mine or something like that.’⁴³

New Zealanders in Vietnam do appear to have picked up and implemented some of the vocabulary used by the Americans and Australians with whom they worked, although evidently not to any great or permanent degree.⁴⁴ John Hall believes, ‘We had our own lingo, and that was enough. I don’t think the American stuff came

terribly much our way.’⁴⁵ Gordon Dalziel also remembers that American slang was not generally used by New Zealanders because ‘we had our own special kind of language. The New Zealanders had language that only we would understand.’ He considers that this vocabulary was based on that used by New Zealanders in earlier conflicts, and was more ‘New Zealand Army in general. We had our own [language], especially amongst senior soldiers or guys in that kind of theatre, you know? Like it took guys, like coming in from raw recruits out on the streets, after their training...eventually they’ll learn the language and it’s a whole different language.’⁴⁶ John Treanor believes that every war develops its own colloquialisms and recalls that much of the vocabulary used in Malaya had British origins, and that the New Zealanders continued using this language in Vietnam.⁴⁷

One ex-infantry officer remembers, ‘We had a patois, but it wasn’t uniquely military except for some vocabulary. The patois was, “Hey boss?” “Yeah boy?” “I needs a new shirt.” “What for?” “Well this one is broke, eh?” And you could be certain that the damn thing was disintegrated. It wasn’t ripped, she was broke, eh? But that’s almost an East Coast New Zealand patois, isn’t it?...you ended up not speaking in English, you spoke entirely in patois.’ He notes that ‘some of our soldiers weren’t exactly Einsteins. For some of them, that *was* their language. And I guess what happened, I *guess* it, but I think language just reached its lowest common denominator because it was important that people understood what was going to happen, what was happening.’⁴⁸

It is clear that the language used by New Zealanders in Vietnam did reflect the vocabularies of the other western allies, at least to a certain degree. Peter Hotop recalls, as does Ted Brooker,⁴⁹ that ‘you quickly pick up the slang and expressions of those you work closely with, ie. the Australians and Americans, even if only to make yourself more easily understood.’⁵⁰ Des Sluce considers that the phrase, ‘A past history is the place where you use a different language’, is particularly relevant to Vietnam. He recalls, ‘The idiom became argot. We used a mixture of US military terminology, VN common terms, medical terminology and our own NZ military/civilian terms.’⁵¹ For example, Ken Treanor remembers:

One adopted several phrases eg. “No. 1” meant good, “No. 10” meant very bad. “He is a No. 10 person” meant that he was no good at all. The VC in the phonetic alphabet, used in military radio procedure, was Victor Charlie which was quickly corrupted to just plain “Charlie”. “Getting short” meant that the 12 month stint was coming to an end. “Cheap Charlie” was a stingy person usually addressed to a Kiwi or an Australian whose spending habits were invariably compared to the more affluent US soldier or civilian. “Gook” was another term for the VC. “Nam” was a corruption of Vietnam. “Round eyes” non Asian.⁵²

Tom Palmer used the same or similar words and phrases, except he can also remember calling the Americans ‘Goddams’.⁵³ Murray Deed observed that the American ‘in-country’ language was everywhere, and ‘if you went to the PX,⁵⁴ most of their cigarette lighters, the Zippo lighters, had all the American sayings on them.’⁵⁵ For example:

Soc Trang 68-69
 We are the unwilling
 Led by the unqualified

Doing the unnecessary
For the ungrateful.

[and]

Qui Nhon 68-69
Ours is not
To do or die
Ours is to smoke
And stay high.⁵⁶

In relation to using the American vocabulary, Fred Barclay suggests that some New Zealand soldiers may have been more impressionable than others. 'There were slang words that were peculiar to Vietnam and you picked up, I mean you used some of the Vietnamese phrases...but your day to day language didn't alter. But I was dealing with...a group of people who were perhaps...three years older than perhaps in a rifle company, and two or three years in a young man's life sort of makes quite a difference.'⁵⁷

Soldiers have never been known for their decorous language and although some New Zealanders resisted the temptation to swear,⁵⁸ most appear to have continued this tradition by happily turning the air in Vietnam blue. 'Bill M' recalls that 'the language was pretty strong [but] that was just part of the language. That was part of the Queen's English.'⁵⁹ Colin Whyte considers that the Americans were partly to blame for the New Zealanders' bad language, because 'Americans are the most foul-mouthed people in the world...[and] some of their terms are actually revolting and everyone uses them from the officers down. Well, I noticed a lot of our boys

were slipping into using these terms...but I made a conscious effort not to fall to that level.' He feels that some of the younger New Zealanders admired the Americans and consequently copied their language and mannerisms.⁶⁰ Bill Peachey recalls, 'we used motherfucker a lot, just 'cos, you know, typical Kiwi likes to imitate everybody',⁶¹ and, to Allan Grayling at the time, 'everything was a Goddamn motherfucker ...It's like a lot of the young kids now use about nine out of every ten words is a swear word, just to be in the right group. It was, I guess, a type of peer pressure.'⁶² Peer pressure or not, Gordon Dalziel was once accused by the commanding officer of his company of being 'the only guy who can ever put five fucks in a sentence and make it make sense.'⁶³

John Pointon considers that the high frequency of swearing was because 'you associated with everyone else and those sort of words were used very commonly.' He also feels that bad language was more commonly used by field troops, particularly when they were on leave and drunk. 'They were pretty horrendous. And if you were offended by somebody swearing at you, and you arrested everyone that swore at you, you'd have very few people on leave.'⁶⁴ John Treanor personally did not, and could not, swear much in Vietnam because one of his main tasks was communicating on the radio and 'If you get caught swearing on the radio you get the boot.'⁶⁵ Jargon for military equipment and practices, particularly that used over the radio, was very frequently used.⁶⁶ John Pointon recalls that this jargon deliberately 'avoided the use of words, in fact. You know, 10-2 you were going

somewhere, and 10-4 you'd been there and all this sort of thing....So they became a slang and a language within themselves that only the guys in the vehicles and the guys listening could understand.'⁶⁷ Peter Hotop considers that the jargon was particularly noticeable in radio communications 'where we adopted many of the short cuts used by U.S. forces, much to the dismay of the traditionalists.'⁶⁸

For the New Zealanders, very little talking was allowed during operations, and 'most communication was by whistle or hand signals.'⁶⁹ Bill Peachey recalls, 'You didn't talk much in the field, really, unless you were down sitting next to your mate and you were whispering and that',⁷⁰ and Hardie Martin remembers that swearing was greatly reduced on operations because it was 'pretty hard to swear in sign language.'⁷¹ Fred Barclay considered it wise not to allow men to talk on patrol because they 'start giggling, they start telling lies to one another, and they're not doing what you want them to do.'⁷² John Moller remembers 'guys coming back off an operation and they'd be sitting in the mess and they'd be *talking like this to each other* [whispering], and all of a sudden you'd realise you were in Nui Dat and say, what the hell am I talking like this for!'⁷³

It appears almost universal in Vietnam that people joked to relieve the stresses of their environment.⁷⁴ For Des Sluce, if one didn't laugh, 'you would cry a lot.'⁷⁵

Similarly, Bill Peachey recalls that people laughed to 'Stop them feeling, you know, stop them crying or something.'⁷⁶ For example, John Treanor was unable to resist, during a lull in a particularly intense and nerve-racking contact, yelling out 'HALF

TIME, CHANGE SIDES!', which was not appreciated at the time, but laughed about later.⁷⁷ Before one particular operation, 'Bill M's' platoon commander was in the middle of giving his team a serious talk regarding the forthcoming dangers and how careful his men would need to be, when one man spoke up and said that he would not be able to go on the operation because he had told his mother before he left for Vietnam that 'I wouldn't do things like that.' 'Bill M' recalls, 'Well, the whole bloody platoon just about killed themselves laughing, you know? Even [the officer] laughed. It was just a way of making a joke out of something serious.'⁷⁸

The wildlife in Vietnam appears to have been responsible for some incidents which were considered wildly amusing, at least in retrospect. One night John Moller's platoon went on alert when the security around their position was breached, his men firing the machine gun in front of their position for several minutes. The next morning they discovered a 'very big dead armadillo that had fallen in the machine gun pit.' The following night there was a further alert, and 'there was this awful bloody screaming. It sounded like a person that was terribly wounded and it just went on and on and on and on and it was pitch black, you couldn't see your own hand in front of your face. In the morning everyone was sort of still awake all night with bloody eyes like saucers. When the sun came up there was this great big deer on the bloody wire, a big deer that got shot and of course they squeal a lot.' As the animal was clearly dead, the men decided to convert it to venison stew and eat it. The deer claimed its revenge when every man subsequently suffered severe and

painful diarrhoea.⁷⁹ In a similar situation, Nigel Martin can remember having a panicked but whispered debate with a team mate one night while on listening patrol, regarding whether or not something or someone was creeping up on them. They decided to err on the side of caution, fired their complete arsenal of weapons including the M60 machine gun and claymores, and rapidly withdrew. They returned the next morning to discover some very vicious-looking but dead chickens in front of their position.⁸⁰ Terry Findlay's team was badly shaken one day when a large wild pig crashed its way onto their track. He recalls, 'I just about filled me pants on that one, I can assure you.'⁸¹

But encounters with animals were not always terrifying. Murray Deed's company had a mascot in Vietnam, a blue heeler dog named Bacardi, which was a great source of amusement. It apparently considered itself to be human, would become drunk on bacardi and coke (hence its name), and would suffer debilitating hangovers the next morning, holding its paws over its head and drinking gallons of water. When the company completed its tour in Vietnam and flew back to Singapore, Bacardi was 'pumped full of valium' and hidden under a seat, to be marched off the plane in resplendent style wearing a tracker dog harness, considered to be state-of-the-art dogwear at the time.⁸²

The surreal and the absurd were also often considered 'good for a laugh', as Ken Treanor discovered. 'During the visit of the Prime Minister, Keith Holyoake in 1969, the local Vietnamese authorities had lined the route from the airport to the

hospital with scouts and guides. They had supplied them with flags of both nations, but as I drove past the lines of children I saw that the NZ flags had been fixed to the staffs upside down, which of course is the international signal for distress!’⁸³

Military intelligence was at times considered to be a contradiction in terms, as experienced by Colin Whyte when he was clearing some bush one day. He looked up to see an American helicopter landing near him, ‘and out pops this American major in his dress uniform and I looked and the floor of this helicopter was covered with maps laying all over the place, and he came up and he saluted me and said Major So-and-So, American Intelligence, can you show us where we are?’⁸⁴ Peter Hotop recalls the time when the task force commander visited his company when all three platoons were out on patrol. ‘He asked to see round the perimeter and didn’t realise that the sentries he saw were all the same people - the CSM [Company Sergeant-Major] was quietly shuffling them ahead of the Commander as he moved from one vacant platoon area to another.’⁸⁵ Des Sluce can remember one ludicrous incident which reduced him to tears of hysterical laughter when he and a team mate were returning to their compound one day:

[We] were told to wait up the road at a Montagnard Camp because the hill that we lived on was under attack. Very relieved that we were not there. Eventually word via radio that if we drove fast they would make sure the gate to the compound would be opened as we crossed the causeway. Very fast drive of two miles then a superb right turn and across the causeway to the locked gates. Sounds of rockets and mortars from the VC and rifle shots from the ever-hopeful Regional Force and Popular Force soldiers. Enemy way out of range of rifles. We looked at each other and simultaneously said, “Bloody bastards!” Much shouting at the defensive positions of the RF and PF. Much waving of hands and non-compliance of our understandable request

for entrance to a doubtful refuge. We chuckled, tittered and finally roared at the absurd situation of us driving furiously into danger. Very casually a PF soldier rides up on his little Honda motorcycle and yells to be let in. More waving of hands by his compatriots. Takes his ignition key and unlocks the padlock on the gate. Wipe tears of laughter away and proceed to our bunkers. We both agreed that security in a war zone was an illusion.⁸⁶

John Pointon recalls that people became blasé about the unpleasant realities of being in a war zone, it becoming 'easy to make jokes of other people's misfortunes.'⁸⁷

Richard Cairns recalls that 'guys who were wounded who subsequently came back onto operations, yeah, they were the butt of a lot of jokes. But again I think that's human nature, I guess that's the collective psychological response to...an involvement in dangerous-type operations where the occupational hazard is someone's going to get killed or badly hurt. When guys were hurt everybody was seriously concerned about it. The moment they found out that it wasn't life-threatening, that they were going to be back on the job, then the jokes would start. But I think that again is symptomatic of soldiering and warfare.' Cairns remembers that he personally did not always find such jokes particularly amusing.⁸⁸ Dave Douglas recalls that joking was often deliberately used during frightening or very unpleasant situations, such as those involving dead and mangled bodies, as a way to get newer members of the team to feel comfortable with their environment.⁸⁹

Peter Earsman recalls an unfortunate episode which happened to one of his team mates who was:

unlucky enough to get an attack of piles severe enough to warrant surgery. He was put in a bed in 7th Field Hospital [Saigon]....He was

surrounded by US soldiers wounded in combat. Some had horrendous facial or chest wounds, some had limbs missing, all were badly injured. A US soldier in the next bed asked my friend what his wounds were. At first my friend mumbled something unintelligibly, but that didn't work, the US soldier persisted. You can imagine how my friend felt. Surrounded by seriously wounded soldiers, and here he was with piles! He decided the smart thing to do was to dress up the truth a bit. "Shot in the arse", he said finally. The US soldier enquired why there were no bandages. With a flash of inspiration my friend replied, "*In the arse mate, in the arse*". He became an instant celebrity.

Earsman was also in Saigon during the Tet offensive of 1968. He was one of a crowd on the roof of his building watching the airbase being rocketed. He noticed 'a NZ soldier, dressed up in his "dacrons" [dress uniform], saying something to himself as he watched the fireworks display. I moved closer and he was saying "fuck...fuck...fuck" over and over. It seemed that he was packed and due to fly back to NZ that morning. Fat chance. We all thought it was hilarious at the time.'⁹⁰

'Steve D' can recall the time when a Sergeant from his company, a 'real hairy bugger', lit a fire using white spirits but unfortunately did not stand back far enough, with the result that 'he lights the fire and BOOM, he goes up. We laughed at him and of course we didn't say get down and roll, and he was doing the haka-boogie. But eventually one of us went over and tipped him up and rolled him in all these prickles and that. We thought this was shit-hot. But then he got dusted off to Vung Tau and he had three or four days RinC down there and that pissed us off.'⁹¹

The individual quirks of some officers were also a source of amusement for troops.

One ex-gunner recalls an episode in the field when one patrol was trying to locate

another. The Australian Major in charge 'told them by radio to listen for the monkey noises, and proceeded to scream and babble at the top of his lungs in an incredible monkey impersonation that went on for several minutes. The CSM loyally told us to shut up when we began grumbling, and said that he had heard plenty of monkeys that sounded exactly like that. Our Vietnamese interpreter...said to me, "Maybe in Malaya monkeys sound like that, but no fucking monkey in Vietnam does".'⁹²

The 'funny incident' most common to New Zealand soldiers, particularly those based at Nui Dat, appears to have involved someone inadvertently or deliberately blowing up the latrines during the sanitising procedure,⁹³ as colourfully related by Dave Orbell:

[The hygiene orderly] used to fly-bomb the bloody shithouses every morning, you see, and they were just like a chook shed, that's all it was, mesh and all these dunnies in a row, and he'd been on the piss the night before and he went into the old ammo bunker and grabbed what he thought was [a] smoke [grenade], you see. What he didn't know was he'd grabbed white phosphorous. So he lined up all the shithouse seats, he had his own method...and he popped them, dropped them in, flipped the lids and walked out. And well, Holy Christ, when it went off the whole bloody hut come up off the ground and there was shit blown out through the mesh, stuck on all the corrugated iron, and we're talking 30 degrees heat here, we're talking real hot weather and no frigging rain. And he shit himself. He just got out boy, and it went.⁹⁴

For another veteran, this type of incident was even more amusing when the latrines were occupied by Australians at the time.⁹⁵

However, one veteran, an officer in Vietnam, recalls that he did not laugh very much at all during his tour because 'The whole thing was sad.' He in fact felt angry when his patrol came across a skeleton in the bush when setting up an ambush, and one of his men placed the skull on an upright stick as a joke. Subsequently, 'in the middle of the night, the night was rent with this enormous scream and clearly what had happened was some Vietcong had come down the track, and with their little oil lamp perhaps, and found themselves confronted by this skull and had whistled off in the opposite direction away from the ambush.' Although he personally found little to laugh at in Vietnam, he believes that black humour was useful insulation against the more horrible aspects of war. 'I have this theory that if you're laughing, it's a bit like sneezing, you can't sneeze with your eyes open. Well, you can't be afraid when you're laughing. And that being the case, if the only humour you've got is black humour, then it's better to encourage it than to crush it. It's a protective bit of machinery.'⁹⁶ Similarly, Peter Hotop suspects that 'black humour develops as a counter to the reality of combat - a way of releasing tension among confederates, even if we didn't realise it at the time.'⁹⁷ Tom Palmer considers that 'All medics develop a "black" sense of humour, even during peace time. It goes with the territory. Otherwise you don't survive/keep sane.'⁹⁸ One ex-NCO remembers that people would 'sort of make jokes and insulate yourself from what's going on...you had to have a sense of humour [or] you wouldn't have made it, there's no doubt about that.'⁹⁹ As far as Bruce Liddall is concerned, 'When soldiers are together and something goes wrong, there's some sort of humour.'¹⁰⁰

One ex-infantryman, for example, can remember an incident which caused considerable amusement when a team mate was told to shoot a very badly wounded enemy soldier through the heart. The team mate, who had evidently spent much of his tour in Vietnam recounting his prowess as a consummate and highly experienced deer and pig hunter in civilian life, shot the wounded man in the right side of his chest, leaving him still alive.¹⁰¹ Another veteran can recall 'Frequent jocular conversation about grisly injuries suffered by enemy dead, eg. the VC who had been shot through the head and who ended up in a sitting position against a tree with the top of his skull gone, his brain sitting in the cavity like as though in an egg cup and both eyeballs hanging out.' His unit had 'adopted' a dog which would 'wander into the position across the perimeter minefield from time to time. We dubbed him "shithead" and he was well treated whenever he called, but one day he trod on a mine on the way back out and was killed. The reaction from the [unit] was a spontaneous cheer and the death was treated as a great joke.' This veteran, who at times worked in the field with Australian units, also remembers that any enemy bodies they encountered were supposed to be buried, but usually were not. On one occasion the company commander insisted that this be done and the man who was given the job 'dug a hole, complaining bitterly, then dragged the dead man over to it, only to discover that the hole wasn't long enough. Rather than dig any more, he took his machete and chopped the VCs legs off at the knees and buried the man with his legs thrown in onto his chest.' The grave-digger, a Scotsman conscripted into the Australian Army, was considered by his team mates to be a 'genuine

psychopath', although his actions that day evidently caused 'much mirth at the time and whenever the story was told afterwards.'¹⁰²

Alan Grayling 'laughed at virtually anything. There were some horrific things when I look back on it but at the same time I thought they were jokes.' He can remember an episode when he and several friends went on a 'banana-picking patrol' some miles from their base, during which they were almost discovered by a Vietcong patrol and had to hide in bushes at the side of the track. They were so close that one of the Vietcong urinated on Grayling's friend. When they finally returned to their base, they discovered that the fruit they had risked their lives for were seed bananas and inedible. Grayling laughed about the episode at the time, but feels that the stress of the incident has had a long-term and detrimental effect on his health.¹⁰³ The Vietcong also appear to have had a sense of humour, which was discovered by Nigel Martin and his section. They were returning from a patrol to an area through which they had passed several days earlier and where they had discovered a store of rice, which they had destroyed. On the return journey, they encountered a large piece of paper nailed to a tree on which was written a message, in English, stating in effect that if New Zealand soldiers continued to blow up Vietcong stores, the stores would be booby-trapped in future.¹⁰⁴

Due to the shortage of resources provided for New Zealand teams in Vietnam, some veterans recall that they had to resort to 'scrounging', trading, or stealing the equipment they needed, dealing either directly with the allies or, on occasion,

through the thriving black market.¹⁰⁵ One veteran, who had to resort to stealing essential equipment, considers, 'It wasn't thieving at all, it was survival',¹⁰⁶ and another, an ex-senior 1NZSMT officer, remembers that the team was not given much practical or material support at all by the New Zealand Government. 'What disappointed me was when I went there, I was introduced to a guy who was the unit scrounger and it was his job to go round the American units and see what he could pick up that we might use including food and all that sort of thing. And essentially we lived off the cast-offs from the American messes.'¹⁰⁷ Another 1NZSMT veteran also believes that 'we were maintained and sustained, possibly unofficially, by the Yanks',¹⁰⁸ as does an NCO in the same team who recalls, 'the [New Zealand Government] wasn't the most brilliant at looking after us....They cut our allowances and really, we had to use the Americans to sort of survive.'¹⁰⁹ Tom Palmer remembers, 'It was the NZers who went out and scrounged the rations. There was no lines of supply for the Med team. If you didn't beg, borrow/steal from the surrounding bases, you starved. The armchair warriors in Wellington gave us an extra \$1US per day to buy our food from the local economy. There wasn't any. The locals were generally starving. Living off the local US Army rubbish dump. This was also true for the majority of our daily /weekly/monthly needs - scrounge or trade it off the Yanks. Thank God they were generous!' Palmer also recalls being unimpressed on arrival in Vietnam with the fact that 'someone in NZ, obviously with lofty ideals about the Red Cross and Geneva convention, decided that our sole armament would consist of a 9mm Browning semi-automatic pistol, each. Wrong!

On arrival in-country, [we] discovered there was no 9mm ammunition available at our location. 9mm pistols were withdrawn and Colt 45s issued...We also “acquired” flak jackets, new US issue steel helmets and US jungle combat boots. After that we were then more confident that we could survive.’¹¹⁰

Murray Deed, who considers, ‘we’re a nation of traders, New Zealanders, and scroungers, and we’d swap anything’, remembers that ‘we used to do a lot of bartering and trading with the rations, which was highly illegal of course, but we used to barter with them. We used to get all sorts of...rubbish we never ever used, plastic potatoes [potato flakes]....So we used to get, trade a lot of things with the locals and get fresh supplies for when the guys came back in.’¹¹¹ Bill Peachey also recalls that much of the equipment used by his company came from the Australians and the Americans. The company Quartermaster evidently acquired most of this extra equipment, ‘but I don’t think he stole it. He just begged for it, type of thing. A few beers and they gave it to him....we just asked our CQ and he got it for us.’¹¹² John Treanor remembers that it was relatively easy to trade for equipment. ‘Some of the Americans might...take a fancy to...some of our gear so, you know, it was an immediate trade-off.’¹¹³ The New Zealanders’ green berets were particularly popular with the Americans because they were almost identical to the berets worn by U.S. Special Forces, otherwise known as the Green Berets. Dave Douglas recalls, ‘And the amount of trading we done with the green berets for American gear! It’s unbelievable, some of the deals that were done. These guys are ready to fly in

Landrovers, boxes and boxes of clothes, you name it, just for a green beret.' The result of this was that 'most of us were equipped out with American uniforms. They were a far better uniform, they were far superior to the...bloody gear we had. The only best thing that we had were our boots.' He also considers that the rifles which the New Zealanders were accustomed to using were superior to the American M16s, but 'we weren't allowed them up there. You had to have bloody, what the Aussies had or what the Americans had.'¹¹⁴ As a medic, Colin Whyte was often unable to obtain the medical supplies normally used by the New Zealanders, but was usually able to substitute with the products used by the Americans and Australians.

'Everyone scrounged over there but...I don't think I really had to, no, I don't think I really had to scrounge. I mean I'd get things from the Americans because they'd offer them, they were very generous people, extremely generous people, and I'd get what I could off the Aussies.' He was once offered cartons of morphine for medical use and to supplement the meagre New Zealand supply by American medics at the U.S. Coast Guard at Dat Do, which he declined.¹¹⁵

John Treanor recalls that when the required clothing or equipment was not available, it was often 'pinched', which is why the New Zealand Army was also known as 'The Hydraulics', as in able to lift anything. 'If you knew somebody that had some gear that you wanted, you'd invite them for a night for a barbecue and send them home with just enough to get them home with enough decency. You know, they were normally lying in the prone position at that stage with probably

just a pair of shorts on....they'd be drunk and didn't know half their gear was taken off them.' John Treanor himself had his prized collection of military head gear stolen, but this did not surprise him, aware as he was that 'There's no honour amongst thieves.'¹¹⁶ Although alcohol was not officially considered to be essential to the maintenance and performance of New Zealand soldiers in Vietnam, it was nevertheless stolen on occasion, evidently because it could be. 'They used to have booze just down the line [from Nui Dat]....And it was American booze you see and they had all security guards round it. Well, we'd been pinching their booze for about, oh, what, for about six months, eh, when we were in camp. And I had about, oh, 30 or 40 cartons stacked in an old...bunker outside me tent, you know? And oh, it was lovely, just go out any time. And...[some friends] went down and got caught by these Yanks, and I lost the lot, everything!'¹¹⁷

For most allied troops, language and style of dress as personal expression were both part of the 'combat culture' of Vietnam. Music was also an integral part of a tour of duty there. British war correspondent Tim Page writes, 'No book on the style of the Vietnam War would be complete without a look at the sounds that pervaded the airwaves....Life was tuned to the tempo of the war, and the whole theatre was high on the riff....Armed Forces Radio Vietnam, later to incorporate a television channel, was the voice you carried illicitly into the field, or else tuned into at the bar.'¹¹⁸ Armed Forces Radio Vietnam, commonly referred to by most allied troops as AFVN,¹¹⁹ featured 24 hour AM and FM broadcasting and syndicated shows such

as *Wolfman Jack*, as well as music recently released in the U.S. including rock, country, soul, pop, and easy listening. Requested constantly were 'Porter Waggoner's "Green Green Grass of Home", Simon and Garfunkel's "Homeward Bound", Bobby Bare's "Detroit City" (with its opening line "I wanna go home"), and Peter, Paul and Mary's "Leaving on a Jetplane".'¹²⁰

Many New Zealand troops also listened to AFVN, as well as the Australian Forces radio station, which played more of the type of music popular in New Zealand and Australia at the time, such as British artists and country and western.¹²¹ Access to music was easy, and Bill Peachey remembers that 'Everybody had transistors. Little pocket ones with the ear, the ear things in, yeah. Everybody carried them.'¹²² John Moller recalls, 'Occasionally troops were a bit naughty and took little transistor radios on patrol and when they went on sentry they put a plug in the ear, I mean you didn't play the things loud, and listened to a bit of music, but generally speaking that was frowned upon because it took your mind off what you were supposed to be doing.'¹²³ One veteran recalls that he and his team mates did not use their transistor radios on operations at all because they were too busy listening for the enemy, and it would have compromised their performance.¹²⁴ John Pointon remembers that the 'most requested song on Australian Forces Radio, broadcasting out of the Vung Tau airbase, was probably "Green Green Grass of Home". The Americans' one was probably... "The Ballad of the Green Berets", and things like that. The ones you see on the likes of *China Beach* and so forth, they were the sort

of music that was listened to.’¹²⁵ For Hardie Martin, the soundtrack from the television series *Tour of Duty* epitomises the music he enjoyed in Vietnam.¹²⁶ The song, ‘Green Green Grass of Home’, was clearly very popular with New Zealanders in Vietnam,¹²⁷ although it made Tom Palmer feel physically sick whenever he heard it.¹²⁸ Gordon Dalziel recalls why it was so popular:

At the end of our tour, Victor 1, because we’d made such a hell of an impression, General Westmoreland, when we were pulling out, he ordered a flight of F100s,¹²⁹ fighters, to come over our base just as we were getting in our choppers to fly out to Vung Tau to fly back to Terendak to prepare to come home after our first trip. The F100s come and done a victory roll over us and then they sent a chopper out playing that...song, “The Green Grass of Home”. And from that, that’s when it become more or less the swan song of all New Zealand...Vietnam vets.¹³⁰

Other songs had more personal meaning for some veterans. One man who had to leave a dearly loved 18 month old daughter in Singapore when he went to Vietnam recalls a song called ‘A Little Ray of Sunshine’, which ‘used to touch all the father’s hearts in Vietnam’, and which was played endlessly by the Australian Forces radio station.¹³¹ ‘Bob P’ remembers that the song ‘The Great Pretender’ was very popular with soldiers who had served time in jail in Vung Tau. They would write in to the radio station after they had been released and request that it be played for the detention wardens who worked there.¹³²

U.S. magazine *The Veteran* describes the type of music popular with American soldiers in Vietnam as ‘frag-rock’, citing such songs as Country Joe McDonald’s ‘I-Feel-Like- I’m-Fixing-To-Die Rag’ and Myra McPherson’s ‘Long Time Passing’ as

anti-war songs which combined anti-war politics with counter-culture, and which 'built a bridge between soldiers in Nam and the anti-war civilians at home who were rocking out in their army fatigues.'¹³³ While New Zealand soldiers in Vietnam certainly enjoyed and remember the music they heard there, they do not appear to have been particularly influenced by the antiwar sentiment of many of the songs, and preferred to take or make their own music (see Appendix G, Photograph 8).¹³⁴

'Matt G' remembers:

you always had the Kiwis who took their own songs over there anyway, so it didn't really matter....People were always writing home for people to tape this song and tape that song and send over some tapes with New Zealand songs on them or whatever....You used to get some guys with, they had songs, Maori songs and all that stuff taped and sent over and of course everybody'd be gathered round, oh, shit, we have to learn the words to that song before we go out. So about two o'clock in the morning you had about 33 drunken soldiers all singing this bloody song with about five flat guitars. Oh, it sounded great then.¹³⁵

Peter Hotop recalls that company barbecues 'always ended up with an evening in our Other Ranks Mess as we had our own built-in Maori concert party - W Company were great singers',¹³⁶ and John Treanor remembers the consistent popularity of New Zealand 'party songs' such as 'The Last Waltz' and 'Ten Guitars',¹³⁷ which was considered by some to be the Maori national anthem in Vietnam.¹³⁸ The New Zealanders also maintained a formal Maori Haka Party while in Vietnam which performed with great success at various concerts for New Zealand, Australian and U.S. troops.

Unlike soldiers in earlier wars, and because of ready access by most to radios, tape recorders, stereos, and visiting entertainers performing the latest popular songs, troops in Vietnam did not need to write their own songs as a method of expressing how they felt about their predicament. They nevertheless did, and produced a considerable amount of usually rude and derogatory material focusing on the perceived deficiencies of the military, the political *raison d'être* for being in Vietnam, and specific roles within the military hierarchy such as rear-echelon staff, high-ranking officers, and military police.¹³⁹ Many new lyrics were sung to old tunes. Possibly the most well-known New Zealand song of this genre is 'Bar Girl's Ballad' sung to the tune of 'This Old Man'. *Uc Dai Loy* (meaning big red rat, which was how the Vietnamese viewed the kangaroo displayed on some Australian equipment) is the Vietnamese word for Australian. The lyrics of one version are as follows:

*Uc Dai Loy cheap Charlie
He won't buy me Saigon tea.
Saigon tea costs many many P
Uc Dai Loy cheap Charlie*

*Tan Tay Lan number one
He go AWOL just for fun.
Saigon tea costs many many P
Uc Dai Loy cheap Charlie.¹⁴⁰*

When sung by the Australians, the lyrics were usually rearranged so that the New Zealanders were the cheap Charlies. There is also evidence that New Zealanders in Vietnam resurrected the lyrics of songs from earlier wars. Les Cleveland, New

Zealand veteran of the Second World War, author and folklore expert, describes a version of a song titled 'Saigon Warrior' popular among New Zealanders and Australians in Vietnam in which the lyrics of an Anzac song from the Second World War appear. The words have been adapted to fit the Vietnam theatre but are based on the following lyrics:

Oh they say that Waiouru's a wonderful place,
 But the organisation's a fucking disgrace;
 There's bombardiers, sergeants and staff sergeants too,
 With their hands in their pockets and fuck-all to do;

And out on the bullring they yell and they shout;
 They scream about things they know fuck-all about,
 And for all that I learned there I might as well be
 A-shovelling up shit on the Isle of Capri.¹⁴¹

Regardless of which war the lyrics relate to, they refer to the perceived inadequacies of staff and training methods in military camps and reflect the traditional dissatisfaction with their lot of soldiers everywhere. It is unclear whether songs such as the above were learned by the New Zealanders who served in Vietnam during their training, or were part of the military heritage passed down via their families. In either case, there is the implication that the soldiers' mythology of earlier wars, and the culture which accompanied it, was still evident in New Zealand at the time of Vietnam.

Despite the overwhelming U.S. presence in Vietnam, and the fact that the New Zealand element there was in effect subsumed by the military structures of both the Americans and the Australians, there is clear evidence that New Zealanders went to some lengths to ensure that their own blend of military and civilian culture was not engulfed and that they stood out as New Zealanders. Because of the lack of resources and unsuitability of some New Zealand provisions for conditions in Vietnam, the New Zealanders utilised and adapted a range of allied equipment and kit. The troops themselves considered the effect to have been that of a somewhat 'rag-tag' army, but do not appear to have been overly concerned at this, the overall aim being comfort and practicability. Some troops made a conscious effort to demonstrate their image of what a soldier was supposed to look like. At times some New Zealand officers were required to insist that at least basic military dress codes were observed while troops were working.

New Zealanders also appeared to have essentially maintained their own military and civilian vocabulary in Vietnam, although some commonly used words were adopted, usually to assist communication. Although considerable military jargon appropriate to the combat environment was used, there is no real evidence to suggest that a new and unique language was adopted, developed or maintained by New Zealand troops as it was by the Americans. Swearing, as in all other wars, was ubiquitous and was possibly considered by the troops as part of the military culture and a tradition to be

upheld. It appears that the tradition of New Zealand troops as inveterate traders, scroungers, and thieves was also sustained, although usually as a result of necessity.

Humour was seen as a way of managing or diffusing stress, particularly with regard to inexperienced or younger team members, and of expressing relief after a tense or frightening occurrence. Black humour relating to injury, death or dead bodies was not uncommon and was seen as acceptable by many troops. Such humour appears to have been a product of prolonged and intense exposure to combat and its associated unpleasant sights and experiences. There is also a sense that many troops went out of their way to experience as many 'laughs' and as much enjoyment as they could during their tours, no doubt a response to the possibility that they could be wounded or killed at any time.

Music was also an integral part of a tour of duty of Vietnam, for New Zealanders as well as the other allies, and most New Zealand troops enjoyed the music broadcast via AFVN. However, it appears that when New Zealand troops relaxed they preferred the 'old favourites' from home, which many took with them to Vietnam on tape. New Zealanders more often than not made their own music, singing and accompanying themselves on guitar. Maori songs appear to have been particularly popular. There is also some evidence that traditional soldiers' songs of earlier wars were revived. It is possible that the reminder of home inherent in the music preferred by the New Zealanders was a comfort to them and a buffer against the

danger, tension and threat of physical harm they faced on an almost daily basis in Vietnam.

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- 1 *Eyewitness Nam: Vietnam Style, Riders on the Storm*, Vol. 14 (Wiltshire, 1988), p. i.
 - 2 The thousand yard stare was slang for the 'characteristic, far-away look of the soldier who has been in combat for too long and who has seen too much'. Linda Reinberg, *In the Field: the language of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1991), p. 218.
 - 3 *ibid.*, p. 185.
 - 4 Slang for the U.S. infantryman in Vietnam. *ibid.*, p. 98.
 - 5 Gustav Hasford, *The Short-timers* (New York, 1979), and the film version, *Full Metal Jacket* (1987).
 - 6 See 'Sam B', 4/7/95; Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
 - 7 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
 - 8 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
 - 9 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
 - 10 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
 - 11 ANON, 7/2/96.
 - 12 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
 - 13 John Hall, 4/2/96.
 - 14 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
 - 15 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
 - 16 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
 - 17 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
 - 18 ANON, 28/12/95.
 - 19 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
 - 20 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
 - 21 John Hall, 4/2/96.
 - 22 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
 - 23 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
 - 24 Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
 - 25 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
 - 26 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
 - 27 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
 - 28 ANON, 14/9/95.
 - 29 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
 - 30 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
 - 31 ANON, 29/8/95.
 - 32 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
 - 33 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
 - 34 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
 - 35 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
 - 36 Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
 - 37 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96, p. 3.
 - 38 Michael Herr, *Dispatches* (London, 1968), pp. 65, 75.
 - 39 John Moller, 10/7/95.
 - 40 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
 - 41 Harry Maurer, *Strange Ground: Americans in Vietnam 1945-1975, an Oral History* (New York, 1989), p. 515.
 - 42 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
 - 43 John Moller, 10/7/95.
 - 44 See Bruce Liddall, Mike Perreau, Hardie Martin, 2/3/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
 - 45 John Hall, 4/2/96.
 - 46 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
 - 47 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
 - 48 Interview 23.
 - 49 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
 - 50 Peter Hotop, 7/96. See also ANON, 28/12/95.

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- 51 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
52 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
53 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96. See also Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
54 PX is the abbreviation of Post Exchange, the U.S. military store which sold a wide variety of personal items. Merchandise at the PX was tax-free and, in theory, only sold to American military personnel. Reinberg, p. 175.
55 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
56 From the private collection of Jim Carle.
57 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
58 See Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
59 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
60 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
61 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95
62 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95
63 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95
64 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
65 John Treanor, 1/3/96. See also 'Sam B', 4/7/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95.
66 ANON, 22/4/96.
67 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
68 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
69 ANON, 7/2/96. See also Mike Perreau and ANON, 2/3/96.
70 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95..
71 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
72 Fred Barclay, 21/5/95, p. 5.
73 John Moller, 10/7/97.
74 See ANON, 7/2/96; John Hall, 4/2/96; Allan Grayling; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; 'Bill M', 15/3/95; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
75 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
76 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
77 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
78 'Bill M', 15/3/95.
79 John Moller, 10/7/95. See also 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
80 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
81 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
82 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
83 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
84 Colin Whyte, 2/3/96.
85 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
86 Des Sluce, 17/5/95.
87 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
88 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
89 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
90 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
91 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
92 ANON, 22/4/96.
93 See Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 13/7/96; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; 'Bill M', 15/3/95.
94 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
95 ANON, 7/2/96.
96 ANON, 14/9/95.
97 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
98 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
99 ANON, 28/12/95.
100 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
101 Interview 28/2.
102 ANON, 22/4/96.
103 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
104 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
105 Interview 32.
106 Interview 35.
107 ANON, 3/2/96.
108 ANON, 17/4/96.

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- 109 ANON, 28/12/95.
- 110 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 111 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- 112 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- 113 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 114 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- 115 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
- 116 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 117 Interview 28/4.
- 118 Tim Page, 'Sympathy for the Devil', in *Eyewitness Nam...*, p. 2.
- 119 AFVN was an abbreviation of Armed Forces Vietnam Network. Reinberg, p. 3. The correct name was Armed Forces Radio and Television Service. *Veteran*, 'The tracks of my tears', in *Eyewitness Nam...*, p. 8.
- 120 *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.
- 121 See Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; ANON, 7/2/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; ANON, 28/12/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
- 122 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- 123 John Moller, 10/7/95.
- 124 ANON, 7/2/96.
- 125 John Pointon, 1/3/95. The American song, 'The Ballad of the Green Berets', by Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler (1966), was very popular with US personnel in Vietnam. *China Beach* was a television series (1990) about Americans who worked at a hospital and recreation facility in Vietnam starring Dana Delaney and Marge Helgenberger, which had a soundtrack featuring popular artists from the Vietnam era such as Diana Ross and the Supremes, The Animals, Janis Joplin, Wilson Phillips, Marvin Gaye, and The Rascals.
- 126 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96. See also Dave Douglas, 7/6/95. *Tour of Duty* (1988) told the story of an American infantry company in Vietnam, and, like *China Beach*, also had a soundtrack featuring sixties era 'heavyweights' such as Jimi Hendrix, Grace Slick, Eric Burdon, The Byrds, Scott MacKenzie, Cream, Santana, The Small Faces, and Steppenwolf. Three soundtracks were released to accompany the television series.
- 127 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
- 128 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 129 The F100 was the North American Aviation's bomber, the Super Sabre. Reinberg, p. 84.
- 130 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- 131 ANON, 29/8/95.
- 132 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- 133 *The Veteran*, 'The tracks of my tears', in *Eyewitness Nam...*, pp. 5-6.
- 134 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
- 135 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
- 136 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
- 137 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 138 'Bob P', 30/5/95.
- 139 Les Cleveland, *Dark Laughter: War and Song in Popular Culture* (Westport, CT, 1994), pp. 132, 139.
- 140 Gary Brooker, *Two Lanyards in Vietnam* (North Canterbury, 1995), p. 87. Saigon tea is a non-alcoholic but costly drink which customers were usually required buy for bargirls as part of the pre-service business arrangement. P is an abbreviation of piastre which was the currency used in Vietnam during the war. AWOL is the acronym of absent without leave, or absent without official leave. Reinberg, pp. 14, 167, 191.
- 141 Cleveland, pp. 132-133.

CHAPTER SIX: If I die in a combat zone; fear, faith and fire fights.

Much of the ground war in Vietnam was fought as a series of contacts, defined as 'enemy engagement[s], including firing on or being fired on by the enemy.'¹

Contacts could arise from crossing the enemy's path, a highly probable event as the infantryman's job in Vietnam was to deliberately find and engage enemy forces, or from initiating or walking into an ambush. While soldiers were always prepared for a contact, they often did not know when or where the enemy would appear. In the words of one experienced infantryman, 'I suppose, in some sense, they were hunting for you, or either dodging you, and...vice versa, and sooner or later you must bloody bump into one another.'² When that happened, a contact ensued.

Infantrymen usually went out on operations as a company but often patrolled in platoon or section-sized groups.³ Air and ground support could be requested when necessary but essentially the teams were alone and only in touch with their bases and other teams by radio. There appear to have been three distinct phases to a contact: the period of patrolling, soldiers constantly tense and expectant, before the enemy was sighted and engaged; the actual contact with its speed, noise and violence; and the 'mop-up' phase which included taking care of casualties, reorganisation and refocussing of the team, and resuming the patrol. Not so predictable were the soldiers' individual views toward, and reactions to, the

experience of combat. An ex-officer and platoon commander in Vietnam considers that 'We have an impression that soldiers have...some sort of deep and grandiose sameness, that they're uniform. Well, they're not. They're a whole raft of individuals who are uniform in the margins and there are fellows that I know could treat [combat] quite lightly, who still treat it quite lightly, and there are fellows I know that have real problems today.'⁴

Fear was something experienced by many veterans, particularly while patrolling and at the onset of a contact. Laurie Pilling remembers being frightened and believes that 'anybody who says they weren't is telling a lie.'⁵ 'Bill M' recalls, 'You get scared, you get nervous, but in the end you just keep doing what you have [to] do....you don't think, oh, you know, shit, I'll go home now. You can't do it, that's all',⁶ and in Terry Findlay's experience 'most fellas were frightened at various times over there.'⁷ Gordon Dalziel, on the other hand, remembers that he did not feel any fear 'because of the nature of the role which I played within the section [which] never allowed me to, any time to feel anything but do my job.'⁸ One 1NZSMT veteran does not recall consciously feeling afraid in Vietnam although he did work in the field on occasions with all the dangers associated with that.⁹ 'Matt G' was not nervous before contacts as he had experienced combat before in Malaya, although he did worry about being hit by stray bullets,¹⁰ and an ex- platoon commander can recall feeling no fear before contacts, but did so after them.¹¹

Some men had specific fears. One infantryman was afraid of not seeing home again, although he was not frightened of dying,¹² and Des Sluce was concerned that he would be wounded rather than killed, and return home maimed.¹³ John Hall feared accidental discharges wounding his own men, and the real possibility of killing innocent civilians.¹⁴ 'Bill M' dreaded encountering hazards, human and mechanical, which he could not see. For him, 'Walking into an ambush was really the worst. Walking on a mine. If you walked on it you'd probably never know anyway. But walk into an ambush would be the worst, I suppose. Actually, he seeing you and you haven't seen him, that's the ultimate.'¹⁵ Fred Barclay's personal fear was that Nui Dat base camp might be over-run while he and his men were out on operations, a real possibility. He also believes that 'the biggest fear of everybody was being captured, not being killed...To be captured would be *almost* the worst thing, and to be wounded and captured would be the worst, because ...the Vietnamese are not pleasant people at all, and you would not have survived. You would have taken a long time to die but you just wouldn't have survived.'¹⁶ Helicopter pilot Ted Brooker feared hitting trees during low flying, a common occupational hazard in Vietnam, and also becoming trapped in a 'fire-box'. A 'fire-box' was a formation of machine guns set up on the ground by the enemy. If a pilot flew within the boundaries of the formation it was almost guaranteed that the helicopter would be hit.¹⁷

For many soldiers in Vietnam, mines were feared more than any other weapon.¹⁸

The Vietcong in particular regularly used a wide range of standard and adapted anti-personnel explosive devices.¹⁹ Dave Douglas considered that mines were universally feared by soldiers but he personally did not worry about them, paradoxically perhaps, because he did not know where they were and could not see them.²⁰ Peter Hotop dreaded standing on a mine but tried not to think about the possibility, his philosophy being, 'If your time is up - that's it.'²¹ For Mike Perreau, the most frustrating thing about mines was that 'once a mine went off, or a booby trap went off, you just couldn't do a thing because of the pattern they used to lay them. If it was on a track, you threw yourself off the track, the odds were there were going to be bloody more of them waiting for you.'²² 'Matt G' recalls being dismayed because he had been trained to expect that mines would be laid in a pattern, as prescribed in the Geneva Convention, but discovered that in practice this did not apply in Vietnam as far as the communists were concerned.²³

One ex-NCO had no specific fears but recalls 'a more or less constant state of heightened tension attributable to everything around me, rather than an actual fear of any identifiable thing.' His most frightening experience was thinking that a tactical nuclear weapon had been detonated when aviation fuel exploded not far from him, resulting in a huge blast and fireball. At that moment, he felt 'a fear I've never felt before or since, a sort of absolute dread, a certainty that I was facing something irresistible that was surely going to kill me, either immediately by its

direct effects or slowly by the radiation sickness I knew would get me, because the blast was so close.’²⁴

The possibility of actually being killed in Vietnam does not seem to have bothered a significant number of New Zealand troops,²⁵ an attitude which some believe to be ‘part of the soldier’s psyche. It’s always the other chap that’s going to get killed.’²⁶ The thought of death did not really worry Gordon Dalziel and he remembers that it was not something that came up in general conversation. He believes that issues such as getting killed were ‘all hidden under a general mask’, and that he and the men he served with ‘tried to block out all the evil that was going on around [them] and live each day as it comes.’ He personally considered that his M60 machine gun would protect him because ‘[when] you’re standing there with a weapon, you’re dealing out 800 rounds a minute, no-one’s going to get you.’ However Dalziel recalls that if he was going to die, he intended to ‘go out in a blaze of glory.’²⁷

Terry Findlay remembers, ‘I don’t think you ever had it in your mind that anything was going to happen to you, it was all to someone else.’²⁸ Nigel Martin had a similar attitude. ‘It’s the same as hopping in a car drunk - you’re not going to get caught, somebody else is going to get caught, aren’t they?’²⁹ By the time Victor 5 went to Vietnam, Harry Ellison knew that an average of three men would die from the company, but he assumed that he would not be one of those three.³⁰ Bruce Liddall believes that ‘everyone’s immortal, specially when...you put on a uniform and slip a rifle in somebody’s hands.’³¹ Bill McNeish observed that this was a

common attitude in Vietnam and that such faith in one's immortality was necessary because 'If you go with an attitude that you're going to get shot, you're not going to go there.'³² Allan Grayling never 'gave a thought to not being invincible...nothing could touch me I guess.' He also recalls the popular rumour among New Zealanders which maintained that the Vietcong would 'always walk straight past any New Zealand position and attack an Aussie one first.'³³ He believes that this rumour was borne out by actual events, for example, the severe casualties which the Vietcong inflicted on an Australian unit which had moved into the Horseshoe area immediately after it had been vacated by Victor 3.³⁴

Inevitably, most men became aware at some stage during their tours of the likelihood that they or their team mates would become casualties or possibly die. After being in Vietnam only three weeks and seeing a friend killed and four others wounded in a single contact, Bruce Liddall realised that 'hey, we're in Vietnam, you know, and we're fighting a war. One of our men had been killed.'³⁵ John Treanor remembers that 'always in the back of your mind there was that, you know, that could have been me.'³⁶ However, the discovery that one was not immortal did not necessarily create additional fear or nervousness. 'Andrew B', for example, had considered himself invincible but when he realised he was not, adopted the attitude that 'if it happens to me, it happens,...that's just the luck of the draw', and got on with the job.³⁷ This attitude was typical of many New Zealanders who considered

that they had been trained to do a job as members of the military and were there to do it, no matter what the consequences were.³⁸

As in other wars, professional soldiering skills in Vietnam were often augmented with an element of superstition as well as personal possessions which the owner considered to be lucky. This, in the opinion of one veteran, was 'because of the close shaves, the inexplicable close shaves' which could be experienced in combat.³⁹

Fred Barclay remembers that 'There's a degree of skill and whatever but an awful lot of it's luck and you could call that bad luck and good luck'⁴⁰, and 'Bill M' observed that people had 'different things they carried', and would perform an activity in the same way or order every time, believing that if the outcome had been successful to date, then 'why change a good thing?'⁴¹ Good luck charms ranged from tiki made of greenstone, silver, or plastic, a locket, patron saint medals, and crucifixes, to a cherished bush hat which had seen two tours of Borneo and two of Vietnam, a small bag containing a piece of Christ's shroud, and a soldier's rosary. Most of these tokens had been given to the men by family and many were items which had been carried by family members in earlier wars.⁴²

For some troops, these tokens of luck were extremely valued. Although he did not carry anything for luck himself, 'Andrew B' recalls that some men would 'go loopy' if they had misplaced, for example, photographs of their loved ones, or an item considered to be good luck had been stolen.⁴³ Richard Cairns wore a tiki, which he still has, on his dog tags and can remember 'guys being frantic because

they'd lost their good luck charms, you know, then becoming very very nervous about it.' He observed that 'a lot of superstitions stem from the Maori culture, the Maori influence in our company and ...I guess by a process of osmosis, as you came to know your Maori comrades better, and I guess the more you respected them, the more you actually took on board their superstitious values.'⁴⁴

Dave Douglas was given a taonga by his grandmother to take with him to Vietnam. It had been blessed and he was told to wear it at all times. He also received a blessing from his uncle, a faith-healer, immediately prior to leaving New Zealand. Six or seven of his Pakeha team mates observed the ritual and asked to be blessed as well. Douglas thought it was 'strange to see it coming from a Pakeha...[but] I suppose because I'm a Maori I think it only happens to us. Bullshit. It happens and everybody does the things in their own way. And these guys were quite happy to have it done and, you know, whatever happened, whatever he did, we all come back!' His uncle also gave him a crucifix to wear. To Dave Douglas a crucifix is a symbol of Catholicism and not part of his own Ratana faith, but he wore it anyway and subsequently became involved in fights with other Ratana Maori who did not think he should be displaying a Catholic symbol.⁴⁵ Murray Deed still has a shark's tooth carved with a Buddha bought from local Vietnamese specifically because it was supposed to bring good luck. He also noticed that some men kept something with them which they felt had brought them luck during earlier tours or a specific combat experience.⁴⁶ Bruce Liddall, for example, carried a magazine for the last six

months of his tour with a round in it left over from a particularly harrowing ambush from which he emerged unscathed. He felt safe carrying it and still has it.⁴⁷

Some men had tokens of luck which, although they may not have totally believed in them, they were not willing to dispense with.⁴⁸ At the time 'Bob P' did not consciously think his St Jude medal was 'going to keep me alive or anything, or save me or anything like that', but would never go anywhere without it.⁴⁹ Similarly, Hardie Martin wore a plastic Air New Zealand tiki on his dog tags. He does not know why, as 'it did absolutely nothing for me', but would not get rid of it.⁵⁰ Nigel Martin had a piece of stone which was reputed to have come from a sacred Buddha in Thailand and would deflect bullets, but did in fact part with it when he 'got drunk and gave it away to some sheila.'⁵¹ Some men were considered to be 'lucky' because they were known to have survived previous combat experiences and 'close shaves'. Richard Pepper's American radio operator preferred to stay close to him for this reason. When the radio operator was killed in action a metre away from Richard Pepper, he remembers, 'If time had permitted I would have wept - he was a wonderful young soldier - may God rest his soul.'⁵²

Other men did not have good luck charms and it would be reasonable to assume that they would be those whose jobs did not place them in constant and immediate danger,⁵³ although there were very few places in Vietnam which were not accessible to the enemy. But this was not always the case, as some infantrymen and gunners did not feel the need to use anything to help deflect misfortune.⁵⁴ For example,

Laurie Pilling did not subscribe to the luck theory at all and believed that 'If I was going to be shot, I was going to be shot.'⁵⁵

While tokens of luck were evidently popular with soldiers, others relied on the religious beliefs and practices they had followed before Vietnam.⁵⁶ A considerable number turned to formal religious practices, even if it was only for the duration of their tours, giving weight to the old dictum that there are no atheists in foxholes, a phenomenon John Moller observed as being rather prevalent in Vietnam.⁵⁷ Ex-military chaplain Harry Shaw considers that people attended church services in Vietnam for a variety of reasons. 'I think there were those who genuinely had faith and were church people back home. I think there were those who took religion as a sort of formality as something that was there and they would go through the religious exercises believing it was right to do so but not prepared to make any personal commitment to it... [and] I think there were those who probably attended because...maybe it would be a good thing to go, just in case.' Shaw's own religious faith did not waver in Vietnam and he found that it gave him resources to help him deal with difficult situations, including his change of attitude towards the Army and the New Zealand Government at the time, particularly regarding the issue of whether New Zealand troops should have been sent to Vietnam at all.⁵⁸ Colin Whyte also feels that his strong religious faith also helped to 'keep him going' when he realised that he did not believe in what he was doing in Vietnam.⁵⁹

'TW Washburn' was not a habitually religious man prior to his tour but remembers that having recently seen the film *The Green Berets*, he sneaked into a Catholic Church the morning he was due to go to Vietnam and discovered most of his company in there as well. Recovering quickly and using the pretense that he had been looking everywhere for them, he took the opportunity to say a *karakia* to allay his own fears.⁶⁰ Fred Barclay observed that men 'needed the religion while they were [in Vietnam] but they didn't need it the minute they were right....people became more aware that they were quite likely not to live and started to wonder about what does happen when you die, you know?'⁶¹ 'Matt G' remembers that nearly everyone in his company attended church services when they were held in the bush even though 'there were an awful lot of people who didn't want to have anything to do with churches and anything like that when we first went up there.' He considers that it was possibly more a case of people 'putting a bet each way' rather than a true religious conversion, as most of the men could not normally be dragged into church 'even if they offered them free beer.' He did think it 'rather strange' to see 'this guy come up in all these purple clothes and things in the middle of a war zone having a chat to us', but feels that his company was fortunate in having a very good padre who 'Always reckoned that that fella at the top was going to look after him and he had to tell these fellas down here. It was good to have that sort of person when we were there.'⁶²

For a considerable number of veterans, patrolling was made easier by men who were considered to have a 'sixth sense' which allowed them to instinctively know when an area or situation was dangerous⁶³, an ability evidently quite common amongst Maori soldiers and one which was frequently relied upon.⁶⁴ 'Bill M' remembers, 'when you go through a bush you can, after a while, you can sense things....It's a sixth sense. You go into a certain area and you look at the joker behind you and if he's not comfortable, you're not comfortable.' In particular, one man in his company possessed hair which would 'stand up on end when something was wrong....You've got to rely on people like that...it's just what happens and some jokers were brilliant.'⁶⁵ Several men in Nigel Martin's company were also considered to have a well developed intuition for danger. In one instance, one of these men refused an order to go up a track because he sensed that there were a lot of enemy in the area. The platoon took a different route, finding out later that they had avoided walking into an estimated 1,000 NVA. This man could also apparently sense mines.⁶⁶

For the majority of New Zealanders in Vietnam, faith in and reliance on the commitment, ability and special skills of team mates created a very strong, life-long bond which, they feel, can never be severed or forgotten. In Nigel Martin's words, 'we belong to a club that only gets smaller, it doesn't get bigger, and no-one can join it, you know?'⁶⁷ 'Matt G' recalls that 'comradeship was the big thing that pulled everybody through over there, something I don't think anybody would find

anywhere else.’⁶⁸ American authors Hansen, Owen and Maddock describe in their study, *Parallels*, the phenomenon of the bonds among troops in Vietnam:

The Brotherhoods in Vietnam...served many purposes, but first and foremost they were a necessary response to a world out of control, in which their own survival was their paramount consideration....The strength of the Brotherhood was the certain knowledge that individual survival greatly enhanced the collective survival....[providing] an identity and that most precious commodity, collective trust, which was established by each person’s behaviour under fire. In the strange world of contemporary warfare - ambiguous objectives, alien terrain, and the daily presence of death - Brotherhood communities are a stabilizing force in a hostile and out of control environment...[and] are the only way to resolve the psychological and spiritual crises men...experience from prolonged exposure to intense combat. Their civilian values are simply dashed, and military values get them into situations that traumatize them far beyond their worst expectations. They have to construct their own social order, not merely to survive physically, but also to survive psychologically and spiritually. The values of the Brotherhood eventually supercede civilian and military values in importance, providing both justification for killing and the spiritual force of an honorable moral code.⁶⁹

These same dynamics also seem to have occurred among many New Zealanders in Vietnam. For ‘Andrew B’, comradeship was extremely important. ‘You’ve got basically what you’re carrying and your comradeship around you and you survive on those essentials....you very quickly came to a silent understanding with...your mates that you were in fact all going through the same thing, you were all dealing with and wrestling with the same emotions and so you supported each other morally, knowing that they were going through similar situations and of course in that way you built up a great respect for each other in the way you helped each other... but it was often silent, it never needed to be spelt out in words.’⁷⁰ Richard

Cairns feels that '[War] certainly heightens the comradeship you have and the affinity you have and the relationships you have with other people, particularly if they happen to be soldiers'⁷¹, and in Mike Perreau's experience, 'You got that close over there...you know them better than your own brother, your sister, your father and your mother. They get a letter, you don't need to read it, you know whether it's good news or bad news or a bloody Dear John or whatever....you know them intimately, [but] not in a sexual bloody context!.'⁷² Dave Orbell also feels that the bond between the men in his company was, and is, like that of brothers.⁷³

Nigel Martin considers that the relationship between infantrymen in Vietnam was particularly strong because of the nature of their work. 'You might be in the bush for say, oh, a month, but you might only see, especially the baggy-arses [Privates], we might only see the guys in our section...you got say seven or eight guys and that's all you mixed with for that time. You're pretty close.'⁷⁴ John Treanor remembers, 'you had to do [your job] as well as you could because if you didn't, you'd let down your mates.'⁷⁵ For Fred Barclay, the most difficult aspect of a soldier's work was 'putting your complete faith in somebody else.' He considered himself lucky in Vietnam because he commanded the same men he had worked with in Borneo previously. For him this was an advantage because 'you trained so hard and the training was so difficult and we'd all done this selection course... [and] we all knew, I mean you just knew one another inside out. You could trust everybody implicitly.'⁷⁶

Teamwork was very important to Dave Douglas who considers that there were implicit but unspoken rules. For example, ‘if you were number three in a patrol, number one and number two and number four were looking after you.... The guy in front was looking after you and so on down the line.’⁷⁷ The need to work as a very tight team in the field is encapsulated in the following quote from *Michael James Manaia*, a play written by New Zealand Vietnam veteran John Broughton:

Now you listen and you listen good.
 That’s the fucking rules man.
 Everyone depends on each other.
 We’re a team here.
 A team.
 Tight.
 Brothers.
 That’s what we are.
 Brothers.
 You fucking get that
 into your little head, see!
 You put one foot wrong,
 and that could be curtains
 for the rest of us.
 And we don’t want that...
 Don’t you ever forget it.
 Otherwise,
 Ya fucked!
 Fucked good and proper!⁷⁸

Dave Douglas also feels that as a section commander, especially during his second tour, his role with his men was almost like that of a father. He helped them with their personal problems and would write to parents and girlfriends if there were difficulties at home. At the time he did not feel that he himself had anyone to whom he could relate. ‘[I] built this invisible shield around me, didn’t let anybody in and

sort of kept to myself and sort of handled it...that way. I didn't sort of get emotional about anything', not because he shouldn't, but because 'you just couldn't in front of these younger guys.'⁷⁹ Gordon Dalziel also considered that he had an obligation to look after the newer and younger men in his team because he was a senior soldier.⁸⁰ Officers and NCOs often felt personally responsible for the men under them. John Moller cared very much about the men in his platoon but felt that at the same time he 'couldn't get close to them emotionally because you were asking them to do, you know, very dangerous things.... You've got 30 guys lives in your hands and if you get it wrong you're going to get them all killed so you had to...bear in mind all the time that if you made a decision it had to be a decision that could do the job, but to try and minimise the risks to your own troops.' Moller also did not feel that he personally had anyone he could talk to and, as a result, learned to cope by himself.⁸¹ Richard Pepper felt that as an 'older' soldier it was important for him to set an example and be seen by younger men 'to take all the excitement in my stride.'⁸²

Faith and trust in one's work mates while in the field was essential and this dependence extended to support units such as the New Zealand, Australian, and occasionally American, gun crews. When artillery and air support were called in, Hardie Martin found this to be 'a little bit scary' because 'you had to trust the bastards sitting back in the fire support base, that they weren't hung over and that sort of thing, and that they got it right, because some of that artillery was brought in

pretty close to us and you're totally out of control. You can hear it bloody coming, you can hear it coming over.'⁸³ Apprehensions about aim aside, any fire support was considered to be good,⁸⁴ and on at least one occasion help was received from an unexpected source. During one operation, Victor 3 encountered a camp of an estimated 3,000 NVA and could not pull back. They radioed for assistance and an Australian gun crew responded but ran out of ammunition. 161 Battery continued the barrage from a nearby fire base but they also ran out of ammunition. Finally, to Nigel Martin's somewhat nervous relief, 'an American battery was going along the main road so they stopped...and fired 155s on them and BOOM, and we managed to get out and I tell you what, I just about turned religious, mate. There was a [tiny] hole...and me and my number two were fighting over it, mate. "Get out! I've got the gun!"'⁸⁵

Although actual combat is commonly assumed to be the most difficult and dangerous aspect of a soldier's work, for many men the tension of waiting for a contact to occur was often worse than the actual contact itself.⁸⁶ One NCO remembers 'immense tension, I wouldn't call it fear, beforehand if you knew something was coming.'⁸⁷ Gordon Dalziel emphasises that 'most of these contacts took place after long, long hours of slow, tedious, nerve-racking patrolling through areas where at any stage it could have happened, and for a lot of guys it was just a relief.'⁸⁸ Similarly, 'Andrew B' recalls 'Endless patrolling during the days, endless ambush positions at night, day after day not having a contact, stress building up,

and then you would have a contact of some form and that always broke the tension because that's what you were there [for], waiting to happen and actively seeking out to happen if you like.'⁸⁹ 'Sniper' can remember being on patrol and feeling so 'highly strung [that] someone would say something to you and you'd jump down their throat',⁹⁰ while John Moller recalls 'running on adrenalin 100 percent day and night, 24 hours a day', because there were absolutely no front lines anywhere. He can remember reaching a point when he had the opportunity to rest, recalling that his body would be asleep but he would still be aware of what was happening around him.⁹¹ Senses were also heightened after spending time patrolling. Gerald Southon could 'actually tell the difference between a termite and an ant. This is at night, you just listen and you can tell. You can tell if it's a pig walking along the track and you can tell if it's a human being, it's a different smell altogether. The smell? The jungle's got a smell all of its own and if you use soap in there, boy, you could smell it, it's like a perfume. And sight. Even though it's pitch black at night you can still make out shapes and the funny thing is, no-one trips over.'⁹²

For some men, a way of managing the tension of constant patrolling was to 'switch off',⁹³ a danger which had to be constantly monitored. Garrie Mills, a veteran of two tours of Vietnam, remembers, 'you just get pissed off with [patrolling], to be quite honest....[But] when your day's finally finished and you harbour up [stop for the night]...you're thinking, hey, you did get a bit sloppy because your mind started wandering, and you'd better switch back on again.'⁹⁴ For Mike Perreau, switching

off did not mean that the patrolling was not being done properly, because 'as soon as the contact opened up...all of a sudden you were fresh as anything.'⁹⁵

Contacts, when they happened, usually only lasted for a short period such as several minutes or possibly an hour, but could occasionally be longer.⁹⁶ The first few moments could be terrifying, especially during 'the first shot, first incoming round or whatever, just before the adrenalin rush took over. That's the moment when some guys would wet themselves or fill their pants if they were going to',⁹⁷ which did happen to some men.⁹⁸ John Treanor remembers feeling '*shit* scared' during his first contact, as opposed to 'any other time, I was just scared.'⁹⁹ Many veterans found that once the contact had started, and amidst the 'yahooing going on and everybody screaming and everybody yelling and all shots going on',¹⁰⁰ that they generally did not have time to think and, as a result, were no longer frightened.¹⁰¹

Pilot Ted Brooker also was not frightened during his first few contacts, mainly because he did not realise he was being shot at, initially unable to distinguish the sound of a communist AK47 rifle from the noise made by the helicopter rotors as they reached supersonic speed. His first indication that he was being shot at came when he noticed the perspex in front of him exploding.¹⁰²

One veteran remembers contacts as 'Rather like being in a car crash, blurred impressions of the actual action with no fear at the time because of the adrenalin rush',¹⁰³ and to Dave Orbell, contacts were 'short and they were violent and they were brief encounters, violent, tremendous bloody noise, utter confusion, you

know, and then nothing.’¹⁰⁴ For Bruce Liddall, the physical experience is easy to recall. ‘[Y]ou sweat, your heart pounds like hell and then the adrenalin takes over for the time of the actual contact which is probably only two or three minutes....when a contact initiates, you’re looking for the biggest thickest tree or the highest anthill or the deepest hole that you can find and you don’t really think about shooting at the enemy for that bit, for that first instant, you know? The first instant is self-preservation....then, *then*, the adrenalin takes over and then you start thinking combat and your training.’ He also felt at the time, understandably, that it was far more frightening being caught in an ambush or unexpected contact than it was initiating one.¹⁰⁵

The surge of adrenalin which troops experienced during contacts appears to have been a very useful physical response. Richard Cairns recalls that during his first contact, ‘the moment the shooting started there was just this incredible adrenalin rush, and of course I thought everyone was shooting at me personally because I happened to be standing in this little clearing, but that wasn’t the case at all. But it is certainly a huge adrenalin rush, I mean, the adrenalin just takes over....When those, the bullets start firing, you hear those bangs going off, and then the body just responds and it’s adrenalin takes you, carries you through.’¹⁰⁶ One ex-infantryman remembers contacts as being ‘Awesome! Terrific! Great fun!...a very good bloody adrenalin rush and you were laughing and grinning, really hyped up and everything.’¹⁰⁷ Nigel Martin also experienced ‘highs’ during contacts, especially

when he was firing his M60 machine gun.¹⁰⁸ Fred Barclay has memories of being slightly more methodical and composed. He and his men would carry 200 bullets with them, but ‘after you’ve fired two, you realise you’ve got 198 left, and you’re miles from nowhere, and Father Christmas isn’t coming past with some more. So you’re aware of all those things and that’s why we called for fire control and fire discipline and all the rest of it.’ He also learned very quickly that noise does not kill people, but that ‘when you fire your weapon, you’ve got to make it count so you’ve got to be very cool and calm. I mean, you’re absolutely bloody terrified but you’ve got to say, hey, if I muck this up, this is me.’¹⁰⁹ One ex-platoon commander remembers contacts as being very confusing. ‘The theory that you can make concise decisions is absolute rubbish because 99 percent of the facts that would let you make a combat decision aren’t there. You can’t see to know what they’re doing so you’re flying off the seat of your pants and hoping like hell it’s going to work. But it wasn’t quite like the textbooks said, it wasn’t a rational thing.... You spend a year preparing orders in your head that you never give, you spend a year planning actions that never happen.’¹¹⁰

Many veterans clearly recall that once a contact had started, their training quickly and automatically ‘kicked in’.¹¹¹ ‘Steve D’ remembers, ‘When...you were fired on or something, you just did exactly what you’d been trained to do’,¹¹² and in Brendan Duggan’s experience, ‘everything came naturally’ during a contact.¹¹³ Another veteran recalls that applying his training became ‘second nature’.¹¹⁴ The intense

training before Vietnam paid off for 'Bill M'. 'We spent all that training, sweating, swearing, cursing, moaning and the time come when it all...fell into place. Didn't have to ask to be told what to do, you just did it pretty naturally... even though you got people around you, bloody officers and so on, you really don't have to be told what to do, because you know what to do.'¹¹⁵

During the 'mop-up' phase, the period immediately after a contact had ended, some veterans experienced symptoms of shock such as trembling and others felt delayed fear. Brendan Duggan remembers, 'once it was over, I felt a great relief come over me and I found that I was shaking all over.'¹¹⁶ Bruce Liddall can recall being 'more scared in the mop-up period than you ever are in the actual contact',¹¹⁷ and for 'Bill M', it was after 'it's all finished, that's when you get the shakes....[You] look around and see a few holes around your head in a few trees and think, well, you know, a bit close!'¹¹⁸ Dave Douglas remembers that 'when everything died down and the lull come over and you didn't know what was happening, that's when, that's when the fear come in... You don't know how many was on the other side, how many, what contact you made, who made the contact, what was happening. It was only when more information starts filtering down that you start feeling more at ease.'¹¹⁹ Richard Cairns also experienced delayed fear. After one particular contact he remembers he and a friend 'breaking open a new packet of cigarettes and 20 minutes later between the two of us we'd smoked the whole packet, you know. The nervous reaction set in I think subsequent to the actual contact.'¹²⁰

Delayed response appears to have been quite common but as 'Matt G' recalls, 'they never let you hang around and mope around too long about it.'¹²¹ Bill Peachey describes his feelings after a contact as a sort of 'high'. He remembers that it would take 'a few minutes to come down. First thing you do is pick up your weapon and clean it a bit just to get yourself down, or have a coffee...but you had that little bit of high afterwards...and you couldn't sit still for a couple of minutes.'¹²² 'Andrew B' remembers that post-contact reactions could be contained by concentrating on tasks such as 'preparing a mate for casualty evacuation, digging a shallow grave for an enemy soldier...preparing the next ambush situation, getting out of the area as quickly as you could, or being evacuated out of the area by helicopter, whatever.'¹²³ As a company commander, it was Peter Hotop's job to ensure that 'all those involved were accounted for, were moved to a safe position, debriefed, all necessary reports submitted, casualties evacuated, ammunition re-supply arranged and delivered', then plan what to do next.¹²⁴ One ex-platoon commander feels that 'if you have the mental picture of a very grubby young Lieutenant sitting on a log in the middle of the jungle with his field note book writing a report which is going to go out on the [next] helicopter...you've got the image right.'¹²⁵

If casualties had been received during a contact, a prime task was to have them evacuated as quickly as possible. Casualties were initially casevaced, transported from the field to a medical facility within Vietnam, then, if necessary, medevaced, which was the process of flying casualties to a medical facility outside Vietnam, or

home. Military historian John Keegan writes, 'The fear of death is the soldier's universal lot. So, too, is the fear of wounding which, for soldiers of the "teeth arms", is all too often realized... How he may be wounded and how he may be treated have, therefore, always preoccupied the soldier, for whom the quality of his army's medical service has been consequently as important as that of his weapons or his leadership.'¹²⁶ Fortunately for allied troops in Vietnam the helicopter casualty evacuation system was excellent and has been described at various times as 'a gold-plated medical system',¹²⁷ 'one of the best lessons learned in Vietnam...regarding the treatment and evacuation of casualties from the battlefield',¹²⁸ and a service which 'completely changed the face of emergency medicine.'¹²⁹

The aim of casevac, or dustoff,¹³⁰ helicopter crews was to transport casualties directly from the field to an appropriate medical facility within the initial 'golden hour' after injury, which dramatically increased their chances of recovery. Alister Brass, an Australian doctor at 1AFH in Vung Tau, observed that most casualties were delivered to the hospital in less than 30 minutes after their injuries had been received.¹³¹ There were also specialised facilities for different injuries, for example, hospitals which concentrated on head wounds and others which treated burns.¹³²

Wounded men were also at times picked up by passing gunships or other helicopters in the area which would divert to take casualties to the nearest hospital. Ted Brooker would at times pick up wounded troops in his helicopter and was himself rescued by an Australian non-casevac helicopter crew when he was shot down.¹³³ In

the early years of the war, casevac helicopters were unarmed, their only protection a red cross symbol, but as this did not deter the enemy from shooting at them, they later flew with door gunners and were accompanied by gunships.¹³⁴ New Zealand and Australian casualties were usually initially treated at 1AFH, or the U.S. 36th Evacuation Hospital if the Australians had run out of beds. They were then medevaced by air to 4RAAF Hospital in Butterworth, Malaya, then to 3RAAF Hospital in Richmond, Australia, then, for the New Zealanders, back to New Zealand.¹³⁵

Dave Douglas was seriously wounded in 1969, receiving extensive phosphorous burns and shrapnel injuries during a contact. He was casevaced from the field and stabilised at 1AFH for a week then medevaced home, spending 3 or 4 days at Butterworth and several more at Richmond on the way, finally arriving in New Zealand to recuperate at Tauranga Hospital. He holds no grudges about being wounded, accepting that it was 'part and parcel of the job', although he cannot recall his own casevac experience due to the extent of his injuries.¹³⁶

Ted Brooker was also medevaced back to New Zealand after his helicopter was fired on and shot out of the sky, a bullet shattering his hand. He was picked up almost immediately by an Australian Navy pilot flying an Iroquois and flown back to Nui Dat to begin what he considers to be the worst experience of his life. He recalls that he was 'Dumped at the 'Dat, no bugger gave a fuck! "Oh, you alright? Yeah, you're alive, well, hang on a minute, there's a chopper going down".' He

went to 1AFH at Vung Tau, nursing his hand which had two fingers attached only by threads of skin, and fortunately was attended by an Australian orthopaedic surgeon who specialised in hand repair. Brooker was given the choice of having his fingers amputated which meant that he could fly again in three weeks, or having his hand reconstructed and going home. He chose the latter. The surgery was performed expertly and Brooker was medevaced to Butterworth and admitted to a ward of psychiatric casualties and troops with horrendous physical wounds. One evening he and two mobile fellow-patients visited an adjacent Australian Sergeants' mess, swathed in bandages, barefoot and dressed in their hospital-issue shortie pyjamas, and were invited in to a large and lively party where they thoroughly enjoyed themselves. An ambulance from the hospital duly arrived to pick them up, patients obviously having absconded to the Sergeants' mess before. After they returned to the hospital, one of Brooker's fellow-abscondee went completely beserk and had to be subdued with drugs. The next morning Brooker was visited by an Australian Air Force Wing Commander, told that as a Captain and the senior officer present he was responsible for the actions of all of the other patients in the ward, reprimanded and confined to bed.

As the only possessions Brooker had with him were hospital-issue pyjamas, a toothbrush and a razor, he gave the last of his money to a Red Cross girl who bought him some clothes. When he was medevaced to Richmond he went with a tag tied to his strapped and wired hand advising that it should not be touched until he

returned to New Zealand. At Richmond a doctor insisted on taking all of the bandages off. The hand started to bleed profusely and the doctor was unable to stop it. Brooker, who had observed the procedure before, asked for a morphine injection and re-strapped and wired his hand himself to stop the bleeding. Brooker recalls that on the morning he flew back to New Zealand, 'sure enough in come the Australians, we want our shortie pyjamas back. Now if I hadn't got my own clothes I'd have been going home in the nude, for God's sake.' When he got dressed, Brooker discovered that he had lost so much weight that his trousers would not stay up. He burst into tears. 'I was in a real state. I'd had it by then.' A sympathetic nurse helped him secure his trousers with safety pins and off he went, arriving in New Zealand at Auckland airport to be met by no-one but his shocked girlfriend. Brooker took himself to Middlemore Hospital with no money, only the clothes he was wearing, exhausted and in pain, and with absolutely no idea of what was supposed to be happening. While in the hospital, the only visitor he received was a man from the RSA who, to Brookers' eternal gratitude, organised some cash and a war pension for him and helped him to settle in. After Brooker recuperated, he returned to 3 Squadron RNZAF where he had been working prior to his tour and trained other pilots who were going to Vietnam. He has never forgiven the Army or the Air Force for not contacting him at any point during his medevac or assisting him on his immediate return to New Zealand.¹³⁷

Colin Whyte also experienced the medevac system after he was concussed by a mine in Vietnam, although he does not appear to have encountered the difficulties experienced by Ted Brooker. Whyte was sent to the British Military Hospital in Singapore to recuperate but after a blood clot moved into his lung he was sent back to New Zealand. Whyte believes that the system for advising the families of wounded troops of their injuries was inadequate. His wife was told of his injuries and that he would be arriving home, but there was no-one available from the Army at the time to support her and their small child. It was evidently assumed that as an emotionally strong woman, she would cope. As a trained nurse, Whyte's wife was fully aware of the gravity of her husband's injuries.¹³⁸ Fred Barclay agrees. During a patrol Barclay was hit by some small pieces of shrapnel but was able to carry on working. Unfortunately, his fiancée in New Zealand was telephoned on New Year's Eve by a policeman from Wellsford and told that Barclay had been shot in the head. She fainted and awoke to hear the same message being repeated on the national news. Fortunately, Barclay was able to persuade some Australian friends, in a convoy of Landrovers and accompanied by a tank, to take him to the nearest village which had a telephone. He rang his fiancée and advised her that the only headache he had was self-inflicted and a result of his New Year's Eve celebrations.¹³⁹

New Zealand veterans remember that the casevac system in Vietnam was extremely good.¹⁴⁰ Ken Treanor recalls that the Americans boasted that no soldier was more than 20 minutes from the nearest medical facility which, he feels 'must have had an

effect on the morale of the soldier.¹⁴¹ Tom Palmer worked with the casevac system almost daily and considered that the system was superb¹⁴², and John Hall remembers that the almost immediate availability of good medical treatment was ‘pretty comforting in your mind’ and, as a result, medical care of the wounded was ‘the last of your worries.’¹⁴³ Peter Hotop was also most impressed because the response of the casevac helicopters was so rapid and the pilots quite prepared to land under fire. He considers that the crews were extremely well trained and that ‘Their reputation was comforting and a great boost to morale.’¹⁴⁴ Mike Perreau recalls, ‘it certainly helped a lot...knowing that if anybody, whether it be you or somebody else, was bloody badly bloody injured you’d be out pretty fast no matter what’,¹⁴⁵ and another veteran had ‘great confidence in the casevac system, partly just because it was so slick and partly because of the bravery and skill of the pilots and medics involved. I felt that they were really on our team, and I knew that they would look after me as well as they would look after themselves, if I needed them.’¹⁴⁶

Casevac crews could be either Australian or American. Some New Zealand veterans consider that the American crews were more committed and therefore more efficient than the Australians.¹⁴⁷ Richard Cairns, who experienced the casevac system personally after he was shot during a contact, was particularly impressed by the Americans. He clearly recalls ‘this helicopter coming in to pull me and the other guy that was still alive out and the jungle canopy was too high for the penetrator to actually get down on to the jungle floor, yet they used the rotors to trim the trees to

get it there. Now, I mean that they were taking one hell of a risk but they were committed to getting to people...[and] I guess the knowledge of their dedication gave us confidence to know that if something happened then they would do their utmost to get us out.¹⁴⁸ Nigel Martin was awed one day when an American casevac crew, whom he remembers collectively as 'good guys', chose to land in the middle of a fire fight to extract some casualties. Unfortunately, the tail rotor of the helicopter hit a tree stump and the machine flipped over. The Americans immediately brought in a Sikorsky Skycrane helicopter which 'just come over the top and picked the whole lot up, with the wounded in it, and just picked it up and took it away.'¹⁴⁹ Colin Whyte also remembers the casevac system as being 'absolutely marvellous', especially the contribution made by the American crews. He remembers with amusement one pilot who had 'Your driver is here courtesy of the Epileptic Society of America' written across his helmet.¹⁵⁰

Dave Douglas remembers feeling very angry at an Australian casevac crew after a mine traumatically amputated both of his section commander's legs and wounded several other troops. His team 'called in for a helicopter to come in and pick him up and these so-called clowns wanted us to secure the area. Well, you know, being realistic, how the hell are you supposed to secure an area like that? After all, we were only a small patrol and we done the best we could do.' He and his team 'sprayed the whole area with machine gun fire', but the Australians allegedly would not land because of the possible danger. An American helicopter arrived 30 to 40

minutes later and picked up the wounded men. Although the New Zealanders had medically tended their section commander as best they could and administered morphine, the man died a short time later. Douglas feels that had he been casevaced immediately, he would have survived.¹⁵¹ John Treanor can remember a similar episode when an Australian tank commander received very serious injuries when he was blown up in his tank. Two casevac helicopters subsequently arrived, one American and one Australian. The American pilot descended, chopping through 'all the trees up and branches...and there was stuff flying everywhere', and picked up several casualties, while the Australian pilot was more cautious. When the Australian pilot eventually landed he was met by a doctor with the Australian company, who 'raced across, ripped the window wide open and punched the pilot, because as far as the doctor was concerned the chopper should have come in straight away, never mind about the trees and the branches.' John Treanor believes that the Australians were cautious because they had been instructed to look after their equipment, whereas the Americans considered that the material and equipment they used was 'there to use and break and throw away...as often as they needed to throw it away.'¹⁵² Ted Brooker, who flew with an Australian reconnaissance unit, considered that the RAAF helicopter pilots were 'real bloody jerks, most of them,' but that the Australian Naval pilots, particularly Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Detachment 9 Squadron RAAF, which had picked him up when he was shot down, were 'brilliant'.¹⁵³

While some New Zealanders may have considered some Australian casevac pilots to have been unnecessarily cautious, the work carried out by Australian medical teams in Vietnam demonstrates commitment and dedication, regardless of the nationality of the casualty. Donald Beard, a Colonel and specialist surgeon at 1AFH during 1968, recorded in his personal diary the medical treatment given to Private E.R. Haenga of Whiskey One Company who was blown up by a mine on 7 March 1968:

[Haenga] was rushed straight through into Cas[ualty] reception and I thought he was dead, both legs being blown to pieces. He had stopped bleeding because he had virtually no blood left. He had no pulse nor blood pressure but was still breathing faintly with an occasional gasp. ... "The team" went into action and I was very impressed by it all. The orderlies had the transfusion sets ready and another rushed to pathology for blood - normally group O is given with matching and in many instances in an emergency without matching. The Duty MO, Maj. Paul Grainger-Smith... and the anaesthetist Maj. Barr had 2 drips running within 5 minutes and 4 drips into both jugular veins and both arms within 10 minutes. The blood was pumped in rapidly so that he got about 5 pints within 20 minutes. I then felt a flicker of a pulse for the first time but the blood pressure was still not recordable. I was then able to remove the shreds of his trousers and the temporary pressure dressings applied by the Medical Assistant (Cpl.) when he was wounded at 1600 hours in the Long Binh hills about 10 miles away... Removal of the dressings revealed shocking wounds - quite the worst I had ever seen. The mine had gone off behind him and virtually blown off the backs of both legs from the feet to the buttocks. With the rise of blood pressure from his transfusions he had started to bleed again, so I reapplied large pressure dressings over the entire back of the legs. This got him under control and after 12 pints of blood (he must have been virtually exsanguinated) his condition was good enough to move him down the hut to X-ray which revealed fractures of both legs and into the theatre where Maj. Barr anaesthetised him. It was now 1800 hours and off I set to try to repair the damage. We had to do him face down on the table and I started on the R leg. There was no circulation to the foot, so I set to work to do an arterial graft at the back of the knee. Having spent about an hour cutting away all the dead tissue and preparing for the graft I then discovered that about 3 inches of the sciatic nerve had been shot out.

Even if the leg had lived with its graft it would have had no feeling so I decided to amputate it. This is a terribly difficult decision to make on the table with a 21 year old boy. I amputated through the site of the fracture in the lower femur and managed to close the stump with a flap of skin from the undamaged shin. Next I had to move up to the back of the thigh and buttock to cut away all the dead muscle. It bled furiously and we had to pump blood in as fast as we could go. By now we were up to about 18 pints of blood transfusion. These wounds were all packed with pressure dressings and the whole stump wrapped up in a plaster cast. By now he was pretty flat and several times we thought we'd lost him and had to wait for 20 minutes until he picked up before I could start on the other leg. This was almost as bad but the sciatic nerve was intact so it was worth saving. I started off at the foot and gradually worked upwards. By the time I had excised all the wounds there was scarcely any skin from ankle to buttock except for a few bridges here and there - however the main problem is to first save the leg and then any skin defects can be closed by graft later. The more I worked, the more he bled and the more blood we had to give him. Eventually it was all over, the legs were encased in plaster and he was still alive but only with the help of a 30 pint blood transfusion - almost 3 times his total blood volume. It was 22:30 and I was completely exhausted physically and mentally, but we were all thrilled that he was still alive. I could not have believed that such shocking injuries could survive...

Beard went to bed but was woken almost immediately by a medical orderly who told him:

“Pte Haenga is bleeding and it won't stop and his pulse is fading”...As soon as I saw him I realised that his condition had indeed worsened and despite the continued blood transfusions, his blood pressure was falling and the blood had soaked out of his plasters and into the bed. There was no choice - he had to go back to the theatre. It was now 03:00 and off we set again. He could still manage a weak smile in the theatre - everyone realised what would be the probable outcome. I cut off the plasters and one by one clipped and tied off hundreds of small bleeding points - vessels that would normally stop bleeding themselves. But his condition was so low and he had none of his own blood to clot, the blood we were giving him was flowing out again. There was no major vessel bleeding - only infinite small ones. It seemed that I couldn't catch up and he was slowly slipping on me. I went as fast as I could and at times thought I

was gaining and then losing ground again. But eventually I did get on top and I was then able to proceed more slowly until eventually I had stopped all but minor oozing. Once again I applied pressure bandages and plasters and he was still alive - but now up to 38 pints of blood. Back he went to the Intensive Care Ward. Once again the theatre looked a terrible mess and the boys had to set to to get it ready for the morning's operating list. It was now 06:30 - Haenga had been with us for 13 and a half hours of which 9 and a half hours were under anaesthetic. But his condition was now better than it had been since his arrival.

Haenga survived and was medevaced on March 15 to 4RAAF Hospital in

Butterworth then flown home to New Zealand for further treatment.¹⁵⁴

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Almost all New Zealand Vietnam veterans recall that they were frightened at some point during their tours and for many, patrolling was when the most fear was experienced. Although veterans had individual and specific fears, the dread associated with being blown up by a mine appears to have been most prevalent. The possibility of being killed in Vietnam does not seem to have greatly concerned many veterans at the time, many adopting a fatalistic view regarding their environment and accepting that death or injury was a possible outcome of professional soldiering. Evidence indicates that the issue of dying was deliberately not referred to, perhaps because to bring it up would be to threaten the psychological mechanisms which had been put in place to allow troops to cope with the possibility.

Although some New Zealanders were entirely accepting of their fate whatever that may have turned out to be, others employed good luck charms as an added security.

Interestingly, a considerable number of charms had been passed down from family members who had carried them during earlier wars. It appears that some troops took the power of their charms very seriously, while others were superstitious enough to be unable to part with them even if they were unsure of their usefulness. Interest in formal religion appears to have increased quite dramatically among New Zealanders in Vietnam, although many veterans consider in retrospect that this was probably a product of the close proximity of death and the resulting 'just in case' attitude of nervous troops. The fact that many New Zealanders consciously relied on the 'sixth sense' demonstrated by some of their team mates to help them avoid danger indicates that awareness of spiritual matters may have been heightened in Vietnam.

For almost all veterans, faith in and reliance on team mates was essential as well as integral to the bond they developed and which many believe is the most enduring aspect of their service in Vietnam. Evidence suggests that this bond was fundamental to the performance of each team and an essential dynamic of combat. Each individual soldier benefited from this relationship, although some officers and NCOs who found themselves in a parental-type role did not feel that they themselves had access to support. For officers, the responsibility of commanding men while at the same time endeavouring to ensure their safety could at times be daunting.

The casualty evacuation system in Vietnam was considered by almost all New Zealanders to be excellent, several recalling that this went a long way towards

allaying their fears. While American casevac crews were universally applauded by the New Zealanders, generally for their enthusiastic and at times even reckless approach to picking up casualties, the Australian crews were criticised for their cautious attitudes. This may not have been a reflection of their personal commitment to their duties, but a product of the operating procedures under which they were working. Evidence also suggests that the medevac system which transported wounded troops home may have been less than entirely satisfactory for New Zealanders. As the system was essentially established for use by Australian casualties but was utilised by the New Zealanders as part of the assistance given to the New Zealand Army by the Australian military in Vietnam, it did not contain a New Zealand element. It is therefore likely that seriously wounded New Zealand casualties may not have had contact with a New Zealander from the time that they were wounded until they returned home. Fortunately for New Zealand soldiers the quality of care they received from allied medical personnel while in Vietnam appears to have been of a very high standard. This appears to have been at least some consolation as they watched their seriously wounded team mates being winched up out of the bush and raced away.

¹ Linda Reinberg, *In the Field: The Language of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1991), p. 51.

² Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.

³ A company has approximately 170 men, a platoon 40 and a section 8 to 10 men.

⁴ ANON, 14/9/95.

⁵ Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.

⁶ 'Bill M', 15/3/95.

⁷ Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.

⁸ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.

⁹ ANON, 17/4/96.

¹⁰ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.

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- 11 ANON, 14/9/95.
12 ANON, 24/6/96.
13 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
14 John Hall, 4/2/96.
15 'Bill M', 15/3/95.
16 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
17 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
18 See Bruce Liddall, 'Steve D', Mike Perreau, Bill McNeish, 2/3/96; John Moller, 10/7/95; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
19 Tim O'Brien, *If I Die In a Combat Zone* (London, 1969), pp. 125-128.
20 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
21 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
22 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
23 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
24 ANON, 22/4/96.
25 See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 13/7/96; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; John Pointon, 1/3/95.
26 ANON, 14/9/95.
27 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
28 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
29 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
30 Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
31 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
32 Bill McNeish, 2/3/96.
33 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95. See also Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
34 John Hall, 4/2/96.
35 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96. See also Gerald Southon, 'Sniper' and 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96.
36 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
37 'Andrew B' 10/5/95.
38 See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; 'Bill M', 15/3/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; 'Sniper', 13/7/96; ANON, 14/9/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
39 ANON, 14/9/95.
40 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
41 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
42 See John Moller, 10/7/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95; ANON, 7/2/96; 'Sniper', Gerald Southon, 13/7/96; ANON, 14/9/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
43 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
44 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
45 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
46 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
47 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
48 See Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; John Hall, 4/2/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
49 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
50 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
51 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
52 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
53 See Des Sluce, 17/5/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; ANON, 28/12/95; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
54 See ANON, 24/6/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; ANON, 22/4/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
55 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
56 See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
57 John Moller, 10/7/95.
58 Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
59 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
60 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96.
61 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
62 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
63 See Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96; Nigel Martin, 'Steve D', Bruce Liddall, Hardie Martin, 2/3/96; John Moller, 10/7/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96.

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- 63 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
64 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
65 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
66 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
67 *ibid.*
68 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
69 J.T. Hansen, A. Susan Owen, Michael Patrick Madden, *Parallels: the Soldiers' Knowledge and the Oral History of Contemporary Warfare* (New York, 1992), pp. 129-131.
70 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
71 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
72 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
73 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
74 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
75 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
76 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
77 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
78 Excerpt from John Broughton, *Michael James Manaia* (Dunedin, 1994), pp. 72-73.
79 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
80 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
81 John Moller, 10/7/95.
82 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
83 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
84 See Mike Perreau, Garrie Mills, Nigel Martin, 'Steve D', Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; 'Sniper', Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
85 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
86 See Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
87 ANON, 22/4/96.
88 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
89 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
90 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
91 John Moller, 10/7/95.
92 Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
93 Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
94 Garrie Mills, 2/3/96.
95 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
96 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
97 ANON, 22/4/96
98 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
99 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
100 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
101 See Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; John Pointon, 1/3/95; ANON, 7/2/96.
102 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
103 ANON, 22/4/96.
104 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
105 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
106 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
107 Interview 17.
108 Interview 28/4.
109 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
110 ANON, 14/9/95.
111 See 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Bill M', 15/3/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Nigel Martin, Mike Perreau, Bill McNeish, Bruce Liddall, Hardie Martin, 'Steve D', 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; 'Sniper', 'TW Washburn', 13/7/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; ANON, 14/9/95; Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
112 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
113 Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
114 ANON, 2/3/96.
115 'Bill M', 15/3/95.
116 Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
117 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.

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- ¹¹⁸ 'Bill M', 15/3/95.
¹¹⁹ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
¹²⁰ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
¹²¹ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
¹²² Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
¹²³ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
¹²⁴ Peter Hotop, 7/96. See also Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
¹²⁵ ANON, 14/9/95.
¹²⁶ John Keegan, *Soldiers: A History of Men In Battle* (London, 1985), p. 17.
¹²⁷ Hugh McManners, *The Scars of War* (London, 1993), pp. 290-291.
¹²⁸ Gary McKay, *Vietnam Fragments: An Oral History of Australians at War* (New South Wales, 1992), p. 213.
¹²⁹ Alister Brass, *Bleeding Earth: A Doctor Looks at Vietnam* (Melbourne, 1968), p. 103.
¹³⁰ The Americans used the words dust off and casevac interchangeably. Reinberg, pp. 69, 138.
¹³¹ Brass, p. 103.
¹³² John Moller, 10/7/95.
¹³³ *ibid.*; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
¹³⁴ Reinberg, p. 138.
¹³⁵ Brendan O'Keefe and F.B. Smith, *Medicine at War: Medical Aspects of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1950-1972* (New South Wales, 1994), pp. 74, 56.
¹³⁶ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
¹³⁷ Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
¹³⁸ Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
¹³⁹ Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
¹⁴⁰ See ANON, 17/4/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; ANON, 7/2/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
¹⁴¹ Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
¹⁴² Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
¹⁴³ John Hall, 4/2/96.
¹⁴⁴ Peter Hotop, 7/96.
¹⁴⁵ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
¹⁴⁶ ANON, 22/4/96.
¹⁴⁷ See ANON, 2/3/96; ANON, 29/8/95.
¹⁴⁸ Richard Cairns, 14/9/97.
¹⁴⁹ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
¹⁵⁰ Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
¹⁵¹ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
¹⁵² John Treanor, 1/3/96. See also Murray Deed, 15/1/96. The belief that the Americans were not required to conserve or maintain their equipment was slightly erroneous. This is demonstrated by an extract from the US Infantry's 'Combat Notes from Vietnam' referring to the need for ground troops to advise casualty evacuation helicopters in advance whether an area was secure or not. Not doing this had resulted in several aircraft receiving '...extensive combat damage and some crew members were wounded. Obviously when our aircraft sustain major damage, we have prolonged maintenance down-time and we cannot as effectively meet our commitments.' Major W.K. Hoen, 'Dustoff', *Combat Notes from Vietnam* (Fort Benning, Ga., 1968), quoted in McManners, p. 294.
¹⁵³ Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
¹⁵⁴ Excerpts from the personal diary of Donald Beard, Australian War Memorial Private Records Collection, AWM Series/Collection No. PR00076.

CHAPTER SEVEN: Acts of War; death and the dark side.

Despite the excellence of the casualty evacuation system in Vietnam and the morale-boosting effect this had on New Zealand troops, the death or injury of a team mate could have a devastating effect on the rest of the team. For Peter Hotop, 'The first reaction is one of dismay - for most junior commanders on the spot there is an immediate feeling of "what could I have done to prevent this?"The pain comes later when all the dust has settled.' He considers that 'Perhaps a commander of troops is fortunate, in one way, because he has to put on a bold face and go about consoling those most effected (*sic*).' These were usually the men in the immediate section or platoon closest to the event and Hotop considered it important to 'watch the behaviour of all those involved for hours and perhaps days. Those who bottled up their feelings usually need the most help.'¹ For one platoon commander at the time, 'The awful thing about getting somebody killed, it doesn't matter what you do, you can't bring them alive again. And you did it, you put him there in that time and that place. That's the officer's lot...[And] you can't deal with it. There is no deal. You can't turn the clock back, you can't undo it. It's on your shoulders and it stays on your shoulders....till the day you die.'²

Many men felt extreme anger at the death and wounding of friends. Gordon Dalziel considers that in Vietnam, 'anger was a brilliant weapon, if controlled. I've always

believed that you have to be controlled, just going out full on is only going to get you killed. Controlled aggression or controlled anger, it's the same thing.'³ For 'Bill M', the death of a friend 'Knocks you back a bit....It's something you, oh, it hurts. You got to handle it, you just carry on. What can you do...seeing your mates get killed, dead, or dying, or taken off to hospital. It makes you fucking sick and angry.' He feels that his anger at the enemy for killing his friends was part of what made the act of killing enjoyable for him.⁴ Anger was also a catalyst for one ex-infantryman who remembers, 'you dealt with it at the time, especially if you caught up with the jokers that killed him',⁵ and 'Matt G' recalls that 'No-one ever got excited, no-one ever turned into a blithering idiot...[but] normally if any of our guys got hit all we wanted to do was just carry on and find these people.'⁶ One ex-officer can recall an incident when 'one of the Corporals in another platoon had been killed and there was a sense of personal anger amongst the troops and...there was a sense of utu. They were going to make the VC pay for this and that was their attitude, you kill one of ours and we'll kill ten of you, sort of style' (see Appendix G, Photograph 9).⁷ 'Bob P' remembers, 'All you felt like doing was just going out and killing anybody, or just doing something to anybody you can get your hands on. It was a horrible feeling actually.'⁸

Like all allied troops, the New Zealanders suffered extensively from the effects of mine explosions and several veterans have very clear memories of these incidents. For Gordon Dalziel, 'cleaning up the results of a mine is never ever pretty,

invariably. Trying to find the bits of guys...you say, well, shit, I can't find your fucking legs, man, you know?'⁹ 'Matt G' considers that the hardest thing he had to do in Vietnam was pick up his friend's leg after a mine explosion and place it next to the man on the casevac helicopter. His friend, who survived, was more concerned at the time that his genitals were intact. In an effort to be reassuring 'Matt G' replied, 'Well, I haven't picked them up yet mate, but there's your leg.'¹⁰

Peter Hotop considers that while all deaths were traumatic for the survivors, the aftermath of a mine incident was quite different and more disturbing. 'It really got the troops worked up and there was an awful feeling of helplessness - there was a strong desire to let fly at anything that moved, to do something to release the pent up feelings. I can quite understand the problems faced by Lt. Kelly (*sic*) of the US Army when his platoon went berserk in a village [My Lai] and they killed most of the occupants - they had just lost a lot of men from mine detonations.'¹¹ As a result of his own experiences, 'Sniper' also feels he has an understanding of the notorious My Lai incident. 'You've got to have someone that's a friend of yours killed before you can really get a hate, you know, sort of take no prisoner attitude. You've got to get to that point and that's what happened there.'¹²

The incident at the hamlet of My Lai-4 in 1968 was the most publicised war atrocity committed by U.S. troops in Vietnam. A platoon from Charlie Company, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry Brigade of the newly formed Americal Division, led by Lieutenant William Calley, entered My Lai-4 on 16 March and systematically killed

between 200 and 500 unarmed civilians (the precise number varies according to reports).¹³ Old men were bayoneted and beaten to death, women and children praying at an altar were shot in the head, several girls were raped before being killed, and 150 villagers were herded into a drainage ditch and executed. The only American casualty was a soldier who had shot himself in the foot.¹⁴ Charlie Company had been operating in the My Lai area, a heavily mined region where the Vietcong were well entrenched, for a month prior to the incident, and received heavy casualties inflicted by mines and Vietcong hit-and-run tactics. At the memorial service of an NCO who had been blown to pieces by a booby trap several days before the massacre, Captain 'Mad Dog' Medina, Charlie Company's commanding officer, gave a 'combination eulogy-pep talk' in which he 'combined "combat orders" from above, his own impulses as a zealous officer, and an appeal to the shared emotional state of his company', implying that permission was being given to carry out wholesale slaughter.¹⁵ Captain Medina reported an enemy body count of 128 from the My Lai-4 operation, and shortly after received a special commendation for the day's action. Despite the U.S. military's attempt to cover up the incident, the details were made public when a news photographer present at the massacre published photographs in American magazines a year later. Lieutenant Calley was the only soldier convicted for the crime, serving only a few years of his original sentence of life imprisonment.¹⁶

The death of friends caused all troops pain and anger but Gerald Southon and 'Sniper' both remember that while in the field there was no time to mourn.¹⁷

Feelings of grief therefore had to be suppressed until the return to base at the end of the operation when a memorial service would be held for the man or men who had died. One veteran, an infantry officer at the time, remembers that 'people would not be able to express too well how they felt about it except that after the ceremony there would be, inevitably be some sort of booze thing...that would be to sort of relieve the tension of the sorrow that they felt.'¹⁸ Gordon Dalziel and his team mates, after attending memorial services at Nui Dat, would attempt to 'just drink it away.'¹⁹ Murray Deed remembers that the death of a team member 'wasn't spoken about very much and everyone sort of had their own grieving in their own way.' He recalls that some men would get 'absolutely wasted' when they returned to Nui Dat and 'just went ballistic, and then when they got into [Vung Tau on leave], they caused fights and all sorts of things but, you know, everyone looked after each other. If you had a mate that you thought, you know, was going over the top you'd just look after him until they settled down or whatever.'²⁰ Out of the field, drinking appears to have been the accepted and most common way of easing the emotional pain of friends being wounded or killed.²¹

Obviously, soldiers did not have to witness the deaths of friends to be affected by the event. Dave Orbell, confined to Nui Dat with severe malaria, was not present when his best friend was killed during an operation and felt numbed when he heard

the news. Seven months later he was drinking with friends in a bar in Malacca, went berserk, almost destroying the bar, and woke up later with no memory of the incident. Orbell considers this episode to have been a delayed response to the death of his friend.²² Nigel Martin remembers that the cook for his company, on hearing that one of the team had been killed, immediately went and stood at the helicopter landing pad at Nui Dat, still dressed in his cook's whites but with his rifle and his webbing, waiting to 'jump on before anyone else could get there.'²³ Des Sluce experienced 'Sorrow, tinged with fatalism' at the deaths of friends, particularly regarding the man for whom he had been best man four years earlier.²⁴

However, one ex-gunner's response to the news that friends had died was 'numbness, almost indifference....Afterwards we would tend to avoid talking about whoever had died except occasionally, especially when drinking. Then there would be brief but sentimental talk about what a good bloke he had been and the subject would be changed. I don't remember any overt emotion at those times, either on my part or on the part of others present.'²⁵ Ted Brooker recalls that when a close friend was killed, 'it didn't make me angry, it just made me feel really really really sad.' However he remembers that when someone whom he didn't know very well died the usual response was 'what the hell, you know, serves you right, the stupid bastard shouldn't have done that.'²⁶ Another veteran knew people who were killed but did not feel any worse about their deaths than if they had been killed in a car accident at home. This man had replaced someone who had been blown up by a

mine, which made him 'think a bit', but he accepted the reality that people in a war zone got killed.²⁷

For some veterans, the guilt of not being able to prevent the death or injury of friends still remains.²⁸ For 'Sniper', the emphasis in Vietnam was on comradeship and when his friend was severely wounded and lost both legs in an ambush, 'Sniper' felt that he was to blame, even though events clearly indicated that this was not the case. This veteran also still suffers from guilt because he was not with another friend on patrol when he was killed, feeling that 'maybe if I'd been there, maybe I would have seen the guy', and been able to prevent the death.²⁹ John Hall remembers counselling men to help them accept that they were not at fault regarding such incidents.³⁰

When Bill Peachey's friends were killed by Vietcong, he felt at the time that he 'hated their guts' and was not able to come to terms with his anger until after he left Vietnam.³¹ This experience was common amongst soldiers and could manifest during their tours as violently aggressive behaviour towards the enemy. This type of behaviour, combined with effective military training and strong survival instincts, resulted on occasion in incidents which could be construed as barbaric or atrocious. The survival instinct is demonstrated by 'Steve D', whose philosophy was 'it's either you're going to get him, or he's going to get you',³² and an ex-infantryman who recalls thinking at the time, 'if I don't get you, you're going to get me, so I'm going to like getting you.'³³ During patrols, wounded enemy would sometimes be

taken prisoner, and at other times they would not. One veteran recalls a member of his team shooting and killing an enemy soldier who had been very badly wounded by a claymore mine to put him out of his misery.³⁴ An ex-infantryman remembers that there was often considerable danger in relation to taking a wounded enemy soldier prisoner because:

If you've got wounded and they're not your wounded, you got to wait for say 20 minutes for a chopper to come in. There's a circle, Charlie's going to go round that circle, aren't they? And they know you're going to go in one direction, OK? And if you wait 20 minutes for a chopper to come in and pick up a Charlie, you're going to get hit somewhere, aren't you? So if they're all dead, if they're all dead, and you go off for a thousand metres and go to ground, you're safe, you're not going to get hit. So what are you going to do? Common sense isn't it?...Why put anyone in jeopardy for a Charlie?³⁵

Another veteran recalls that after one contact, 'two gooks had been wounded, we followed them up and, I'm not bullshitting you, they were executed....one of them had been shot through the hip, one of these gooks, and we dragged him along and he was leaned against a tree and a barrel put in his mouth, right?...Because one of our mates had just been cleaned out and we were angry, weren't we, you know? We would have chased those jokers right across the Cambodian border.'³⁶

Another veteran has memories of shooting a Vietcong as the man was saying Chieu Hoi, the Vietnamese term for surrender.³⁷ For this veteran, the decision to shoot was prompted by the common knowledge that the enemy were known to booby trap themselves before attempting to surrender, or to booby trap their wounded or dead.³⁸ Precautions with dead bodies were taken by tying a rope around the corpse,

retreating to a safe distance, then pulling the bodies over.³⁹ One infantryman remembers that because of these potential dangers, 'you're not going to go up to one of them that's saying Chieu Hoi, Chieu Hoi, and pat him on the shoulder and say, oh, give us your weapon mate, because you don't know what he's going to do because they, they were ready to die no matter what, eh? And that was it, so you killed them.'⁴⁰ Another veteran was told to shoot the enemy on the ground 'in case they were faking death and they get you in the back.'⁴¹

The killing of wounded enemy does not appear to have been restricted to enlisted men as one veteran can recall an incident when a wounded enemy soldier was shot by a junior officer. The shooting was this officer's 'first kill.'⁴² There is also evidence to indicate that while officers may not have openly condoned this type of activity, there were times when it was not rigorously discouraged. An ex-infantryman recalls an incident when a team mate approached a wounded enemy soldier and 'shoved the machine gun in his mouth and pulled the trigger and he misfired. And [the officer] said, oh, we'll take him prisoner. But anyway he died...on the operating table, we were told later. In other words, the ARVN killed him.'⁴³

Veterans recall that the killing of wounded enemy was not uncommon and was considered by many to be a normal part of combat, several men observing that it happened in the heat of battle, and that such activities were different to killing in cold blood.⁴⁴ One veteran states, 'It happened and I defy any, any company to say

that it didn't happen in their company after a major contact. And it happens, it happens in war, that happens in war'⁴⁵, while another knows 'for a fact that there were prisoners bumped off at times, but it happens in all wars.'⁴⁶ On the other hand, many veterans do not recall experiencing such episodes during their tours.⁴⁷ One ex-officer is personally not aware that wounded enemy or prisoners were killed by New Zealand troops in Vietnam, and would have been obliged under military and civil law to take action if he had been. He emphasises, as do other veterans, that in wartime there is always a fine line between the cessation of combat and the taking of a prisoner.⁴⁸ Other veterans believe that incidents such as the killing of wounded enemy would not necessarily have been reported back to Headquarters because they were considered by the men in the field to be a normal part of combat, and therefore did not warrant special mention, and also because they may have been disapproved of. One man can remember preparing to shoot a wounded Vietcong and being warned by a friend not to because he was 'being watched by upstairs' by the occupants of a helicopter.⁴⁹

If there was an unofficial policy in Vietnam of killing wounded enemy soldiers, it was one which the Australians also appear to have adopted. In his account of Australian atrocities in Vietnam, Australian university lecturer in psychology Alex Carey wrote during the Vietnam War, 'our soldiers shoot their wounded Vietcong captives after a battle, because they have found that if any among their captives have the means to do so they will kill themselves and an Australian rather than

surrender. But how should we expect our Vietcong captives to behave otherwise while we - in flat contravention of the Geneva Conventions -continue to hand them over to the South Vietnamese Army, who will in any case kill them?' Carey believes that while Australian soldiers must take some responsibility for their actions, it must also be shared with the politicians who sent them to Vietnam and consequently placed them in situations where they were forced to choose between 'defeat on the one hand and ever worsening barbarities on the other.'⁵⁰

New Zealand soldiers in Vietnam had of course been trained to kill the enemy, but the necessity of killing enemy female soldiers could be very disturbing for some men. During the mop-up phase after one major contact, one ex-infantryman remembers being distraught when he discovered that as the machine gunner for his section, he had killed approximately 14 female combatants. 'I stood there, I think it was the first time ever on the battlefield, and I shed tears. I was standing there, there were tears coming down me, I was standing there with this bloody M60 and I'd done this to all these women and I just said to myself, what the hell have they turned you into...? What's happened to you?' This brought him to the realisation that 'we were in a pretty dirty sort of a war and we had to fight in the best way we knew how and stay alive the best way we knew.'⁵¹ Allied troops also quickly discovered that the Vietnamese civilians whom they thought they were fighting to protect could also be the enemy. As a result of witnessing allied casualties caused by civilians, 'Bill M' subsequently did not 'give a shit about the arseholes', and recalls

that his company would steal food as a form of petty revenge from the villagers in the area known as the Long Green⁵² near Dat Do. Most of the casualties incurred by his company occurred in this area as a result of mine incidents and it was commonly believed that the villagers were responsible for laying the mines.⁵³ John Moller remembers thinking that the situation in the Long Green area was 'a bit surreal' because the mines were originally made by the Americans, supplied to and laid by the Australians, stolen by the Vietcong, and used to kill New Zealanders. Moller also thought the original Australian decision to lay the mines and leave them unattended 'a bit stupid'.⁵⁴

Another veteran also considered civilians to be the enemy and treated them as such. He recalls repeatedly firing a 40mm grenade launcher into a house where he had seen a suspected enemy run, knowing that there were also civilians inside, but 'to me they were all enemy, they were supporting the enemy.' He recalls feelings of hate towards these civilians although in retrospect he realises that they probably did not have a choice about which side they supported at the time.⁵⁵ Similar feelings of confusion and frustration allowed some New Zealand troops to carry out acts such as throwing exploding detonating cord into a rubbish dump where children were hunting for food, not caring 'if we killed any kids',⁵⁶ and sitting on a beach firing an M79 grenade launcher at a Vietnamese junk, not knowing or concerned whether it was occupied by Vietnamese civilians or the enemy.⁵⁷

The issue of atrocities, or 'acts of war', has always been emotive. When the Australian book *War: Australia and Vietnam* was published in 1987, a chapter contributed by a NVA veteran, Colonel Trung, was received by some Australians as 'horrendous and unbelievable', 'preposterous rubbish', and 'absolutely scurrilous'.⁵⁸ Trung's chapter contains a paragraph which states, 'The crimes [Australians] committed in Phuoc Tuy were in no way less ferocious than those of the US and puppet troops. Savage beatings, rapes, arbitrary arrests, beheadings, the plucking out of people's livers, the exposure of corpses for deterrent purposes, wanton shootings - these were common practices. About 890 innocent people were killed in the period from September 1969 to October 1971.'⁵⁹ Kenneth Maddock, editor of a collection of informed reflections on Australia's involvement in Vietnam, interviewed Trung and researched his allegations. He came to the conclusion that some were valid and legitimate wartime practices, for example, the arrests and the exhibition of corpses, a practice which the New Zealanders also occasionally employed as a deterrent but which was not condoned by the New Zealand Army.⁶⁰ Maddock concluded that the allegations of more barbaric behaviour such as decapitation and the removal of livers had been erroneously attributed to the Australians instead of ARVN, American, Vietcong and Cambodian forces which were alleged to have committed such acts on occasion.⁶¹

Also in 1987, Stuart Rintoul published *Ashes of Vietnam*, which was not well received by Australian Vietnam veterans and considered by them to be sensationalist

and distorted. Unlike Trung's chapter in *War: Australia and Vietnam*, it did not create a public furore. In the book Rintoul writes, 'Australians in Vietnam were guilty of acts of barbarity. There were Australians whose morality was so eroded that they murdered villagers, raped women, tortured and killed wounded enemy soldiers and mutilated corpses.'⁶² This is confusing as it quite clear in the book, as pointed out by Kenneth Maddock, that most of the barbarities described by Rintoul's informants are blamed on 'Americans, New Zealanders, or Vietnamese, with Communists accused of the worst cruelties.'⁶³ For example, one veteran interviewed by Rintoul told him that a Maori soldier, apparently serving in an Australian unit, dug up an enemy body and removed the head, stripped off the flesh, leaving the hair, and 'wired it through the chinbone on the front of his carrier.'⁶⁴ In reference to Trung's allegations, Maddock writes, 'If these are true stories, we can see an Australian association with decapitation, without needing to infer that Australians were guilty of the practice',⁶⁵ which is a very neat way of transferring suspicion of guilt from one nationality to another. New Zealand troops were also accused of committing atrocities, at least indirectly, by New Zealand journalist Rex Hollis. His brief volume, titled *Vietnam Eye-Witness* and published by the Communist Party of New Zealand in 1965, proposes that the New Zealand Government's support of U.S. military activity in Vietnam condoned the atrocities perpetrated by American troops and therefore subsequently implicated the New Zealanders also serving there.⁶⁶

No nation finds it easy to accept that its soldiers are capable of wartime atrocities. However, over the past decade and a half, some Americans have come to accept the view that Vietnam was neither a just nor a politically sound war, and have concurred that it was a military, moral and psychological disaster for many of those who participated and for the American nation as a whole. Some New Zealanders may have not yet reached this level of acceptance. When Rod Eder published his novel *Deep Jay* in 1995, which includes a description of the killing of a wounded enemy prisoner,⁶⁷ considerable media debate ensued and Eder was pressed to provide names and dates.⁶⁸ Other Vietnam veterans were featured in the media denying that such acts ever occurred and declaring that such a claim was a slur on all New Zealand Vietnam veterans. An article by New Zealand military historian Colin Smith was also published in Mike Subritzky's *The Vietnam Scrapbook* giving very detailed reasons why such incidents could not 'on the balance of probability' have occurred. Smith reinforces his argument by noting that only one such allegation has been made to date.⁶⁹ Defence Minister Warren Cooper was quoted in the *Evening Standard* as saying that the allegations did not warrant an official investigation at that point in time as no specific details were available. He also implied that Eder's motivations for suggesting that such incidents did occur were 'avarice and his desire to sell his books.'⁷⁰

Despite denials that acts which could be considered as atrocities were committed by New Zealanders, the evidence indicates that on occasion they probably were. This

does not mean that New Zealanders were not empathetic at times towards their enemy. Gerald Southon remembers discovering that the fallacy that it is easy to kill a person is not necessarily true, particularly in an ambush situation. He recalls aiming his rifle at an enemy soldier walking down a track towards him and experiencing his heart 'going boom boom and you're really dry and you actually look at that person and you don't want to, the last thing you want to do is pull that trigger....A lot of things run through your mind....I wonder what their parents think, where do they come from, what about their families?'⁷¹ Moral discomfort and empathy aside, another veteran found killing the enemy difficult simply because 'the rounds were probably too powerful for them because they were very skinny fellas', and the bullets would go straight through them.⁷²

In retrospect, some veterans feel that they eventually became callous and desensitised to death, regarding human bodies as 'just a shell.'⁷³ John Moller considers, 'there's a sort of mechanism in the human brain where you just switch off. You know, you see things which are terrible but you, they don't actually, you *see* them but you don't register them in a sort of deliberate conscious manner but you file them away in your subconscious.' He remembers having to bury seven enemy dead after they had been shot at and incinerated when the cordite they were carrying ignited. When they were taken off the wire in front of the platoon's position they fell apart like 'over-cooked blimmin' roast pork.' Moller recalls that at the time he relegated the incident to his subconscious but could not eat pork for

years afterwards.⁷⁴ Another veteran remembers an incident when the top of an enemy soldier's skull was shot off during a contact, 'And one of our guys, he scraped the brains out, put his, clenched [the body's] fist, pushed it inside his head, and propped him up on the side of the track. So this nog was sitting there cross-legged,...sitting there with his hand inside his head and you wouldn't see him until you'd come right round the corner and he was there, you know? And it was, we never booby-trapped him or anything but it was, you know,...we never thought about it, really.'⁷⁵ Nigel Martin accidentally sat on a fresh grave one day which burst, 'and all these stomach gases and intestines and everything all [went] up me back. Well, we'd just had a [resupply], I had to wear that shirt for three days. It wasn't nice, I'm telling you, it wasn't nice. But I still had me lunch.'⁷⁶

Numbing of sensitivities was not an experience confined to infantrymen alone. Tom Palmer remembers a meal with his team mates during a day of 'cut and slash' medical work wearing the blood-soaked clothes he had been operating in. 'We went to lunch and sat down amidst the "Yanks" who were also having theirs....The medics got stuck in and heartily ate the meal whatever it was. The others tried with varying degrees of success.'⁷⁷ Another ex-medic remembers, 'you got to the stage where nothing you saw really worried you in the finish. You sort of became dehumanised a bit.'⁷⁸ Richard Cairns is of the opinion that perhaps 'civilisation is a very thin veneer on mankind in terms of...our existence in that you peel away that veneer of civility and you really are not much better than the rest of the animals that

live in the jungle and it was the law of the jungle that largely took over.’⁷⁹ An ex-officer agrees. ‘You’re living very close to the ground and it’s bound to, you lose your sort of respect.’⁸⁰ This desensitisation, considered by some veterans to be a reaction to the combat environment,⁸¹ abated for some men after they returned to New Zealand, while others have found that they still have no reaction to a dead body today.⁸²

Some less experienced troops initially encountered difficulty with the sight and smell of dead and mutilated bodies, and it was up to the more senior soldiers to help them through this.⁸³ ‘Steve D’ remembers that ‘Some of the younger fellas found it a bit harder...to get a grip on, to sort of accept, and were not switched on afterwards....you tell them to sort their shit out, that’s what’s happening [and] if you don’t keep your eyes open it’s going to happen to you.’⁸⁴ The first time Mike Perreau encountered a dead body, ‘[I] looked away, I was spewing my bloody ring out, and I did get a kick up the arse. But, you know, it was just one of those standard procedures that you had to follow but it was sort of brand new to me and the first body I’d ever really seen but from there it was no problem.’⁸⁵

At times even experienced troops found the sight of dead and mutilated bodies upsetting. John Pointon found the duty of identifying bodies very unpleasant, especially when they were New Zealanders,⁸⁶ as did another veteran who was required to identify a New Zealand soldier in a U.S. mortuary at Tan Son Nhut. The mortuary was a ‘charnel house with bodies on slabs in all sorts of posture, eg.

twisted with results of fire, etc. It was production line stuff with, with rubber body bags, and metal containers piled up in readiness to be individually filled.’⁸⁷ Harry Shaw also remembers feeling extremely upset when he was required to minister to the bodies of two Australian soldiers who had both had their chest and stomach areas completely blown away. The experience was very traumatic for him and he recalls, ‘[I] just looked at them and thought what a useless waste of human life, you poor devils, and your parents don’t know you’re dead yet and they’ve got a shock coming to them.’⁸⁸

For some New Zealanders, cultural beliefs contributed to attitudes towards death and dead bodies. Richard Cairns remembers an occasion during a night ambush when the Maori soldiers in his team became more and more agitated as the night wore on. When they realised they were in a Vietnamese graveyard, their unease increased, and by morning everyone in the team was extremely uncomfortable and took some time to settle.⁸⁹ Dave Douglas, contrary to what he himself assumed would be the case, found that ‘The Maoris were bloody scared...of dead people’, and considered that Pakeha soldiers dealt with the issue of dead bodies better than did Maori. He recalls a Maori team mate who shot his first enemy while on sentry duty. The man had been told to stay at his post if he fired shots, but ‘he came *belting* back down the track and the first thing you saw was his eyes like bloody shining headlights! They were so big, they were huge!’ The body was brought into the harbour, or night, position causing the man who had done the shooting to

endure the rest of the night in a 'petrified' state. Douglas observed that the only people more frightened than Maori of dead bodies were the Islanders in his company.⁹⁰ In a similar situation, Hardie Martin can remember being harboured up in a position near an enemy corpse. The Maori soldiers in his team could not settle because they felt that 'the spirit [was] still there because he'd just been killed that day.'⁹¹ Those who offended against cultural beliefs could be ostracised. One ex-section commander recalls an occasion when his team was required to dig up an enemy body to check that weapons had not been hidden underneath it. The Maori soldier who volunteered to do this kicked the head off the corpse and as a result, 'there was none of my guys would basher up [partner] with him for the whole operation.'⁹²

Friendly fire injuries, or casualties caused by accidental allied attack on other allied troops, were another unpleasant reality of combat. One of John Hall's biggest fears was that his men would be wounded by friendly fire, which 'the incidents or the threat thereof are pretty much legion and they really did have me on the alert. The fire control system through the radios was exercised quite often to get it stopped.' Unfortunately, while patrolling, an element of Hall's company unexpectedly came across an Australian patrol which was not known to be in the area and accidentally shot and wounded an Australian soldier. A court of enquiry was instigated but John Hall was never advised of the outcome. However, he did hear that the Australian commanding officer at the time 'fortuitously stopped a very malicious badly worded

report going through to Canberra on the incident that started to really blame us.

That wasn't the case, it could have happened anywhere.'⁹³ Brendan Duggan remembers with regret a similar incident which occurred just after the Tet offensive of 1968. 'We were operating in open country when the lead scout and myself observed armed soldiers 100 yards in front of us. We immediately went into our contact drill. They opened fire on us and we returned the same [and] a heavy fire-fight took place. At about this time I noticed them run off yelling and screaming [so] we ceased fire and went forward and found that we had been attacked by South Vietnamese troops. We suffered no casualties but they lost five soldiers including the officer.'⁹⁴

Ex-gunner Allan Grayling can also recall a traumatic incident which he feels has greatly contributed to the post-Vietnam PTSD problems he has experienced. The incident occurred when an inexperienced Australian platoon commander requested demonstration fire. 161 Battery responded, the rounds falling within the safety limits of the platoon. The platoon commander ordered a further drop correction and two rounds fire for effect. This brought the fire onto his own position and killed several of his own men.⁹⁵ For Grayling, 'the hardest thing was sitting and listening over the tannoy system as they screamed "Cease fire, cease fire".'⁹⁶ Gerald Southon had a very similar experience during his first tour of Vietnam with 161 Battery. A request for artillery had been received at the New Zealand artillery command post and an inexperienced New Zealand officer, newly arrived in Vietnam, incorrectly

relayed the co-ordinates to 161 and caused the fire to fall short onto 6RAR's Headquarters Company, wounding four Australians. The officer at fault was returned to New Zealand almost immediately. Southon recalls that the entire New Zealand battery felt that they 'took the blame as a whole.' He also remembers feeling sorry for the New Zealand officer in question because the battery field staff, who were allegedly sitting in the command post playing cards at the time, had given him such a responsible task prior to him having had any practical experience.⁹⁷

During his second tour with the infantry, Southon was also present when a junior New Zealand officer was accidentally killed by claymore mines laid by his own platoon. The officer stood up during an alert to survey the area and 'the next minute all the claymores went off and he caught the whole blast in [the chest]...and he turned around and he said, "Oh no", then he dropped and I knew straight away that he'd had it.' Another New Zealander, who was seriously wounded in the same incident and casevaced to hospital, was allegedly instructed by the New Zealand Army not to divulge the real details of the incident but to give another more palatable version.⁹⁸ Nigel Martin can remember an awe-inspiring but terrifying incident when his team were dropped by helicopter into the wrong area, and 'a bloody Huey Cobra come on top of us and had a go at us with his mini-guns. I tell you what, it was awesome...it was unreal, you know? And we all go, "What the fuck was that", you know, and then he was just off.'⁹⁹ Dave Douglas feels that friendly fire injuries were 'the sort of thing you don't dwell on. You just got to, the

next day is another day, you just carry on and see what's going to happen for the, what's in store for you around the corner again.'¹⁰⁰

Fear of combat, and the stresses associated with combat, could be overwhelming for some soldiers and occasionally resulted in emotional breakdown or attempts to avoid dangerous duties such as going out on operations.¹⁰¹ One ex-officer recalls, 'the weak reeds, I like to think there weren't any, but in fact there were. There was a chap who was quite screwball and we shunted him away on his leave back to Terendak early in the piece and I wrote a quiet note to the doctor who took one look at him and he was on his way to New Zealand...but in retrospect he should never have been in.'¹⁰² Another veteran remembers that some men 'began to look forward to going home very early in the piece and some began to practice avoidance of going out into the jungle at all', and would do this by saying they were too ill or injured to go.¹⁰³

'Andrew B' recalls that 'There [were] times when people broke down emotionally and they had to be supported at times or quite ruthlessly shaken back to reality, to bury their emotion and get on with the job.'¹⁰⁴ Dave Douglas is one of several veterans who did not personally witness anyone practicing avoidance,¹⁰⁵ but he does remember one contact 'where they sort of broke, I suppose....I think a lot of it was a combination of things that was happening back home....these were married guys [and] they had their bloody wives and families back there in Malaya and...stories were rife about the women back [there] fooling around.'¹⁰⁶ 'Steve D' had one of his

men voluntarily tell him that he was nervous and frightened that he would make a mistake at a crucial time and cause the death of one of his team mates. 'Steve D' referred him to 'the powers that be' and the man was found a position at Nui Dat where he was able to perform effectively. The reason for him being kept out of the field was not made public to the rest of the men.¹⁰⁷ Richard Cairns does not remember anyone 'being disciplined for claiming that they were sick or not well and I think it's testimony to the leadership style of the people who were our officers and NCOs that they didn't charge people. They probably perhaps accepted, with reservation, what some individuals were saying, and maybe they found another form of employment that...meant that they could still perform their duty and they could perhaps better perform their duties in a slightly different environment.'¹⁰⁸

In John Treanor's experience, soldiers who practiced avoidance were not 'hassled' by the other men because in the field they were considered a liability and could put the team at risk. He also recalls a soldier who was 'actually on the bus travelling from Terendak to Changi in Singapore where they were to fly out from, and he lost his mind, on the bus, and basically became a blithering wreck and I don't know whether it was a nervous breakdown or not at that time, you know, but he just kind of lost his head.' This man's personality had changed markedly during the work-up period prior to going to Vietnam and he was hospitalised after the episode on the bus and eventually shipped home.¹⁰⁹ One ex-platoon commander was present when a soldier 'ran amok with a knife...he was stressed out. I think the game was too big

for him. He was inadequate and that generated its own stresses.¹¹⁰ While this appears to have been a genuine case of emotional breakdown, Gordon Dalziel believes that men who practiced deliberate avoidance possibly did so because they could see the 'pointlessness' of fighting in Vietnam, and does not feel that these men were necessarily bad soldiers.¹¹¹ People who could not cope with their environment were labeled as 'blow-arses' by some troops.¹¹² However, even though such men were usually removed from field operations or Vietnam altogether, the feeling towards them generally was not negative. Mike Perreau believes that 'they were better off out of the system because we had to rely on each other so much.'¹¹³ Hardie Martin feels that for people who could not come to terms with their fears, it was 'more embarrassing than anything else because...people went there to find out how the hell they'd cope.'¹¹⁴

For some men like Mike Perreau, it was a matter of pride to go out on operations even when genuinely unwell,¹¹⁵ even if they did receive 'a kick in the arse for...risking bloody other people's bloody lives.' Perreau personally felt that it was not done to 'blow-arse'.¹¹⁶ Bruce Liddall also remembers that 'pride was a big thing. No-one wanted to be LOB [left out of battle].'¹¹⁷ Another veteran still feels extremely guilty about missing several operations due to a bad case of malaria, remembering, 'that bothered me for years, the guilt of that, reallyit still eats the shit out of me today. But, hey, every bastard was doing his own thing. Guys wounded themselves to get the Christ out, you know, far worse than that.'¹¹⁸ This

veteran's guilt is in direct contrast to another ex-infantryman who 'never took my malaria pills for about, oh, I suppose the last three months in Vietnam and I suppose all the time back in Malaya, and I didn't get malaria until I arrived back in New Zealand. That really pissed me off.'¹¹⁹

One ex-platoon commander remembers that 'everybody was sick, but some chose to persevere, some longer than others in spite of that....I think anybody after the first couple of ops could have got a medical certificate from the doctor to stay at [Nui Dat].' Over the two years that he commanded his platoon, '82 different men marched through it to maintain a strength of 36. When I did a head count at the end I still had 14 of the originals. We lost two killed and a handful of wounded. The rest was health, the rest of the turnover was health.'¹²⁰ Genuine illness among soldiers was very prevalent in Vietnam and included malaria and other specific febrile diseases, fever of unknown origin, gastroenteritis and diarrhoea, amoebiasis, bacillary dysentery, skin diseases, upper respiratory tract infections, infective hepatitis, worm infestations, and VD. As an example of the extent to which illnesses affected troops, of the 41,000 Australians who served in Vietnam from June 1962 to July 1965, approximately 16,000 personnel were reported as requiring treatment as a result of contracting the above diseases.¹²¹

It appears to have been relatively rare for a New Zealand soldier to deliberately wound himself to avoid duties, although this did happen in the case of one private who shot himself in the foot after seven months in Vietnam. He apparently had had

a 'gutsful' and decided "'Hey, I want to go home"', and that was it, put a shot through his foot.' This episode was kept very quiet and 'low profile'.¹²² John Moller remembers that 'One of my guys actually shot himself through the hand one night back in base but, you know, we were charitable about it and put it down as an accident because he was as pissed as a bloody owl.'¹²³

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The loss of a team mate through either death or serious injury could have a profound impact on the team as a whole. Casualties caused by mines were particularly disturbing as there were often no enemy to confront after the incident. The team dynamic was disrupted and the remaining team members left unsettled. As there was little time in the field for troops to grieve and no other outlets for their feelings, many troops expressed their grief as anger and directed this at the enemy. It is possible that as most of the New Zealand teams went to Vietnam as complete units, the effect of losing a member from within a unit may have had more impact than it might have had on teams which had not formed such close bonds. Grieving, when the opportunity arose, usually when a company returned to Nui Dat, was often accompanied by getting drunk. Some troops would experience emotional outbursts and others would retreat into themselves. Evidence suggests that the subject of a team mate's death was actively avoided by troops rather than confronted.

Evidence also suggests that some New Zealand troops in Vietnam may have killed wounded enemy soldiers, and that the decision to do so was based on what the troops believed to be common sense with regard to the safety of their team and, in some cases, compassion for the enemy soldier. There is no evidence suggesting that New Zealand troops killed enemy who had been formally taken prisoner and who were uninjured. This raises the complex issue of combat ethics and, indeed, the definition of the term 'prisoner'. Is a prisoner an enemy soldier who has been captured and who, after combat has ceased, will be taken away for the purpose of extracting intelligence? Or is a prisoner an enemy soldier who has been injured and unable to run away, but who has not indicated surrender? Is the completion of the killing, therefore, an atrocity, or simply the conclusion of the original aim of combat which is to negate the enemy? It is unlikely that New Zealand troops, or any troops in Vietnam, took the time during a contact to debate these questions, and it is clear that they did what they considered at the time to be practical and expedient. It is undeniable that the killing of wounded enemy and prisoners, however a prisoner is defined, has occurred in all wars and that soldiers from all nations have implemented the practice at some point, including New Zealanders. There was nothing special about the Vietnam War which might suggest that this type of activity would not or should not have occurred there. The fact that other allied troops did it is widely documented. But it is clear, as indicated by the evidence, that not every New Zealander in Vietnam took part in, or witnessed, the killing of prisoners and it is more than likely that some veterans were not even aware of the practice.

Some New Zealanders experienced emotional desensitisation after a period of combat exposure in Vietnam. Emotional numbing was in fact encouraged as squeamishness and sensitivity were considered to at times hamper performance. For many troops, desensitisation was a useful internal protection mechanism which prevented them from having to consciously register the horrors they were experiencing, and allowed them to continue operating. However, the cultural beliefs of some soldiers, particularly Maori, could at times compromise this mechanism and create antagonism between spiritual conventions and martial practices. Other troops found it very difficult to come to terms with the fact that they were required to resort to arms against women and children, an inescapable reality in Vietnam. Moral dilemmas such as these, repeated emotional assaults and the constant threat of physical harm encountered during a tour in Vietnam created considerable tensions and stresses and the New Zealanders, like all other troops, developed their own antidotes with which to combat these.

¹ Peter Hotop, 7/96.

² ANON, 14/9/95.

³ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.

⁴ 'Bill M', 15/3/95.

⁵ Interview 28/2.

⁶ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.

⁷ Interview 11.

⁸ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.

⁹ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.

¹⁰ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.

¹¹ Peter Hotop, 7/96.

¹² 'Sniper', 13/7/96.

¹³ *The Vietnam War Day by Day*, edited by John S Bowman (London, 1989), p. 121.

¹⁴ Jeremy Barnes, *The Pictorial History of the Vietnam War* (London, 1988), p. 139.

¹⁵ Robert Jay Lifton, *Home From the War: Vietnam Veterans; Neither Victims Nor Executioners* (London, 1973), pp. 46-49.

¹⁶ Barnes, p. 139.

¹⁷ Gerald Southon and 'Sniper', 13/7/96.

¹⁸ ANON, 29/8/95.

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- 19 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
20 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
21 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; John Hall, 4/2/96; Tom Palmer 13/7/96; 1/3/96.
22 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
23 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
24 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
25 ANON, 22/4/96.
26 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
27 ANON, 28/12/95.
28 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
29 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
30 John Hall, 4/2/96.
31 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
32 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
33 Interview 28/1.
34 Interview 28/2.
35 Interview 28/4.
36 Interview 28/2.
37 Interview 28/1.
38 See also Colin Whyte, 3/2/96, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
39 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
40 Interview 28/4.
41 Interview 36/1.
42 Interview 28/4.
43 *ibid.*
44 See Hardie Martin, Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
45 Interview 28/2.
46 Interview 5.
47 See Mike Perreau, 2/3/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
48 Interview 25. See also Interviews 28/3, 28/9.
49 Interview 28/2.
50 Alex Carey, *Australian Atrocities in Vietnam* (Sydney, ?), p. 3.
51 Interview 7.
52 The 'Long Green' and the 'Light Green' were terms for different types of jungle. Colin Smith, *The Killing Zone: the New Zealand Infantry in Vietnam* (Auckland, 1995), p. 42.
53 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
54 John Moller, 10/7/95.
55 Interview 36/1.
56 Interview 36.
57 Interview 6.
58 Kenneth Maddock, 'Going Over the Limit? - the Question of Australian Atrocities, in *Memories of Vietnam*, edited by Kenneth Maddock (New South Wales, 1991), p. 151.
59 Colonel Trung quoted in *Memories of Vietnam* p. 152.
60 Colin Sisson, *Wounded Warriors: The True Story of a Soldier in the Vietnam War and the Wounds Inflicted* (Auckland, 1993), p. 80.
61 Maddock, pp. 151-163.
62 Stuart Rintoul, *Ashes of Vietnam: Australian Voices* (Victoria, 1987), p. xiv.
63 Maddock, pp. 152-153.
64 Rintoul., p. 165.
65 Maddock, p. 155.
66 Rex Hollis, *Eye-witness Vietnam: an Eye-witness Account of U.S. Atrocities in Vietnam* (Auckland, 1965), pp. 23-29.
67 Rod Eder, *Deep Jay* (Birkenhead, 1995), pp. 70-81.
68 For a sample of the many newspaper articles which appeared subsequent to the publishing of *Deep J*, see *The West Coast Times*, 17/3/95; *The Christchurch Press*, 16/3/95, 17/5/95; *The Daily Telegraph*, 17/3/95; *The Evening Standard*, 22/3/95; *The Hawkes Bay Herald Tribune*, 16/3/95. Articles also appeared in Australian newspapers, for example, *The Australian*, 17/3/95, in which an Australian Vietnam veteran supported claims that prisoners were killed in Vietnam. *Deep J* also received similar support from New Zealand veterans of other wars. See articles in *The Sunday Star-Times*, 19/3/95; *The North Harbour News*, 30/3/95.

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- ⁶⁹ Colin Smith, 'The Balance of Probability', in *The Vietnam Scrapbook: the Second ANZAC Adventure*, edited by Mike Subritzky (Papakura, 1995), pp. 43-47.
- ⁷⁰ *The Evening Standard*, 25/3/95.
- ⁷¹ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ⁷² Interview 28/4.
- ⁷³ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ⁷⁴ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁷⁵ Interview 28/4.
- ⁷⁶ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- ⁷⁷ Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- ⁷⁸ ANON, 28/12/95.
- ⁷⁹ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ⁸⁰ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ⁸¹ See Hardie Martin, ANON, 2/3/96.
- ⁸² Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ⁸³ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; 'Steve D', 2/3/96; 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ⁸⁴ 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- ⁸⁵ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- ⁸⁶ John Pointon, 1/3/95
- ⁸⁷ ANON, 17/4/96.
- ⁸⁸ Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
- ⁸⁹ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ⁹⁰ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- ⁹¹ Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ⁹² 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- ⁹³ John Hall, 4/2/96.
- ⁹⁴ Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
- ⁹⁵ S.D. Newman (Lt.), *Vietnam Gunners: 161 Battery RNZA, South Vietnam, 1965-71* (Tauranga, 1988), p. 104.
- ⁹⁶ Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- ⁹⁷ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96. See also Newman, pp. 51-53.
- ⁹⁸ Interview 36/3.
- ⁹⁹ Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹⁰⁰ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95. See also ANON, 22/4/96.
- ¹⁰¹ See ANON, 24/6/96; Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ¹⁰² Interview 25.
- ¹⁰³ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ¹⁰⁴ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ¹⁰⁵ See ANON, 17/4/96; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; ANON, 7/2/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/96.
- ¹⁰⁶ Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- ¹⁰⁷ 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- ¹⁰⁸ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ¹⁰⁹ John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ¹¹⁰ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ¹¹¹ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- ¹¹² Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹³ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹⁴ Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹⁵ *ibid.*
- ¹¹⁶ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹⁷ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹⁸ Interview 32.
- ¹¹⁹ Interview 28/4.
- ¹²⁰ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ¹²¹ Brendan G. O'Keefe and F.B. Smith, *Medicine at War: Medical Aspects of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1950-1972* (New South Wales, 1994), p. 399.
- ¹²² Interview 28/4.
- ¹²³ John Moller, 10/7/95.

CHAPTER EIGHT: Beer, bargirls, and brawling; antidotes for combat.

For many New Zealand troops in Vietnam, getting drunk, having a brawl, or using the services of prostitutes were the preferred methods for relaxing and releasing stress.¹ Alcohol was cheap, fighting was free, and women were available on the infrequent RinC trips to Vung Tau. New Zealand infantry companies spent most of their time in Vietnam patrolling out in the field, and 161 Battery was regularly deployed away from Nui Dat to fire bases around Phuoc Tuy province. Between operations, both companies and the battery would return to Nui Dat to rest for several days and prepare for the next operation which could be as short as two days, or as long as, on one occasion, four months.² Most soldiers had the chance to visit Vung Tau for RinC for two or three days at least once, and usually twice, during their tours.

Although Nui Dat base accommodated several thousand troops, security remained an issue and soldiers were required to do sentry duty and other similar tasks while in camp. Fred Barclay recalls, 'the place used to get mortared or whatever all the time and I mean you couldn't get away from it.' In one instance, an enemy rocket landed directly behind Barclay on SAS Hill where 4Troop lived in the centre of the camp but fortunately, it 'never went off, it just opened up like a big peeled banana, and it doesn't do a lot for saying, well, I'll just go back and read my Mills and Boone or

whatever.’³ Living with the constant threat of attack appears to have fostered a somewhat cavalier attitude in some men. Brendan Duggan, for example, remembers, ‘Playing cards one night at the base camp when the alarm went off. The VC were outside the wire and we had to stand to. I was upset as I had just been dealt the best hand of the night and could not play it.’⁴

Despite the perpetual threat of attack, Nui Dat was considered a safer place to be than in the field and time at the base gave troops an opportunity to rest and relax. On immediate return from an operation, weapons had to be checked and cleaned and any faulty equipment replaced, including wrecked clothes and boots (see Appendix G, Photograph 10). The next task would be a thorough wash to remove accumulated dirt, dust and sweat, officers would be debriefed and receive orders for the next operation,⁵ and there would often be a company hangi or barbecue. Murray Deed remembers that a special effort would be made for these occasions and he would go into town to the local markets and buy seafood and other fresh food.⁶ There was usually time at Nui Dat to play informal games of sport, cards, board games and Housie, and write letters, read, and see the occasional touring show. Australian, U.S. and Philippine entertainers regularly toured the military bases in Vietnam, and New Zealand’s own Maori Volcanics toured five times when the New Zealanders were there (see Appendix G, Photograph 11).⁷ Exotic dancers, or strippers, also visited Nui Dat on occasion.⁸

The base also had an outdoor picture theatre. Colin Whyte recalls a rather surreal experience, 'sitting down, relaxed, having a drink of Coke, watching this movie, and I glanced up and there was a firefight going on, someone was attacking a unit there, and there were gunships there and the artillery was coming in, and we were watching a movie!'⁹ Fred Barclay, on the other hand, would not attend outdoor films because 'if I was the local enemy commander, every time I saw the thing on I would fire a few mortar bombs just to keep them off balance, you know. And it just struck me it just wasn't the right place to be. There were too many people in one small area and I didn't ever bother going.'¹⁰

Nui Dat would also receive official visitors and, on occasion, ladies from the Salvation Army who would travel from Saigon to talk to the troops.¹¹ John Treanor remembers numerous visits from 'some senior Government official or some senior military official, because they were always tiki-touring through the place while we were there and they'd turn up at the barbecue.'¹² Not all visitors were appreciated. Dave Orbell recalls his company being visited by New Zealand Members of Parliament who, he feels, had no understanding at all of the soldiers' environment or experiences, although they would sit down with soldiers and 'yak the bullshit.' 'We had values and we had a sense of purpose, and the way that these pricks treated us over there was, it degraded (*sic*) that in a sense, that they said, oh, you know, Mum and Dad and Watties bloody baked beans and what sort of beer do you like and take a message home to Mum, all this pedandering (*sic*) type crap, and [then]

they'd piss off.' Orbell also remembers Prime Minister Keith Holyoake visiting at one point and the New Zealand troops at the base, as a gesture of protest at the Government's treatment of New Zealanders serving in Vietnam, being very reluctant to turn out for a parade.¹³ Harry Shaw was also unimpressed with the New Zealand politicians who visited because in his view, representatives from both the Labour and National parties ignored what they saw in Vietnam and went home reaffirming their predetermined decisions that 'there's no question we shouldn't be there.'¹⁴ 'Bob P' recalls one New Zealand soldier who made his opinion of politicians quite clear:

We had this little guy in the unit...Ribs we used to call him, little skinny bugger he was, and anyway old Ribs, as soon as the top come off a can he was drunk, poor little bugger. Anyway, he'd had a mouthful plus half another one and he was well on the way and he walked up to Norman Kirk and...Norman's sitting there in a blue safari suit, you know, sweating like a pig and blobbed in the corner, and he says to old Norman Kirk, he says, "If you're so much against Vietnam how the bloody hell do you get a bludged trip up here like this?" And it just sort of broke the bloody place apart.¹⁵

The most popular form of recreation at Nui Dat appears to have been relaxing with a few, or more, beers,¹⁶ which was so cheap to buy that one could 'come out of the bush, [and be] drunk on a dollar!'¹⁷ One ex-officer considers that 'Grog has been the sort of traditional way of the Army to get people relaxed and it sort of, in that context, it causes no harm, they don't do any harm, though they sometimes punch each other up if there's a little bit of friction between a couple of guys, usually it never gets...out of hand.'¹⁸ 'Steve D' agrees. '[The Army] would more accept you

to go and get smashed out of your bloody tree, drinking piss and roaring round the lines or having a go at your mates, than you sneaking down the road and perhaps picking up a load or something, you know, because they knew where you were.’¹⁹

Another veteran remembers the company shout at post-operation barbecues, which would be a line of 44 gallon drums filled with beer on ice,²⁰ and several others recall trailer loads of beer at these events.²¹

An alcoholic ‘blow-out’ on the first or second night after coming back from an operation appears to have been common, but alcohol consumption would usually taper off to avoid fitness being affected,²² and because there was an unwritten rule adhered to by most troops which maintained that drinking stopped well prior to the start of a new operation.²³ Dave Douglas recalls:

You had one big blow-out, you know, one good night on the bloody booze, and then after that you sort of got back to reality and just had a few drinks and just calm yourself and get ready for your next op....It was a hell of a good feeling to get back and get blotto, you know, flake, get really splashed. You know, you woke up with a hell of a headache but the guys, you knew that the guys were all relaxed....because otherwise you could just bloody snap your fingers and they were just highly strung and, you know, all tensioned up....a lot of them I suppose had they not been able to have this bit of a break, bit of a booze-up there, probably a lot of them would have popped over the other side, you know, gone over the bloody edge.²⁴

In theory, beer was rationed to two cans per man per day but it was evidently not difficult to obtain more. Some veterans recall that the beer ration was accrued for troops who were on operations so there was plenty for them when they got back.²⁵

During ‘Matt G’s’ tour, Whiskey and Victor Companies had a covert arrangement

with an American PX in the area from which they purchased beer. This came to an end when both companies were out on operations for some time, and the Americans 'rang the Australian battalion to find out what happened and said, "Why aren't these people coming to get their beer", and [the Australians] said, "Oh, nobody goes in there and gets beer!" [The Americans said] "Oh, yes, they do!....[Y]ou've got two Kiwi companies that come down every two weeks and pick up a pallet each", and of course that got the kibosh put on that. By that time though we already had about three pallets stuck in one of the spare tents there.'²⁶ Fred Barclay considers that alcohol consumption at Nui Dat could at times be slightly excessive, prompting him to observe that 'with 200 good guys I could have made such a bloody mess of Nui Dat on a Sunday when everybody was drunk...including me if I was there.'²⁷

Although troops were not supposed to drink on duty,²⁸ this did happen. 161 Battery's charge book for the period 30 December 1966 to 29 May 1968 records that during that time, 36 charges were brought against New Zealand troops for drinking on duty.²⁹ One ex-infantryman remembers an episode when he and his team mates were caught drinking on sentry duty by an Australian Captain. The next morning at 6 am all 18 of the accused were lined up outside the Australian officer's tent and the New Zealand company commander was duly summoned. When he asked his men had they been drinking on sentry duty, they all denied it, leaving the Australian officer unable to press charges. The New Zealand commander, having

given his blatantly hungover men the benefit of the doubt, left them to stand in the relentlessly hot sun for an hour, 'crook as dogs, sweat running off us', then sternly advised them that charges for any similar future misdemeanours would be doubled.³⁰

Another veteran recalls that when it was the turn of his team to do sentry duty, he and his friends would prop up a broom dressed in a helmet and flak jacket, which they named 'George', in front of the main gun, and sit inside the tent and drink.

One night an officer approached the tent and called out, "'Come on you chaps, I know you fellas are having a beer in there, come out here, come on.'" And one of our fellas...had his rifle and [cocked it], next minute [the officer] took off. Nothing was said, eh.'³¹

While alcohol could help to relieve accumulated tension, it could also encourage fighting and aggression, another common form of stress release. Several veterans recall deliberately engaging in hand-to-hand fighting with team mates in an effort to relieve tension after operations.³² Fred Barclay remembers occasional alcohol-related incidents in the combined Australian/New Zealand SAS senior officers' and NCOs' mess at Nui Dat, from which he and his team were barred 'so many times in a year...that it was unbelievable. None of it was for anything vicious, it was all drunken good fun sort of thing...and there might be a bit of fisticuffs for a couple of minutes but it was among guys of equal rank and it'd be sorted out.'³³ Similarly, ex-infantryman Mike Perreau was aware of 'regular scraps' in the infantry NCOs' and officers' messes.³⁴ Although Gordon Dalziel does not remember ever seeing a

New Zealander commit an act of aggression with a weapon while drunk,³⁵ and one ex-gunner considers that only a minority of individuals under the influence of alcohol would become emotional or violent,³⁶ some men did become aggressive when intoxicated. During 'Andrew B's' tour, 'there were a few incidences of guys getting drunk and sort of going off their heads and shooting their rifle at people and so on',³⁷ and Dave Douglas remembers a period when beer was rationed for a short period so some soldiers 'went up to different other lines and got, you know, got liquored up and started a little fight of their own, little gun fight of (*sic*) shooting shadows of their own.'³⁸

In one disastrous case a New Zealand soldier committed suicide at Nui Dat. The man had been arrested for drinking while on duty but had absconded to a nearby American base. After he had been re-arrested and returned to Nui Dat he then assaulted one of his escorts and ran off to his tent. When he was confronted by the duty NCO, the man produced his rifle and aimed it at the NCO's stomach. The NCO 'turned and walked away, and I heard a shot, and he'd put the rifle in his mouth.' The NCO blamed himself for the suicide, was threatened by some of the other troops who felt that the affair had been mishandled, and was kept out of the area on the day of the funeral which he consequently missed. Later, he was 'put on duty away from the camp and I understand that the [senior officer] came from the Australian Brigade and lined everyone else up...and told them any more threats and they'd be dealt with.'³⁹

The potential for incidents like this, plus the need to set an example and be constantly alert and prepared, resulted in some officers feeling that they were not in a position to be able to drink.⁴⁰ Laurie Pilling felt that he, personally, 'really had to be above reproach. I wouldn't let myself get drunk, and I thought I had to set an example, so therefore I really had to control myself quite rigidly and I went to a fair degree to do that and by and large the New Zealand officers did that, the ones that I was associated with particularly, the senior officers.' 1NZATTV policy maintained that 'only a third of the soldiers, if we were having a party, basically were allowed to drink because we were in an environment [in the Mekong Delta] where we were sort of on duty all the time which is a bit different from Nui Dat and other places where they had huge amounts. I mean, we were isolated in a Vietnam setting.'⁴¹

Drinking appears to have been a popular way of relaxing for New Zealanders wherever they were based in Vietnam. Several members of 1NZSMT at Bong Son remember that there was not a lot to do there except drink, if that was one's preference, play cards, or read. There were occasional visits to the American 173d Brigade which was up the road from the New Zealanders, or to the team's headquarters or the NZST or Red Cross teams, all at Qui Nhon.⁴² One veteran recalls that 'by the time I left Vietnam I could probably drink a 40 oz bottle of spirits without too much ill effect, horrifying my parents when I got home.' However he and his team mates could not often drink to excess as they never knew when they might receive an influx of casualties. Despite this restriction on their

recreational activities, he believes 'we all got on pretty well...there were a few arguments and that obviously, but we never seemed to come to blows.'⁴³

This was not always the case. Another 1NZSMT veteran chose not to visit the team headquarters at Qui Nhon because he and 'many others' became 'fed up with being detailed to do "jobs"...by the NZers who lived in the house in Qui Nhon. As far as I was concerned they were useless bone idle bastards...The comment was often made; "If the VC had wanted to pick someone to fuck up the Team they couldn't have picked any better themselves!"'⁴⁴ One ex-officer considers that for 1NZSMT at Bong Son during his tour, alcohol was not really a problem, although 'there were some people that were very busy, surgeons and so on were, and if you've got a booze party going on half the night all confined in not a very large house, you know, and there were beer cans hitting the wall, it sort of got a little bit uncomfortable. I'd go and shut them up, you know, tell them to pack it in and go to bed.'⁴⁵

For Peter Earsman in Saigon, 'There were, for all intents and purposes, no [women] with whom one could interact socially. Consequently, behaviour tended to be male-oriented. This lack of opportunity to interact on a social/friendly level with women results in one's social skills becoming blunted and predictable. In bars there was little male posturing as there was nobody to impress. (Or needed to be impressed, more correctly).'⁴⁶ While drinking appears to have been the norm for New Zealanders in Vietnam, there were one or two who chose to drink very little

during their tours.⁴⁷ One veteran who did not drink at all feels that this made him ‘a bit of a loner’, and recalls being told by some of the men he worked with that because he did not drink, or smoke, or ‘run around after girls’, he was not a real man.⁴⁸

John Hall does not consider, that in his company at least, there was a problem with excessive alcohol consumption in Vietnam, and like many other veterans,⁴⁹ he also does not believe that there was a drug problem within the New Zealand team. ‘The drug scene was there. We were probably naive enough in those days not to be worried about it....Whether the boys experimented with it or not I don’t know but it certainly didn’t come into the culture, the company culture.’⁵⁰ John Moller also remembers that ‘there wasn’t a drug culture amongst the New Zealanders which...because they were professional soldiers, they knew that if they got into that stuff, they goofed off, they weren’t going to come home.’ He recalls seeing advertisements on AFVN television informing U.S. troops that if they used drugs in the field they would die, and that ‘We were just sort of falling out of our chairs laughing.’⁵¹ A psychologist who visited Peter Hotop’s company reported that they ‘certainly didn’t have any drug problems - the troops liked their beer too much!’⁵²

While some veterans do not remember seeing New Zealanders using drugs, they did hear rumours that it had occurred. One ex-gunner remembers, ‘We all disapproved of it very strongly. Two or three hard cases were reputed to smoke dope when they went into American lines at the base or on leave, but never around the [New

Zealand lines]. I never saw them under the influence, and still don't know whether to believe the stories.'⁵³ Similarly, an ex-infantryman recalls, 'We didn't believe in drugs. I mean drugs was not part of our culture at that stage....alcohol was our release and smoking dope was just, some guys did it of course, there was always some that would do it, but most of us, the majority didn't, that I saw.'⁵⁴ Another veteran remembers, 'I don't think there was any in our company at the time but we heard that further back there was a few that used to smoke a bit of marijuana and stuff, but they weren't into any other drugs, I don't think.'⁵⁵ Peter Earsman recalls that 'The softer drugs, like pot, were readily available and cheap in Saigon. Twenty expertly rolled (and in some cases packaged) marijuana cigarettes cost US\$3.00. Nobody I knew had a problem. Hard drugs were not obvious.'⁵⁶

However, some veterans did observe marijuana being used on occasion by New Zealanders, or tried it themselves,⁵⁷ and several New Zealand soldiers were prosecuted for drug use in Vietnam.⁵⁸ One veteran observed that some young New Zealand troops, 'had no idea what they were getting into', in terms of the war in Vietnam, and instead of asking to be discharged and sent home would openly smoke marijuana, because 'there were notices everywhere saying you'd be sent home. Well, Christ, guys were walking around, you know, send me home, you know?'⁵⁹ Despite drug use not being prevalent among New Zealanders, several veterans were concerned about the occasional use that was evident. One ex-NCO remembers that marijuana was used by 'Some of the young ones, the very young ones and not the

professional soldiers....The ones that came for the trip were very easily persuaded to get into dope, very easily persuaded, and with the proximity of American units it was very freely available.’⁶⁰ An ex-officer also recalls that ‘there was drug-taking among the New Zealanders. Not a great deal I think but...it was a little bit prevalent in Singapore when they came out of Vietnam, they’d probably experienced it up there...it didn’t affect us too badly but there were some, only a small number, but there were some behavioural problems.’ These problems involved marijuana and, in one or two cases, heroin.⁶¹

While the issue of drug use in Vietnam evidently does not appear to have affected the New Zealanders to any noticeable extent, it did cause serious problems for the Americans, although Ted Brooker who worked closely with Australian and U.S. infantrymen in 1969 and 1970 saw no indication at all of drugs being used.⁶²

American psychologist John Helmer writes that regular marijuana and opiate users, an average of 40 percent of U.S. service personnel in Vietnam between 1969 and 1971, did not confine their activities to off-duty hours, and it ‘mattered little to them whether they smoked off or on base, in the field, night or day, under threat of attack or when relatively secure.’ Helmer suggests that only very small numbers of American service personnel were using drugs before they arrived in Vietnam, and that the dramatic increase was predominantly a manifestation of the working-class soldier’s protest against his fate in the war. The use of marijuana, and later heroin, was in theory a major disciplinary offence against U.S. military regulations but use

was so prevalent that providing it was not used openly, little action was taken to prevent it. However in 1969, when the full extent of the problem was eventually realised, the U.S. military implemented severe police actions against users. The only real effect this had was to almost immediately encourage drug users to change from marijuana, which was bulky and impossible to conceal because of its distinctive smell, to heroin, which was easily obtainable in Vietnam via Laos or Burma.⁶³ The U.S. military subsequently implemented the Free Radical Assay Technique (FRAT), or testing for drug use through urinalysis, in June 1971. All American soldiers had to pass the FRAT test on their way out of Vietnam or remain in treatment in Vietnam until they did. Personnel who failed, and those who voluntarily sought treatment for addiction, were sent to the 6th Company Convalescent Centre at Cam Ranh Bay, or Company B at Long Binh.⁶⁴ The Australians, on the other hand, do not seem to have experienced a pronounced drug problem, although it is evident that, like the New Zealanders, some Australian soldiers experimented.⁶⁵ No cases of drug abuse among the Australians were documented for the years that they were in Vietnam, chiefly, it is suggested, because Australia did not have an overt drug culture during that period and, again like New Zealand, the drinking culture predominated.⁶⁶

Most New Zealand soldiers were able to take advantage of at least one or two opportunities for RinC, usually at Vung Tau. While there most New Zealanders stayed at the Peter Badcoe Club, an Australian recreation centre for soldiers, named

in honour of Major Peter Badcoe who was killed in Vietnam in 1967 and awarded a posthumous Victoria Cross. The centre could accommodate over a company and had facilities which included a tailor, a barber and a PX, tennis, badminton and volleyball courts, and a large swimming pool, with a mini-golf-course and a concert hall nearby.⁶⁷ John Hall remembers that the Peter Badcoe Club had a 'Lovely beach, lovely facilities, swimming pool, straight out on the beach, little yachts, swimming, warm water, food...and no weapons, you know? Just the mere fact of being safe and not having your rifle with you sort of thing was, you know, you really were tired out and away with the fairies.'⁶⁸ But for some men, not having access to their weapons was disconcerting. John Moller felt vulnerable because 'they took your weapons off you....You felt naked without a weapon because you were so used to having a weapon on you all the time.'⁶⁹

Terry Findlay remembers that before going on leave, troops would deliberately be kept at Nui Dat for the first night or two after coming back from operations to allow them to 'blow off steam.' The rationale behind this was 'basically the trouble makers and the stropky ones sort of leered up back at base, then you went [on leave].' This policy was the result of an earlier incident when the battery visited Vung Tau at the same time as the two infantry companies were also there. The result was a 'great brawl at the Flags, that was the centre of Vung Tau, and everybody there, everybody just started fighting, Australians and MPs....They never let us down there again together in those numbers.'⁷⁰ After this incident, RinC

for the New Zealanders was scheduled so that only half of the battery went on leave at one time, providing that neither of the infantry companies were also in Vung Tau,⁷¹ and the companies were restricted to visiting the town a platoon at a time for the same reason.⁷²

The agenda for RinC in Vung Tau seems to have been fairly similar for most soldiers, with slight variations according to taste.⁷³ One veteran recalls that the typical programme was, 'Peter Badcoe Club, drink as much as you could there because it was cheap, and then you head into town...go for a root...do whatever you could to just let off steam....if it meant a punch up or a fight with someone, it meant a fight with someone.'⁷⁴ Another veteran in a later company recalls that 'Things had changed when I got there. We went for the root first and then got on the piss.'⁷⁵ This somewhat rambunctious attitude towards having as much 'fun' as possible on leave is demonstrated by the saying of the day which John Treanor remembers was, 'When the Americans go to town, they own it. When the Australians go to town, they think they own it. And when the New Zealanders go to town, they don't care who owns it....If you can sing and drink and fight or whatever, and do the things that we do, then you must be pretty good.'⁷⁶ This also gives an indication of how the New Zealanders viewed themselves, also evident in the following motto:

Fighters by day
Lovers by night
Drunkards by choice
Army by mistake.⁷⁷

At the Peter Badcoe Club at the beginning of the leave period, soldiers were advised 'not to take all of their spending money with them into town; not to travel alone; and, if they wanted to be friendly with the bar girls, to do so before they got drunk; and then to wear condoms.'⁷⁸ Murray Deed remembers that 'everyone would get a briefing and then they used to issue some sort of tablets you'd take which were supposed to stop you getting gonorrhoea and stuff...streptomycin, I think it was, something like that.'⁷⁹ The rules of the club would be outlined, as would areas in Vung Tau out of bounds to New Zealand soldiers, which were both usually completely ignored.⁸⁰ Bruce Liddall recalls, 'first they used to give you this big screed of rules, eh, no doing this, no doing that, no swimming in the swimming pool with your clothes on, you know? And the first joker every time when we'd go to the Peter Badcoe Club was [an officer]! He was in, clothes and all',⁸¹ and Gerald Southon has memories of soldiers during briefings 'sitting there going yes...[and] hello, as soon as the fella turns his back, everyone's going to this area and that area, straight to the out of bounds areas.'⁸²

A curfew was imposed on allied soldiers at night in Vung Tau but this was evidently easily circumnavigated by organising in advance to have someone else hand in one's ID card where one was supposed to be staying.⁸³ 'Matt G' thought it was easier to ignore the curfew and stay out all night because it saved having to go all the way back into town again the next morning. If the curfew time was missed and advance arrangements had not been made, 'The first thing they do is they ring the military

police outfit and they say, "Have you got so-and-so, what does he look like, what's his number?", and if they did, they'd say, "Well, leave the bugger there until he's ready to go home".'⁸⁴ John Treanor recalls that the curfew was not religiously policed and suspects that 'our bosses looked the other way. It was never checked.'⁸⁵ One reason for the curfew was the presence of Vietcong who also took their recreation leave in Vung Tau. John Hall remembers that Vung Tau 'was like an open city and we knew the VC went there for their R&R too.'⁸⁶ John Pointon recalls, 'They had their beach and we had ours. We used to take photos of them and try and identify them later in the night and so forth moving around town and if possible we'd try and get them for some offence.' There was an 'unspoken arrangement' by which the Vietcong 'stayed on their patch and enjoyed themselves and threw their ball around or kicked their soccer ball...and enjoyed their time, but if they started any other activities in the town itself...we'd try and get them.'⁸⁷ Vietcong could apparently be spotted because of their yellow eye-balls, a result of living in underground tunnels.⁸⁸

RinC was an opportunity to relax, usually with the assistance of alcohol, and one veteran remembers that 'it wasn't until people got down to Vung Tau that people let their hair down. Well, on the way down. I mean, obviously guys were probably drunk before they even got to the end of the road, you know, drinking a bottle of whiskey or something.'⁸⁹ 'Bob P', who policed Vung Tau, observed that when soldiers were on leave, 'that's when you'd see the release. Some of them were so

highly strung...[that] as soon as they just relaxed they went bonkers....We always got trouble on the first night.’⁹⁰ John Moller remembers that ‘Kiwi soldiers being as they are, once they got on the booze they let their hair down quite a bit, although quite a lot of them did actually stay in the [RinC] centre. They went down town for a while and...soon got sick of that and they got back and got on the booze. And I mean they got on the booze in a big way. I mean, they had a monumental hangover for a week. And they swam and they ate a lot and they swam and they ate a lot more and they generally pigged out. But generally, generally, they were OK.’⁹¹

Bruce Liddall remembers one RinC when ‘we arrived at the Peter Badcoe Club, every man walked into the bar, bought a bottle of spirits and a carton of beer. And we sat under an umbrella, outside in the stinking heat, we drunk the beer and passed the bottle of spirits around...and I don’t know how much booze we went through. Every man in the company, that’s 140 cartons of beer were put in this, under this big umbrella. It was stinking hot by the time we finished it too.’ Excessive alcohol consumption could encourage such traditional soldiers’ pastimes as the Dance of the Flaming Arseholes. The required equipment for this performance was a solid table, two inebriated soldiers, two six-foot lengths of toilet paper, and one cigarette lighter. The secret to success was to ‘get *them*, the other person, to light yours first. The when he turns round, you light his about two feet shorter. And he’s watching you, and the next minute he goes AAARRGH!’⁹²

Fortunately perhaps, as far as most MPs in Vung Tau were concerned, simply being intoxicated was not considered an arrestable offence. John Pointon recalls:

In the majority of cases you would take [a drunk soldier] back to his unit, lines, or to the Badcoe Club or to the Le Loi R&R centre, hand him over to his duty Sergeant, take his leave pass off him for say, you know, six hours, and give it back to him. And that was the end of the situation as far as we were concerned. And we'd done our job by dropping him off, he was in safe hands, he was in a safe place, he had his money, he had his hide, if you like, and he could live to have another go at it in a reasonable period of time.⁹³

For many soldiers on leave, sexual activity 'came a close second to drinking...[and] moral values about, you know, sex and what have you that were trappings of a...civilised community...were out the window.'⁹⁴ One ex-infantryman recalls, 'you're bloody young, you're virile, you're a bloody Kiwi, you're a red-blooded male. You get to town, you get boozed, you get your woman, and do whatever you had to do',⁹⁵ while for another veteran, it was as if 'you develop an attitude, well, you know, you could be dead tomorrow or the next time up, what the hell, so away you go.'⁹⁶ A veteran who patronised brothels when on leave can also recall an incident on patrol in the field when some Vietnamese women who lived in an ARVN compound invited members of the patrol to have sex, which they did. 'We left two guys on the Landrover on the machine gun...and one guy stood at the door with a rifle in his hand, an SLR, and each one of us took a turn with a different one of the women by only undoing the zip and holding your rifles in your hands. You know, to me that goes against everything I believed in, but things like that seemed to be OK back then. It was in the theatre of war. It was real unusual.'⁹⁷ However

another veteran was 'sufficiently influenced by the health and safety lectures to avoid the brothels in Vietnam',⁹⁸ and one ex-NCO, instead of visiting prostitutes, would go to 'a very well organized place called "The Golden Hand". One does not need to be a rocket scientist to work out what went on there. Euphemistically known as "steam and creameries". Going to these places did not seem so adulterous. A bit of a silly attitude but you can rationalize yourself into anything if you try hard enough.'⁹⁹

Most New Zealand veterans feel that they treated Vietnamese prostitutes well and generally with respect.¹⁰⁰ Gordon Dalziel, who maintains that he 'never ever' had to pay for the services of prostitutes, remembers, 'We all had our special girls that we always went back to...When you went to town she was your lady. And what it cost you and all that, that was that, she was your lady. And you'd...treat her to things and this was what the big distinction was between the New Zealanders, the Australians, and the bloody Yanks, was the way we treated our women.' Dalziel feels that Vietnamese females in general were 'good, strong women', regardless of their professions, and his view did not alter even after an incident in which a Vietnamese prostitute aimed a pistol at him, announcing that she was a Vietcong and intended to kill him. He managed to disarm her and left, choosing not to turn her in.¹⁰¹

Murray Deed remembers that the New Zealanders had a 'good rapport' with the prostitutes and Mama-sans¹⁰² because the New Zealand soldiers treated them well,

most men realising that many women were prostituting themselves from necessity rather than choice to feed and support their families.¹⁰³ Bill Peachey recalls, 'The Mama-sans of the bar, most of the bars we used to drink at, used to say, oh, the girls are getting done up, the Kiwis are in. Because the boys used to spoil them quite often...we used to get soap and stuff because they couldn't get soap over there. We used to have boxes of it and they used to take it and give it to the girls, stuff like that, and perfume and stuff. 'Course, they thought that it was Christmas every day, the Kiwis on leave.' Peachey observed that the Australians and Americans would at times 'Give [the Vietnamese prostitutes] a hard time and they got drunk, they used to push them around, belt them and stuff like that. That's what, probably the reason why they'd sooner be with the Kiwis, because they just treated them like a sister.'¹⁰⁴

However, one ex-officer recalls, 'We weren't exactly encouraged to be friendly with them. The theory of the day was of course any of them could have been a Vietcong',¹⁰⁵ and another veteran remembers, 'We treated them fairly hard but they treated us hard back, too....In Vung Tau everyone was out to rip everyone off.'¹⁰⁶ One ex-infantryman considers that some New Zealand soldiers may have mistreated prostitutes if the men were drunk, or 'if they bloody well tried to rob you',¹⁰⁷ while another veteran believes that 'as far as the New Zealand soldiers were concerned, the bar girls were there for one thing only and they talked dollars as soon as they come and sat down with you so...I don't suppose you could treat them any other

way.’¹⁰⁸ ‘Bob P’ observed that the mistreatment of Vietnamese prostitutes by members of all allied forces in Vietnam was common, and feels that this was a result of mutual mistrust from both parties and the fact that many allied troops considered that because the women were Vietnamese, they were expendable. He recalls seeing very little of that type of behaviour when he had been stationed in Singapore.¹⁰⁹

The incidences of VD among most allied forces in Vietnam was high. John Pointon was involved with a public health programme run by the Australians which had been implemented to keep the VD rate as low as possible. Pointon remembers that ‘every girl who worked in a bar had to be registered. And they were registered ...first of all with the bar, so they could operate only in one bar. They were then registered with the South Vietnamese police...and then registered with us. And when they were registered like that, they had to go to the hospital where we had a clinic where they were given a check to make sure they were clean.’ The women carried cards which were stamped to show that they had passed their health checks.¹¹⁰ After 1ATF had been fully established at Nui Dat in June 1966, the incidence of VD among Australian and other allied soldiers became a serious problem. VD did not usually preclude soldiers from carrying out their duties but the Australians were concerned that a high VD rate could assume ‘political significance’ due to the ‘considerable public antipathy’ already in existence against sending National Servicemen to Vietnam. A programme of provost patrols and contact-

tracing was subsequently introduced in collaboration with the Americans and local Vietnamese authorities and was aimed at trying to keep allied servicemen out of the ever-increasing number of brothels in Vung Tau. However the programme was conspicuously unsuccessful, mainly because of the rapid rate of this increase in the number of brothels. The Australians also found:

that the Vietnamese prostitutes, under pressure from their employers, objected to the soldiers using condoms, because the men took longer to reach orgasm. Bar owners coldly calculated that the women could serve more clients and make greater profits for them if each contact was expeditiously terminated. The Australian soldiers themselves paid little heed to preventive measures. A survey by the [Regimental Medical Officer] of 5RAR of the first 100 VD cases in the battalion found that most of the men were “hopelessly drunk” at the time they contracted the disease and had either forgotten to use or were “totally incapable’ of using a condom.

In response, the Australians implemented a system in late 1967 whereby prostitutes in Vung Tau would be checked for VD at a free clinic by trained staff. This programme was marginally more successful than the earlier system of provost patrols and the VD rate was subsequently slightly reduced, helped also for a short period by the introduction in 1968 of a registration requirement and clinical identity cards for prostitutes. The latter did not last long and was hampered by the ever-changing prostitute population and outright refusal of many women to be registered. In 1968 a temporary reduction of the VD rate was achieved, due mainly to operational changes and the Tet offensive, as Vung Tau was out of bounds to soldiers during this period. A year later the VD rate had climbed steadily back to the previous unacceptable heights, despite various prevention programmes,

generally because of 'the mire of corruption and vice that existed in Vung Tau' which interfered with the programmes, and the continued somewhat irresponsible behaviour of the troops themselves. The VD problem among New Zealand and Australian soldiers did not go away until both forces withdrew from Vietnam in 1972.¹¹¹

Despite receiving advice about how to avoid contracting VD, not all New Zealand soldiers took heed, one veteran remembering that condoms handed out at the leave centre were blown up and hung off ceiling fans, etc, because, in the opinion of he and his friends at the time, 'Maoris don't wear condoms.'¹¹² Another man remembers that if VD was contracted, one would 'just go to the medic' to have the problem attended to.¹¹³ Bruce Liddall recalls one soldier who apparently had VD from the day he arrived in Vietnam, and 'it just wouldn't go away, and he'd get leave and away he went again, you know? And in the end, before, in the early stages they used to put them in base camp, you know, and in the end they just got sick of him so every morning he used to go to company platoon headquarters there and bend over.'¹¹⁴ Another veteran remembers, 'you weren't worried if you got a load really, you know, because so what, it might give you two or three days back in camp, so that was a good thing.'¹¹⁵ But the anticipated outcome of a few days out of the field was not always achieved as, due to the increasing prevalence of VD, the companies eventually 'took to carrying penicillin in the field so if you got VD you were tough out of luck, that didn't keep you out of the field. That provided a certain

amount of entertainment for the chaps when the injection was plunged just before last light.’¹¹⁶

Contracting VD was in theory a chargeable offence. However, for those unfortunates who did, ‘there was arrangements within arrangements. With certain people for certain goods you could get a jab in the arse. Penicillin. And nothing went on your record. If it went on your record, shit, yeah, it was a chargeable offence.’ Even worse than getting ordinary VD was the possibility of contracting the dreaded and apparently incurable strain called Saigon Rose. If one did, it was rumoured that ‘there was an island off somewhere and that’s where you went, and you didn’t come home.’¹¹⁷ Perhaps the spectre of Saigon Rose had an effect on some New Zealanders as one ex-infantryman recalls that the men in his platoon, ‘if you compared it to Malaya, they probably cut [sexual activity] back by 50 percent. Were a bit scared...[of] catching a load....Bit ripe over there.’¹¹⁸

Brawling also appears to have been a common form of recreation and/or stress release for New Zealanders and most veterans can recall being involved in brawls or witnessing them.¹¹⁹ Gordon Dalziel remembers that brawling was considered to be a normal activity, and ‘if somebody said something to me I didn’t like, I’d just, there’d be a big brawl, you know, settle it right there....it was socially unacceptable but over there you do it and get away with it.’¹²⁰ Brawls could arise from real or perceived affronts, from rivalry between allies, or nothing at all, and could often be exacerbated by alcohol, as in the following example (the names have been changed):

Group of Kiwis in brawl with GIs on RinC, one GI pulls a gun and begins firing. Tom takes a bullet in the thigh and goes down. Others dive for cover. Dick had a gouge across his back from another bullet....GIs run off. Harry...pulls out a little pocket knife and, full of booze and adrenalin, sets off in pursuit. Dodges in and out of panicking locals and hawkers' stalls for a hundred metres or so and realises he can't see the GIs any more. Stops, they run past him! He has overtaken them without realising it. Decides against tackling them. Vietnamese policeman on motor scooter goes by, ignores Harry's attempts to flag him down, so Harry reaches out and grabs officer's arm. Cop falls off motor scooter, is immensely upset. He leaps to his feet, pulls gun, pokes it in Harry's face. Situation eventually sorted out at the scene, but the story that gets back to the leave centre is that the Vietnamese police have shot and killed Tom. Those of us at the leave centre (all liquored up) form a posse with the intention of going into town and killing a Vietnamese policeman. [The] orderly officer...learns of the plot in time to intercept and stop us.¹²¹

'Sam B' recalls that because of the likelihood of getting into a brawl, and the other dangers of leave in a foreign and wartime environment, 'when you went on [RinC] and that you were never alone, you know, there was always a few in the group, so you always knew you had someone backing you',¹²² and when Murray Deed's company went on leave, 'normally we'd operate in twos and threes...just to keep yourself protected if anything happened.'¹²³

At times, brawling could end in disaster for all New Zealanders on leave, not just those involved in the fight. 'Matt G' remembers that his company's RinCs 'always got cut short because somebody always belted up an MP and your company commander said, "Right, everybody...back to base again." So you had one good night on the turps and...the other two days of your rest and recuperation you spent back in your base camp, which wasn't a hell of a lot of use to anybody.'¹²⁴ The

combination of being drunk and getting involved in a brawl usually had the almost inevitable result of attracting the MPs. In opposition to what soldiers popularly believed at the time, ex-MP John Pointon recalls that 'our job in relation to the soldiers who were on leave in Vung Tau was to allow them to have the best possible time, of their choosing, without interfering with other soldiers' ability to have a good time. And without offending the local Vietnamese population.' Although in the majority of cases the latter did not occur, he felt that there were 'some who obviously overstepped. Hadn't read the books and didn't understand the things or thought every woman that walked past him was a prostitute...and of course that's not the case.' Pointon was aware that MPs were unpopular with many of the servicemen, including the New Zealanders. 'Kiwis would fight Kiwis until the Military Police would arrive, then it would be forget about themselves and then fight us.'¹²⁵

'Bob P' considers that much of the conflict between allies was exacerbated by the attitudes of Australian MPs who allegedly treated the New Zealand soldiers 'like dirt.'¹²⁶ Murray Deed also feels that this was the case, and that 'having a good time, Kiwi style, is playing the guitar [and] singing, and that to the Australians is being a nuisance and making a lot of noise and it's unnecessary. So they used to come, the MPs used to come, and, you know, get pretty stropky and try to break it up and of course that would always cause a fight and the MPs would come flying out through doors and it was just like a bar room brawl in the old cowboy style with MPs flying

out windows.’ Deed also considers that Australian MPs were disliked by New Zealanders because of their ‘more superior than thou sort of attitude’, and the fact that they ‘just didn’t really like seeing the Kiwis having a good time.’¹²⁷ ‘Andrew B’, who considers that ‘All military police are bastards’, disliked the Australian MPs only marginally less than the universally despised British MPs in Malaya.¹²⁸ He remembers that the ‘crowning glory’ of any RinC was to ‘get into a fight with some MPs and actually give them a hiding before they got reinforcements there’, and that Australian MPs ‘were always game for a fight, so they gained a certain respect for that, but...they fought dirty’, particularly when they used their night sticks on people’s heads. He also feels that ‘The American MPs were softer on us. They invariably wouldn’t, wouldn’t take on a group of Kiwis into a fight. They usually just pulled their revolvers and backed us up against a wall and searched us and then cuffed us and took us away. And they used their firearms. They wouldn’t have hesitated to shoot us if we tried to do anything so that’s where it stopped, so they weren’t much fun.’¹²⁹

John Moller recalls that there was ‘a specific Australian policeman who was a real shit. He was a sadist. And he actually got one of my guys who was a bit drunk and he hand-cuffed him to a jeep and broke his jaw....[and] he used to delight in laying out Kiwis with his baton. And he got sent home eventually because the word got around that if he didn’t get sent home, he was going to have a nasty accident. He was a real nasty bit of work. He was famous not only among the Kiwis but the

Australians as well.’¹³⁰ However the evidence does suggest that the New Zealanders may at times have been at least partly responsible for their own misfortunes at the hands of some Australian MPs. One ex-gunner, for example, recalls that baiting MPs was ‘quite a game’, and that it was considered amusing to gang up on an MP, steal his gun and run off with it.¹³¹ ‘Matt G’ remembers, ‘You’d get these Aussies and they used to come in with their guns, their hand guns. They’d stick it in your ear and say, “Get the hell out of here”, and of course you told them, “Take it out of my ear before I shove it up your arse”, then laugh like hell. And if course you’d try and shove the bloody thing up his arse and in the meantime chuck him in the pool as well, and of course they didn’t like having that done to them.’ He recalls that this type of activity was considered by the New Zealanders to be ‘good, clean fun.’¹³²

It appears that New Zealand soldiers were more responsive to New Zealand MPs, despite the existence of one who, like his Australian counterpart, also ‘had to come home in a hurry’ for being somewhat over-zealous in the application of his duties.¹³³ ‘Matt G’ recalls that New Zealand MPs were the only MPs who were able to get away with saying “Hoi! Get up”, or “Pick that up! Who said you could throw that bloody table there? Go and get it!” And you did.’¹³⁴ One ex-infantryman remembers, ‘if there was trouble among the Kiwis it would take about ten Aussie MPs to sort it out, whereas if they stayed away you would get one regimental, one Kiwi regimental policeman could sort out the whole platoon...they just didn’t listen

to the Aussies.’¹³⁵ ‘Bob P’ witnessed one such incident which occurred during an incident at the Grand Hotel in Vung Tau. ‘We had it under control...and these two Aussie MPs come in about two minutes later and I think the words were, well, they were, I can still hear them being said, “Typical bloody Kiwis, can’t hold your booze”, and as one they just rose up.’¹³⁶ As a result of the animosity between New Zealand troops and Australian MPs, Murray Deed remembers that ‘in the end, what they used to do, one of us NCOs would have to go out with the Australian MPs in the end, when we were in Vung Tau or when we went down there permanently before we come home...because we could handle the Kiwis. We’d just tell them to shut up and quieten down and they’d be fine, but if the Australians told them it was a recipe for disaster.’¹³⁷

John Pointon remembers that fighting was the main offence for which soldiers would be arrested.¹³⁸ Most short-term jail sentences for both New Zealanders and Australians were the result of relatively minor misdemeanours such as swearing at officers, or striking them or other ranks.¹³⁹ Murray Deed recalls that men would be temporarily jailed or receive some form of field punishment from their commanding officers for such breaches of military law.¹⁴⁰ One ex-officer remembers that ‘there were a number of times when I had a soldier before me on a charge for some minor misdemeanour and I had the greatest of trouble trying to keep a straight face. It is amazing what soldiers will get up to to amuse themselves.’¹⁴¹ One ex-infantryman and his friend were jailed ultimately as a result of their lack of forward planning.

They were initially picked up by Australian MPs in a Vung Tau bar and taken to the Australian detention centre. They tricked the young detention warden by employing a ruse they had seen in a film, which consisted of calling him over to the cell then hitting him and taking his keys, then escaped back into town having stolen the warden's gun and his Landrover. They returned to the same bar and were re-arrested an hour later by the Australian MPs, reinforced by several American MPs and Vietnamese policemen, as they had parked the stolen Landrover directly outside the door.¹⁴² Disregard for the authority of Australian officers could also result in a jail sentence. 'Bill M' recalls an incident travelling back by road to Nui Dat after a 24 hour leave in Vung Tau when an Australian officer ordered the New Zealand and Australian soldiers in the truck not to cock their weapons. As routine orders stated that weapons must be cocked at all times outside the wire, 'Bill M' and his friends ignored the order. The officer repeated the order, so 'Bill M' told him, "You can go and get fucked." Oh Christ, you're on a charge. One of many. I did 27 days and 28 days loss of pay....I was the first to go down. There was a big influx from the same platoon that carried on after that for some unknown reason.'¹⁴³

Fragging, the term given by U.S. troops to the deliberate murdering of one's superior officer with a fragmentation grenade or other weapon, does not appear to have occurred within the New Zealand teams in Vietnam,¹⁴⁴ although it was a considerable problem for the Americans who reported at least 1,013 documented cases during the war.¹⁴⁵ Tom Palmer once witnessed a handcuffed American soldier

being escorted by U.S. military police. The man, who had allegedly killed an officer, looked unconcerned and kept repeating “I’m going back to the world, man”.¹⁴⁶ The Australians also experienced some problems with fragging, although had less incidents than the Americans, which New Zealand soldiers were aware of.¹⁴⁷ During his tour, ‘Bob P’ was required to guard an Australian soldier, who had fragged his superior officer, at Vung Tau for 24 hours a day for six consecutive weeks,¹⁴⁸ and Murray Deed can recall guarding two Australians on different occasions at Nui Dat to protect them from being fragged by their own men.¹⁴⁹ Also at Nui Dat, Dave Orbell literally fell over an ‘Australian on the road, and he had an M60 machine gun with a belt on it, cocked, and he fired the fucking thing and he was lined up on the sergeants’ mess and it was full, mate, it was all on in there. And the only thing that saved those bastards in there was the first round was a cook-off [misfire].¹⁵⁰ One New Zealander who worked with the Australians on occasion was told by an Australian team mate that he would be fragged himself if he did not take the opportunity to frag an Australian officer should the opportunity arise,¹⁵¹ and John Moller had been personally acquainted with an Australian officer who was murdered when a grenade was rolled into his tent. He was fragged because he was considered to be incompetent, and a particularly bad-tempered and unsavoury man.¹⁵²

Constant access to armaments was part of the combat culture of Vietnam and soldiers treated the continual presence of lethal weapons in their lives as nothing out

of the ordinary. While most soldiers developed a healthy respect for their weapons, familiarity in some cases could foster disregard for their lethal potential. For example, 'Andrew B' can remember 'playing with live grenades, pulling the pins out and seeing how quickly we could throw them round a room before we tossed them into a bunker, you know, a disused bunker...so you played pass the hot potato....[it was] almost a public demonstration if you like of your ability to, that you were totally committed, utterly dedicated.'¹⁵³

There is no concrete evidence which clearly demonstrates that a New Zealand officer was fragged by New Zealand troops, although one veteran heard during his tour that it had occurred. 'And that's all I really know about it. It happened, I don't even know whether it's become officially known, but it happened.'¹⁵⁴ It is also rumoured that a New Zealand officer was deliberately hit over the head with a baseball bat by one of his own men during one unit's tour.¹⁵⁵ At least one ex-officer took the possibility of being fragged seriously at one point, as 'there was a period of tension in one platoon, and back in the base I slept with my pistol under my pillow.'¹⁵⁶ Although seven veterans related incidents of threatened or attempted fraggings,¹⁵⁷ only two state that they were directly involved. One, an officer at the time, was present in the Officers' Mess at Nui Dat when a smoke grenade was thrown through the door,¹⁵⁸ and the other, an ex-enlisted man, maintains that he remembers preparing to mortar the occupied command post while extremely drunk one night. Fortunately, he and his friends were so intoxicated that they were unable

to complete the task.¹⁵⁹ The other five testimonies concerning fragging imply that they are possibly hearsay, and perhaps different versions of one, or several similar, events, which may or may not have been perpetrated by New Zealand troops.

These incidents, or implied incidents, suggest a lack of communication between officers, NCOs and enlisted men, and possibly a general disregard for authority.

John Moller, an ex-officer himself, observes that:

New Zealand soldiers don't mind being treated in a hard manner, but they do insist on being treated in a fair manner. If you don't treat them fairly or justly then...you know about it. They don't suffer fools gladly. So you have to tailor your style of leadership to cater for those characteristics that New Zealanders have.... Kiwis as soldiers are very independent, they're very individualistic...but they don't respect authority and you can have all the pips you like on your shoulder but if they don't respect you, they won't do what you bloody tell them to do. You, as a leader, you have to earn the soldiers' respect and be prepared to do what you ask them to do yourself, and...this is not only officers but non-commissioned officers as well....and if you don't lead by example the soldiers say, well, he's no good to us, and they'll just go and do their own thing. And they are hard to lead but if you've got good non-commissioned officers, guys that they respect, they'll go to hell and back for you. But if they think you're an idiot, you're history, you may as well not be there.¹⁶⁰

Another ex-officer recalls, 'you couldn't probably have put a...foot out of place without [the men] being aware of it, but that's alright, you were living with that all the time sort of thing and if you wanted to be a hypocrite, well, then you had to be big enough and ugly enough to live it down, and I don't think I'm big enough, so you had to mind your ps and qs.'¹⁶¹

In the experience of one ex-infantryman, relations between New Zealand troops and their officers were not always perfect. He feels that 'You'd be lying if you said you didn't have bad feelings against your officer....[because] the thing is, no matter what you are, no matter how well you're trained or...how disciplined you are, there's still going to be a little bit of animosity to someone who's in charge.'¹⁶² An ex-Corporal, a veteran of Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam, recalls experiencing difficulties working with officers who had been formally trained at Portsea or Duntroon. He found it frustrating when 'you've had the experience and you try to give him some, not advice or tell him how he's to do it, but give him some advice on what's happening terrain-wise...and he's not prepared to listen, you're inclined to get pretty frustrated about it.'¹⁶³ However, another NCO, also a veteran of several wars, believes that 'In the New Zealand Regular Army much stress is placed on officers and NCOs to appreciate their minors', although he observed that 'of course, the minors constantly assess their superiors, this is discouraged, but soldiers will be soldiers.'¹⁶⁴ This observation is echoed by an ex-officer who considers that 'the New Zealand [enlisted man] is entitled as much to his professional opinions as the officers, in certain circumstances, and there's nothing new about that. The reverse applies when [an officer] gets carted off on a stretcher and [an enlisted man] takes over. And they've all got a field marshal's baton in their packs, they really have, or most of them.'¹⁶⁵

In a combat environment such as Vietnam where mutually supportive interpersonal relationships were essential, and survival dependent on the reliability and commitment of team mates, mistrust and dislike of a team member could be very disruptive and detrimental to a combat unit. For example, several New Zealand veterans from the same company recall an NCO who was almost universally disliked and considered to be 'the biggest arsehole of a [NCO] you've ever come across, because he just didn't have any personality. He was the [NCO] and he wouldn't listen to no-one else and no matter what people did or said, they were wrong. So he got off on the wrong foot straight away with the section.'¹⁶⁶ An ex-officer from the same company recalls, 'The private soldiers had a way of sending messages to [people in command] and that is a, what would you call it, in a recreational situation or what have you they will have a conversation within your hearing.... Well, I got a hint and it was along the lines that if something or other didn't happen to such and such, then such and such would happen.'¹⁶⁷ Evidently, 'something or other' did not happen, as purely by chance, a drunken member of the company was intercepted one night on his way to throw a number of grenades under the unpopular NCO's bed, an action which resulted in the potential fragger being sent home.¹⁶⁸ A further deterioration in relations between company members and the NCO ultimately resulted in the NCO being removed from the unit altogether.¹⁶⁹

A significant number of veterans appear to have encountered officers who, in their view, acted incompetently at some point. One ex-infantryman recalls an officer who

once led his platoon in a perfect, large circle, an error which took a full day to discover. This officer also chose to defecate within the perimeter of his platoon position, instead of moving beyond it, because he feared his environment and, it is suggested, his own men. This behaviour evidently impressed the men in his platoon even less.¹⁷⁰ Another veteran remembers the painful experience of having a friend killed in action being made worse by an officer who insisted on taking photographs of the body of the dead man as it was being winched up through the trees by a casevac helicopter.¹⁷¹ One ex-infantryman recalls an officer who led his platoon through another New Zealand team's ambush, fortunately without any casualties, and considers that the officer was 'bloody useless [and]...couldn't command a bloody bakery, let alone an outfit',¹⁷² and another veteran remembers a particular officer who was 'always an arsehole', whom he came close to striking. However, he did not think the man was 'worth going to jail for three months for.'¹⁷³

In general, most New Zealand officers appear to have been liked and respected by their men. Mike Perreau considers that 'The majority of [New Zealand officers] though were bloody good....they'd been bloody well trained and, well, the green ones learned pretty hard over there but the section commanders and Sergeants, they led bloody well, I thought',¹⁷⁴ and Terry Findlay remembers, 'we got on pretty well with most of our officers, yeah, most of them were pretty good....I think most of our officers were pretty respected.'¹⁷⁵ One ex-officer recalls that discipline in Vietnam, although relaxed, was always there. 'New Zealanders don't take sort of

false sort of pompous attitudes but they know, you know your duty as an officer or a Sergeant to keep troops under control and the troops almost invariably respond and the amount of indiscipline in the New Zealand Army is remarkably small.¹⁷⁶ But it is evident that there was some indiscipline among New Zealand troops in Vietnam. For example, between 20 December 1966 and 29 May 1968, 21 161 Battery members were charged for sleeping on duty, 50 for being absent without leave, and 60 for failing to appear for duty. A lesser number of charges were brought against troops for being drunk and/or in possession of unauthorised alcohol, swearing at or striking officers or NCOs, taking a vehicle without authorisation, having dirty weapons, and not wearing a shirt. Two soldiers were charged for sitting in deck chairs while on piquet duty, and one for having a cigarette in the battery's ammunition bay.¹⁷⁷

Comparing Australian officers with their New Zealand counterparts, Murray Deed considers that 'our officers were more in touch with us. [The Australians had] this big gap between the officer and the enlisted man....But with our guys, our officers, we had respect for them and they didn't, they earned that respect by their training and everything coming through',¹⁷⁸ and 'Andrew B' had a 'great faith in essentially those who commanded', believing that the high standard of the New Zealanders' training and the quality of their commanders was reflected in the number of men who came home from Vietnam.¹⁷⁹

It is clear that many New Zealanders made the most of their opportunities in Vietnam to drink, brawl, and have sex, although sex appears to have been generally only available on leave in Vung Tau. The veterans consider that they pursued this type of behaviour in an effort to relieve the stress of living in a war zone, although there are indications that they behaved in this way simply because they were away from home and could get away with it. There are no indications that this type of behaviour was any more excessive in Vietnam than it was, for example, during the First and Second World Wars. But unlike earlier conflicts, the New Zealand Army seems to have at least covertly condoned the use of alcohol among troops in Vietnam and officers do not appear to have disapproved of their men drinking, except perhaps when their safety may have been compromised.

The use of drugs by New Zealanders appears to have been minimal although the collective evidence does suggest that there was more experimentation among troops than is openly acknowledged by veterans. Some New Zealand troops believe that of all allied soldiers in Vietnam, they treated prostitutes most kindly and were most popular with them, but evidence from other veterans suggests that this was not always the case. A feature of leave appears to have been the presence of Australian MPs with whom the New Zealanders evidently had an uneasy and at times violent relationship, although some veterans appear to have enjoyed this, even deliberately provoking situations which would end in, preferably, in a large-scale fight.

The offence for which most New Zealanders were arrested was brawling. However, most jail sentences were the result of disregarding or challenging the authority of, or assaulting, a superior officer. While some veterans maintain that the relationship between officers and enlisted men in Vietnam was relatively harmonious, there is substantial evidence indicating that at times it was not. New Zealand troops clearly felt animosity and contempt for some of their officers some of the time, and no doubt these sentiments were reciprocated. Although New Zealand veterans believe in retrospect that their professional ability and high standard of training was ultimately responsible for the fact that most of them came home, many also consider the leadership which they received during their tours to have been instrumental in their survival.

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- ¹ See Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; ANON, 22/4/96; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; Mike Perreau, Bruce Liddall, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; John Hall, 4/2/96; Gerald Southon, 13/7/96; 'Sniper', 13/7/96; ANON, 29/8/95; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; ANON, 7/2/96; ANON, 24/6/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ² Colin Smith, *The Killing Zone: The New Zealand Infantry in Vietnam 1967 to 1971* (Auckland, 1995), pp. 37-38.
- ³ Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
- ⁴ Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96.
- ⁵ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁶ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ⁷ *60 Minutes*, TVNZ, 21/9/97.
- ⁸ Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- ⁹ Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
- ¹⁰ Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
- ¹¹ Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- ¹² John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ¹³ Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ¹⁴ Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
- ¹⁵ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ¹⁶ See 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; ANON, 22/4/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; ANON, 28/12/95; Mike Perreau, Hardie Martin, Nigel Martin, 'Steve D', Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Dave Orbell, 2/2/96; Tom Palmer, 13/7/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ¹⁷ 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
- ¹⁸ Interview 1.
- ¹⁹ 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- ²⁰ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ²¹ Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; 'TW Washburn', 'Sniper' 13/7/96; ANON, 7/2/96.
- ²² Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.

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- 23 Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
24 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
25 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
26 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
27 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
28 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
29 See 161 Battery Charge Book, 30/12/66-29/5/68.
30 Interview 17.
31 Interview 36/3.
32 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96. See also Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
33 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
34 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
35 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
36 ANON, 22/4/96.
37 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
38 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
39 Interview 16. See also ANON, 22/4/96.
40 See ANON, 14/9/95; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
41 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
42 See Des Sluce, 15/5/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; ANON, 3/2/96, ANON, 29/12/95.
43 ANON, 28/12/95.
44 Interview 12.
45 ANON, 3/2/96.
46 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
47 See ANON, 7/2/96; Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
48 Interview 16.
49 See Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; ANON, 28/12/95; Bruce Liddall, Hardie Martin, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; ANON, 17/4/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
50 John Hall, 4/2/96.
51 John Moller, 10/7/95.
52 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
53 ANON, 22/4/96.
54 Interview 29.
55 Interview 2. See also Interview 5.
56 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
57 See Interviews 28/9; 29; 36/2.
58 Interview 13.
59 Interview 27
60 Interview 16.
61 ANON, 29/8/95.
62 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
63 It was widely believed that Air America, the CIA's secret airline, worked in conjunction with Laotian opium growers and Saigon drug dealers, and provided the transport for heroin traffic into Vietnam. See Christopher Robbins, *Air America: the True Story of the CIA's Mercenary Fliers in Covert Operations From Pre-War China to Present Day Nicaragua* (London, 1979).
64 John Helmer, *Bringing the War Home: The American Soldier in Vietnam and After* (New York, 1974), pp. 76-77, 80-81, 185, 187-188, 198.
65 See Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; ANON, 29/8/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95.
66 Brendan O'Keefe and F.B. Smith, *Medicine at War: Medical Aspects of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asia 1950-1972* (New South Wales, 1994), p. 146, 171.
67 Gary McKay, *In Good Company: One man's War in Vietnam* (Sydney, 1987), pp. 102-103.
68 John Hall, 4/2/96.
69 John Moller, 10/7/95.
70 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
71 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
72 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
73 See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Gerald Southon, 13/7/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
74 Interview 28/2.
75 Interview 28/1.
76 John Treanor, 1/3/96.

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- ⁷⁷ Gary Brooker, *Two Lanyards in Vietnam* (North Canterbury, 1995), p. 24.
- ⁷⁸ McKay, p. 103. New Zealanders at the Peter Badcoe Club were given the same advice as were the Australian soldiers on leave. However, this advice was sometimes delivered by New Zealanders stationed in Vung Tau as the Australian officers at times found communication with the New Zealanders difficult because 'NZers speak a different language.' See Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
- ⁷⁹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96. The tablets were known as 'no sweat pills', an antibiotic. McKay, p. 103.
- ⁸⁰ See Gerald Southon, 'TW Washburn', 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ⁸¹ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ⁸² Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ⁸³ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ⁸⁴ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
- ⁸⁵ John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ⁸⁶ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁸⁷ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ⁸⁸ Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ⁸⁹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96. See also Bruce Liddall, Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- ⁹⁰ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ⁹¹ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁹² Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ⁹³ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ⁹⁴ Interview 38.
- ⁹⁵ Interview 7.
- ⁹⁶ Interview 37.
- ⁹⁷ Interview 9.
- ⁹⁸ ANON, 22/4/96.
- ⁹⁹ Interview 30.
- ¹⁰⁰ See 'Bill M', 3/5/95; ANON, 28/12/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
- ¹⁰¹ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- ¹⁰² Mama-san is slang for an oriental female or elderly woman. Also used to describe a 'madam' or brothel keeper. Reinberg, p. 135.
- ¹⁰³ Murray Deed, 15/1/96. See also Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Bruce Liddall, Harry Ellison, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; ANON, 2/3/96.
- ¹⁰⁴ Interview 2.
- ¹⁰⁵ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ¹⁰⁶ Interview 9.
- ¹⁰⁷ Interview 40.
- ¹⁰⁸ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
- ¹⁰⁹ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ¹¹⁰ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ¹¹¹ O'Keefe and Smith, pp. 102-103, 125-126, 146-147, 177-180, 201-206, 225-227.
- ¹¹² Interview 36/2.
- ¹¹³ Interview 25.
- ¹¹⁴ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ¹¹⁵ Interview 28/4.
- ¹¹⁶ ANON, 14/9/95.
- ¹¹⁷ Interview 32.
- ¹¹⁸ Interview 17.
- ¹¹⁹ See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ¹²⁰ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- ¹²¹ ANON, 22/4/96.
- ¹²² 'Sam B', 4/7/95.
- ¹²³ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ¹²⁴ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
- ¹²⁵ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
- ¹²⁶ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- ¹²⁷ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
- ¹²⁸ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95. See also Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ¹²⁹ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ¹³⁰ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ¹³¹ Interview 9.
- ¹³² 'Matt G', 5/7/95.

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- ¹³³ Bill McNeish, 2/3/96.
¹³⁴ 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
¹³⁵ ANON, 2/3/96. See also Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
¹³⁶ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
¹³⁷ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
¹³⁸ John Pointon, 1/3/95.
¹³⁹ 'Bob P', 5/4/95. See also Interviews 6, 14, 25
¹⁴⁰ Interview 29.
¹⁴¹ Interview 21.
¹⁴² Interview 36/2.
¹⁴³ Interview 17.
¹⁴⁴ See Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Fred Barclay, 21/5/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; Peter Hotop, 6/97; ANON, 17/4/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; John Treanor, 1/3/95; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
¹⁴⁵ Richard Gabriel quoted in Jonathan Shay, *Achilles in Vietnam: Combat Trauma and the Undoing of Character* (New York, 1884), p. 127.
¹⁴⁶ Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
¹⁴⁷ See Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Peter Earsman, 1/9/96; Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; John Hall, 4/2/96; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; ANON, 14/9/95; ANON, 7/2/96; Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
¹⁴⁸ 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
¹⁴⁹ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
¹⁵⁰ Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
¹⁵¹ ANON, 22/4/96.
¹⁵² John Moller, 10/7/95.
¹⁵³ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
¹⁵⁴ Interview 39.
¹⁵⁵ This information was given to me off-the-record so I am unable to quote directly, or name the source.
¹⁵⁶ ANON, 14/9/95.
¹⁵⁷ See Interviews 8, 28/4, 20, 26, 32.
¹⁵⁸ Interview 31.
¹⁵⁹ Interview 6.
¹⁶⁰ John Moller, 10/7/95.
¹⁶¹ John Hall, 4/2/96.
¹⁶² Interview 28/2.
¹⁶³ Interview 28/8.
¹⁶⁴ Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
¹⁶⁵ Interview 31.
¹⁶⁶ Interview 28/2.
¹⁶⁷ Interview 31.
¹⁶⁸ Interview 28/4.
¹⁶⁹ Interview 28/4.
¹⁷⁰ Interview 28/2.
¹⁷¹ Interview 28/4.
¹⁷² Interview 36/1.
¹⁷³ Interview 20.
¹⁷⁴ Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
¹⁷⁵ Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
¹⁷⁶ ANON, 29/8/95.
¹⁷⁷ 161 Battery Charge Book, 30/12/66-29/5/68.
¹⁷⁸ Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
¹⁷⁹ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.

CHAPTER NINE: The green green grass of home; coming home and the aftermath.

It is clear that some New Zealand troops do not consider that they received the full support of the New Zealand Government during their service in Vietnam. When they came home, many were even more disappointed and disillusioned to find that this disregard extended to other New Zealanders and that protest against the war was at times directed personally at them. The reason for this is likely be found in the changing nature of New Zealand society during the 1960s and early '70s. In the introduction to Maurice Shadbolt's play about the First World War, *Once on Chunuk Bair*, Michael Neill of ACT Magazine writes:

The myth of Anzac, in whose shadow successive generations of New Zealanders grew up, exhibited a curious, unexamined doubleness, however; it was paraded both as a proof of separateness, of independent identity, and as a token of our claim to participation in the common dream of Empire. When we woke to find all that Imperial red faded from the Atlas, the contradictions of this patriotic lore stood painfully exposed, and Anzac Day began to seem as an embarrassing relic of our colonial past.... The generation of the sixties felt it as a sign of new independence that it no longer needed to know about the 700 casualties on Chunuk Bair, the thousands left behind on that remote coastline.¹

While this may be a somewhat generalised statement, it is clear that the decade of the 1960s was one of significant change for New Zealand society in many areas.

There is little in New Zealand historiography regarding these changes, and what is

available is often nostalgic or journalistic, and it is a challenge to describe the era without using shallow clichés such as ‘psychedelic’, ‘global village’, ‘mini-skirt’, ‘counter-culture’ and ‘sexual liberation’. There are also differing interpretations of these changes. For example, Michael King writes in his book *After the War: New Zealand Since 1945*, ‘If the 1940s and 1950s could be regarded as hinged moulds of conformity for most New Zealanders, then the 1960s were to see those moulds smashed’, implying some sort of almost overnight, violent social revolution occurred during the decade, although King does note that his book is representative of events that occurred in New Zealand after 1945 and not comprehensive.² On the other hand, Graeme Dunstall, in his chapter titled ‘The Social Pattern’ in the second edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, suggests that the genesis of changes which occurred during the 1960s was already evident in the previous two decades, writing, ‘From the 1940s, however, a number of long-established processes accelerated. Population growth, fertility transition, urbanization, and the development of a white-collar society helped to bring a new distinctiveness and complexity to New Zealand society. The social pattern developed an indigenous flavour.’³

As a result of the post-war level of economic security, high employment and the relative affluence of many New Zealanders in terms of luxury items and consumer goods, the 1950s and the first half of the following decade are often remembered in New Zealand as the ‘golden years’. But Redmer Yska, author of *All Shook Up: The*

Flash Bodgie and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties, suggests that there were also several significant and disturbing social undercurrents during this period of 'social flux', including: problems associated with increased population movement to urban areas; the paranoia-inducing "'Red Scare", where communists and godless conspiracies were found under every bed'; and the Cold War with its threat of world-wide annihilation by nuclear weapons which Yska suggests shaped the beliefs, attitudes and actions of the post-war generation. Their attitude to life, he writes, was 'coloured by the fact that their world could be blown up at any minute.'⁴ The latter point is supported by the findings of Auckland psychologist A.E. Manning in his pioneering work of 1958, *The Bodgie: A Study in Abnormal Psychology*, in which he writes of 'bodgies' and their female counterparts, 'widgies', 'Life is not much good except to have a good time, and the majority were of the hopeless opinion that all the future held for them was the possibility of death or mutilation in war...Life lacked a real purpose for them and a real security.'⁵

Yska also discusses the widespread impact of American culture, introduced during the Second World War, on New Zealand youth, and how this served to alienate young New Zealanders from their elders, many of whom still subscribed to the essentially British culture dominant in New Zealand prior to the war. The changing behaviour and apparent indiscipline of New Zealand teenagers caused parents and officials alike real concern and, according to Yska, had a significant impact on the

national referendum in 1949 regarding compulsory military training (CMT) which was to be re-introduced 'in readiness for battles in Korea and, later, Malaysia'. Although CMT had attracted controversy in 1952 when it was revealed that teenaged conscripts were being indoctrinated with anti-communist propaganda during their training, more than 50,000 young men had gone through the system by 1955. The scheme was suspended in March 1959 (but reintroduced in 1961 by the National government), at least in part because it had proved to be very expensive, but not before A.E. Manning had commented on its negative impact on young males and their resistance to the militarism of post-war years which was 'reflected in popular culture and by mainstream media, especially the powerful tabloid *Truth*, reinforcing the dominant ideas of thousands of returned servicemen.' This sentiment was demonstrated by 600 trainees who failed to attend Operation Ulysses, a 'huge army exercise at Waiouru featuring simulated atom bombs made of forty-four-gallon drums full of napalm' early in 1959.⁶

Dunstall summarises the social pattern of New Zealand from the close of the 1950s to the early 1970s when he writes, 'From the late 1950s there were signs of rebellion among adolescents; by the early 1960s youth culture had been commercialized; from the mid-1960s it was politicized as counter-culture. The late 1960s brought recession and participation in the Vietnam war; new forms of urban protest sprang up, the most enduring of which in the 1970s were a Maori cultural resurgence and a new feminist movement. Optimists saw in the growing diversity of

lifestyle a new social pattern emerging. Yet in the social fabric, elements of continuity were as pervasive in the 1970s as they were in the 1940s.’⁷

Population growth, after a post-war ‘baby boom’, slowed in the 1960s, with Pakeha fertility falling due to the advent of the contraceptive pill, a desire for smaller families, and women’s aspirations beyond the family, although the Maori population continued to grow rapidly. The population had also become more youthful, and there was increased Pakeha and Maori movement into urban areas. Patterns of employment were also changing. White-collar and blue-collar occupations had increased since the war, the latter based on the processing of farm produce for export, although farming continued to be important despite the number of farm holdings, particularly dairy, having fallen by a third. School rolls also increased, as did the pursuit of a more advanced education including secondary school, technical and trade training, and university. There was limited growth in public health services but the dual system of public and private health providers which developed in the 1940s continued and was amplified. Housing patterns, particular in suburbia, had been changing in the 15 years prior to the 1960s, resulting during that decade in a disparity between Maori and Pakeha housing standards, although this was alleviated initially by state housing and ‘low cost’ suburbs. Home-ownership in New Zealand, writes Dunstall:

lay at the heart of the prevailing ethos, reflecting aspirations for security, independence and respectability. Ownership also brought capital gains and enhanced social status....Above all, the suburban house was the focus of the consumer society with an ever-

increasing standard of living, measured in terms of a car (or two), a lawnmower, and a broadening range of household gadgetry. Amenities such as an electric range, washing-machine, and refrigerator which were to be found in little more than half the houses in the late 1940s were well nigh universal by the mid-1960s. New Zealanders became steadily more comfortable than ever before.... Yet some were more comfortable than others.⁸

He also suggests that although the dream of material utopia was universal in post-war New Zealand, it had certainly not been attained by the 1960s, pointing out that the disparity between the 'haves' and 'have-nots' in terms of education, health, occupation, income and housing during that decade only served to challenge the ethos of egalitarianism. 'For many the promise of affluence became uncertain. A further dimension was added to the doubts and divisions in society.'⁹ Protest was one of the means by which the 'generation born after the war reacted against the country's welfare state mentality, its concentration on material comfort, and suburban lifestyle and orthodoxy.'¹⁰ Robert Chapman, in his chapter in the second edition of *The Oxford History of New Zealand* titled 'From Labour to National', maintains that 'The underlying changes in the golden 1960s were social rather than political, technological rather than legislative, individual rather than public. If they took a mass form they did so as protest movements, confronting or, at the most, working alongside party structures.'¹¹ But it was the advancement of technology, in particular television and communications systems, which allowed New Zealanders during the 1960s direct access to the social and political movements and cultures of other nations after decades of colonial isolation fostering conservatism and very

little national introspection.

Ironically, a dominating theme for protest during at least the latter half of the decade was war, the very issue which had helped to consolidate and define New Zealand in earlier times. The Vietnam War was not responsible for the diverse social changes in New Zealand during the 1960s, but it can perhaps be seen as a catalyst which helped to direct and quantify these changes. Australian historian Ann Curthoys makes a similar point when she writes of the U.S. and Australian protest movements, 'And in each case, the anti-war movement can be seen as one focus, among many, for the rapid cultural and social changes of the period.'¹² For New Zealanders, other focal points during the era were the Maori and women's movements.¹³ However the Vietnam War in particular was a very divisive issue for New Zealanders, and there was much high feeling both for and against New Zealand's participation.¹⁴ Roberto Rabel writes of the 'searing impact which the Vietnam conflict had on this country's political life in the 1960s', and that 'one of the most significant repercussions of the Vietnam conflict for New Zealand was that it became the first foreign policy issue to polarise public opinion.'¹⁵

In response to Prime Minister Holyoake's likely committal of New Zealand troops to Vietnam, major protest actions against the war began in New Zealand in April 1965 when the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament's (CND) annual march coincided with the visit of Henry Cabot Lodge to New Zealand. CND members 'marched to parliament with posters and banners saying "Vietnam - Negotiate

Now”....they called for the withdrawal of New Zealand’s token contingent of non-combatant engineers’, and night vigils were held outside Lodge’s accommodation.

The Committee on Vietnam was formed, and the ‘whole campaign that would make headlines for the next decade had taken off within a week.’¹⁶

The New Zealand anti-war movement was strongly influenced by American and Australian protest against the war, and the New Zealanders used a variety of means to have their protests heard. These included vigils lasting up to 17 days outside and, at one point, inside parliament, pickets, rallies, demonstrations and marches which attracted thousands of participants (see Appendix G, Photographs 12 and 13), street theatre involving coffins and the burning of the U.S. flag, hunger strikes, American-influenced teach-ins at universities, and the publication of various newsletters such as *Indo-China Brief* and *Vietnam Quote and Comment*. The anti-war protesters were a diverse group and included academics, communists, trade unionists, Christian pacifists and other church parties, and politically radical students as well as ‘ordinary’ New Zealanders who opposed the war. The most organised and publicised group was perhaps the Progressive Youth Movement.¹⁷ As in the U.S. and Australia, clashes with police and the significant and active pro-war faction of New Zealand society led to violence and arrests and, ultimately, a rift in New Zealand society which, according to Michael King, ‘divided families, communities and the nation.’¹⁸

Anti-war protest in the U.S., Australia and New Zealand was undoubtedly fueled by images of the war appearing throughout the media,¹⁹ and some New Zealand veterans consider that the media betrayed them during their service in Vietnam. 'Sniper' believes that the media were biased against troops and unsupportive and therefore must accept some responsibility for the poor treatment that veterans received during and after the war.²⁰ 'TW Washburn' agrees, considering that 'It's the TV, the news media, they're the ones that were building it up, bringing the news out, making us sound like a pack of fucking shitheads', and believes that the result of this was that 'No-one sort of tautokoed us, no-one supported us.'²¹ Ted Brooker recalls that although many of the appalling atrocities perpetrated by the Vietcong were not reported, almost every controversial incident concerning allied troops was. For example, 'if we go and shell, put three or four rounds in Baria and frighten the living Christ out of a few townies...that was over every paper in the world.'²²

Certainly, the Vietnam War was the first conflict to be televised and broadcast directly into the nation's living rooms but most footage seen by New Zealanders was American, except for an occasional official New Zealand military film clip. Ian Johnstone, television journalist with the fledgling New Zealand Broadcasting Corporation (NZBC), recalls, 'Because it was a new news service here and a new television service I suppose [the NZBC] were somewhat cautious about how much they showed, but there's no doubt about it that Vietnam led the news whenever

there was footage, so people weren't denied seeing what the Americans were seeing. It began to impinge on us in the way that it was in America.'²³

What the Americans saw was often presented without interpretation or explanation.

U.S. investigative journalist Richard Severo writes, 'For network news, the Vietnam War became a convenience, the sort of TV staple that tenement fires already were for local news. There were interminable fires, violent explosions, weary young men bearing arms in the jungle, smoke billowing skyward, huts made of mud and straw, forbearing, hollow-eyed civilians staring into the camera, imploring a nation in their fragility and agony....Most of it was the ultimate expression of American journalism's shallowness, its predisposition, despite its much trumpeted muckraking, to content itself with reporting what Government officials said it was doing.'²⁴ This suggests that what New Zealanders saw on television was a reflection of the official American stance which maintained that the war was morally and politically right, and that the allies were winning. However, without clarification of what was being shown, news items were open to conjecture and interpretation which inevitably fueled anti-war protest. Images such as that of a Vietcong suspect being shot in the head by the Saigon Chief of Police were so inflammatory that the New Zealand Government accused the NZBC of a 'lack of integrity, later rephrased as "perspective", in its use of television footage.'²⁵

Reporting on the war by New Zealand correspondents overseas, such as Peter Arnett, meant that New Zealand newspapers were able to provide a more

informative service than could the NZBC. Journalists of all nations had almost unlimited access to the war and many, such as American correspondent Michael Herr and photo-journalist Tim Page from Britain, made the most of this, regularly accompanying troops into the field, as did Arnett who won a Pulitzer Prize for his reporting of the war.²⁶ If it is alleged that the New Zealand Government attempted to manipulate the media at times, and was 'extremely conscious of what it had told people and tried to maintain the picture it had painted', it is clear that these attempts sometimes failed. For example, the story written by David Barber of the New Zealand Press Association, which described the 'shabby treatment of New Zealand troops "by politicians who were not prepared to back their commitment with the supplies the troops needed, who made them pay income tax because 'war had not been declared' and docked their pay at the slightest excuse"', caused both the Government and the military considerable embarrassment.²⁷

Compared to newspaper coverage of earlier wars in New Zealand, news of Vietnam never really had a high profile. A perusal of the major New Zealand papers for the period 1965 to 1972 reveals that they were not inundated by articles about Vietnam, and a considerable number of those that did appear did not rate as front page news.²⁸

The tone of articles ranges from rather jolly, such as 'Gunners Smile' which describes the enthusiasm of 161 Battery members at the news that they would be going to Vietnam,²⁹ to criticism of the Government's treatment of troops as in 'Clothes rot off soldiers backs',³⁰ to admiration for the New Zealanders' bravery

and soldiering skills - 'NZ Guns Smash Ambush by Reds'³¹ and 'Anzac troops in bitter fighting with guerillas',³² to outright criticism as in 'NZ Artillery Blamed: Support guns kill 3 American paratroops'.³³ Interestingly, and perhaps indicating a change in how New Zealanders thought they should be represented in a war zone, the New Zealand medical teams in Vietnam appear to have received at least as much coverage in the papers as the combat elements did.³⁴ As the war progressed, an increasing number of articles began to appear reporting protest activity in New Zealand and questioning whether New Zealand troops should be in Vietnam at all.³⁵

Whether they were aware of the extent of anti-war sentiment in New Zealand or not, almost all New Zealand troops appear to have looked forward to coming home at the end of their tours.³⁶ The actual date was referred to as one's Return To New Zealand (RTNZ),³⁷ which was a slight misnomer as most of the infantry companies spent a further six months after Vietnam at Terendak or Neesoon before they finally came back to New Zealand. Despite looking forward to coming home, several veterans recall that they would have extended for a second tour if required.³⁸ Tom Palmer, who became famous among his American associates because he was completely unaware of his RTNZ, the actual day taking him by surprise, would have been happy to have taken a month's leave then returned.³⁹ John Hall, on the other hand, bitterly resented the decision which led to his company staying an extra, unscheduled, week in Vietnam.⁴⁰

The term 'short timer' was applied to those troops who were nearing the end of their tours,⁴¹ and some soldiers kept a 'short-timer's' calendar which was marked off each day.⁴² Most New Zealanders considered themselves to be getting 'short' from between one and three months prior to their RTNZ,⁴³ although one veteran recalls counting down from the day he arrived.⁴⁴ Peter Hotop preferred to wait until he 'had enough fingers to count on.'⁴⁵ The terminology used for counting down was, for example, 'ten and a wakey', the ten being the nights left to sleep in Vietnam, and the wakey the morning of the day of RTNZ.⁴⁶ 'Greasy eggs' was another method for counting down, referring to the number of fried eggs left to be eaten at breakfast before RTNZ.⁴⁷ Some veterans were unable to complete counting down either because of injury or because of the early withdrawal of New Zealand combat units from Vietnam in December 1971.⁴⁸

Although some New Zealanders do not appear to have modified their behaviour at all as their RTNZ approached,⁴⁹ others became slightly more conservative in their activities, were more safety-conscious, and did not take unnecessary risks.⁵⁰ Hardie Martin considered that 'Everybody's got a quota of bloody luck and after 12 months it was starting to get pretty short.'⁵¹ On John Treanor's last operation, 'It was floating on top of the ground to make sure you didn't touch anything.' He recalls a point approximately four months before his RTNZ when he became convinced that his luck had already deserted him and he was going to be killed. 'I actually packed all my gear up ready to come home, ready to be sent home, if I got killed.' He

remains unsure why he did this but remembers, 'I think it might have been, hell, I've come this far and I haven't even had so much as a mossie bite, you know? And I thought, hell, how could you have been so lucky?', recalling that he 'didn't even get any tattoos.'⁵² John Hall remembers that professionalism increased during the last few weeks, even though 'no-one from the top down was going to try and win the war single-handed in his last wee while', which was fortunate as his company encountered considerably increased enemy activity in the period just prior to their RTNZ.⁵³ Fred Barclay's last operation was a 'horror story right from the word go.' His team was inadvertently inserted into the middle of a very large NVA unit and had to be immediately pulled out again. To the team's relief, their commanding officer considered them to be too close to going home to risk another operation, and they did not return to the field.⁵⁴

Leaving Vietnam was easier for some than it was for others. Ken Treanor had concerns relating to the future welfare of the Vietnamese civilian population at the end of both of his tours,⁵⁵ and Murray Deed recalls feeling sad when Victor 6 withdrew early because 'we got to like the place and know the place and it's a beautiful country.'⁵⁶ One veteran recalls that 'The feeling that the war was unfinished and I wasn't going to be there at the end of it troubled me a little, but I had no doubt that we would win it, so I didn't actually feel bad about it.'⁵⁷ John Hall was personally disappointed with the allied decision to withdraw from Vietnam, believing that 'The rationale for us to go, albeit reluctantly, was to help

South Vietnam, another country, to preserve its integrity and independencenow the lack of moral fibre to carry it through was described by some people as being worse than Napoleon's retreat from Moscow.... Time will tell and history will tell, but it was quite disturbing to be very intimately involved.⁵⁸ John Pointon and several other New Zealanders were actually left behind at Vung Tau when the last of the Australian and New Zealand combat teams withdrew in 1971. Not wanting to remain in Vietnam for the rest of his life, Pointon gave 'an American Chinook pilot an Australian Landrover to fly us to Saigon. He took it, [and] flew...four of us down to Saigon later that afternoon.'⁵⁹ He recalls being dismayed prior to his departure at the fate of both Nui Dat and Vung Tau bases, both of which were handed over intact to the South Vietnamese military as part of the 'Vietnamisation' programme. Both bases were completely ransacked in a matter of hours, one veteran who witnessed the handover of Nui Dat recalling that the experience was 'shocking'.⁶⁰

It appears that almost none of the New Zealand soldiers who served in Vietnam were officially debriefed, in the sense that they were asked to pass on their operational experience,⁶¹ although Laurie Pilling recalls that he was.⁶² Ken Treanor was not debriefed, but remembers a handover point at the end of both of his tours which gave him the opportunity to share his knowledge,⁶³ and another 1NZSMT veteran wrote an official report each month of his tour, but is unsure whether the experience and advice contained in those reports was ever noted or acted upon.⁶⁴

Some veterans feel that a debrief including an opportunity for them to 'unburden' themselves of any possible trauma experienced in Vietnam would have helped them adjust to civilian life after their tours.⁶⁵ Others do not,⁶⁶ one veteran noting that the value of debriefing would depend on 'the psychological make-up of the individual, eg. what sort of person was he/she *before* Vietnam.'⁶⁷ For some, further service after Vietnam, even if it was only short-term, helped them to readjust. Bill Peachey recalls of the six months his company had in Singapore after Vietnam, 'They said it was a wind-down period or something. It was too',⁶⁸ and the majority of the battery troops on short term enlistments still had time to serve after Vietnam in New Zealand before they were discharged.⁶⁹ Some veterans consider that men who left the Army immediately after Vietnam could have experienced significant readjustment problems,⁷⁰ and Peter Hotop believes that 'those soldiers who returned immediately to New Zealand and were also to leave the Army immediately should have been counselled by experts - not by Army personnel.'⁷¹

The adjustment period immediately after Vietnam, even within the military environment, was not always necessarily smooth. John Treanor recalls that when Whiskey 2 returned to Terendak, 'We were told to keep out of the way because we were a bloody nuisance....the battalion was in the throes of transferring down to Singapore...and we finished our tour right in the middle of it and they didn't know what to do with us....[It was] get out the way, we're bloody busy.' He was also 'a bit pissed off' when he discovered that the money which his company had been

putting aside for a post-Vietnam celebration had been spent by their colleagues at Terendak. Treanor recalls that he and his team mates were told, 'there's some barracks down there, go and find a bed', which they duly did, taking the mattresses and selling them for beer money.⁷² Dave Orbell recalls that alcohol was also a focal point when his company returned to Terendak. 'We'd be from six in the morning until midnight. Spew up, feed, back into it, crawl home at midnight. Six in the morning, flog your gear at the hock shop, in there again.'⁷³

For many New Zealand veterans, the actual return to New Zealand can be described as uneventful at best. It appears that a considerable number of the flights which brought New Zealand Vietnam veterans home landed either late at night or very early in the morning. John Pointon recalls, 'four of us got off a plane at Whenuapai about half past two in the morning. Somebody begrudgingly took us, took me to Papakura, I picked up some tickets, I left some kit at Papakura and went out to Mangere...to catch a plane to ChristchurchThat was it.'⁷⁴ When Murray Deed came home, 'No-one sort of gave a stuff, you know, find your own way [home].'⁷⁵ Another veteran also recalls that 'Nobody gave a stuff....We got back to New Zealand in the middle of the night sort of thing and away we went home and that was it', which he thought was appalling because 'you unloaded this plane-load of guys that had been under all this stress, they were drinking everything in sight and half of them have probably sort of killed people and here they are plonked back, straight back, as though nothing had ever happened.'⁷⁶ Nigel Martin, whose plane

landed at Wellington, recalls, 'We never even landed at the airport building, we went to a side hangar, didn't even go anywhere near the building, the terminal or anything.'⁷⁷ When Bruce Liddall came home, 'We flew into Wellington at 11 o'clock at night, we were the only plane to land there at that time of night. We were ushered, *ushered*, through a back door, didn't even go to customs, didn't go anywhere. We were straight out, our families were waiting there, we were more or less put in the car and told to go.' However he had flown home on the same plane as the New Zealand Minister of Defence, and suspects that this was the reason for the slightly preferential treatment.⁷⁸

The experiences of troops medevaced back to New Zealand do not appear to have been any more welcoming. For Colin Whyte, the return home was marred by the fact that his young son did not know who he was and was frightened of him, preferring to stay with the Army driver who had driven him with his mother to the airport.⁷⁹ Dave Douglas does not recall most of his trip home but his return was also marred by a double family tragedy which had occurred only hours before he landed in New Zealand.⁸⁰ For Ted Brooker, the sense of utter dislocation he experienced on return was profound. The day that he was discharged from hospital, he 'went down Queen Street and it was a beautiful summer's day. Mini-skirts were the thing of the day and it was a world I didn't even live in. It was just amazing. It was just, you know, I felt as if I was walking around in a glass bowl. It was just totally unreal. It was so bloody unreal it was just, creepy.' After Brooker had been shot down and

treated at 1AFH in Vung Tau, he had gone back briefly to Nui Dat to pick up his gear before he returned to New Zealand. He remembers that he experienced the same sense of dislocation then. 'And I felt the same. I was out, I was safe, I was, I wasn't one of them anymore....I think what happened there is you became so introverted and you were tied in with the guys that were there...soon as somebody was coming in he was brought into it, soon as somebody was out, he was gone, he was dead. He just didn't belong in that world.' Brooker recalls, 'it's such an unbelievable thing. It doesn't go away. It really... that whole thing, I didn't realise how long it affected me, but it must have affected me for about five or ten years.'⁸¹

It appears that flights carrying troops who had served in Vietnam home to New Zealand may have been orchestrated to arrive when it was least likely that anyone would be about, in particular, protesters. Although many New Zealand soldiers were not met at the airport by anti-war demonstrators, others were and found the experience to be confusing, disappointing and, in some cases, very annoying.⁸²

Dave Douglas recalls, 'we didn't know anything. We didn't know about all of this protesting...that was going on....It wasn't until after we got back and reality hit us about what was going on. Nobody told us anything. Nobody told us...that there was people at home were disillusioned with us going up there, they didn't want us going up there.'⁸³ 'Matt G' describes the debacle his company, Whiskey 1, encountered when they landed at Whenuapai. They were completely perplexed when a policeman immediately boarded the plane and advised them to stay in their seats because:

They're putting bloody ropes up....So when we got out the door we had to follow the ropes all the way into the [terminal]. They said, you'll see people out there, they've got placards saying Babykillers and Christ knows whatever else. He says ignore them, don't even look at them, just get out of the plane and take off into the bus, and of course that was the worst thing you'd ever say. Plus you no sooner stepped out of the plane and these people are YAH! shoving these placards in your face. Soldiers just straight over the ropes having a hua of a great scrap about 2 o'clock in the morning....and a few of the bloody placards got broken over the soldier's heads and the soldiers bloody grabbed the broken sticks and whacked a few people around the bloody ears with them, including a policeman, and bloody police dogs got in the road and everything else. But the police must have been expecting it because there was a hua of a lot of them there all of a sudden. They were just picking up people and putting them in the bus. But the thing is, when we got in there they locked the bloody doors and all these people that were outside, they just went! They just left! When they found there was no more people coming out of the plane, they didn't come through, through the [terminal] to get out but where they hell they disappeared to, I don't know.

The company was then transported by truck to Papakura Camp, or deposited at the 'pub' of their choice. 'Matt G' and several of his friends booked into the Victoria Hotel, asked the proprietor to keep the bar open all night and then ordered \$20.00 worth of fish and \$20.00 worth of chips (in separate parcels) to be delivered to the hotel by taxi. An hour later, they rang the taxi company again and ordered a further '\$20.00 worth of chips this time, never mind the fish.' Several days later, 'Matt G' flew to Wanganui, arranging to meet his friends there in a week's time. They duly arrived eight days later, having hired the 'chip' taxi for the whole trip which had evolved into a non-stop pub crawl, all attired in fashionable suits, ties and hats, and with a new hat for the taxi driver.⁶⁴ Tom Palmer's reception at Whenuapai was considerably less colourful. He recalls that he was almost immediately reduced

from Sergeant to Corporal, and put in charge of a 'barrack block full of trainees.' His accommodation was 'the baggage room. No curtains, no power pints, stinking of cat's urine... Welcome home you bloody hero!'⁸⁵

A considerable number of New Zealanders remember that one of the few pieces of advice that they did receive from the military on their immediate return home was not to wear their uniforms on the streets, although many initially did not know why.⁸⁶ 'Andrew B' recalls, 'We were told to change into our civilian clothes and we were not to wear our uniforms in public and that was the first time, we hadn't been told anything of this situation of soldiers coming back into the protest situation in New Zealand.' He and his team mates had to get changed in the airport toilets.⁸⁷ Ted Brooker remembers, 'We weren't allowed to wear our uniforms in public, for Christ's sake. We weren't *allowed* to! It wasn't a question of we suggest you don't, *you will not!*'⁸⁸ Some veterans discovered that their families were more aware of potential trouble than they were themselves. Bruce Liddall was collected from the airport by his bother-in-law who advised him when they stopped at a hotel to buy some beer to stay in the car as he was wearing his uniform. Liddall recalls that he drank his dozen on the way home.⁸⁹

Most veterans did not receive a welcome home of any sort, except perhaps for private celebrations with families and friends. Conversely, Richard Pepper recalls that his 'Helicopter Squadron and all other ranks at Hobsonville gave me a great welcome home. My family, Hastings civic leaders, a local women's Vietnam

support organisation, all embarrassed me with their most sincere welcome', although he notes that he has 'not yet received the same for my return from the Korean conflict - not that I expect it.'⁹⁰ For some veterans, the absence of an official or even public welcome was very disappointing. Dave Douglas remembers, 'You were sort of expecting to be, I suppose, welcomed with open arms, so to speak. But we weren't, you know. We were shunned.'⁹¹ Dave Orbell compares the experience of coming home with, 'you've got ten acres of thick bloody paddock out there and you say to your son you want to cut it to within one millimetre without a blade of bloody grass left on it. And the kid goes out there and labours at it, he gets the bare requirement to do the job. He comes in, he's looking for acknowledgment, praise and all the rest of it, and you tell him to go to bed. And you do nothing more about that incident and that kid's in there sleeping, thinking about that task, and no acknowledgment.'⁹²

The one official and public 'welcome home' ceremony for New Zealand Vietnam veterans which did eventuate appears to have been such a disaster that no more were ever initiated. In May 1971, members of 161 Battery and the SAS who had served in Vietnam marched up Queen Street in Auckland to the Town Hall to be officially welcomed home. Although Queen Street was lined with 'supportive, cheering people [who] stood six or seven deep', a relatively small group of protesters screamed insults, waved derogatory placards, threw eggs and red paint at the veterans, and hurled themselves under the feet of the band causing an altercation

which resulted in one protester (perhaps somewhat hypocritically) taking the battery commander, Major John Masters, to court for offensive behaviour. The case against Masters was dismissed by the judge as 'misconceived'. It is interesting to note that 'Only the actions of the protesters made the evening television news.'⁹³

A considerable number of New Zealanders recall that they were not ostracised by the public after their initial return home.⁹⁴ Peter Earsman, for example, remembers, 'Nobody gave me a hard time. Significantly perhaps, nobody thanked me either.'⁹⁵ For other veterans, public reaction to who they were and where they had been was demoralising at best, and devastating for some.⁹⁶ Des Sluce recalls, 'When I came home I was often accosted by know-nothing protesters. I will always call them that because in spite of an intensive education they persisted in wanting to know nothing but the dogma they found convenient....All service personnel will tell you that being shot at is part of the job. But they will also tell you that being shot at and hit by fellow countrymen is an insult.'⁹⁷ Tom Palmer was walking in uniform down Queen Street one day when he was 'punched in the chest by a [university student] and asked, "Why was I wearing that fascist uniform"?' Palmer recalls, 'Initially, he could have been right because I nearly floored him, which wouldn't have done the service I am so proud of much credit. Justice intervened in time, in the form of a New Zealand Policeman and two very indignant citizens complaining on my behalf.'⁹⁸ Several veterans recall becoming involved in fights in social situations or at work with people who either disapproved of the fact that they had served in

Vietnam or considered it necessary that the veterans prove their status as experienced and tough soldiers.⁹⁹ 'Steve D', incapacitated at the time with one leg in a full-length plaster cast, was attacked by several students in the toilet of the Robbie Burns Hotel in Dunedin. Fortunately for him, the barman there at the time was Joe McNally, the New Zealand boxing champion, who heard 'a bit of a scuffle', came to investigate, and 'decked about four of these fellas.'¹⁰⁰ Gordon Dalziel also remembers that he became involved in a fight with students in the Royal Hotel in Hamilton, and subsequently spent his first night at home in jail,¹⁰¹ and 'Sniper' can recall a physical altercation with a work colleague who persisted in calling him a 'mercenary', a 'child killer', and a 'fucking murderer'.¹⁰² Hardie Martin remembers feeling devastated after he was verbally attacked, criticised and demeaned by a female visitor at the home of his girlfriend. 'Now, quite frankly, I wanted to kill that woman right then and there and I still want to kill her to this day....it was a *disgusting* thing to do to a 22 year old young man.'¹⁰³

Somewhat unsurprisingly, some veterans developed and still retain a negative opinion of those who displayed anti-war sentiment. For Des Sluce, the one insult which he feels he can 'never, never, never forgive or forget is; 'The danger's passed, the wrong is righted, the veterans ignored, the soldiers slighted.'¹⁰⁴

Interestingly, this verse is almost surely a version of the short poem known by veterans of the First World War; 'When troubles rise and War in nigh, God and the soldier is the cry. When War is over and the troubles righted, God is forgotten and

the Soldier slighted.’¹⁰⁵ In Tom Palmer’s opinion, the ‘Friday night “Rent-A-Crowd”’ protesters who marched up Queen Street were motivated less by political and moral beliefs than by fear that the New Zealand Government would re-introduce conscription. He believes, ‘We were right - the Communists were and still are the “Baddies” and should be confronted wherever they surface. Where are the apologies?’¹⁰⁶ Colin Whyte recalls, ‘And what must be remembered about the civilian attitude to us, we were the first New Zealand, Australian or American army to lose. The very first. And no-one likes a loser....the pro-war people looked down on us, and the anti-war people would resent us.’¹⁰⁷ For another veteran, ‘There was a lot of anti-war sentiment, but I figured that if I really believed that the war had been about democracy then I had to accept the right of these people to think what they did.’¹⁰⁸

Mike Perreau considers that the return from Vietnam can be described in general as ‘a hell of a kick in the arse’.¹⁰⁹ For another veteran, ‘The hardest part of a war is coming home....civilian life was unreal....the reality is where you’ve been. Nobody knows what the hell you’re talking about so you stop talking....The density of people, the noise, the hostility. Coming home was horrible.’¹¹⁰ Several veterans remember that they felt very lonely and alienated when they first returned home, as they were often separated from team mates and found themselves to be estranged from former friends.¹¹¹ Terry Findlay recalls, ‘I think the main thing when you came home you were lonely. I had...a very supportive family...[but I would] go to

the pub all day with me mates and they were doing the same thing and you'd sit in the pub for an hour or something and nobody would arrive so you'd go to the next one and sit looking at the door, and when somebody would walk in the door it was like you'd found your long lost brother, you know....I think the whole of your leave you spent looking for mates and that.'¹¹² Gordon Dalziel also recalls, 'I know when I got out, every pub you went to...you were always looking for your mates....It was like a baby being torn from the bosom of its mother.'¹¹³

The problem of not being able to relate to civilians and even family also seems to have been prevalent for some newly returned veterans.¹¹⁴ Bruce Liddall found it 'very hard to talk to civilians....because they were on a different world to me....they still lived in a world of fantasy as far as I was concerned. They still talked about this big home on the hill with six kids and a wife and a big flash car, where to me, that didn't mean anything.'¹¹⁵ Hardie Martin experienced the same difficulty, remembering a formal ball he attended. 'There I was, all done up in a bloody suit and all these people were in bloody long dresses...and three weeks ago I was walking around dripping with ammunition with a bloody live round up the spout. And I just could not relate to that evening. I was shitting myself. I had to keep on going outside because I couldn't breathe, I couldn't relate to the bloody people that were there, they were bloody ponces, they were wimps, and I just didn't want to know them.'¹¹⁶

These and other veterans found that as a result of their combat experiences they had nothing in common with 'ordinary' people, and considered the subject and form of normal social conversation to be meaningless and trivial. Another veteran became 'distant, unconcerned about close relationships with anyone. I would actually get up and leave the room sometimes if people entered it, without realising I was doing it. Friendships bored me, and I wasn't really interested in anyone except a handful to whom I closely related, either fellow veterans or a couple of life-long civilian friends.'¹¹⁷ Dave Douglas remembers thinking 'the quicker we can get...back in the Army, because we had X amount of days leave, the quicker we can get out of civvy street so to speak and get back within, within an environment we were used to, the better off. Get away from all that bloody hassle.'¹¹⁸

It appears that alcohol was commonly used by newly returned veterans to help them to adjust to life out of the war zone. John Treanor considers that he drank excessively when he returned to New Zealand, although this tapered off after a while. 'I hit the booze a bit and I think again that was a release of tension and...there was all my mates back in Rotorua and things like that and I was a big tough bloody soldier [who could] drink everybody under the table.'¹¹⁹ Terry Findlay's brother-in-law was initially convinced that Findlay was an alcoholic when he came home,¹²⁰ and Nigel Martin would 'go down to [a bar] every day when I was on leave, and I used to buy a...40 oz bottle of rum over the bar, have that on the table, plus drink beer...then go home. And I did that for about a week and a half I

suppose, and one day I went in there...and started drinking away and *boom*, I only finished half the bottle and I was paralytic. Just out of the blue! Bang!’¹²¹ Mike Perreau recalls that he spent all of his accumulated wages and savings on alcohol, but when ‘the cheques started bouncing that’s when I realised maybe I had a problem. And I bloody put myself on the dry for a bit and got a job as a bloody part-time barman.’ He recalls that this turned out to be a somewhat unsuccessful strategy.¹²²

Many veterans attempted to join the RSA when they came home from Vietnam, assuming that as soldiers returned from active service overseas they would be welcomed and supported. Some recall feeling rejected and insulted when they discovered that this was not the case.¹²³ Claire Loftus Nelson writes, ‘At the one place where they expected support, the RSA, they felt rejected by some World War One and Two veterans who said the younger generation didn’t know what it was like to be in a “real” war, had only served short terms overseas and were known as drug and alcohol users.’¹²⁴ One veteran remembers, ‘my father took me to sign up with his local RSA. Never been back, never renewed the membership. It wasn’t a real war, sonny, not like ours.’¹²⁵ Although Vietnam veterans are welcomed into the RSA now, some believe that this is only because there are not enough Second World War veterans left to ‘run the show.’¹²⁶

Another issue which disillusioned some Vietnam veterans was the lack of practical advice and assistance from the military.¹²⁷ Gerald Southon considers that soldiers

returning from Vietnam should have been advised of the types of assistance available for veterans, such as home and rehabilitation loans, which he recalls generally did not happen.¹²⁸ Obtaining a rehabilitation loan to purchase a farm was one of the main reasons 'Sniper' decided to serve in Vietnam, having been advised before he went that he would have to serve overseas to be eligible, but when he returned to New Zealand, he was advised by the Rehabilitation Board that the scheme had been discontinued some years ago.¹²⁹ Allan Grayling was given the same information, although he discovered in 1982 that this was in fact incorrect, but had lost his eligibility by then. He believes that 'the Army made no effort in many cases, some people it told about their rehab and other groups were never told anything and...there's a lot of that stuff should have been corrected but there was no extensions left or anything else so it left a bad, bad feeling in people's mouths.'¹³⁰ For Gordon Dalziel, 'it was a bloody kick in the arse when they took our rehab loans away from us....a rehab loan traditionally was given to returning soldiers for services rendered to their country in appreciation by the Crown for services to your country, for your country.'¹³¹

For some Regular Force veterans, returning to peace-time work in the military was very frustrating and unfulfilling. Des Sluce recalls, 'To come back from an extremely responsible job to dealing with fit, healthy individuals who had an ill-defined pain was a tremendous let down. A few people were jealous of, or resented, that we medics had the opportunity to have gone to war. Damn it, that puts them on

the same level as chopper pilots! Can't have that sort of thing.' He also felt that the cities and pubs at home were 'strange', that life was 'banal', and that he could not relate to civilians or 'airmen who had not seen what I had seen.'¹³² Tom Palmer had a similar experience. 'On my return to New Zealand I [was] a highly trained medic who wasn't allowed to do anything...because of the petty bureaucracy and "jealousy" of the entrenched establishment'. He recalls that he was initially not even allowed to administer injections by himself.¹³³ Hardie Martin remembers being dismayed when he observed what he considered to be 'the Army mistreating people who were veterans of Vietnam', recalling that 'the jealousy was bloody horrific', and that veterans were told to remove their combat ribbons and medals, something which Harry Ellison also encountered.¹³⁴ 'Steve D' recalls that this also happened to troops who had served in Borneo.¹³⁵

For other veterans, the combination of public hostility or disinterest, the lack of support and recognition, and an inability to readjust to a peace-time environment were too much to cope with so they volunteered to return to Vietnam for a second tour. Dave Douglas went back because his initial tour with Victor 1 had not fulfilled his expectations, but also because of the 'disillusion of what happened at home.'¹³⁶ Gordon Dalziel, who also did a second tour, recalls that he 'couldn't get back quick enough', and considered volunteering for a third tour but eventually did not for family reasons.¹³⁷ Allan Grayling, dismayed at the attitude of the people and Government of New Zealand towards Vietnam veterans, left the country seven

weeks after he was discharged from the Army because he 'couldn't face this country any more.' He went to Australia where he was allegedly almost conscripted into the Australian Army, returned to New Zealand for a further two weeks, then left again for America, not returning until 1982.¹³⁸

The popular image of the Vietnam veteran is often that of a drug-crazed, camouflage-clad madman taking pot-shots at passing cars from his lounge window with a smuggled-home weapon. This is clearly not the case. Many Vietnam veterans who have suffered from problems such as war-related PTSD have done so in silence and in private with only their immediate families aware of their circumstances. It appears that the symptoms of PTSD (see Appendix F for description) are in fact not widely recognised by many New Zealand veterans, apart from those who have perhaps experienced severe difficulties themselves and have been diagnosed as suffering from the disorder. One ex-infantryman was assessed some years ago as having an anxiety neurosis, which he felt was incorrect because 'anxiety neurosis is for frustrated housewives.' He has since learned that his symptoms clearly indicated PTSD, which he could not recognise at the time.¹³⁹ Another veteran considers that he was probably suffering from PTSD after he returned from Vietnam but also did not realise. He joined the New Zealand Police Force after he left the Army but was 'medically disengaged' when he was diagnosed as suffering from 'depression, post-traumatic stress disorder and generalised anxiety disorder.' He believes that it is 'anybody's guess whether any of that was Vietnam baggage.'¹⁴⁰ One ex-infantryman

who has also been diagnosed with PTSD believes that it took him almost 20 years to come to terms with his experiences in Vietnam, noting that he still suffers from intermittent bouts of depression today.¹⁴¹ For another veteran, the years following his return from Vietnam were a 'disaster'. He recalls that he threw himself into pursuing his 'one love', which was farming, at the eventual expense of his mental health. He lost his drivers' licence for three years at one point for drunk driving, recalling:

so I just became a hermit. Lived on the farm by myself and, oh, they were terrible years....Financially I set myself up to a degree but socially and emotionally I was a wreck....It was such a terrible experience that I suppose it's like a lot of depressions if you like, that I felt that of course I was the only one that was having these problems and so I avoided even the guys I served with because I believed that I was, just wasn't coping but they seemed to be coping so it was my problem and I was just a bloody embarrassment to them. It wasn't until much much later of course you realise that we're all going through that in various degrees and we all had this problem and...had there been any reasonable psychological services available to us to actually get us into a discussion group type of situation, which we do now, you know, as a group of vets, but we needed that 20 years ago.¹⁴²

While some New Zealanders do not feel that they experienced any problems at all adapting to life after Vietnam, apart perhaps from the normal adjustments required after a period away from home,¹⁴³ others consider that they did, although most do not define these difficulties as being symptomatic of PTSD as they understand it.¹⁴⁴

One veteran, for example, has experienced mood changes and a growing lack of tolerance, but wonders, 'Is it PTSD, or am I just old and bloody grumpy?'¹⁴⁵ An ex-officer recalls, 'I've had my run of nightmares, I've had my down times, I've

had my depressions, I've had my resentments, I've had points where I couldn't remember my own damn telephone number and one point where I couldn't remember my address.'¹⁴⁶ Like other veterans,¹⁴⁷ Des Sluce experienced permanent changes to his sleep patterns. 'Even now I wake once or twice a night. Come to the surface just to check things are OK. They always are. But I still check',¹⁴⁸ and another veteran experienced persistent dreams relating to some distressing sights he witnessed in Vietnam and eventually had to seek counselling for this problem.¹⁴⁹ Colin Whyte also experienced 'nightmares' and, like several veterans,¹⁵⁰ had initial difficulties coping with unexpected loud noises. He recalls one incident when 'we were walking around [Christchurch] Square...and a car back-fired and I threw [my wife and child] into a doorway and jumped on top of them! And everyone came to have a look to see what else I did, what other tricks I had, you know, all the other pedestrians stopped to see what else I did for a laugh.'¹⁵¹ Other veterans have found it difficult to form friendships since Vietnam or communicate with 'non-Vietnam' people, civilians in particular, but do not consider this to be a problem as friends made during their Vietnam years are considered to be enough.¹⁵² One ex-gunner still has 'trouble cultivating relationships and maintaining friendships, not because I fight with people or anything, just because I still feel distant, that I don't actually need people and I don't really care about getting close to them.'¹⁵³

A number of veterans discovered that the excessive drinking habits they had developed in Vietnam became a problem for them at home.¹⁵⁴ One ex-infantryman

continued to drink heavily after his return for some years with rather disastrous results until he decided to abstain altogether,¹⁵⁵ and an ex-gunner was spending up to \$300 a week on alcohol at one point before he was able to successfully address the problem.¹⁵⁶ Another ex-infantryman relied heavily on alcohol until the mid-80s, which was when he asked himself 'what the hell am I doing, you know, what the hell is going on? And it was round about then that I realised that I was getting sicker and sicker...I just had to bloody pull up and slow down.'¹⁵⁷ He considers himself to have been very fortunate to have had the support of an understanding family, as does another veteran who recalls that he would lock himself in his garage 'night after night' drinking up to three bottles of whiskey per session. This veteran's father intervened, assisting with his young family until he 'started to mend.'¹⁵⁸

As already noted, not all New Zealand Vietnam veterans experienced post-war problems. John Treanor believes that he did not because he went with an open mind, viewed the experience as a sort of 'nature study visit', and did not take the popular propaganda relating to the communist threat too seriously. 'I mean to say it sounded good when you were drunk but I never sort of dwelt too much on that.'¹⁵⁹ Murray Deed considers that his personal psychological make-up allowed him to block out the incidents which may have impacted more heavily on other men. He concedes that his job as a company cook may have screened him from some trauma, but points out that he did experience his share of frights and revolting sights.¹⁶⁰

It is clear that of the veterans who have not experienced PTSD, some are somewhat sceptical of the validity of and motives behind the claims of others who have.¹⁶¹ One veteran believes that although *conscripted* members of allied forces in Vietnam probably can justifiably claim that they have experienced PTSD, ‘Our nation sent only regulars to Vietnam, [and] sadly some of our vets have caught the PTSD disease. How come our veterans of previous conflicts fail to yell and scream about PTSD?’ He also believes that ‘Another cause for PTSD is for the afflicted to listen to the whinings of the neighbour rather than going to the appropriate department’, and that veterans tend to self-inflict PTSD by refusing to join suitable veterans associations.¹⁶² Another veteran also considers that Regular Force soldiers were less likely to suffer from PTSD, although he has seen genuine and quite severe cases among this group, and that the degree of combat trauma experienced is a clear factor contributing to the development of the disorder. He believes, as do some other veterans,¹⁶³ that ‘the people who attribute their problems in later life to active service, particularly in Vietnam, are really using it as an excuse for them not being successful’, and that this type of person would probably have had ‘difficulties with coping with life’ regardless of whether they had served in Vietnam or not.¹⁶⁴

One ex-infantryman considers that although some veterans experienced trauma to a degree that they could have legitimately developed PTSD, ‘there is a category of Vietnam veterans who were employed in duties where they are unlikely to have been traumatised at all by their experience. The people I suspect who really do

suffer PTSD are the wounded who were evacuated to New Zealand and released immediately from the Army on return to New Zealand. These people, already traumatised by their war experience would have been further traumatised by their change in physical condition and social environment (particularly a society that was either indifferent to our involvement in the war or very vocal in its opposition to it).’ He also considers that soldiers who had short-term enlistments and left the Army immediately after Vietnam were likely candidates for legitimate PTSD.¹⁶⁵

Another veteran, who worked in Vietnam as both a gunner and an infantryman, suggests that some ex-gunners who have experienced PTSD feel inadequate because they served in Vietnam without being directly involved in a combat role, but feel that they should have, and that this is what has caused their psychological problems. In his experience, ‘jealousies crept in...[and] fantasies crept in. And what they were trying to do, I think...they felt they weren’t actually Vietnam veterans because they hadn’t got into combat. And I used to tell them, well, without you, us in the field would have been had it because if you weren’t there then we wouldn’t have had no-one to support us.’¹⁶⁶

In general, it appears that veterans who stayed in the services after Vietnam did not experience difficulties to the extent that those on short term enlistments did, considering that the military infrastructure was able to provide more support than could a civilian environment.¹⁶⁷ John Treanor remembers, ‘I was still a serving soldier, I wasn’t a short term one, I was there for the long haul so coming back into

the camp it was an insulated world and, there, there was no question about what was right and what was wrong about being in Vietnam.¹⁶⁸ One ex-Sergeant recalls that there were 'people in the Army that you can talk to that can understand what it was like. The Army, the service, does look after its own, there's no doubt about that and, yeah, that would have been a hell of a lot easier than going straight back to being a civilian.'¹⁶⁹ Another veteran, an ex-infantry officer, considered that it was 'sensible to spend a bit longer in the service. There's a sort of collective support within. Out there, society was hostile, let me tell you, it *was* hostile. Really hostile. Once you stepped out, you were *alone*.'¹⁷⁰

However, John Moller recalls that the New Zealand Army could be very unsympathetic to personnel who felt that they were experiencing post-war problems. 'I can remember going to one of my superior officers, a Colonel, and saying to him, look, I'm having problems and I think it's related to Vietnam. And I can remember to this day exactly what he said to me. He said, "Piss off before you make me angry."' Moller suggests that 'In a sense, the Defence Department were quite negligent because they didn't...even consider the possibility of PTSD, although there's plenty of literature about it.' He also believes that because of the negative attitudes and denial expressed by the military, many Vietnam veterans were discouraged from revealing that they were experiencing a range of health problems which, consequently, have never been resolved.¹⁷¹ Gordon Dalziel also considers that the New Zealand Army did some Vietnam veterans a 'terrible injustice' by

ignoring their post-war problems. He recalls that when Victor 1 came home, the company was considered to be unmanageable by the Army and was consequently sent to Okains Bay on Banks Peninsula to get them out of the way and to 'unwind', but without any practical assistance to help them do this.¹⁷² In Ted Brooker's opinion, the New Zealand Army displayed complete disregard for its Vietnam veterans. 'They went into total shock, the whole Army. When the Vietnam War stopped, I was Chief Instructor [at the] School of Army Administration, [and] I can tell you the Army just turned to shit. It turned into a back-biting bitching introverted bunch of tits, and I got out of it and joined the [Territorials] and it was the best thing I ever did, be a soldier and no politics.' Not long after this Brooker attended a Chief of General Staff conference at Papakura, recalling:

General Poananga got up and said, and I quote, "Forget about Vietnam, we're going back to the basics, desert warfare." Fuck! I couldn't believe it! We'd spent donkey's years in there learning some bitter, bitter lessons about a specialized type of warfare and we were going to forget it all and go back to the fucking desert, where they were all bloody heroes....I really do think at the time, now, that it was a self, sort of self-protection thing. No, fuck, real bad news man, let's forget all about that and go back to something we know we're, you know, we're good guys at.¹⁷³

John Moller considers that the military is now addressing the issue of post-operational assistance for veterans, as demonstrated by the support services which were made available to New Zealand military personnel who had served in Bosnia. Like some other Vietnam veterans, he feels that this is a very good sign.¹⁷⁴ 'Matt G' believes that if Vietnam veterans had had access to similar counselling after their

war, the magnitude and impact of their problems would have been considerably reduced.¹⁷⁵ Conversely, 'Sniper' considers that the counselling made available for Bosnia veterans was unnecessary because they were not involved in an active combat role, and were not required to 'fire a shot...[or] confront the enemy.'¹⁷⁶ Richard Cairns agrees, considering such counselling to have been a 'crock of shit', and that there is a 'big difference between being a combat soldier and witnessing things horrific and being a peace-keeper and witnessing things horrific.' He believes that the attention paid to Bosnia veterans was probably a 'classic case of us over-reacting to a...failing from previous conflicts' and possibly ineffectual anyway because, in his view, counselling should not just occur subsequent to a traumatic event but should also be applied before and during the event.¹⁷⁷

As well as experiencing psychological trauma as a result of their service in Vietnam, a considerable number of New Zealand veterans are experiencing ongoing problems with their physical health. The New Zealand Government still publicly maintains that New Zealanders in Vietnam were never exposed to chemical sprays. Agent Orange, so named because of the identifying colour code on the drums it was stored in,¹⁷⁸ is the most commonly known and publicised of these chemicals. This denial is somewhat confusing as Member of Parliament Doug Graham is recorded in the Parliamentary Debates on 20 June 1990 as saying, 'Members will know that about 3,400 New Zealand servicemen served in Vietnam, and it is estimated that about 2,400 of them were exposed to the defoliants.'¹⁷⁹ It is also alleged by at least

one veteran that New Zealand Defence Headquarters holds radio logs of ‘incidences where New Zealand companies called up on the air and said that we’ve been sprayed with this stuff, is it safe?’¹⁸⁰ Dave Douglas recalls that Victor 1 was directly sprayed with defoliant at one point, and that it was common for companies to work in areas which had been recently sprayed.¹⁸¹ 1ALSG base at Vung Tau where ‘Bob P’ was stationed was also sprayed, including the drinking water supply,¹⁸² and Hardie Martin, Bruce Liddall and Nigel Martin all remember patrolling through areas which had been defoliated, recalling that the terrain was ‘absolutely dead’, and ‘like being in space and the soil was like pumice and dust.’¹⁸³

As well as official denial of the genesis of their war-related health problems, many New Zealand Vietnam veterans have also endured what they perceive to be the scepticism of some health professionals, and the process of even applying for a war disability pension has proved to be a humiliating and frustrating experience for some. ‘Sniper’ was accused quite recently by a general practitioner, who was referring to Vietnam veterans in general, of being a ‘bludger’ for having a card which entitles him to subsidised medical care relating to war disabilities,¹⁸⁴ and ‘Bob P’, who has spent literally thousands of dollars over the years on health problems and was only recently diagnosed as being severely affected by chemical exposure, was frequently called a ‘bloody malingerer’ and told that he was imagining things. He eventually had a 15 week course of treatment appropriate to his diagnosis, and now feels ‘100 percent. I’m a different person.’¹⁸⁵ Dave Douglas recalls that visits to

the Department of Social Welfare (now known as Income Support), which administers war pensions and disability allowances, have been particularly frustrating because 'straight away they start referring you. You feel like reaching over and belting them one. The quickest thing to say is, well, shove it....you go there a couple of times and you get a slap in the bloody face and you can't be bothered going back again for that same treatment.'¹⁸⁶

America and Australia have openly acknowledged that their veterans are entitled to compensation subsequent to service in Vietnam, and both nations have now officially welcomed their veterans home. New Zealand Vietnam veterans have to date not been officially acknowledged or 'welcomed home'.¹⁸⁷ Now, 30 years on, there appears to be a definite division among veterans over the issue, some believing that they have a valid entitlement and others considering either that it is now too late, or that there is no entitlement because it was simply part of their job as soldiers. As far as 'Sam B' is concerned, 'to be honest, I don't see why [the Government] should. I mean, we volunteered....We knew we were going over there, we weren't sent.'¹⁸⁸ Nigel Martin agrees,¹⁸⁹ and Harry Ellison considers that it was a simple matter of 'I went and did a job and I completed the job and what the heck, that's life.'¹⁹⁰ One veteran considers that had the New Zealand Government sent conscripted soldiers to Vietnam, there would be an obligation to offer recognition and acknowledgment and provide appropriate and ongoing practical support as the American and Australian governments have eventually done. In his

view, the treatment received by New Zealand troops after Vietnam is not too different from that experienced by soldiers who fought in earlier wars in that 'very few New Zealand soldiers have been [welcomed home], even after the Second World War. You know, they came home without any particular parades or this sort of thing.'¹⁹¹

Whether or not veterans consider official acknowledgment of their service to be warranted, or even relevant any more, many believe that New Zealand governments during and since the Vietnam era have treated them very poorly, particularly in terms of recognising the validity of health problems developed as a result of service, and providing appropriate treatment for these problems. Some also feel strongly that the New Zealand governments have allowed veterans to be publically 'scapegoated' for the political and military debacle of Vietnam. These sentiments are summarised by Bruce Liddall, who considers, 'I honestly think we got treated like shit.'¹⁹² For Harry Shaw, the 'great hurt' regarding Vietnam is that 'there's lots of men suffering the ongoing effects of that war, psychological and physical. And... governments won't admit it and nobody wants to hear about it.... People say to me, why are ex-Vietnam soldiers any different to any other soldiers - they all went through it and some of them went through worse things. And I say, yes, but [they] did it as heroes, and that makes a very big difference. We did it as child-killers.' Shaw feels that because New Zealanders went to Vietnam directly as agents of the New Zealand Government, current and past administrations should be ashamed of their

treatment of veterans. He also believes that they have a responsibility to acknowledge the impact and effects of the Vietnam War which, in his view, was 'a psychological disaster waiting to happen.'¹⁹³ Tom Palmer considers that the New Zealand military services were 'shafted', maintaining that 'The majority of us were and still are professionals. The Government involved New Zealand in the conflict and we did our job.'¹⁹⁴ Des Sluce also feels that responsibility lies with government as 'Anything that you have to do in a war should be pre-forgiven because, whatever the people think, service personnel are obliged to obey the lawful orders of "the authorities".'¹⁹⁵

Dave Orbell believes that once it became evident that the unpopularity of the Vietnam war had become a powerful political force in New Zealand, Prime Minister Keith Holyoake deflected anti-Vietnam sentiment from himself and his administration, the decision-makers responsible for New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam, to the soldiers who served there, deliberately allowing them to be scapegoated.¹⁹⁶ John Moller also considers that New Zealand soldiers were 'made the scapegoats for what was a bad political decision', suggesting quite rightly that the New Zealand Government's decision to send troops was 'window dressing for better trade terms.' He also believes that 'when a country commits soldiers to a theatre of war, it has to have the agreement of the people. It has to be a majority decision, but that didn't happen in New Zealand. You know, the country has to agree that their sons and daughters are going to go away and do the dirty work for

their country. And, cynically, you don't see politicians' sons and daughters in places like Vietnam.'¹⁹⁷ 'Matt G' also considers that the New Zealand Government was, and still is, embarrassed by Vietnam veterans 'because they sent us to war without having the mandate of the people.'¹⁹⁸

Dave Orbell is one of a number of veterans who believe that it is not too late for New Zealand Vietnam veterans to be officially acknowledged and recognised for their service in Vietnam, although it will be soon, and that an event such as a welcome home parade could be the single biggest catalyst in the healing process necessary to allow veterans to put their Vietnam experiences behind them.¹⁹⁹ He fears that many veterans are no longer interested in such an acknowledgment because they feel that it is too late.²⁰⁰ Colin Whyte, for example, considers that 'Now, it's just a condescension, a sort of sucking up, to recognise it. That's just my opinion. And there are ones that are now saying we don't want it, you didn't give it to us then so we don't want it now.' But he believes, as do other veterans,²⁰¹ that counselling and other practical assistance could still be of benefit, particularly to those who continue to experience difficulties, but possibly not the 'average person, [who has] got on with his life now. It's just a bad part of his life like having an arm missing or cancer or something like that. It's stuffed away and hidden and you do your best to handle what's left.'²⁰² Bruce Liddall also believes that freely available assistance with service-related health problems would be more beneficial than a 'parade through the street with some bloody band and waving banners and banging

drums and shit.'²⁰³ Gordon Dalziel feels that even this assistance could possibly be too late for most veterans, but that it should be provided for the children of veterans.²⁰⁴

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The Vietnam War coincided with a period of significant social change in New Zealand which resulted in some New Zealanders challenging the validity of sending New Zealand troops overseas to fight another country's war. The form that this questioning took was protest, inspired by civil opposition to the Vietnam War overseas and fueled to some extent by international news reports of the war itself.

For the New Zealanders who actually served in Vietnam, many of whom had been overseas for several years, the degree of anti-war sentiment demonstrated by New Zealanders at home when they returned was unexpected and disturbing. While much of the protest against the war was directed at the New Zealand Government, a percentage of anti-war activists appear to have considered the veterans themselves to have been personally responsible for the war and subsequently condemned and persecuted them for their involvement. For some veterans, in many cases already disillusioned and traumatised by their service in Vietnam, the treatment they received when they returned from both official and public sources, as well as peers, only added to the post-war difficulties they were experiencing.

Many veterans appear to have experienced some degree of difficulty adjusting to life

out of the war zone on their immediate return home, and some recall that this in itself caused a certain amount of stress. A significant number believe that their attitudes towards life have been irreversibly altered as a result of their service in Vietnam, and some still struggle with the physical and emotional legacies of their experiences. However, a considerable number of New Zealand Vietnam veterans believe that they have adjusted relatively easily to life after Vietnam and consider that they are leading well-balanced and rich lives as a result of their service. Among some veterans who have not experienced problems to any great degree there is a marked element of scepticism regarding those who have.

There is also debate among veterans regarding whether official acknowledgment of the efforts of New Zealand soldiers in Vietnam should be given now. Some veterans believe that it is too late, others disagree, and some consider that it not warranted at all because all New Zealanders volunteered for service in Vietnam. Comparison with the recognition given to veterans of other allied nations which served in Vietnam does suggest that New Zealanders have been somewhat reluctant to examine the impact that the war has had on New Zealand, both at the time and in the years which have followed.

¹ Maurice Shadbolt, *Once on Chunuk Bair* (Auckland, 1982), pp. 12-13.

² Michael King, *After the War: New Zealand Since 1945* (Auckland, 1988), pp. 'author's note', 91.

³ Graeme Dunstall, 'The Social Pattern', in *The Oxford Dictionary of New Zealand History*, 2nd edition, edited by Geoffrey W. Rice (Auckland, 1992), p. 451.

- ⁴ Redmer Yska, *All Shook Up: The Flash Bodgie and the Rise of the New Zealand Teenager in the Fifties* (Auckland, 1993), pp. 10, 38.
- ⁵ A.E. Manning quoted in *ibid.*, p. 205.
- ⁶ Yska, pp. 30-33, 37-38, 205, 209.
- ⁷ Dunstall, p. 451.
- ⁸ *ibid.*, pp. 454-457, 460-461, 466-469, 473, 458-459.
- ⁹ *ibid.*, p. 453.
- ¹⁰ King, p. 91.
- ¹¹ Robert Chapman, 'From Labour to National', in *The Oxford Dictionary of New Zealand History*, 2nd edition, p. 382.
- ¹² Ann Curthoys, 'The Anti-War Movements', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (New South Wales, 1992), p. 104.
- ¹³ Dunstall, pp. 477-481.
- ¹⁴ Chapman, p. 382.
- ¹⁵ Roberto Rabel, 'The Dovish Hawk': Keith Holyoake and the Vietnam War', in *Sir Keith Holyoake: Towards a Political Biography*, edited by Margaret Clark (Palmerston North, 1997), pp. 173, 190.
- ¹⁶ Claire Loftus Nelson, *Long Time Passing: New Zealand Memories of the Vietnam War* (Wellington, 1990), p. 42.
- ¹⁷ *ibid.*, pp. 42-43. See also Tim Shadbolt, *Bullshit and Jellybeans* (Wellington, 1971).
- ¹⁸ King, p. 116.
- ¹⁹ See *The New York Times*, *Front Page Vietnam*, edited by Arleen Keylin and Suri Boiangiu (New York, 1979); and Rodney Tiffen, 'The War The Media Lost: Australian News Coverage of Vietnam', in *Vietnam Remembered*, pp. 138-163.
- ²⁰ 'Sniper', 2/3/96.
- ²¹ 'TW Washburn', 2/3/96.
- ²² Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ²³ Ian Johnstone quoted in Nelson, p. 38.
- ²⁴ Richard Severo and Lewis Milford, *The Wages of War: When America's Soldiers Came Home - From Valley Forge to Vietnam* (New York, 1990), p. 349.
- ²⁵ Nelson, p. 39.
- ²⁶ Peter Arnett, *Live From the Battlefield: From Vietnam to Baghdad, 35 Years in the World's War Zones* (London, 1994), pp. 73-198.
- ²⁷ Nelson, p. 40.
- ²⁸ See *The New Zealand Herald* and *The Dominion* for this period.
- ²⁹ *The Press*, 28/5/65, p. 1.
- ³⁰ *The New Zealand Herald*, 2/9/66, p. 1.
- ³¹ *ibid.*, p. 2/12/65, p. 1.
- ³² *The Dominion*, 5/2/68, p. 1.
- ³³ *ibid.*, 1/1/66, p. 5.
- ³⁴ See *The New Zealand Herald* for the period May 1967 to December 1971.
- ³⁵ See 'Anti And Pro' Demonstrations' in *The Press*, 4/4/68, p. 1, and 'Progress of the War in Vietnam' in *The New Zealand Monthly Review*, February, 1966, p. 9.
- ³⁶ See John Treanor, 1/3/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; ANON, 7/2/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; Harry Shaw, 9/5/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; ANON, 24/6/96; ANON, 3/2/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; ANON, 17/4/96; Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 2/3/96; Peter Hotop, 7/96; ANON, 29/8/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; ANON, Bruce Liddall, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; ANON, 28/12/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ³⁷ S.D. Newman (Lt.), *Vietnam Gunners: 161 Battery RNZA, South Vietnam, 1965-71* (Tauranga, 1988), p. 5.
- ³⁸ See 'Sam B', 4/7/95; John Pointon, 1/3/95; ANON, 14/9/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; ANON, 22/4/96; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- ³⁹ Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- ⁴⁰ John Hall, 4/2/96.
- ⁴¹ Linda Reinberg, *In the Field: the language of the Vietnam War* (New York, 1991), p. 198.
- ⁴² See John Pointon, 1/3/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95.
- ⁴³ See Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; ANON, 24/6/96; ANON, 17/4/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Bruce Liddall, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Bill M', 3/5/95;

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- 44 ANON, 7/2/96.
45 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
46 ANON, 14/9/95. See also Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
47 'Steve D', ANON, 2/3/96.
48 See Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
49 See ANON, 7/2/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; ANON, 17/4/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; ANON, 22/4/96.
50 See Gerald Southon, 2/3/96; Peter Hotop, 7/96; 'Steve D', Mike Perreau, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/95; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
51 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
52 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
53 John Hall, 4/2/96.
54 Fred Barclay, 21/5/96.
55 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
56 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
57 ANON, 22/4/96.
58 John Hall, 4/2/96.
59 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
60 ANON, 28/9/95.
61 See Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; ANON, 7/2/96; Des Sluce, 17/5/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; ANON, 24/6/96; John Pointon, 1/3/95; Richard Pepper, 29/12/95; ANON, 14/9/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; ANON, 17/4/96; Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 2/3/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Hardie Martin, 2/3/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; ANON, 28/12/95; ANON, 22/4/96; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Fred Barclay, 21/5/96; 'Bill M', 3/5/95; 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
62 Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
63 Ken Treanor, 8/5/96.
64 ANON, 3/2/96.
65 See Des Sluce, 17/5/96; ANON, 24/6/96; ANON, 14/9/95; John Moller, 10/7/95; Gerald Southon, 'Sniper', 2/3/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; ANON, 28/12/95; ANON, 22/4/96.
66 See ANON, 7/2/96; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
67 ANON, 17/4/96.
68 Bill Peachey, 5/3/95. See also Murray Deed, 15/1/96; Hardie Martin, 2/3/96; 'Bill M', 3/5/95.
69 See Terry Findlay, 4/9/95; Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
70 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
71 Peter Hotop, 7/96.
72 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
73 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
74 John Pointon, 1/3/95.
75 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
76 ANON, 28/12/95.
77 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
78 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
79 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
80 Dave Douglas, 5/6/95.
81 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
82 'Sam B', 4/7/95.
83 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
84 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
85 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
86 See 'Sniper', 2/3/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95.
87 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
88 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
89 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
90 Richard Pepper, 29/12/95.
91 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
92 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
93 Nelson, p. 48.

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- 94 See Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; Anon, 7/2/96; Harry Shaw, 9/5/95; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; ANON, 28/12/95.
- 95 Peter Earsman, 4/9/96.
- 96 See Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- 97 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- 98 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 99 See Gerald Southon, 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
- 100 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- 101 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- 102 'Sniper', 2/3/96.
- 103 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- 104 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- 105 Quoted in Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton, *In the Shadow of War: New Zealand Soldiers Talk About World War One and Their Lives* (Auckland, 1990), p. 245.
- 106 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 107 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
- 108 ANON, 22/4/96.
- 109 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- 110 ANON, 14/9/95.
- 111 See Bruce Liddall, Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
- 112 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
- 113 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/96.
- 114 See Nigel Martin, ANON, 2/3/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- 115 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- 116 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- 117 ANON, 22/4/96.
- 118 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- 119 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
- 120 Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
- 121 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
- 122 Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
- 123 See Bruce Liddall, Nigel Martin, Hardie Martin, Bill McNeish, ANON, 2/3/96; Dave Douglas, 7/6/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- 124 Nelson, p. 48.
- 125 ANON, 14/9/95. See also Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- 126 Harry Ellison, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- 127 See Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
- 128 Gerald Southon, 2/3/96. See also 'TW Washburn', 2/3/96.
- 129 'Sniper', 2/3/96.
- 130 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- 131 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- 132 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- 133 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
- 134 Hardie Martin, Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
- 135 'Steve D', 2/3/96.
- 136 Dave Douglas, 7/6/96.
- 137 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- 138 Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- 139 Interview 8.
- 140 Interview 18.
- 141 Interview 7.
- 142 Interview 6.
- 143 See Ken Treanor, 8/5/96; John Treanor, 1/3/96; ANON, 7/2/96; 'Sam B', 4/7/95; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; Tom Palmer, 13/7/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Fred Barclay, 21/5/95; Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
- 144 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- 145 Hardie Martin, 2/3/96.
- 146 ANON, 14/9/95.
- 147 See Nigel Martin, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- 148 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
- 149 ANON, 17/4/96.

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- 150 See John Treanor, 1/3/96; ANON, 28/12/95.
151 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
152 See ANON, Nigel Martin, Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; Terry Findlay, 4/9/95.
153 ANON, 22/4/96.
154 See Interview 18.
155 Interview 36/3.
156 Interview 9.
157 Interview 8.
158 Interview 7.
159 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
160 Murray Deed, 15/1/96.
161 See Interviews 25; 27.
162 Interview 24.
163 See Interviews 38; 12.
164 ANON, 29/8/95.
165 Interview 38. See also Interview 33.
166 Interview 36/3.
167 See ANON, 7/2/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; ANON, 29/8/95; John Hall, 4/2/96; ANON, Harry Ellison, 2/3/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; Laurie Pilling, 27/9/95.
168 John Treanor, 1/3/96.
169 ANON, 28/12/95.
170 ANON, 14/9/95.
171 John Moller, 10/7/95.
172 Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
173 Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
174 John Moller, 10/7/95. See also Colin Whyte, 3/2/96; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
175 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
176 'Sniper', 2/3/96.
177 Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
178 Agent Orange was just one type of defoliant used in Vietnam. There were also Agents Pink, Green, White, Purple and Blue. Jean R. Williams, *Cry in the Wilderness: Guinea Pigs of Vietnam* (Queensland, 1995), p. 256.
179 Parliamentary Debates, 2nd Session, Forty-second Parliament, 1990, House of Representatives, Vol. 509, 10 July to 9 August 1990, p. 2873.
180 John Moller, 10/7/95.
181 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
182 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
183 Hardie Martin, Bruce Liddall, Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
184 'Sniper', 2/3/96.
185 'Bob P', 5/4/95.
186 Dave Douglas, 7/6/95.
187 In June of 1998 a nation-wide reunion with an official march, sponsored by the New Zealand Government, will be held in Wellington. The event has been called 'Remember the Fallen, Honour the Living'. The New Zealand Government does not see the march as an official 'welcome home', something which has angered some veterans who plan to boycott the event for that reason.
188 'Sam B', 4/7/95.
189 Nigel Martin, 2/3/96.
190 Harry Ellison, 2/3/96.
191 ANON, 29/8/95.
192 Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
193 Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.
194 Tom Palmer, 13/7/96.
195 Des Sluce, 17/5/96.
196 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
197 John Moller, 10/7/95.
198 'Matt G', 5/7/95.
199 See Mike Perreau, 'Steve D', ANON, 2/3/96;
200 Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
201 See 'Andrew B', 10/5/95; Allan Grayling, 5/5/95; Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
202 Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.

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- ²⁰³ Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96. See also Mike Perreau, 2/3/96.
²⁰⁴ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.

CHAPTER TEN: Poppies, pensions, and popular culture; a war remembered?

War is remembered in a variety of ways, and the extent and cultural richness of that remembrance can be an indication of how such conflicts were perceived at the time by their participants, including those who stayed at home, and how they choose to interpret the impact and meaning of those conflicts in later years.

For Americans, the Vietnam War was a time of painful, confusing and at times chaotic social upheaval and division. The establishment of the national Vietnam Veterans' memorial in Washington DC, known simply as the Wall, was part of the process of social repair and regeneration. The Wall not only bears the name of every American who died in Vietnam, it is the physical manifestation of the efforts of the American people to understand the war, heal the deep national rift it caused, and to welcome and accept its veterans back into American society.

Originally the dream of Jan Scruggs, a decorated U.S. combat veteran who served in Vietnam in 1969, the Wall was funded by money raised by the non-profit Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund group (VVMF) founded in April 1979 and led by Scruggs and two other veterans, Robert Doubek and John Wheeler. The VVMF also gained the support of the US Senate, and in April 1980 a Bill was passed giving the veterans a two acre site for their memorial at the foot of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington DC. The VVMF announced a nation-wide competition for designs for

the memorial based on the philosophy, 'Because of inequities in the draft system, the brunt of dangerous service fell upon the young, often the socially and economically disadvantaged. (However) the memorial will make no political statement regarding the war or its conduct. It will transcend those issues. The hope is that the creation of the memorial will begin a healing process.' After receiving 1,421 entries, a world-class panel of jurors unanimously chose the winning design, a submission from a 20 year old undergraduate at Yale University, Maya Ying Lin.¹

Lin's design was simple, a tapering wing-shaped wall of black polished granite to be chronologically inscribed with the names of every American who died in Vietnam between the years 1957 and 1975. Detractors of the design, including some veterans, called it a 'black gash of shame' and maintained that it was 'unheroic, unpatriotic, below ground and death-oriented.' Numerous journalistic attacks followed and nationwide opposition steadily increased. By late 1981 disagreement over the design of the memorial had grown to the extent that James Watt, President Reagan's Secretary of the Interior, announced that the dispute must be resolved before construction could begin. After several lengthy and emotional meetings between the opposing factions, a compromise was reached. It was agreed that a traditional flag and a representational statue would be added and opponents would withdraw their objections. Sculptor Frederick Hart was selected for the additional project and his design in bronze of three U.S. servicemen, depicting the ethnicity, comradeship, youth and combat culture of troops in Vietnam, was accepted. The

statue was installed and dedicated after the Wall, on Veterans' Day, 11 November, 1984.²

The Wall was dedicated in November 1982 and each of the approximately 58,000 names of those who died in Vietnam inscribed on the Wall were read aloud during a 56 hour vigil. One hundred and fifty thousand people travelled to Washington DC. for the dedication and on Saturday 13 November, Vietnam veterans marched down Constitution Avenue to the memorial in one of the largest processions the nation's capital had seen since John F. Kennedy's funeral in 1963. Joel Swerdlow, co-author of the book *To Heal a Nation* which chronicles Jan Scruggs's campaign to build the Wall, writes:

All afternoon, all night, the next day and the next and the next for an unbroken stream of months and years, millions of Americans have come and experienced [the Wall]. The names have a power, a life, all their own. Even on the coldest days, sunlight makes them feel warm to the touch. Young men put into the earth, rising out of the earth. You can feel their blood flowing again. Everyone, including those who knew no-one who served in Vietnam, seems to touch the stone. Lips say a name over and over, and then stretch up to kiss it. Fingertips trace letters. Perhaps by touching, people renew their faith in love and in life; or perhaps they better understand sacrifice and sorrow. "We're with you," they say. "We will never forget".³

Over 10,000 people still visit the Wall daily, many leaving a small personal item, a tradition said to have started when a Navy pilot laid his brother's Purple Heart medal in the wet foundation concrete of the Wall as it was being built.⁴ More than 6,000 of these momentos have been collected from the Wall by National Park Service staff and stored at the Museum and Architectural Regional Storage facility.

The items include combat boots, flags, hundreds of medals including bronze and silver stars and a Medal of Honour, packets of cigarettes, hats and helmets, GI-issue tin-openers, MIA-POW bracelets, personal letters addressed to those listed on the Wall, dog-tags, Zippo lighters, a flak jacket, a tape of the Carpenter's hits 1969-73, a can of Busch beer, teddy bears, a large feather decorated with Indian bead work, toys, Black Power symbols, shrapnel, and small weapon and helicopter parts.⁵ It is symbolic of the increasing importance of the Vietnam memorial to the American public that these offerings are all carefully catalogued and stored and will become a Museum collection in their own right. As well as the Wall, the US has many other memorials to the Vietnam War. Most are not soaring obelisks or triumphant arches, but unadorned plaques, quiet parks, or simple, life-like statues. The New York Vietnam Veterans' Memorial is inscribed with an excerpt from a serviceman's letter home. It reads: 'One thing worries me - will people believe me? Will they want to hear about it, or will they want to forget the whole thing ever happened?' American memorials to the Vietnam War honour those who served and died but they also call on every American to reflect on one of the most divisive and turbulent eras in the nation's history. A U.S. Veterans' Administration (VA) psychologist has suggested that the memorials 'open the experience to all Americans. All are carrying around some trauma from the war. In that sense, everybody in this country is a Vietnam War vet.'⁶ If this is so, it perhaps accounts for the success of a series of officially

supported and widely attended 'welcome home' marches organised and implemented by U.S. veterans throughout America in 1986.⁷

Australia also has significant memorials to the Vietnam War and the impact which it had on Australian society. The national monument, the Australian Vietnam Forces National Memorial (AVFNM), is in Canberra on Anzac Parade in front of the Australian War Memorial. Unlike the Wall, which only lists the names of those who died in Vietnam, it is a memorial to all those who served, including non-military personnel, with a special aspect only devoted to the dead. Like the Americans the AVFNM Committee invited design submissions by way of a competition. An 86-page booklet, *National Memorial to the Australian Vietnam Forces: Conditions for a Two-Stage Design Competition*, published by the Committee in October 1989, stipulated that the words 'For all those who served, suffered, and died. Vietnam 1962-1973' be inscribed on the memorial, and that 'The memorial should reflect on those who died and those who served in the Vietnam Conflict, it should depict the environment and conditions in which Australian service personnel served, including the feeling of night, and capture the mood and feeling of that era. Symbolism of the link between the Australian Vietnam Forces and the original ANZAC Force is also to be expressed in the memorial. Consideration is to be given also to the controversy at home which surrounded Australia's involvement in Vietnam.'⁸

After a lengthy selection process, a submission by the combined team of Ken Unsworth, a well-known Australian sculptor, and the architectural firm of Tonkin,

Zulaikha and Harford, was chosen. The design consisted of three large slabs of stone, tapered and inclining inwards, forming an open triangle with a polished steel ring, symbolic of the 500 Australians who died in Vietnam, fixed above the structure. Originally, stones were to be suspended above the memorial but it was considered that for veterans, the effect of rocks flying through the air could be disturbing. The polished granite on the inner walls of the memorial would be engraved with scenes from Vietnam and inscriptions of the idiom of Vietnam at home and abroad, and an altar would be set against the third wall which would be blank. Surrounding the structure would be ramps and a set of steps leading to the monument, a large lettered sign saying 'Vietnam' above a wall suitable for wreath-laying, and, beside this, flagpoles. A 1:25 model of the winning design went on tour throughout Australia from December 1990 to March 1991 for comment from veterans and the general public. The design which toured remained essentially unchanged and the memorial was built and dedicated on 3 October 1992.⁹

As well as being the location of the national memorial, the Australian War Memorial also has an entire gallery in its museum dedicated to Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War. The extensive collection includes detailed dioramas and models, audiovisual displays, weapons and equipment, and personal mementos of the war. The Memorial also holds catalogued collections of war art, maps, photographs, sound and film recordings, heraldry, printed and written records, including private as well as some official war records, and published

material, much of which is available to the public for research purposes. The Memorial book shop also sells a wide selection of books and memorabilia relating to the Vietnam War.¹⁰

Several years prior to the establishment of the Australian national memorial, and in response to the success of the American 'welcome home' parades of 1986, Australian Vietnam veterans together with other community groups organised a national march in October 1987. The event was named the Australian Vietnam Forces National Reunion and Welcome Home Parade, and was officially endorsed by the Australian Prime Minister at the time and supported by U.S. President Ronald Reagan.¹¹ Over 22,000 Australian Vietnam veterans attended the event, which was described by *The Sydney Morning Herald* as a 'new beginning, a sign that we have all begun to gain a sense of historical perspective on the profound conflicts which the Vietnam War aroused.' The parade, cheered enthusiastically by a large Sydney crowd, was considered an 'unambiguous success' for the veterans, and the ABC television network broadcast the event to 288 Australian television stations. But many Australian veterans had already been involved in earlier 'welcome home' parades held when their battalions initially returned from Vietnam. Jane Ross writes, 'It is interesting that these earlier "welcome home" marches seem to have been so comprehensively forgotten....Most of these marches took place in Sydney and Brisbane, but there were some in Adelaide and Townsville. From the first march in June 1966 in Sydney, to the last one, in December 1971 in

Townsville, the troops were cheered and clapped by thousands of onlookers. There were occasional “incidents”, but of a very minor nature.’ The first parade in Sydney for 1RAR’s return, for example, attracted a cheering crowd of 500,000 which threw streamers and confetti over the marching veterans. There was a slight hitch when a girl covered in red paint jumped in front of the parade. However, it was revealed that she had no connections with the anti-war movement whatsoever. This was the only recorded incident of its kind to occur during any of the Australian parades.¹²

In his speech dedicating the New York City Vietnam veterans’ memorial in May 1985, Mayor Edward Koch remarked that ‘many Americans wanted to forget about the war once it was over, but in the process they forgot about those who were sent to fight it.’¹³ While this appears to have also been the case in New Zealand, the difference between the New Zealand experience and that of the Americans and the Australians is that it has only been in the last few years that New Zealanders have begun to ‘revisit’ Vietnam and begin the process of looking at the meaning of the war to New Zealanders. For the Americans and the Australians, the process appears to have begun years earlier. However, in his essay, ‘The Memory of History’, American historian Michael Frisch expresses his concern that public memory of the Vietnam War, and the manifestation of that memory through the arts and historical research, has been ‘severed from the present almost entirely, sealed in a kind of protective wrapping, either of forgetfulness or artificial distance.’ He ponders how

it is that 'so much that is threatening about this recent history can be blocked out now, with the evidence all around us and the experience still painfully fresh', suggesting that 'Given the difficulty of explaining now the reality of defeat, or at least the necessity of retreat, through the conventional manipulations of history, the major response has been to fall back on a more simple denial of memory, and hence responsibility.' He also suggests that the process of remembering the Vietnam War in a way which indicates selective amnesia, or not at all, can be seen not as simple ignorance, but deliberate '*ignore-ance*'.¹⁴ Further, historian Paula Hamilton maintains that 'Forgetting is one of the most powerful forces that shape national remembering.'¹⁵ This observation could also perhaps be applied to the New Zealand experience.

However, In New Zealand, this process does not apply just to veterans of Vietnam but also to New Zealand veterans of all conflicts in which New Zealand has been involved since 1945. The names of the 16 Jayforce servicemen who died in Japan, for example, to date do not appear on war memorials to the Second World War,¹⁶ and veterans of the Korean, Malayan and Borneo campaigns were not publicly and formally recognised for their service there by the New Zealand Government until 1991.¹⁷ Further, although the New Zealand tradition of building war memorials continued after the Second World War, most monuments erected since then in fact commemorate earlier wars.¹⁸

New Zealand has very few memorials to Vietnam. Those that do exist bear no resemblance to the type and scale built by the Australians and the Americans to honour and commemorate their veterans. Memorials to the Vietnam War in New Zealand are usually small brass plaques, inscribed with the brief epigraph, 'Vietnam 1965-1972', in most cases added only recently to already existing memorials to earlier wars.¹⁹ Such plaques will often refer not just to Vietnam, but to the Korean, Malayan and Borneo campaigns as well, as if the post-war conflicts in which New Zealanders have fought and died are most conveniently regarded as a series of ongoing, possibly connected, but low-key skirmishes. They were anything but low-key, to the people who were involved in them. On the obelisk at Bluff, Vietnam has been misspelt.²⁰ However there is a substantial memorial to New Zealand's Vietnam veterans, the Vietnam Roll of Honour, in the impressive and solemn Second World War Hall of Memories at the Auckland War Memorial Museum.

The idea of establishing a national memorial specific to the Vietnam War was first raised in 1984 by the New Zealand Ex-Vietnam Services' Association (EVSA) which lobbied intensely to see the concept realised. Museum authorities considered it inappropriate to memorialise veterans of Vietnam before the same had been done for veterans of Korea, Malayan and Borneo,²¹ so representatives from the Korea Veterans' and Ex-Malaya Associations were subsequently consulted, and the Rolls of Honour from the Korean, Malaya and Borneo conflicts added to the project. The unveiling of the combined Roll of Honour in April 1991 was accompanied by a

ceremony including hymns, prayers, addresses and a dedication.²² But it needs to be remembered that the Museum, a huge multi-storied stone and marble acropolis occupying some of Auckland's most prime real estate, is itself a memorial to New Zealand's involvement in earlier wars. The simple list of names of those killed during post-war conflicts within the museum pales into insignificance compared to the structure and symbolism of the actual building. The only memorial dedicated solely to New Zealand's involvement in post-war conflicts is at Waiouru, where many of the troops who served in those wars initially trained.²³

New Zealand veterans have Anzac Day, but the sanctity of this day of commemoration has been steadily eroded over the past 30 years. Attendance at memorial services began to decline after the Second World War and in 1966, 'the holiday nature of the day was recognised in the Anzac Day Act, which decreed that the morning should be sacred, but permitted race meetings, sports fixtures and other entertainments in the afternoon.' Now, retail shopping on Anzac Day afternoon is common, and the recent lobbying by retailers for changes to legislation to allow all-day trading has enraged some veterans.²⁴

Public attendance at Anzac Day reached an unprecedented low in the 1970s but, during the 1980s, the number of young New Zealanders at Anzac Day services increased,²⁵ a trend which appears to be continuing.²⁶ One Second World War veteran stated in 1997 that, '[This] shows that the spirit of Anzac is as strong as ever. I think [youth] are proud to come along and feel they've got links with what's

been done by their forebears.’²⁷ This may not necessarily be the case, however. It may simply indicate a growing interest on behalf of this nation’s youth in the general history of New Zealand, which has, after all, been remembered at least in part by the wars in which New Zealand has fought. There need not be any suggestion of a re-emerging militant nationalism at all, regardless of ex-Prime Minister Jim Bolger’s efforts on Anzac Day in 1996 to rekindle such sentiments by referring to a ‘sense of nationhood forged in the fires of adversity in distant battles’ which he evidently perceived to be still prevalent in New Zealand. Bolger also stated, ‘Our young people are aware the life we enjoy today owes much to the sacrifice of those who risked their lives for the right of free nations to determine their own future and for all people to be treated as equals.’²⁸ This, also, is unlikely. Not even children who grew up while earlier wars were being fought were aware of such sacrifices.²⁹

For many New Zealanders, Anzac Day relates to the First and Second World Wars only.³⁰ This is demonstrated by the sentiments of editorials and articles relating to Anzac Day printed in newspapers in recent years which repeatedly recount the exploits of the 1st and 2nd NZEFs.³¹ Many New Zealand children are unaware of New Zealand’s involvement in the Korean, Malayan, Borneo and Vietnam campaigns (although the Vietnam War itself has received much more publicity in New Zealand via American films and television series than have the earlier conflicts). For New Zealand veterans of post-war conflicts, it is not a matter of

'Lest we forget', it is perhaps more an issue of New Zealanders, including governments, simply not knowing or caring. This sentiment is demonstrated by John Moller who states, 'I look at Anzac Day now and think well, it's really just an excuse for...politicians to stand up and say fine words but they don't really understand what they're talking about because the price of war just actually goes on after the shooting stops. People still suffer and they do for years.'³² However a significant number of Vietnam veterans make a point of attending Anzac Day parades, despite the negative feelings they may have regarding their Vietnam experiences in general, as it is the one time each year that they may represent mates who died in Vietnam.

The lack of public and official knowledge of and interest in Vietnam and other post war conflicts is at least partly reflected in the extent to which the relics of these wars, and the personal experiences of those who fought in them, have been preserved in New Zealand. Although the Auckland War Memorial Museum has almost a complete floor permanently dedicated to military displays, Vietnam is barely represented, although aspects of the Vietnam conflict are included in a recent major and permanent exhibition of New Zealand's military history at the Museum titled 'Scars on the Heart'. The Vietnam section is tucked into a very small and secluded corner of the exhibition and easy to miss if one does not have a map, which describes the display as 'Kiwis in Asia'.³³ Both the location of the display and its name are perhaps symbolic of the importance of the Vietnam War in public and

official memory, and possibly even the embarrassment which some New Zealanders may feel about New Zealand's involvement. The Queen Elizabeth II Army Memorial Museum at Waiouru has a slightly more comprehensive collection relating to Vietnam, as would be expected. The Kippenberger Military Archive and Library at Waiouru also holds some material, as does the Alexander Turnbull Library at the National Library in Wellington, although neither of these collections are extensive. The Defence Library, again in Wellington, also has a collection of published New Zealand material about Vietnam, but this is dwarfed by the American and Australian material also held. Official military records are a different matter, but most of these are not easily accessible to the public. It is clear from the above collections that little priority has been given to the acquisition of material relating to New Zealand involvement in Vietnam, both for preservation and for public education, although this can also be said of other aspects of New Zealand's history as well.

This is not necessarily a failing in the policies of these repositories, as surely those who served in Vietnam themselves have a responsibility to share their memories and experiences with the wider public if they wish New Zealanders to be educated about the war. However it needs to be remembered that neither the public, nor even historians, have in past years expressed much desire to examine or learn about the veterans' experiences. A recent exception to this trend was an exhibition at the Manawatu Museum from July 1995 to January 1996, titled 'Vietnam: the War

Experience 30 Years On', which explored 'the Vietnam war through the eyes and experiences of people who lived it.'³⁴

Memorials, museum collections and public commemoration are all ways in which wars are remembered. Other ways include writing about the experience, or analysing and teaching it, or recreating or examining it through a range of art forms. Since the 1960s, the impact which the Vietnam War has had on American society has been subject to extensive scholarly and popular re-examination, a focus for books and essays and articles and many different cultural forms, examples of which are too numerous to be considered in any detail here. American writers have produced thousands of books and articles about all aspects of the war including personal experiences, political, military and social analyses, representation of the war via the arts, the protest movement, the media, the Vietnam generation, and veterans' health and welfare including issues such as Agent Orange and psychological trauma.

There is also the art which depicts and interprets the war itself, including poetry, fine art, and music and film, the latter medium apparently the almost exclusive domain of the Americans. The prolific representation and interpretation of the war in American film has been analysed in some depth. Gilbert Adair's *Hollywood's Vietnam: from The Green Berets to Full Metal Jacket*, lists the release of 79 films relating to the Vietnam War since 1968, almost all of which are American-produced.³⁵ Possibly the earliest well-known American film about the war is *The*

Green Berets released in 1968 starring John Wayne. *The Deer Hunter* (1978), *Platoon* (1986), *Apocalypse Now* (1979), *Good Morning, Vietnam* (1987), and *Full Metal Jacket* (1987), based on Gustav Hasford's novel *The Short-timers*, are all notable U.S. films, as is *Forrest Gump*, based on Winston Groom's novel of the same name. All deal with aspects of America's involvement in Vietnam. Not all condemn that involvement or, in some examples, realistically portray it.

In *The Deer Hunter*, for example, although one character loses three limbs in the war and another commits suicide, the film concludes with the 'survivors of what has been pictured as a brutal war against Red Oriental demons [coming] together with their friends and families to sing "God Bless America".' *Platoon* depicts the killing of villagers in a My Lai-type situation, yet in the film the atrocity is immediately reported and an investigation is instigated, unlike the real My Lai incident which was not reported for 12 months, therefore implying that the 'U.S. Army as an institution will not tolerate mistreatment of the civilian population.'³⁶ The *Rambo* series, which shot Sylvester Stallone to fame and fortune, was a massive commercial success, perhaps, it is suggested, because it is based on a myth of the American soldier which readily usurped the reality of the average GI in Vietnam. However, films such as *Good Morning, Vietnam* about real-life AFVN disc jockey Adrian Cronauer, convey a different message. Gilbert Adair writes that the film conveys the impression that 'if only the war's architects had an ounce of Cronauer's wit, charm and gregariousness, the cultural imperialism that they camouflaged by the

publicly stated ambition of conquering “hearts and minds” would have been a pushover.’³⁷ American films about the Vietnam War therefore reflect the divisions which have besieged that nation regarding its involvement in the conflict.

U.S. music can be analysed in a similar manner. There are three types of music or song associated with the Vietnam War. The first is music which speaks about the war and which was generally written and performed between 1965 and 1972, the second is music associated with the war, most relevant to the troops who served there, and the third is music which remembers the war. The first type, often penned and performed by folk artists as a protest action, includes songs such as ‘Eve of Destruction’ by Barry McGuire, The Byrd’s poignant ‘Draft Morning’, and Buffy Sainte-Marie’s ‘Moratorium (Bring Our Brothers Home)’. These songs were countered by pro-war, pro-America artists such as Johnny Wright with ‘Hello Vietnam’, Merle Haggard with ‘Okie From Muskogee’, and Staff Sergeant Barry Sadler and his ‘Ballad of the Green Berets’. The counter-culture voice of the anti-war artists was quickly joined by bluesmen such as John Lee Hooker with ‘I Don’t Wanna Go To Vietnam’ and Junior Wells with ‘Vietnam Blues’, country artists such as Kenny Rogers with ‘Ruby, Don’t Take Your Love To Town’, and the more electric, acid-rock oriented sounds of ‘Star Spangled Banner’ and ‘Machine Gun’ by Jimi Hendrix, ‘Unknown Soldier’ by the Doors, Credence Clearwater Revival’s ‘Fortunate Son’ and ‘Run Through the Jungle’, and Steppenwolf’s ‘Draft Resister’.³⁸

For troops serving in Vietnam especially, some songs came to be associated directly with the war, their messages seeming to perfectly echo the sentiments of the Vietnam experience. These songs, including Peter, Paul and Mary's 'Leaving on a Jetplane', 'Nowhere To Run' by Martha Reeves and the Vandellas, 'All Along The Watchtower' by Jimi Hendrix, Grace Slick's 'White Rabbit', The Animals' 'We Gotta Get Out Of This Place', and Janis Joplin's 'Ball And Chain' (with its refrain of 'you got to hold on, hold on, hold on'), evoke images of psychedelic confusion, hopelessness and homesickness and are today more often associated with the Vietnam War than are the actual protest songs of the era. They have become part of the post-war culture which has evolved and shaped today's images of Vietnam. Adding to this culture are the songs written in retrospect as observations of the impact of the war on the American nation and its veterans, which further incorporate the mythology into history. 'Walking On A Thin Line' by Huey Lewis and the News is an example, as is 'Copperhead Road' by Steve Earle, and Bruce Springsteen's 'Born in the U.S.A.'.

The Australians have also assimilated their experience of Vietnam into their culture and history. Australian writers had begun to produce novels about the war even before it had ended. The first to be published was *The Ambassador* (1965) by Second World War veteran and author Morris West, and the second followed in 1968, *Count Your Dead*, by soldier John Rowe. Both novels were told from the American perspective, but both refer to the Australian presence in Vietnam. By the

time the war had ended for the Australians in 1972, most novels about the war were being written by veterans who had served there. Rhys Pollard's *The Cream Machine* (1972) and William Nagle's *The Odd Angry Shot* (1975) are examples of these. In 1980, veteran of three Vietnam tours Lex McAuley wrote *Where the Buffalo Fight* under the pseudonym of David Alexander. McAuley later wrote *The Battle of Long Tan: the Legend Of Anzac Upheld* (1986), the factual account of the Australians' legendary stand against the NVA in 1966. Most of these novels describe the 'psychological defences developed by the Australian soldier to cope with his recognition that his presence in Vietnam was merely a "token" gesture.' Later Australian novels are distinguished by their 'extremely critical attitude towards the army.' These include John Carroll's *Token Soldiers* (1983) and *Nasho* (1984) by Michael Frazer. Several collections of veterans' narratives have also been published, including Stuart Rintoul's unpopular *Ashes of Vietnam: Australian Voices* (1989), and Gary McKay's very different *Vietnam Fragments: An Oral History of Australians at War* (1992).

There are also numerous anthologies of poetry written by Australian veterans, although little work was produced after the war by non-veteran Australian poets.³⁹ Also, a considerable amount of reflective writing about the war and its political and social impact on Australia has been published as journal articles and collections. The most detailed history of Australian involvement in Vietnam is the series titled *The Official History of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asia 1948-1975* produced by

the Official History Unit at the Australian War Memorial. Volumes already published cover politics and diplomacy, the Australian Army in Vietnam until 1966, and medicine, and the series will eventually include a further volume on politics and diplomacy, the Army in Vietnam after 1966, RAN and RAAF operations in Vietnam, and Australian involvement in Malaya and Borneo.⁴⁰ There are also numerous Australian unit histories, including *The Anzac Battalion in South Vietnam 1967-1968* (1968), edited by Major K.E. Newman, a record of 2RAR's tour of Vietnam which includes the two New Zealand infantry companies.

As with literature, much Australian art depicting Vietnam has been produced by those who served there, although some earlier works were by anti-war artists such as Clifton Pugh who painted *The Body Count* in 1966.⁴¹ The Australian War Memorial was the principal sponsor of official war art during the Vietnam War and sent two young artists, Bruce Fletcher and Ken McFadyen, to Vietnam in 1967 and 1968 respectively. Fletcher was accidentally shot two days after his arrival in Vietnam and subsequently spent most of his six month tour there with his foot in plaster in Vung Tau hospital or Nui Dat Base, painting as much of the environment as he was able to see. Ken McFadyen worked for ten months in Vietnam, mostly at Nui Dat Base, but also accompanied infantrymen into the field and spent five days on HMAS *Hobart* during an operation, when two of his paintings were blown overboard by the onboard guns. During the Tet offensive in 1968 he was hit by a sniper. Fletcher worked with pen enhanced with watercolour, and McFadyen used

mainly oils, both artists producing figurative work, a requirement stipulated by the Australian War Memorial, which holds many of the works in its Vietnam collection. Of the non-official works produced by Australian Vietnam veterans, Ray Beattie's *Image for a Dead Man* (1980) is possibly the most well-known. The painting, acrylic on canvas with collage, depicts a chair on which are laid a folded Australian flag, a military jacket with medals, and a military hat. The work pays homage to 'the many men who returned and who were ignored or received little acknowledgment, whose presence was overlooked', and is also held by the Australian War Memorial.⁴²

Although there are numerous official Australian films and documentaries, there is only one commercial feature film specifically about Australian troops in Vietnam. Based on William Nagle's novel of the same name, *The Odd Angry Shot*, the film appeared in 1979. It was considered a commercial and critical failure, possibly because of its 'bitter edge' and the 'sense of betrayal' demonstrated by the Australian troops portrayed in the film.⁴³ Two Australian television mini-series have also been made, *Sword of Honour* (1986) and *Vietnam* (1987), both of which have screened in New Zealand. The Vietnam War also inspired several Australian plays including Alan Hopgood's *Private Yuk Objects* (1966), *Onstage Vietnam* (1967) by Mona Brand, and several other plays such as *The Legend of King O'Malley* (1971) by Michael Bobby and Bob Ellis, which addressed issues relating to Vietnam, but

set them in earlier times, possibly, it has been suggested, to avoid alienating some audiences.⁴⁴

A number of Australian folk singers wrote anti-war songs, performing them at demonstrations and concerts throughout the period of the war, and several more formal pieces were written and performed between 1967 and 1987. The only Australian popular song written about the war during the 1960s was 'Smiley', written by Johnny Young and performed by Ronnie Burns. It was number two on the hit parade for 20 weeks in 1969, sold over 50,000 copies, and reached gold record status in April 1970. The overall most successful Australian song about Vietnam is 'I was Only Nineteen' (1983), written by John Schumann and performed by his folk band *Redgum*. Based on the reminiscences of an Australian Vietnam veteran, the song gained huge popular acceptance.⁴⁵ Before the song was released, John Schumann had approached the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia (VVAA) and asked for their endorsement, and subsequently donated the considerable royalties to the association. Schumann wrote another song, 'Safe Behind the Wire', three years later and dedicated it to founding member and national president of the VVAA Phil Thompson, who took his own life in 1986.⁴⁶ As in the U.S., Vietnam has also passed into Australia's history by way of songs written retrospectively, such as Jimmy Barnes's 'Working Class Man' and 'Khe Sanh', his tribute to alienated Australian veterans. The fact that there were probably no Australian troops at Khe Sanh appears to be irrelevant.

New Zealanders appear to be hesitant to examine the impact of Vietnam. History sections in New Zealand libraries abound with books about the First and Second World Wars, but there is significantly less about Korea, the Malayan conflicts, or Vietnam. It is true that New Zealand made a much larger commitment in terms of manpower and effort on the home front during the two world wars than was made during later conflicts, and that the impact of the First and Second World Wars on New Zealanders was considerable, but there is no obvious and immediate reason why the 'writing up' and analysis of New Zealand's involvement in conflicts after 1945 has not occurred to any great extent. Of course, not all books about the First and Second World Wars were written as soon as those wars ended, and perhaps the majority have only been published in the last 25 or so years, corresponding with what appears to be a reawakening of New Zealanders' interest in New Zealand's military history.

There is Ian McGibbon's extensive two volume chronicle of New Zealand's involvement in the Korean War, and one memoir about 1RNZIR in Borneo by veteran Robert Gurr, but little else about post-war conflicts prior to Vietnam in which New Zealand has been involved. There are references to the Asian conflicts in various New Zealand military histories, but in most cases these are brief at best. The situation is slightly improved regarding Vietnam, but this is due at least in part to the efforts of the veterans themselves. An official account of New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam is yet to be completed, although Christopher Pugsley's

long-awaited work on New Zealand's involvement in Southeast Asian conflicts will include a section on Vietnam.

Rod Eder's novel *Deep Jay* has probably been the most publicised of New Zealand's books about Vietnam. Les Cleveland compares Eder's novel with the New Zealand documentary and accompanying book, *New Zealand at War*, which were released to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the Second World War, and considers that *Deep Jay* is superior by far and considerably more realistic and accurate as a portrayal of New Zealanders at war.⁴⁷ There are also a book of poetry by John Moller, the two personal accounts by ex-infantrymen, the memoirs and letters of an ex-surgeon with the NZST, Mike Subritzky's relatively extensive compendium of anecdotes, photographs, poetry and basic information, a short history each of the infantry companies and the battery, a history of military medics in Vietnam, and recent histories of the New Zealand Army Signals and Transport Corps which include service in Vietnam. There are several pamphlets protesting the war, and three or four short official reports on military and civilian assistance to Vietnam, all published during the 1960s and early 1970s.

There is also some New Zealand material of a retrospective nature which has not been written by veterans. These include a collection of letters sent to New Zealand troops in Vietnam by civilian correspondent Betty Mae Brown, two reports published by Massey University regarding the health and welfare of New Zealand Vietnam veterans, one or two unpublished theses about aspects of the war, and an

analysis of the use of international law in relation to New Zealand's involvement in Vietnam. There are also a handful of journal articles, a National Radio documentary accompanied by a published book and a series of audio tapes, two television documentaries, one of these quite substantial, and several television 'current affairs' type programmes. Finally, there is John Broughton's very powerful one man play about a Vietnam veteran, *Michael James Manaia* (1989), first performed in New Zealand in February of 1991. The lead role was played by Jim Moriarty in New Zealand and also when the play was taken to the Edinburgh Festival in 1992. Prior to this, Broughton had also written an earlier play about Vietnam, called *Te Hokinga Mai: The Return Home* (1988). Broughton's plays, Rod Eder's novel, and John Moller's book of poetry are the extent of Vietnam's representation in New Zealand culture. There is no fine art (or none which has been publically displayed), and there are no songs or films. It is now over 25 years since the last New Zealand troops left Vietnam and it has only been in the past ten years that any published material has been forthcoming from New Zealand's veterans.

Veterans in the U.S., Australia and New Zealand have all formed veterans' associations which serve several purposes. Most appear to have initially developed as a response to the veterans' need for a united voice regarding their specific health and welfare issues, and also as a support structure through which veterans are able to remain in touch.

To U.S. Vietnam veterans after the war, it became obvious that the traditional and Second World War-oriented VA would not be able to effectively manage the specific psychological and medical problems being experienced by those who served in Vietnam. Bobby Muller, a paralysed Vietnam veteran who had spent time in an over-crowded and inadequate VA hospital himself, set about in 1979 forming a new veterans organization, Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA). The VVA was and is very politically active, believing that political change is the key to effectively assisting veterans, decrying the 'hand-out' mentality which the American public was beginning to associate with veterans, and actively and persistently pursuing solutions to their problems. For example, the VVA openly criticised President Carter in 1979 for his platitudes and lack of practical assistance for Vietnam veterans, and relentlessly lobbied the government for legislative change. The organisation succeeded in having three major pieces of legislation passed through the Senate and House concerning employment assistance for veterans, specialised, community-based counselling for veterans, and an official week to recognise those who served in Vietnam and to raise public awareness, which was held in July 1979. During Vietnam Veterans' Week, Bobby Muller said in his speech at a large public ceremony in New York, 'You people ran a number on us. Your guilt, your hang-ups, your uneasiness, made it socially unacceptable to mention the fact that we were Vietnam veterans', his words a sobering reminder of the negative impact of the war. Although the VVA was opposed by the more traditional veterans' organisations, it has successfully argued that veterans' programmes should not be administered by

the government for veterans, but should be administered by *veterans* for veterans as a means of 'empowering veterans as a new and distinctive force in society.' *The Veteran*, the magazine founded in 1981, is the voice of VVA and remains a respected, informed, and widely read U.S. publication.⁴⁸ But the success of the VVA does not necessarily mean that all American Vietnam veterans are united by the brotherhood of shared experiences and goals. A glance at some of the comments made via U.S. veterans' Internet newsgroups makes this quite clear.⁴⁹

The Vietnam Veterans Association of Australia (VVAA) was originally known as the Vietnam Veterans Action Association and was formally established in 1980 as a response to emerging health issues among Australian Vietnam veterans, in particular, the effects of chemical exposure during service. Like the VVA in the U.S., Australian Vietnam veterans did not consider that the traditional and well-established Australian Returned Servicemen's League (RSL) could assist with their specific issues, which were not shared, and subsequently formed the VVAA, the association's philosophy being that 'Vietnam was a special war, and that its veterans required special help.' The VVAA became alienated from the RSL, bitterly attacking the more conservative organisation for 'betraying' Vietnam veterans regarding the Agent Orange issue by 'siding with those who see no need for special action and [arguing] that established channels could handle any problem.' The VVAA pushed extensively for investigations into veterans' health problems, resulting in the 1983 Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents

on Australian Personnel in Vietnam (which unfortunately did not find in their favour),⁵⁰ the subsequent investigations which overturned the Royal Commission's findings, and the establishment of the Vietnam Veterans Counselling Service.

Despite the successes of the VVAA, not all Australian veterans support the association, some disagreeing with its portrayal of the veteran as the 'troubled digger', and insulted by 'the image of a sick misfit with damaged children and a head full of bad dreams.' The VVAA has also allegedly experienced internal problems and maintained a 'bitterly cynical attitude towards both (*sic*) the politicians who sent them to Vietnam and then "betrayed" them by losing the war; and towards the anti-war politicians who in general also "betray" the veterans by criticising the rightness and usefulness of their war.' It has been suggested that both of these views originated from the U.S. veterans' movement, finding 'fertile soil in the VVA[A].' Other veterans' groups have consequently been established, such as the Vietnam Legion of Veterans Association which restricts itself to welfare and social activities.⁵¹

New Zealand also has more than one Vietnam veterans' organisation. The Ex-Vietnam Services Association began informally as 'The Gunner's Drinking Club' in 1976 but evolved into an incorporated association in 1982, renamed the EVSA. The initial aims of the EVSA were to maintain regular contact with New Zealand Vietnam veterans throughout the country (and overseas), and to organise national reunions which, since 1980, have been held every two years. The EVSA also

produces *Contact* magazine for veterans which is published regularly and features articles of interest, information on events, and letters from veterans. In more recent years, the association has begun to focus on welfare and has a policy of referring veterans to appropriate agencies when necessary. The EVSA has never officially become involved in issues regarding Agent Orange, believing that other agencies are better qualified to do so. The EVSA is affiliated to the RSA and currently has over 1,500 members.⁵² New Zealand's other national veterans' organisation is the Vietnam Veterans Association of New Zealand (VVANZ). The VVANZ was formed in 1982 in response to what was seen by some veterans as the unwillingness of the EVSA to become involved in the Agent Orange debate. More health and welfare oriented than the EVSA, and smaller in membership, the VVANZ has staunchly pursued the issues of veterans' rights and compensation for the past 15 years.⁵³ Both associations have achieved milestones in terms of recognition of New Zealand's Vietnam veterans - the EVSA with the establishment of the national memorial at the Auckland War Memorial Museum, and the VVANZ with its work regarding the Agent Orange issue.

The history of the struggle of U.S. and Australian veterans' organisations to have Vietnam-related health problems compensated is long and complex. After years of official and corporate denial, obfuscation, and manipulation of evidence, governments of both nations have accepted that there is a clear relationship between service in Vietnam and certain serious health problems experienced by veterans

today. These problems include cancer and other physical illnesses caused by chemical exposure, and psychiatric disorders such as PTSD. The American campaign was assisted in 1978 when the controversial documentary *Agent Orange - Vietnam's Deadly Fog* was shown on national television,⁵⁴ as well as by the deluge of U.S. publications which followed over the years. The Australian effort benefited from the publication in 1980 of *Agent Orange: the Bitter Harvest* by John Dux and P.J. Young, both journalists for *The Australian*,⁵⁵ and, more recently, *Cry in the Wilderness: Guinea Pigs of Vietnam* (1995) by Jean Williams, which is now into its third reprint. Also, *Debrief*, the official quarterly magazine of the VVAA, began circulation in 1981 chiefly to disseminate information about chemical exposure. Today in the U.S. and Australia, although entitlement to compensation for war-related illness and disability remains far from automatic or easy to obtain, there has at least been official recognition of, and subsequently a reluctant acceptance of at least some responsibility for, these issues.

This does not appear to have been the case in New Zealand. The possibility that chemical exposure during service in Vietnam was causing serious ongoing physical health problems became an issue for New Zealand veterans in the early years after the war when it was noticed that an abnormally high number were becoming ill or dying from unexpected heart failure or relatively rare cancers at an early age.⁵⁶ In 1982 the VVANZ began to investigate the use of chemicals in Vietnam and its effects on New Zealand veterans, undertaking their own independent research as

well as using material already collated by veterans' organisations in America and Australia. The VVANZ came to a similar conclusion to their overseas colleagues, that chemical exposure was responsible for specific ongoing illness in Vietnam veterans, and, with the Australians, subsequently joined the enormous American class action against seven chemical manufacturers, including the Monsanto Chemical Company, which had supplied defoliants to the U.S. Defense Department for use in Vietnam.⁵⁷

In April 1983 Geoff Braybrooke, New Zealand Member of Parliament and Vietnam veteran himself, attempted to introduce the Vietnam War Veterans' Health (Investigations) Bill, which was to investigate the possible effects of chemical exposure in Vietnam. The Bill was defeated in the House by one vote.⁵⁸ It is considered by some New Zealand veterans that the defeat of the Bill then, and its referral when it was reintroduced in 1990 to the Select Committee for Foreign Affairs and Defence which instigated an inquiry⁵⁹ (which found against the claim that chemical exposure in Vietnam was the cause of veterans' health problems⁶⁰), is part of an ongoing government conspiracy to conceal the fact that the New Zealand Government in 1967 sold New Zealand-made defoliants to the U.S. military for use in Vietnam during the war.⁶¹ It must be noted that there is significant documentary evidence to support this theory.⁶²

In 1984, the U.S. veterans' class action won US\$180 million for American, Australian and New Zealand Vietnam veterans.⁶³ The New Zealanders were awarded

a percentage of the money based on their troop numbers proportional to the total number of western allies serving in Vietnam, which was NZ\$747,561.18. This figure was considerably reduced by the payment of \$200,214.00 for outstanding legal fees after the funds were received but augmented by a further \$50,000.00 from a New Zealand Social Welfare grant.⁶⁴ The money was placed in the New Zealand Agent Orange Trust Fund and disbursed to veterans on an individual basis as members of the Trust Board saw fit until December of 1997 when the Trust Board advised that no more claims would be accepted.⁶⁵ The New Zealand Government was not moved by the award beyond making an initial contribution to the fund, Minister of Defence David Thomson stating at the time that 'the Government did not consider that a full study of Vietnam veterans in New Zealand could produce any meaningful results.'⁶⁶

It has been suggested by some veterans that there are two reasons why New Zealand governments will not acknowledge that the health problems of some Vietnam veterans are related to chemical exposure. The first is that New Zealand had assented to abide by the Agreement on the Cessation of Hostilities in Vietnam drafted at the Geneva conference in 1954, including Articles 17 and 18 which prohibit chemical warfare (although the Agreement has doubtful legal validity as its resolutions were not signed by any of the delegates at the conference).⁶⁷ The second is that should any New Zealand government officially recognise that defoliants made from the chemicals 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T (the components of Agent Orange) can

cause serious health problems, including spina bifida, a not uncommon birth defect in New Zealand,⁶⁸ the New Zealand public could be entitled to claim compensation for damages caused by the long-term and continued use in New Zealand of such chemicals for agricultural purposes.⁶⁹ Interestingly, the Australians, who were still using 2,4-D and 2,4,5-T domestically in 1990,⁷⁰ did not allow this possibility to deter them from eventually accepting Australian veterans' claims, albeit reluctantly.

While the reticence of New Zealand governments regarding the whole issue of wartime chemical exposure is evident, war pensions and disability allowances are available for New Zealand Vietnam veterans. Historically, New Zealand war pensions legislation has placed the onus on the government to disprove a veteran's claim for compensation. However, after the Vietnam War, it is considered by some veterans that New Zealand governments 'moved the goal posts' by not allowing Vietnam veterans the benefit of the doubt, maintaining that veterans themselves must clearly establish that chemical exposure in Vietnam was the direct cause of their post-war health problems.⁷¹ This is potentially very difficult, and expensive, to prove, particularly 30 years after the event. New Zealand war pensions legislation does not use the term 'chemical exposure', referring instead to 'service overseas' as being responsible for some veterans' health problems. But whatever the term used, the legislation does award pensions to those deemed eligible under the War Pensions Act, although the process can evidently be very protracted, stressful and demoralising. Allan Grayling, who has had many years' experience assisting

veterans to obtain pensions, notes that while many applications are declined in the initial stages, they are almost always accepted at appeal.⁷²

Some veterans' belief that the War Disablement and Pension Department of the Income Support Service is deliberately denying them compensation has been reinforced by their knowledge of the recommendation which was made by the Massey University team which studied of the health and welfare of Vietnam veterans in 1991 and 1994.⁷³ As a practical extension to its two initial studies, the team subsequently piloted a scheme to assist with the design and implementation of an 'education and counselling programme directed towards mental health problems for any family member of a Vietnam veteran.' At the conclusion of the pilot in 1994, the team stated, 'Due to the level of need demonstrated by this pilot programme, we recommend that Regional Health Authorities purchase community based services to ensure that the ongoing needs of families of those who have served in any overseas conflict as part of New Zealand defence forces are met.'⁷⁴ To date, this recommendation has not been implemented, even though the New Zealand War Pension Research Trust Board funded the studies.

For some New Zealand Vietnam veterans, reunions appear to be a very important part of their Vietnam experience both in terms of keeping the memories alive and as a way of providing ongoing support for team mates. There are the EVSA reunions every two years for all New Zealand Vietnam veterans and many units have their own reunions on alternate years. For 'Andrew B', reunions and other veterans' get-

togethers are therapeutic because 'You don't have to talk your experiences, you don't have to talk worries, you don't even have to talk your problems....Just the fellowship of being together often is enough to give you that sort of moral support.'⁷⁵ Gerald Southon believes that 'talking [among] ourselves and just letting it all come out, the therapy was within there',⁷⁶ and 'Sniper' considers that after reunions, a 'massive weight' has been lifted from his shoulders.⁷⁷ For Ted Brooker reunions are a time for laughing, which in itself is a form of therapy, recalling that at one reunion he went to 'I have never laughed so much in all my life. You blot it out, you blot all the shit out, and unless you sort of conscientiously sit down and do this, you don't remember it. You remember the funny things....You get a group of guys together who don't want to talk about shit, they just want to talk about the funny things. And it's funny, it's real funny.'⁷⁸ Richard Cairns for some time avoided reunions, believing that they were no more than 'an occasion for guys to get pissed and to reminisce', but finally went to one in 1991 and was 'quite amazed about how much of an affinity people still had for one another.' He recalls that there were some veterans who would 'perhaps have a cry in their beer or whatever,' but found that most were too busy talking about:

what they had done in the intervening period since they'd seen each other. And of course there were a lot of them whom I caught up with but the last time I saw them was either when they being evacuated out of the jungle because they'd been wounded or, you know, I saw them soon after we'd arrived back in New Zealand and they were discharged from the Army and I hadn't seen them, you know, in all those years since and it was great. I mean, they were, they had grown-up families by the time I got to see them and their kids were there as well.⁷⁹

However, one ex-infantryman believes that some veterans 'live for reunions, go from reunion to reunion every year. Well, to me, that seems to be looking at life in a mirror. I've got a colleague who puts it aptly. He says in our generation, some of the Vietnam veterans, we've got a good handful there who are nothing more than professional mourners. They go from one funeral to the next and thoroughly enjoy it.'⁸⁰

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To varying degrees, U.S., Australian and New Zealand Vietnam veterans have all had to fight to have their service in Vietnam, and the repercussions of that service, recognised and acknowledged. For the Americans, the building of the national monument in Washington D.C. was a process which helped the nation to come to terms with the impact of the war, and to begin to heal. It has been suggested that the collective post-war experience of Australian veterans was perhaps not as traumatic as that of U.S. veterans, nevertheless the struggle to have war-related health issues acknowledged and compensated appears to have been protracted and bitter in both countries.

In New Zealand there are very few specific memorials to Vietnam, and no special days to commemorate Vietnam veterans as there are in the U.S. and Australia.

While the social and political impact of Vietnam has been acknowledged and examined in depth in America and Australia, no real national effort has been made

in New Zealand to 'rediscover' Vietnam as a genuine and important aspect of this country's history.

There could be several reasons for this. The first may be that New Zealanders were, and still are, essentially indifferent to the war and those who fought there.

However, given the social division caused by the war and public reaction toward its veterans, which ranged from outright and personalised hostility to disinterested apathy to solid and consistent support, this is unlikely. The second may be that New Zealanders are simply not ready to examine their responses to the war and are in effect perhaps experiencing their own form of collective post-traumatic stress disorder. Some may in retrospect be ashamed of the treatment meted out to New Zealand's Vietnam veterans, or perhaps of a perceived betrayal of the nation by the New Zealand Government by 'prostituting' New Zealand troops in Vietnam at the request of a much larger international power in exchange for favourable trade and defence terms.

Evidence certainly suggests that New Zealand governments themselves have demonstrated little desire to examine their past or present roles in the Vietnam War and its legacy. New Zealand governments have in the past denied alleged possible involvement in the intended supply of chemicals to the U.S. military during the war, although evidence suggests otherwise. Whether or not this was the case, it appears that the Government remains reluctant to accept outright that service in Vietnam is responsible for the serious and ongoing health problems of many of New

Zealand's Vietnam veterans. New Zealand governments have traditionally relied on the decisions of American and Australian authorities which have maintained in the past that chemical exposure is not responsible for the ill-health of their Vietnam veterans. Now that substantial evidence has come to light in both the U.S. and Australia to the contrary, it will be interesting to see whether this will have any effect on New Zealand policies regarding disablement pensions and compensation.

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- ¹ Joel L. Swerdlow, 'Vietnam Memorial - America Remembers', *National Geographic*, vol. 167, no. 5 (May, 1985), pp. 562, 566.
 - ² *ibid.*, pp. 567, 570.
 - ³ *ibid.*, p. 573.
 - ⁴ *ibid.*, p. 571.
 - ⁵ 'In Memoriam - Symbols of Grief', *The Record* (New Jersey, 29 May 1989), reprinted in *Contact; Magazine of the New Zealand Ex-Vietnam Services Assn. Inc.*, vol. 6, no. 5.
 - ⁶ *The Vietnam Experience: A War Remembered*, edited by Stephen Weiss, et al (Boston, 1986), p. 6.
 - ⁷ Jane Ross, 'Australia's legacy, The Vietnam Veterans', in *Vietnam Remembered* (New South Wales, 1990), p. 212.
 - ⁸ Jeff Doyle, 'Short-timers' Endless Monuments: Comparative Readings of the Australian Vietnam Veterans' National Memorial and the American Vietnam Veterans' Memorial', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (New South Wales, 1992), pp. 114-116.
 - ⁹ *ibid.*, pp. 120-125.
 - ¹⁰ Australian War Memorial, *Vietnam: Their Place in History...* (Canberra, 1992), pp. 8-17.
 - ¹¹ Brochure for *Australian Vietnam Forces National Reunion, Sydney 1987*, pp. 1-2.
 - ¹² Ross, pp. 190-192, 212-213.
 - ¹³ *The Vietnam Experience...*, p. 5.
 - ¹⁴ Michael Frisch, 'The Memory of History', in *A Shared Authority: Essays in the Craft and Meaning of Oral and Public History* (Albany, U.S.A., 1990), pp. 17, 20, 26.
 - ¹⁵ Alistair Thomson, Michael Frisch and Paula Hamilton, 'The Memory and History Debates: Some International Perspectives', *Journal of the Oral History Society*, Vol. 22, No. 2 (1994), p. 41.
 - ¹⁶ *The New Zealand Herald*, 25/4/97, p. A1.
 - ¹⁷ Order of Ceremony for the Unveiling of the Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam Rolls of Honour, 14 April 1991.
 - ¹⁸ Chris Maclean and Jock Phillips, *The Sorrow and the Pride: New Zealand War Memorials* (Wellington, 1990), p. 157-158.
 - ¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 157.
 - ²⁰ *ibid.*, p. 157.
 - ²¹ Telephone interview with Alan Nixey, Secretary of the EVSA, 2/11/97.
 - ²² Order of Ceremony for the Unveiling of the Korea, Malaya, Borneo and Vietnam Rolls of Honour, 14 April 1991.
 - ²³ Maclean and Phillips, p. 157.
 - ²⁴ *The Dominion*, 26/4/97, p. 1.
 - ²⁵ Maclean and Phillips, p. 161.

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- ²⁶ *The Dominion*, 26/4/97, p. 1; *The Waikato Times*, 25/4/97, p. 1; *The New Zealand Herald*, 26/4/97, p. A24.
- ²⁷ *The Waikato Times*, 25/4/97, p. 1.
- ²⁸ *The New Zealand Herald*, 26/4/96, p. A24.
- ²⁹ Deborah Challinor, 'Children and War: A Study of the Impact of the First World War on New Zealand Children' (unpublished M.A. thesis, Waikato University, 1993), pp. 42-43.
- ³⁰ *The Press*, 22/4/96, p. 13.
- ³¹ For examples see articles in *The Dominion* and *The New Zealand Herald* on or about Anzac Day in recent years.
- ³² John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ³³ Brochure for 'Scars on the Heart' exhibition, Auckland War Memorial Museum, 1997.
- ³⁴ Brochure for 'Vietnam; the War Experience 30 Years On' exhibition, Manawatu Museum, 1995.
- ³⁵ Gilbert Adair, *Hollywood's Vietnam: From The Green Berets to Full Metal Jacket* (London, 1989), pp. 203-22.
- ³⁶ Michael L. Klein, 'Cultural Narrative and the Process of Re-Collection: Film, History and the Vietnam Era', in *The Vietnam Era*, edited by Michael Klein (London, 1990), p. 12.
- ³⁷ Adair, pp. 133-134, 210.
- ³⁸ John Storey, 'Bringing It All Back Home: American Popular Song and the War in Vietnam', in *The Vietnam Era*, pp. 104-106.
- ³⁹ Ann-Mari Jordens, 'Cultural Influences: the Vietnam War and Australia', *Journal of the Australian War Memorial*, No. 15, (October, 1989), pp. 3-8. See also Peter Pierce, 'Australian and American Literature of the Vietnam War', in *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, edited by Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey, and Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), pp. 237-274.
- ⁴⁰ Ian McNeill, *To Long Tan: The Australian Army and the Vietnam War 1950-1966* (New South Wales, 1993), dust jacket.
- ⁴¹ Jordens, p. 11.
- ⁴² Anne Gray, 'Artists' Visions of Vietnam', in *Vietnam Days...*, pp. 152, 154, 156, 171-172.
- ⁴³ John Murphy, "'Like Outlaws": Narratives From the Vietnam War', *Meanjin*, 2/1987, p. 153.
- ⁴⁴ Jordens, pp. 8-11.
- ⁴⁵ *ibid.*, pp. 12-13.
- ⁴⁶ *Debrief: the Official Quarterly of the Vietnam Veterans' Association of Australia*, Vol. 5, No. 1 (April, 1988), p. 8.
- ⁴⁷ Les Cleveland, 'The Culture of Death - Where are all the Songs?', in *Under Review: A Selection From New Zealand Books 1991-1996*, edited by Lauris Edmond, Harry Ricketts and Bill Sewell (Canterbury, 1997), p. 147.
- ⁴⁸ *Eyewitness Nam: Aftermath*, No. 12 (Wiltshire, 1988), pp. 62-63.
- ⁴⁹ For example, see Internet Newsgroup: alt.war.vietnam.
- ⁵⁰ The Evatt Royal Commission (Royal Commission on the Use and Effects of Chemical Agents on Australian Personnel in Vietnam), which was established in 1983, stated in its 1985 conclusion 'So Agent Orange is Not Guilty and the chemical agents used to defoliate battle zones in Vietnam and to protect Australians from malaria are not to blame. No one lost. This is not a matter for regret but for rejoicing.... Veterans have not been poisoned. The number with general health problems is small, probably much smaller than amongst their peers in the community.... This is good news and it is the Commission's fervent hope that it will be shouted from the roof-tops.' Quoted in Ross, p. 203.
- ⁵¹ *ibid.*, pp. 192-198.
- ⁵² Telephone interview with Alan Nixey, Secretary of the EVSA, 2/11/97.
- ⁵³ John Moller, 2/9/97.
- ⁵⁴ Ross, p. 201.
- ⁵⁵ F.B. Smith, 'Agent Orange: the Australian Aftermath', in Brendan O'Keefe and F.B. Smith, *Medicine at War: Medical Aspects of Australia's Involvement in Southeast Asian Conflicts 1950-1972* (New South Wales, 1994), p. 295.
- ⁵⁶ Victor Johnson, 'report to Vietnam Veterans Association of New Zealand - 3 Dec. 1994', in *The Vietnam Scrapbook: The Second ANZAC Adventure*, edited by Mike Subritzky (Papakura, 1995), p. 253.
- ⁵⁷ John Moller, 2/9/97.
- ⁵⁸ Parliamentary Debates, 2nd Session, Fortieth Parliament, 1983, House of Representatives, Vol. 450, 7 April to 4 May 1983, pp. 395-406.
- ⁵⁹ Parliamentary Debates, 2nd Session, Forty-second Parliament, 1990, House of Representatives, Vol. 509, 10 July to 9 August 1990, pp. 2872-2883.

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- ⁶⁰ Owen Wilkes, 'NZ Tried To Sell Agent Orange to the USAF...And Sonja Davies Was Part of the Cover-up', (no date), p. 1.
- ⁶¹ This belief was shared with me by nine or ten of the veterans I interviewed. As it was off-the-record information, I am unable to quote what they said or provide their names, but they do believe that there is a clear conspiracy which is preventing them from receiving compensation and benefits for ongoing illnesses which they believe are the result of chemical exposure in Vietnam.
- ⁶² See Wilkes; Parliamentary memorandum written by Secretary of Defence W. Hutchings to Minister of Defence David Thomson, 12/7/67; Parliamentary memorandum written by Secretary of Defence W. Hutchings to Minister of Defence David Thomson, 20/7/97; Letter from C.A. Turner to David Thomson, dated 14/7/67.
- ⁶³ O'Keefe and Smith, p. 355.
- ⁶⁴ Board of Trustees, Agent Orange Trust Board, *Report on the Activities of the New Zealand Agent Orange Trust Board, 1 September 1994 to 31 August 1995*, Annex A.
- ⁶⁵ Letter to VVANZ from Mr Neville Wallace, dated 1/7/97.
- ⁶⁶ *New Zealand Herald*, 10/5/85, p. 2.
- ⁶⁷ Rupert Granville Glover, *New Zealand in Vietnam: a Study of the Use of Force in International law* (Palmerston North, 1986), pp. 10-11, 59.
- ⁶⁸ The Hon. Bruce Scott, Minister for Veterans' Affairs, Australia (Media release, 27 March, 1996), 'Governments Acts on Agent Orange Report'.
- ⁶⁹ Interview 40.
- ⁷⁰ Ross, p. 199.
- ⁷¹ John Moller, 2/9/97. See also Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96.
- ⁷² Allan Grayling, 5/5/95.
- ⁷³ Again, this information was provided off-the-record by a significant number of veterans.
- ⁷⁴ Kerry Chamberlain, Lorna Davin, Nigel Long, & Carol Vincent, *Vietnam Veterans' Family Programme; Nga Whanau a Tu - Final Report* (Massey University, 1994), pp. 2, 12.
- ⁷⁵ 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ⁷⁶ Gerald Southon, 13/7/96.
- ⁷⁷ 'Sniper', 13/7/96.
- ⁷⁸ Ted Brooker, 23/6/97.
- ⁷⁹ Richard Cairns, 14/9/95.
- ⁸⁰ Interview 38.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION.

Of the New Zealand Vietnam veterans interviewed for this study, almost all retrospectively view their service in Vietnam as having been worthwhile, either as a personal experience or in terms of their career development, and the majority are glad that they went, some stating that they would 'do it again'.¹ However a handful do not view the experience positively. For 'Andrew B', Vietnam was 'unpleasant' but, because of his personal anti-communist convictions, he believed it to be something which had to be endured.² John Moller found Vietnam to be a 'very sobering, brutal experience.'³ Dave Orbell agrees, believing that he came back from Vietnam a completely different person and that the changes in his character were for the worse.⁴ For Colin Whyte, Vietnam was, simply, 'terrible'.⁵

However, although most of the veterans interviewed consider that their experiences in Vietnam were worthwhile, many of them at some point in their testimonies talked about how confusing, frustrating, stressful or pointless aspects of their tours, or the return home, were, some more than others. A considerable number also talked at length about how difficult their lives have been since Vietnam. As all New Zealanders in Vietnam were, at least in theory, volunteers, and therefore can be assumed to have wanted to go to Vietnam enough to risk being killed there, the factors which have influenced these negative sentiments need to be examined. While the political and military climate and some actual events which occurred in Vietnam

will be considered, more emphasis will be placed on the veterans' personal and collective beliefs and expectations surrounding war, what happened to them afterwards, and how international veterans' movements may have influenced New Zealanders after the war.

In Chapter One, the two categories of New Zealand military mythology were discussed - the public mythology and the soldiers' mythology. What impact have these had on New Zealand's Vietnam veterans? Jock Phillips writes of his own experience growing up during the 1960s, 'By the time "our war", the Vietnam War came along, the old Kiwi mythology of battle had become not something to inspire me but a burden to resist.'⁶ Clearly, Phillips is not speaking on behalf of all young New Zealand men during this period. When the under-resourced New Zealand Army called for volunteers for Vietnam in 1965, a significant number of civilians enlisted. There was not a deluge of volunteers, but enough at least to prevent Prime Minister Holyoake from becoming internationally embarrassed.

It is important to look at why young New Zealand men volunteered for Vietnam. Volunteers need to be considered in two categories - those who were already Regular Force personnel at the time (in fact, most of the interviewees), and those who volunteered as civilians. The majority of Regular Force personnel appear to have gone to Vietnam because being a soldier was their job and that was what they were trained to do, no matter where the job was. Also, the testimonies of a significant number of these men indicate that they actively wanted to go to test

themselves as soldiers, both personally and in terms of their skills, and did not just go because the Army told them to. Regular Force officers appear to have been in a slightly different category as there are suggestions that had they declined to serve in Vietnam, their careers would have been detrimentally affected. It is interesting to note that several ex-enlisted men also do not consider that they were volunteers in the true sense of the word, although many more are adamant that no one was forced to go. One in particular maintains in his testimony that he was specifically told by his superiors that there was nothing he could do to get out of going. He remains angry about this today and his memory of this experience may be influenced by the fact that he believes that service in Vietnam has been at the root of many of the life problems he has encountered since then. Paradoxically, he states later in his testimony that one of the reasons he had specifically wanted to go to Vietnam was to be eligible for a rehabilitation loan, which he did not receive.

Civilians who volunteered obviously did not go because they had to or wanted to because it was their job. The handful who were interviewed for this study went for a variety of reasons, including in several cases a strong personal desire to fight communism, as well as boredom with civilian life, and for the challenge, excitement, travel and adventure, which also applies to many Regular Force personnel. One veteran who volunteered as a civilian went to Vietnam because he wanted to prove that he could be as good a soldier as his father had been on Crete during the Second World War. This desire to continue family military traditions is

shared by a considerable number of veterans, although several point out in their testimonies that the versions of war received from their fathers and uncles left out the unpleasant aspects of combat and focused on the amusing or 'hard case' things that had happened. Approximately 25 percent of the veterans interviewed state that family military traditions had some impact on their decisions to go to Vietnam, although some state outright that it was New Zealand's military mythology per se that influenced them.

Among the civilian volunteers, there were no reasons for going to Vietnam which were not shared by Regular Force soldiers. One Regular Force soldier did state that he wanted to 'do something for the country', although going off to fight communism could be similarly interpreted. Of the three or four veterans who listed this as their main reason for going to Vietnam, all indicate that they believed and took seriously the widely held view of the day which maintained that if the communists were not stopped in Southeast Asia, they would not halt until they reached New Zealand. Other veterans who mentioned this view of the perceived communist threat state that they did not take it particularly seriously.

Overall, it seems that the main reasons for going to Vietnam were, for Regular Force soldiers, to put into practice the skills learned as a career soldier and because it was part of the job, and for all who went, to continue family military traditions, and/or to experience challenge and adventure, or a combination of all of these motives. These are essentially the same reasons which had compelled New

Zealanders to volunteer for the First and Second World wars.⁷ Perhaps the significant difference is that far fewer soldiers who served in Vietnam appear to have been influenced by ideas of patriotism or political ideals.

For most New Zealanders, Vietnam itself appears to have been what they had expected, although a few clearly had no idea at all of what it would be like, particularly with regard to the people and the culture. The biggest initial impact on New Zealanders appears to have been made by the U.S. military presence. Some thought they would have to fight as they got off the plane on arrival, suggesting a lack of pre-deployment instruction on behalf of the New Zealand military, also indicated by the fact that some soldiers had been told that the Vietcong would be wearing black pyjamas, which is the everyday dress of most rural Vietnamese.

Disillusionment set in early for many New Zealanders. Some discovered that they would not be doing what they had thought they were going there to do, such as specific combat-related roles or effectively helping Vietnamese civilians, and others decided that it was politically and morally wrong to have been there at all. The U.S. political interference in military strategy was also extremely frustrating. The disappointment of not being 'allowed' to win appears to have had a considerable impact on many New Zealanders, although most consider that they still did their professional best despite this. The awareness of some soldiers that New Zealand was only making a token contribution in Vietnam was also disillusioning, especially when New Zealanders were losing their lives simply as a 'gesture'.

Perhaps even more disappointing for some was the fact that New Zealand troops had to pay tax on what they earned in Vietnam. Although all other New Zealand troops who have served in post-war conflicts, apart from the Korean War, were taxed during active service, some Vietnam veterans are either under the impression that this has applied to them only, or have chosen to ignore the historical reality. However, the issue is perhaps not the tax which had to be paid in Vietnam, but the fact that the New Zealand Government would not declare the theatre a war zone, or operational area, therefore possibly marginalising the veterans' contribution there, in the veterans' eyes at least. The New Zealanders *were* the only ally in Vietnam to be paying tax, but they were also the only western fully Regular and 'volunteer' force serving there, and financial incentives may well have been given to U.S. and Australian troops to compensate for the fact that they did not have an option regarding service in Vietnam. New Zealanders did in fact eventually receive an allowance of one tax free dollar a day for every day of their tour.

For some, the biggest disappointment of all was the discovery that some New Zealand civilian agencies were supplying the enemy with aid, regardless of the humanitarian motives of those agencies, which New Zealand soldiers at the time were possibly not in a position to appreciate. In the perception of many New Zealanders in Vietnam, therefore, the war they were fighting was not being viewed by the New Zealand Government as a 'real' one, they were only there as a token, and were being 'robbed' of winning. Some considered the political *raison d'être* for

being there to be flawed, and for others there were clear indications that New Zealanders at home were not supporting them in their efforts. All of this culminated in many New Zealand troops feeling that their expectations were not being met and, in some cases, that they had been 'tricked' into going to Vietnam by the New Zealand Government. On the other hand, many Regular Force personnel consider that the operational experience they gained in Vietnam was invaluable in terms of their ongoing military careers.

Some of the New Zealanders' disillusionment and disappointment in Vietnam appears to have been compensated by their almost universal belief that they were the most professional, best trained and committed troops there. Almost every ex-infantryman interviewed considers that their combat training 'kicked in' automatically when required and that they automatically knew what to do and when, and did it well, although the evidence suggests that not every New Zealand soldier was 'cool, calm and collected' at the onset of a contact, no matter how experienced. Several veterans specifically state in their testimonies that they are confident that the military traditions established by New Zealanders in earlier wars were upheld in Vietnam. One expresses his belief that the 'outdoor' nature of New Zealanders makes them ideal soldier material, a clear echo of an aspect of the traditional public mythology which maintains that the success of New Zealanders in past wars can be attributed at least in part to their pioneer and colonial heritage.⁸ Another veteran, who went on to a very illustrious career with the Army after Vietnam, considers

that the New Zealanders' belief in their superiority as soldiers is directly related to the traditional public mythology, and that this belief is integral to the success of a fighting unit, large or small.

However, the New Zealanders may not have been quite as good in Vietnam as they thought themselves to be. Evidence suggests that most were politically naive, and unable to understand and appreciate how the enemy thought, or the culture of Vietnamese civilians. This is considered by some veterans to have been a serious training omission which influenced military effectiveness. Further, the New Zealanders were comparing themselves against allies which had significant less well-trained and motivated conscripted elements. When the percentage of men that each western ally lost in Vietnam is compared, the Americans had the largest losses, but those of Australia and New Zealand were very similar.⁹ As the Australian figures include conscripted personnel, compared with the fully professional (as in Regular Force) and 'volunteer' New Zealanders, the New Zealanders do not appear to have been that much more effective, at least in terms of keeping themselves alive. Whether the New Zealanders were effective in Vietnam in a military sense is difficult to judge within the terms of reference of this thesis.

In Vietnam, New Zealand troops appear to have successfully upheld many of the traditions which are inherent in the soldiers' mythology. They continued the time-honoured tradition of not getting on with Australian troops and disrespecting Australian officers to the point where it became embarrassing for the New Zealand

Government and military. Several New Zealand veterans appear to have considered this antagonism and rather anti-social rivalry acceptable and possibly even obligatory simply because it had occurred in earlier wars. The public mythology of the Anzac alliance originating from the First World War does not seem to have been held in high regard by either the Australians or the New Zealanders in Vietnam, although many New Zealand veterans concede that it was worth having the Australians as military allies 'when it mattered', that is, in combat situations. The only exception to this is perhaps in relation to the Australian casevac crews which the New Zealanders did not consider to be as committed to saving the lives of injured soldiers as the Americans were. It is suggested here that the disharmony among the Australians and the New Zealanders was not a result of incompatible military ideology or procedure, but possibly more a clash of national characters, which are perhaps actually not dissimilar.

The New Zealanders appear to have generally got on well with American troops, although many considered their ability as soldiers to be doubtful, and some saw them as arrogant and unthinking. Some New Zealanders believe that they were popular with the Americans because the Americans were so impressed by the New Zealanders' non-racist and egalitarian attitudes. However, regardless of the testimonies of a number of New Zealand veterans, there are indications that the relationship between Maori and Pakeha troops in Vietnam was not always harmonious, some veterans talking of the Maori interest in the U.S. Black Power

movement and racial divisions within New Zealand units, seeing these as perhaps a reflection of New Zealand society at the time. Other veterans recall being shocked at the extent of racial discrimination in New Zealand once they left the military. But such discrimination has always been present in New Zealand, and it was certainly evident during the 1950s and early 1960s before many of these veterans went into the Army.¹⁰ Issues of race were perhaps transcended or disguised for some New Zealanders in the combat-oriented environment of Vietnam where trust in and reliance on team mates was essential to survival.

One veteran commented on the New Zealand Army's lack of ethos and culture as a warrior group at the time of Vietnam, revealed by the problems between Maori and Pakeha. The traditional public and soldiers' mythologies have both maintained that New Zealand soldiers are 'gifted amateurs' who, through 'natural talent and inner discipline', are able to compete with any professional army,¹¹ a belief that some Vietnam veterans, despite their rhetoric regarding how professional they were, appeared to hold. But the New Zealand Army during the 1960s was supposed to be a professional Army, highly skilled, technically proficient, ideologically cohesive, and not made up of part-time farmers and bushmen, so for this veteran, the fact that it did not have a suitable ethos and culture was an obstacle in Vietnam.

Several New Zealanders were shocked at the extent of corruption and black-marketeering evident among U.S. troops, one considering that this influenced some New Zealanders to the extent that they also took part in such activities. This is

perhaps a naive view as trading on the black market is hardly new to New Zealand troops in wartime.¹² Other New Zealanders disapproved of the U.S. approach to the war in Vietnam in terms of strategy and excessive use of military technology, considering that the approach taken by the New Zealanders and the Australians, based on experience gained during earlier conflicts, was much more appropriate.

Most New Zealanders in Vietnam appear to have been unimpressed with the South Vietnamese military because, in the perception of the New Zealanders, they were unmotivated, poorly trained and unreliable and therefore useless as soldiers. Several New Zealand veterans have a more positive view of the ARVNs and the RF/PFs but note that their generally poor performance had an impact on the morale of New Zealand troops who resented this. The New Zealanders' negative attitude appears to have extended to South Vietnamese civilians, although the New Zealanders who worked with civilians appear to have had much more rewarding relationships and an appreciation of the Vietnamese culture. While some field troops consider that they treated the civilians well, some even forming relationships, other evidence suggests that a considerable number behaved in a patronising and racist manner towards them. It is clear that some Vietnamese civilians were neither particularly helpful nor co-operative towards the New Zealanders and often tried to take advantage of their generosity and naivety. The situation was made worse by the fact that the New Zealanders could not tell who was the enemy and who was not, causing them to have to be ever wary and distrustful of all civilians. One veteran, who considered at

the time that all Vietnamese were the enemy, and would shoot at civilians regardless, believes that this was the fault of the indoctrination he had received from the New Zealand Army before he got to Vietnam. There is also a sense in the testimonies that some veterans consider that the Vietnamese civilians were not as grateful as they should have been towards western soldiers who had come to fight for and 'save' them. Veterans who experienced the duplicity of Vietnamese wartime culture recall feeling hurt and 'used'.

Most New Zealanders do not appear to have been particularly bothered by the practical aspects of not having enough of the right clothing or equipment in Vietnam, some believing that this even enhanced the image of the 'rough and ready' but effective soldiers they considered themselves to be. What did disappoint and anger some was the failure of New Zealand military, and therefore in the soldiers' perception the Government, to support them, especially when parliamentary delegations visited them wearing the gear not available to the soldiers themselves. Again, this was not a new experience for New Zealand soldiers on active service. Troops in Japan were reduced to wearing gumboots, sandshoes and used items of uniform, due a severe of shortage of suitable military clothing.¹³

Despite this, New Zealanders in Vietnam consider that they went to some lengths to distinguish themselves as New Zealanders and a separate entity from the other western allies, particularly the Australians, especially when they were in formal dress. Many recall that while they were working they chose to wear U.S. shirts, and

sweat bands around their heads instead of regulation New Zealand bush hats, suggesting that the motivation to 'look the part' may have been stronger than their desire to be identified as New Zealanders, but this may have been more of a practical issue than anything else due to the shortage of New Zealand clothing. U.S. combat helmets appear to have been available for New Zealanders if they wanted them, but some considered that the sweatband 'look' was more appropriate to their image, exhibiting perhaps a certain studied nonchalance about their own personal safety.

While the New Zealanders appear to have picked up and employed the 'language of Vietnam' to some degree, generally to enhance communication between nationalities, it seems that they used the vernacular developed in earlier conflicts in which New Zealanders had been involved more, suggesting a continuation of operational procedures and traditions passed on through generations of soldiers together with aspects of the language used by New Zealanders in general. Swearing was also prevalent, and considered traditional, although whether as a New Zealand male or military tradition (if indeed there is a difference) is unclear, but it apparently paled into insignificance compared to the foul language used by the Americans.

Humour was considered essential in Vietnam as a method of stress release and a psychological buffer against unpleasant or frightening situations, and 'black' humour appears to have been common. Some veterans consider in retrospect that

some of the things they laughed about in Vietnam were actually quite awful, nevertheless these incidents are often recounted at veterans' reunions with great enjoyment, the 'hard case' aspects of war perhaps preferable to the pain and misery also experienced, a reflection of how veterans of earlier wars have passed on their war experiences.

Many of the veterans interviewed showed no compunction whatsoever about the fact that they scrounged and stole in Vietnam, some viewing this with pride, especially if they had stolen from other allies. Stealing and scrounging in fact appear to have been considered a normal and acceptable part of life at war. Trading appears to have been considered in a slightly different category and in a more entrepreneurial light, some veterans maintaining that if, for example, the Americans were willing to trade large amounts of equipment for a green beret, then so be it. Others found the necessity to scrounge disappointing, particularly those who worked in the medical teams, but this appears to be related to the lack of support from the New Zealand Government, not the act of scrounging itself.

Despite the ubiquity of 'American style' music in Vietnam, the New Zealanders preferred their own music from home, singing and guitars being essential elements of New Zealand parties. The anti-war messages in some of the music favoured by the Americans does not appear to have influenced the New Zealanders, perhaps because, as volunteers, they did not have the culture of the U.S. conscript in particular who was not a professional soldier and did not want to be in Vietnam.

Some of the New Zealanders' songs were versions of those sung in earlier wars, again indicating a continuance of military traditions. The song 'The Green Green Grass of Home' is considered by some veterans to be 'their' song in relation to Vietnam. One veteran maintains that it was ordered to be played by General Westmoreland in appreciation of one New Zealand infantry company's notable efforts in Vietnam. Conversely, another veteran from the same company maintains that the company's duties consisted mainly of digging holes for the Australians, which is incongruous.

Almost all of the veterans interviewed for this study stated that they were frightened at some point in Vietnam, whether it was before contacts or afterwards, although one veteran maintains that he never allowed himself to feel fear because of the responsibility he had in his section as the machine gunner. Being scared appears to have been openly accepted among team mates as a normal part of combat, and 'healthy' fear does not seem to have attracted derision (although it was the butt of many jokes), supportive assistance in fact being given to inexperienced team members. While some veterans maintain that soldiers who became incapacitated by their fear were not ostracised, others referred to such people as 'blowarses', considering that to have been one would have been highly embarrassing and believing that the removal of such people from the field was necessary for the safety of everyone else. The evidence suggests that there were a number of New Zealand soldiers in Vietnam who could not cope emotionally, but it is very unlikely that this

was a uniquely New Zealand phenomenon. It appears, then, that it was acceptable to show normal fear, especially if one was an inexperienced soldier, but not to succumb to it to the detriment of team mates. The incident when a New Zealander committed suicide at Nui Dat was covered up by the Army, but whether this was to protect the Army's reputation, or the family of the deceased man, is unclear.

The possibility of being seriously injured or dying in Vietnam does not seem to have bothered many New Zealanders, at least initially, mainly because of the common assumption that it would always happen to someone else. But this is not necessarily a phenomenon unique to soldiers - most young people have little comprehension of their own mortality. Some veterans believe that such an attitude was necessary otherwise no one would have gone to Vietnam, or to any other war for that matter (unless, of course, they were conscripted). The death of team mates did tend to modify this sentiment for some New Zealanders, but it was often replaced by the view that the possibility of injury or death was an accepted hazard of the job which, after all, they had volunteered for.

Of the talismans used by some New Zealanders to bring them luck, a surprising number were possessions which had belonged to family members who had served in earlier wars, as if the luck may be passed on from generation to generation. A considerable number of the veterans interviewed were superstitious, in Vietnam at least, and Maori and Pakeha cultural, spiritual and religious beliefs seem to have been shared and adopted by both races when it was perceived to have been prudent.

Although many veterans abandoned these practices after Vietnam, they concede that they had an important psychological role while they were there.

For many veterans, comradeship was and is the essence of their Vietnam experience, some considering that this was what got them through their time there and what made the experience ultimately worthwhile. Relationships with mates in Vietnam and afterwards were and are considered to be extremely intimate (although not in a physical way, as one veteran is quick to point out), exclusive of civilians, and enduring. This is consistent with the experiences of New Zealand soldiers in other wars,¹⁴ and no doubt soldiers of all nationalities and times. The deaths of mates could have a devastating impact on troops, which often initially manifested itself as anger towards the enemy and could be the catalyst for acts which could be construed as 'barbaric' or 'atrocities of war', such as the killing of wounded enemy, or prisoners, depending on one's point of view. Similar acts committed by almost all military forces which fought in Vietnam (including the NVA and the Vietcong) are well-documented, as are incidents which occurred in other wars.

The reaction to Rod Eder's allegation in his book *Deep Jay* that New Zealanders in Vietnam killed prisoners will be considered briefly. Clearly, as indicated by the evidence, not every New Zealander in Vietnam took part in, or was even aware of, the killing of wounded enemy or prisoners. But there is a difference between maintaining one's ignorance of the fact, and insisting that it could not possibly have happened. One possible explanation for the latter view is the implication that some

New Zealand Vietnam veterans still subscribe to the traditional public mythology which defines the New Zealand soldier as a chivalrous and morally superior being incapable of such an act. It is significant that very little comment was forthcoming from civilian New Zealanders regarding the allegation - the media debate seemed to be confined to veterans only, and mainly those who wanted to deny the allegation.

Grief at the deaths of mates was usually demonstrated covertly, if at all, the excessive use of alcohol apparently the only way that one could get away with 'going over the top' and expressing emotions. Soldiers seem to have been torn between modes of acceptable behaviour when dealing with grief - the public mythology which maintains that New Zealand soldiers are emotionally resolute and don't cry, and the soldiers' mythology which maintains that they do. Mates dying could affect soldiers in other ways as well. Several veterans still feel guilty today because they were not present when friends were killed, viewing this as part of the burden they carry from Vietnam. Other veterans recall that they felt little when people they knew died, an indication perhaps of the emotional de-sensitisation which occurred in a significant proportion of New Zealanders during their service. Some veterans who were on the delivery end of friendly fire incidents do not appear to have been de-sensitised, as several still feel guilty today, one considering that the incident he was involved in contributed greatly to problems he has experienced with PTSD over the years.

Rest-in-country at Vung Tau was one of the few opportunities for New Zealand troops in Vietnam to relax and unwind, apart from a day or two between operations at Nui Dat. Although most New Zealanders had at least one night before RinC at Nui Dat Base, Vung Tau was where they appear to have 'let their hair down'. Many of the ex-enlisted veterans' memories about going on leave focus on what a good time they had had during these occasions and the 'trouble' they had found themselves in, embodying the 'typical Kiwi - eats roots and leaves' image of New Zealand males. Few refer to crippling hangovers, VD and empty wallets, unless they are relating the misfortunes of others, and hardly anyone seems to have gone sight-seeing or shopping. Ex-officers are far more circumspect in their testimonies about what they did on leave.

Leave for many veterans appears to have rotated around relaxing in ways which demonstrated, or confirmed, one's masculinity. Most maintain that they drank to excess, the aim appearing to be to pass out or at least vomit, some went with prostitutes (and others imply that they did), and many got into fights, preferably, it seems, with Australian MPs. Being arrested does not appear to have been considered a shameful experience, in fact, quite the contrary. This is of course how many New Zealand soldiers spent at least some of their time out of the combat zone in earlier wars, at times to notorious excess, as discussed earlier. But did New Zealanders in Vietnam behave in this manner because they thought it was expected of them as New Zealand soldiers, or was it because this is what a relatively large

group of young men does away from home, perhaps for the first time? While drinking was an acceptable aspect of New Zealand culture during the 1960s, using the services of prostitutes and brawling in public were not. One veteran actually states in his testimony that brawling 'was socially unacceptable but over there you do it and get away with it.'¹⁵ So the soldiers' mythology may have had less impact on this aspect of the New Zealanders' behaviour in Vietnam than may be initially assumed.

Some New Zealanders consider that they treated Vietnamese prostitutes very well and believe that the New Zealanders were favourites with the women because they gave gifts and did not treat them aggressively, as some allied soldiers did. While this is possible, it is perhaps more likely that the prostitutes were ultimately motivated by the prospect of business at the time, and a guaranteed transaction the next time the New Zealanders came to town, as they would have been in relation to all of the soldiers whom they dealt with. Conversely, some veterans maintain that the New Zealanders did treat the prostitutes poorly, citing the women's' dishonesty and the possibility that they may be Vietcong as reasons.

According to the soldiers' mythology, New Zealand troops have traditionally had a general disregard for military authority, and this appears to have also been the case in Vietnam. While a considerable number of the testimonies indicate that the majority of New Zealand officers were respected and liked, others suggest a less harmonious relationship. The veterans, including some ex-officers themselves, are

of the opinion that officers are required to earn the respect of their men and that in some cases this did not occur. Some ex-officers consider that New Zealanders are difficult to lead as troops but that once a good relationship has been established, the result is positive and effective. Although the evidence does suggest that a 'frag warning', or an incident which was interpreted as a warning, did occur among the New Zealanders at least once, much of it was hearsay but delivered in a way which suggests that it had already become a myth of the New Zealanders in Vietnam itself. Several veterans recounted versions of the story they had heard, or had been there when it had happened but did not see it, one or two maintain that they were going to do it themselves, or knew someone who was, and several described what getting a frag warning meant, but had not received one themselves. Some appear to have talked about fragging in their testimonies to illustrate how serious and tense the situation in Vietnam was, and that the troops would not tolerate incompetent leadership. On the other hand, some veterans interviewed did not appear to know what the term 'fragging' meant and had never heard of such an incident occurring among the New Zealanders.

Although the majority of New Zealanders appear to have looked forward to coming home from Vietnam, only two or three directly state in their testimonies that they expected a hero's welcome, although the testimonies of more suggest that they might have, which is consistent with expectations generated by both the public and soldiers' mythologies. Of all the veterans interviewed, only one encountered

protesters at the airport, although considerably more commented on the fact that that had happened to others. The lack of any sort of sort of welcome back to New Zealand, even from the military at the time of return (although military transport did seem to be available to some veterans when they landed), was very disconcerting for many. It seems that when veterans refer to 'we' in reference to such incidents, they are at times referring to New Zealand Vietnam veterans as a collective group, and not necessarily to something which they experienced personally, a process which defines and augments the veterans' own mythology of Vietnam. However, a number of veterans remember that they were ostracised and personally, and often viciously, attacked for having gone to Vietnam. Some also consider that medical assistance was not available for them when they began to experience ill-health as a result of their service, both immediately after the war, as in cases of PTSD, and in the following years. It is also suggested in some testimonies that the New Zealand military was instrumental in encouraging veterans to keep quiet about their service-related problems, therefore compounding them. Further, there seems to have been some confusion regarding the advice given to veterans about what sort of rehabilitation and home loans and other assistance they were entitled to.

It is difficult to come to any qualified conclusions about why some veterans experienced PTSD and others did not, and it is certainly beyond the terms of reference of this thesis, and the ability of the author, to do so. Such unqualified

analysis could in fact be considered irresponsible. The patterns which did emerge from evidence provided by the veterans for this study are congruent in most areas with what was concluded by the substantial Massey University studies of 1991 and 1994, which describe the 'typical veteran with PTSD' as follows:

Compared to the non-PTSD veteran, he will have a constellation of problems. He will be less well educated and less well off financially. He will have served in Vietnam with a lower rank, and experienced more severe levels of combat, and will have remained in the Armed Forces for a shorter period of time in total. His current health status will be worse; he will have more acute symptoms and more chronic illnesses, and rate his health status as poor. He will have high levels of daily stress, and experience high levels of anxiety and depression along with his symptoms of PTSD. He will have difficulty in relating to other people, and be withdrawn and disengaged from his family. He is likely to be separated or divorced. His strategies for coping with this constellation of problems will be to vent his emotions, to deny the importance of and relevance of problems, and to disengage from, dealing with them.¹⁶

Based on the testimonies collected for this thesis, there are several variations to this profile, although it is noted that the above is a generalised summary. Firstly, some New Zealand ex-officers, who are presumably the better educated and financially better off veterans referred to in the Massey comments, state that they developed PTSD symptoms after their service in Vietnam. The difference between these veterans and those who fall into the lower ranked, less educated and less financially well off group is that the officers appear to have been able to recognise their symptoms quite early and therefore do something about them. A further variation is that not all of the veterans interviewed for this study who believe that they have developed PTSD did experience prolonged levels of combat, although the majority

did. Finally, a significantly large number of the veterans interviewed for this study consider in retrospect that they did experience some symptoms of PTSD in the short term immediately after they came home from Vietnam, although these went away of their own accord. The Massey study does not seem to have considered this category of 'PTSD veterans' to any great degree.

Of those veterans interviewed for this study who do not consider that they have developed PTSD, some are rather scathing of those who have, implying in their testimonies that such mental weaknesses were inherent before Vietnam and that the war is being blamed for everything that has gone wrong in these veterans' lives since. There is a sense in these testimonies that veterans who are experiencing, in particular, prolonged PTSD symptoms are tarnishing the image of the New Zealand soldier and 'letting the side down'. There is a similar feeling in relation to veterans with physical health problems attributed to chemical exposure in Vietnam, although this is less pronounced.

There is currently debate among veterans regarding whether they should be officially recognised for their efforts in Vietnam. Some consider that it is warranted and deserved, while others feel that it is too late and that such a gesture would be condescending. Still others believe that as they volunteered, no recognition or official 'thank you' is required. One veteran points out in his testimony that not all veterans of earlier wars have been recognised either, including many who served during the Second World War, another reality which appears to have been either

ignored, or is generally not known, by many veterans. It appears that in general the veterans who most feel that recognition is warranted are those who believe that Vietnam has impacted severely on their lives. Also, there appears to be a direct correlation between the reasons why some New Zealanders went to Vietnam and how negatively they view their reception when they came home - those who went specifically to fight communism or in some way 'do their duty' for New Zealand appear to be the most bitter, although there are exceptions to this.

Compared with the U.S. and Australia, New Zealanders appear to have been hesitant to examine the impact of the Vietnam War and incorporate it into history and culture. Interestingly, this was not something that many veterans commented on in their testimonies, apart from strong feelings of having been ignored since they returned from Vietnam and the desire of some for official recognition. Many seem relatively content to relive and memorialise their service in Vietnam at regular veterans' reunions and on Anzac Day.

It is the contention here that both the traditional public mythology and the soldiers' mythology to some extent influenced New Zealand Vietnam veterans, both before they went to Vietnam and during their service there. There is also evidence that the myth of the New Zealand male also had an impact on their behaviour and personal beliefs. It is suggested that in fact the three mythologies are entwined and not easily separable. But how have these mythologies influenced the veterans' memories of Vietnam?

Of the veterans interviewed for this study, roughly 65 percent do not consider that the Vietnam War has had a long-term detrimental effect on their lives. While some concede that their lives have been changed as a result, and that at times they have experienced some associated difficulties, they believe that they have succeeded in achieving what they wanted from life, and that, in a significant number of cases, their experiences in Vietnam have helped them to do this. This group includes some veterans who have experienced symptoms of PTSD and other ill-health, and others who have faced a range of non-war-related crises in their lives. These veterans also appear to have come to terms with the outcome of the war in Vietnam, and their experiences there, whether they were positive or negative. Most consider that they did what they were asked to do in Vietnam to the best of their ability as professional soldiers, regardless of how their actions were viewed by others during and after the war, and regardless of whether they personally believed that the war was 'right' or 'wrong'.

For the remaining veterans interviewed for this study, the Vietnam War has been, and still is, the focal point of their lives. Some consider that Vietnam has irreversibly altered their characters for the worse, deprived them of career and financial opportunities, destroyed personal relationships, and made them physically sick (there now is substantial evidence to suggest that this is in fact so). Many feel that they have become victims of successive governments and a society which do not care about them and would like them to disappear. For some of these veterans,

what happened to them in Vietnam had a very significant impact, for example, their perceived betrayal by the New Zealand Government, the U.S. political and military powers, and the Vietnamese themselves, but almost all of them consider that the experience of coming home has caused them the 'biggest hurt' of all. Their testimonies indicate that many consider that they were 'tricked' by the New Zealand Government into going to Vietnam to fight a war which was morally wrong and unwinnable, then ignored, abused and scapegoated for doing so when they came home.

It is these veterans who appear to have gone to the greatest lengths to 'compose' their memories of Vietnam in a manner which allows them to live comfortably today with what they experienced in the past. When they came home and discovered that they were not the heroes they thought that Vietnam would make them, their image of themselves as professional, effective and worthy New Zealand soldiers was undermined, so they remember that they were the best soldiers in Vietnam. When the war was lost, they know that they could have contributed to winning it if they had been allowed to. When they look back in retrospect at mates whom they lost and certain behaviours they demonstrated during the war, including 'atrocities' and what they perceive as emotional failure, they remember that they were tricked into going. When their lives after the war do not live up to their dreams or expectations, they blame Vietnam and what happened to them there. It is possible that the latter is compounded by confusing and ongoing episodes of anxiety and

depression as described in the Massey report. Vietnam is remembered as a place and time where terrible and traumatic things happened. At the same time, it is perceived as a period in the veterans' lives when there was unity, the rules of survival, and therefore life, were clear and easy to follow, comradeship was paramount, and the values of the combat zone were 'pure' and real. Life after Vietnam has been 'flat' and littered with bitter disappointments, and the veterans feel 'let down' by a society which has traditionally maintained that being a soldier is honourable and meritorious. The war, therefore, has to be remembered as being 'wrong' or a 'mistake' so that the veterans are not at fault for having volunteered to go and subsequently not responsible for not 'fitting in' with the public mythology. On the other hand, it also has to be remembered as an outstanding experience so that the deaths of mates have not been in vain and the efforts, beliefs and commitment of the veterans themselves are validated.

But most of the veterans interviewed for this study appear to have 'composed' their memories of Vietnam to a certain extent, some more than others. If one were required to provide a brief generalised description, based on the testimonies, of what New Zealand enlisted men were like in Vietnam, one would have to say that they were: scruffy, rough and ready, rather undisciplined yet efficient and professional soldiers, physically and emotionally tough, hard drinkers and definitely hard cases, voracious and popular lovers but far more committed to their mates, with 'she'll be right' attitudes and always ready for a laugh. This image is

remarkably similar to the traditional soldiers' mythology of past wars. New Zealand officers in Vietnam would be summarised as: very professional and committed, serious and responsible yet able to be 'one of the boys', caring of their men yet not in an overt way, and able to give as good as they ordered on the battlefield. Again, there is a strong similarity, and perhaps to a greater or lesser extent New Zealanders actually are like this when they go to war.

But it is clear, when testimonies are cross-checked with other testimonies and evidence, that some veterans did deny certain events or issues, or excluded or accentuated others, although this could certainly have been the genuine experience of individual veterans. Cross-checking with the testimonies of veterans in the same unit usually highlights any discrepancies. For example, some maintained that no one ever became violent when drinking at Nui Dat, although the collective evidence suggests that this happened on numerous occasions. Others state that the New Zealanders treated Vietnamese prostitutes well, but colleagues maintain that they did not. One veteran denied that frag threats were ever issued by New Zealanders in Vietnam, when it appears that they probably were, something which this veteran conceded to later in his testimony. Some veterans do not recall that anyone exhibited emotional weakness, while others are aware of this happening quite regularly. Several veterans consider that the New Zealanders were kind towards and considerate of Vietnamese civilians, while others maintain that the New Zealanders treated civilians in a generally very arrogant and patronising manner, and the list

goes on. These discrepancies, taken in the wider context of an individual's complete testimony, do suggest that some veterans are anxious to portray a certain and specific image of themselves, or New Zealanders in general, in Vietnam. Whether this is to maintain a veteran's preconceived image of what a New Zealander at war should be like, or create a desired image for posterity, is unclear and perhaps only the individual veteran can clarify this.

A number of the testimonies, considered collectively, suggest that another factor may have influenced, at least to a limited extent, the way some veterans remember Vietnam and the aftermath, and these are the mythologies which have developed from the American and Australian experiences during and after the war. However the impact of these mythologies seems to be generally confined to those New Zealand veterans who are experiencing physical and mental ill-health as a result of Vietnam, and/or who are involved in the campaign to have New Zealand Vietnam veterans officially recognised. In *Culture and Identity in New Zealand*, Bill Willmont suggests that when minorities realise that their life experiences have been different from those of the dominant culture, they will sometimes look beyond the boundaries of that society to cultures similar to their own to strengthen and define their identity.¹⁷ To some extent, some New Zealand Vietnam veterans have done this, looking to the Australian mythology of Vietnam, itself influenced by that of the Americans, for guidance and support.

Using Hollywood's response to the war, Australian historian Jeff Doyle gives a simplified and schematised summary of the development of American mythology of Vietnam:

First, from the beginning of the war until the late 1970s there was no significant product with the exception of *The Green Berets* (1968). The second phase is marked by a focus on the American soldier's experience, beginning with the PTSD veteran and closing with a flavour of the "revisionist" history of the war inaugurated by President Reagan's designation of it as a "noble cause". It includes films such as *Taxi Driver* (1976), *Coming Home* (1978), *Who'll Stop the Rain* (1978) and *Apocalypse Now* (1979). The third phase, from the early to mid-1980s, marks the ascendancy of revisionist readings when missing-in-action (MIA) issues dominate and the deranged veteran gives way to the veteran as vengeful superhero victoriously refighting the war. *Uncommon Valour* (1983) and Chuck Norris's *Missing In Action* films (1984, 1985) are typical, while the "passage from *First Blood* (1982) to *Rambo: First Blood Part II* (1985) is summary". The fourth phase begins in the late 1980s with a more complex, some would say more realistic, response to the events and interpretations of the war in such films as *Platoon* (1987), *Full Metal Jacket* (1988) and *Born on the Fourth of July* (1989).

Doyle goes on to suggest that 'until recently, the Australian experience of Vietnam at the level of popular culture has manifested a considerable appropriation - or is it a further aspect of Australia's colonization by its larger allies? - of the American visual media's participation in, and presentation and interpretation of, the war....In certain areas such as the Welcome Home march of October 1987 this appropriation/colonization extends to the returned servicemen themselves, for whom there seems to be an uneasy, psychological conflation of fragments of the Anzac tradition, often brought together with elements derived from the US military and media imagery.'

He concludes his article by writing that 'the complex history of the war as a total

event, including the soldiers' experiences, will be rewritten, seemingly playing an Australian tune but once again pulling out the stops on a false national instrument.'¹⁸

Doyle's colleague Jeffrey Grey suggests that neither Australian veterans nor the public should view their experience of Vietnam in the same light as that of the Americans, mainly because of the huge difference in scale of commitment there in terms of manpower, responsibility, and the fact that Australia 'entirely escaped the public and private agony of the POW/MIA issue, which is still such a powerful factor in American thinking on the war.' Grey then describes and challenges several Australian myths about Vietnam. The first relates to the popular notion of Vietnam as an example of Australia becoming involved in 'other people's wars'. Grey points out that this would make the First World War, which gave rise to the legend of Anzac, an 'example of grand folly', and maintains that Prime Minister Menzies genuinely believed that military commitment to Vietnam was in the best interests of Australian regional policy and defence. Second is the idea of the 'high standard of professionalism for the troops involved', as portrayed by Australian authors such as Lex McAuley - Grey notes that this was certainly not the case as the Australians were under-resourced and units were poorly prepared particularly in the early years, and also points out that 'the small Australian task Force could have no impact at all on the outcome of the wider war and no one at the time pretended any different.'

Finally, Grey comments on what he describes as an 'entire network of myths' which has arisen from the VVAA's premise in the early 1980s that Vietnam veterans were

experiencing unique health problems and were being neglected by government, suggesting that much of the discontent generated by these myths was 'fed by misconceptions about the Australian experience and confusion in the popular mind between Australian and American images of the war.'¹⁹

Australian historian Anne Curthoys notes that "'Vietnam' is a healthy industry in Australia - not so healthy perhaps as in the United States, where the number of books, journal articles, films, university courses, and public debates about Vietnam continues to loom very large - but significant all the same.' She examines several aspects of Australia's mythology of Vietnam, including the 'increasingly prominent view' put forward by Australian veterans that 'the anti-war movement directed its hostility not so much at the Australian government but at the returning soldiers themselves', and comes to the conclusion that this view is almost certainly a product of the mythology surrounding the incident during 1RAR's welcome home in Sydney in 1966, (described in Chapter 10), writing:

'From a very few isolated incidents, a myth, a collective memory has been and is being created. The soldiers, especially the conscripts, went to Vietnam to do their duty as they understood it. Sent by their government and supported by a majority of voters, many realised there that they were not, as John Murphy puts it, "welcomed as liberators, but had instead entered a much more complex historical situation".... Their anger at being sent to a war that failed to achieve its ends and that brought them little honour is deflected onto the protesters, who are understood as attacking them personally rather than the governments that sent them there.'

Curthoys also notes that 'the key pictorial image in veterans' memories that is publicly expressed is of being jeered and spat upon by anti-war protesters on their return', but points out that, based on the documented comments of Australian veterans, most 'relate a general hostility, but very few mentioned themselves experiencing or witnessing hostile reactions by protesters.'²⁰

It is easy to see why the both the U.S. and Australian mythologies surrounding the Vietnam War, especially the latter, are attractive to some New Zealand veterans. Belonging to a wider, international community of Vietnam veterans surely helps them to feel that they belong somewhere, have an identity and are not alone. The issues are very similar, although the scale is reduced in the case of the New Zealanders, and New Zealand society, it is suggested here, perhaps even more ignorant of and indifferent to the veterans' experiences and ongoing difficulties.

In reference to the Australian mythologies of Vietnam, Doyle concludes his discussion of memory and public myth with a note of caution.

Our Vietnam myths distort and conceal as much as they explicate; they make plain some deeply held beliefs about the nature of war history, and the use to which they are put will influence where we find ourselves in the next century. Vietnam and our failure to prevail there was never central to our identity and place in the world, but failure to identify the Australian experience, delineate it from that of our American and New Zealand allies, and incorporate its diverse meanings into our national sense of self will see Australians continuing to delude themselves about the nature of our society and the realities of our place in the world.²¹

This thesis has presented the experiences of a small number of New Zealanders who served in the Vietnam War, and it is hoped that the observations and analysis offered here go some way towards illustrating what they remember about the war and explaining why they might remember it this way. There are some possible conclusions. One of these is that both the New Zealand public and soldiers' mythologies of war impacted on at least some of these veterans before they went to Vietnam, during their service there, and after they came home. It is also suggested that those who subscribed most heavily to the public mythology in particular have perhaps suffered more as a result of their experiences in Vietnam. The ways in which they remember their war are therefore 'composed' accordingly. Finally, while it is possible that a significant number of New Zealand's Vietnam veterans have come to terms with Vietnam (or indeed have never considered that there was anything to actually have to come to terms with), it is clear that others have not and that the search for a comfortable identity and a 'past they can live with' has been confusing and painful. It is probable that there is no such thing as a 'good' war or a 'bad' war. Perhaps it is memory alone, with its interpretations, distortions, siftings and search for meaning, that makes a war whatever it was and is to those who fought in it. To quote 'Mr Sammler' again, 'Everybody needs his memories. They keep the wolf of insignificance from the door.'²²

¹ See interviews with 'Sam B', 5/7/95; Peter Hotop, 7/96; Brendan Duggan, 16/5/96; Murray Deed, 15/1/96; Peter Earsman, 4/9/96; ANON, 28/12/95; John Treanor, 1/3/96; 'Matt G', 5/7/95; Nigel Martin, Bruce Liddall, 2/3/96; Bill Peachey, 5/3/95; 'Bob P', 5/4/95; ANON, 17/4/96; ANON, 7/2/96; ANON, 24/6/96; Richard Cairns, 14/9/95; Gerald Southon, 13/7/96; Harry Shaw, 9/5/95.

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- ² 'Andrew B', 10/5/95.
- ³ John Moller, 10/7/95.
- ⁴ Dave Orbell, 2/2/96.
- ⁵ Colin Whyte, 3/2/96.
- ⁶ Jock Phillips, *A Man's Country: The Image of the Pakeha Male*, Revised edition (Auckland, 1996), p. 134.
- ⁷ For examples, see Nicholas Boyack and Jane Tolerton, *In the Shadow of War: New Zealand Soldiers Talk About World War One and Their Lives* (Auckland, 1990); Maurice Shadbolt, *Voices of Gallipoli* (Auckland, 1988); *The Great Adventure: New Zealand Soldiers Describe the First World War*, edited by Jock Phillips, Nicholas Boyack and E.P. Malone (Wellington, 1988); Lawrence Watt, *Mates and Mayhem: World War II; Frontline Kiwis Remember* (Auckland, 1996); John McLeod, *Myth and Reality: The New Zealand Soldier in World War II* (Auckland, 1986); Alison Parr, *Silent Casualties: New Zealand's Unspoken Legacy of the Second World War* (Birkenhead, 1995).
- ⁸ Phillips, *A Man's World?...*, p. 146.
- ⁹ The Americans lost 2.15% (58,000 of 2,700,000), the Australians lost .86% (508 of 59,000), and the New Zealanders lost .92% (37 of 4,000). These figures have been rounded off.
- ¹⁰ See Ranginui Walker, 'Maori People Since 1950', in *The Oxford History of New Zealand*, Second edition (Auckland, 1992), pp. 498-519.
- ¹¹ Phillips, *A Man's World?...*, p. 148.
- ¹² See, for example, Laurie Brocklebank, *Jayforce: New Zealand and the Military Occupation of Japan 1945-1948* (Auckland, 1997).
- ¹³ *ibid.*
- ¹⁴ See Phillips, pp. 179-181.
- ¹⁵ Gordon Dalziel, 30/5/95.
- ¹⁶ Kerry Chamberlain, Carol Vincent and Nigel Long, *New Zealand Vietnam war Veterans Twenty Years On: II: Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder and its Effects*, (Palmerston North, 1994), p. 40.
- ¹⁷ Bill Willmott, 'Introduction: Culture and National Identity', in *Culture and Identity in New Zealand* (Wellington, 1989), p. 13.
- ¹⁸ Jeff Doyle, 'Bringing Whose War Home?: Vietnam and American Myths in Australian popular Culture', in *Vietnam Days: Australia and the Impact of Vietnam*, edited by Peter Pierce, Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (Victoria, 1991), pp. 99-100, 110-111, 141.
- ¹⁹ Jeffrey Grey, 'Memory and Public Myth', in *Vietnam: War, Myth and Memory*, edited by Jeffrey Grey and Jeff Doyle (New South Wales, 1992), pp. 138-141, 143-144.
- ²⁰ Ann Curthoys, "'Vietnam': Public Memory of an Anti-War Movement", in *Memory and History in Twentieth-Century Australia*, edited by Kate Darian-Smith and Paula Hamilton (Melbourne, 1994), pp. 114, 127, 129-30.
- ²¹ *ibid.*, p. 150.
- ²² The character of 'Mr Sammler' in Paul Bellow's *Mr Sammler's Planet*, quoted in David Lowenthal, *The Past is a Foreign Country* (Cambridge, 1985), p. 198.



APPENDICES

Appendix A: Release Form

UNIVERSITY OF WAIKATO
Te Whare Wananga o Waikato

Department of History

VIETNAM ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

RELEASE FORM

Could you please sign this form. It will protect your privacy and interests.

Name of person to be interviewed:

Address:

Name of interviewer: Deborah A. Challinor

Date and place of interview:

1. Storage: I agree that the recordings of my interview/s and accompanying material will be held at the University of Waikato, Hamilton, or 1278 Horotiu Rd, Whatawhata, RD9, Hamilton.

2. Access: I understand that the recordings of my interview/s and accompanying material may be used in a doctoral thesis by Deborah Challinor and a book to be published at a later date, except for any material which I may decide at any point that I don't want to be used.

3. Public Use: I understand that the recordings of my inter/s and accompanying material may be quoted in full or in part and that the recordings may be broadcast or used in public performances in full or in part.

4. Name to be Used:

- I want my real name to be used if my information is used.
- I want a false name to be used if my information is used.
- I do not want my name to be used at all if my information is used.

5. Other Comments:

Interviewee

Deborah A. Challinor

Date

Date

NOTE:

- (i) This agreement may be revised or amended by mutual consent of the person recorded and Deborah Challinor.
- (ii) Copyright on tape recordings and accompanying material generated by this project is held by the University of Waikato.

Appendix B: Questions used during tape-recorded interviews.

- When did you go to Vietnam?
- How did you go there and where from?
- How old were you when you went?
- What was your rank?
- What company were you in and who were you attached to?
- Where were you based?
- How long was your tour?
- Did you come straight back to NZ afterwards?
- How long were you in the Army prior to going to Vietnam?
- How long were you in the Army after you came home from Vietnam?
- Why did you want to go to Vietnam?

- What did you think of Vietnam when you first got there?
- Was it what you expected?

- Overall, what was being in Vietnam like for you?

- Were you involved in combat or action and where?
- If you were, did it affect you in any way?
- How did you deal with it emotionally?
- If you weren't, how do you think it affected people who were?

- What scared you the most on operations or in being in Vietnam? Why?
- Is there an incident on operations or in Vietnam that stands out most in your mind?
- Did you see anyone get wounded or killed or did you know anyone who was wounded or killed?
- What were your/others' reactions to mates getting wounded/killed?
- Were you impressed with the casevac system in Vietnam and did it make you feel better about the possibility of you or your mates being wounded?

- What is the saddest event you can remember?

- What is the funniest event/incident you can remember?
- Did you joke about things and if so, what?
- Why did you joke about things?

- In Vietnam, do you think you behaved in ways which you wouldn't have at home?
- Did you use different language, ie. swearing, slang, euphemisms or expressions which related specifically to being in, or you picked up in, Vietnam? Examples?

- Did you have or use any good luck charms that you carried to keep yourself safe? If so, what?
- Did you have any beliefs or rituals such as if you did something a certain way you would be alright? What were they?
- How did people wear their day to day uniforms?
- What would people do if they wanted to avoid combat or go home?

- Did you hear of any instances of fraggings? Can you describe?

- What did you think of the other allied soldiers there, eg. Australian, US, ARVN?
- How do you think they got on with the New Zealander soldiers and vice versa?
- In particular, how did New Zealand and Australian soldiers interact?

- What was your attitude towards the NVA and the VC?

- Do you know anything about the drug problem in Vietnam?

- What did you do to unwind or relax?
- What sorts of music did you listen to in Vietnam?
- What sorts of things did you do when you were on R in C or R and R?
- Did you visit prostitutes? (Optional question)
- How do you think the allied soldiers treated the prostitutes?

- What did you think about the South Vietnamese people in general?
- Did you trust them? If not, why not?
- In general, how do you think New Zealand, Australian and American soldiers each treated the Vietnamese?

- How did you feel about coming home when your tour was nearly up?
- Did the fact that you were getting short have any effect on your behaviour or attitudes towards being in Vietnam in any way? How?
- When did you consider you were getting short, eg. how many months to go?

- Did you get debriefed after you finished your tour?
- If you didn't, do you think it would have helped?

- What was it like for you when you got home?
- What effect has Vietnam had on you between coming home and now?
- Looking back now on your experiences in Vietnam, how do you feel about the fact that you went?

- Have you seen films like Apocalypse Now, Platoon and Full Metal Jacket, and do you think Vietnam was really like that?
- Are there any songs that you hear now that remind you of Vietnam?
- If so, what do you think when you hear them?

Appendix C: Questions used for correspondence interviews.**VIETNAM PROJECT
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS :
(By Correspondence)**

1. BASIC INFORMATION

- a) When did you go to Vietnam?
- b) How old were you when you went?
- c) How did you go to Vietnam and where did you leave for Vietnam from?
- d) What company were you in and who were you attached to?
- e) What was your rank in Vietnam?
- f) What was your usual job in Vietnam?
- g) Where were you usually based in Vietnam?
- h) How long was your tour there?
- i) If it was longer or shorter than 12 months, why was this?
- j) Did you come straight back to NZ after your tour in Vietnam?
- k) How long were you in the Army prior to going to Vietnam?
- l) How long were you in the Army after you came home from Vietnam?
- m) Why did you personally want to go to Vietnam?

2. IMPRESSIONS

- a) What were your first impressions when you arrived?
- b) Was being in Vietnam what you expected it would be?
- c) Had you been told to expect anything before you got there?
- d) If you were, what were you told and who told you?
- e) Can you describe what sort of experience being in Vietnam was for you and why you feel this way about your tour/s?

3. COMBAT

- a) Please describe any combat situations or contacts that you were in.
- b) Did these situations affect you in any way? If so, how?
- c) How did you deal with these situations emotionally when;
 - patrolling and waiting for a contact to happen
 - during a contact
 - after a contact
- d) Were you confident you had been trained well enough to go into combat?
- e) During a contact, if you had been able to have one more piece of information or advice to help you during the contact, what would that have been?
- f) If you were not in any combat situations, how do you think people were affected who were?
- g) If you did not experience any combat situations, were you glad you didn't or did you feel bad because you didn't?

4. FEARS AND GRIEF

- a) Can you describe what scared you the most on operations or being in Vietnam in general and why?
- b) Please describe the incident on operations or in Vietnam in general which stands out most in your mind.
- c) Were you there when anyone was wounded or killed or did you know anyone who was wounded or killed?
- d) What were your/others' reactions to mates getting wounded/killed?
 - at the time
 - afterwards
- e) Please describe what sorts of things you did to deal emotionally with the fact that mates or acquaintances were wounded or killed.
- f) Did the deaths and injuries of mates have any effect on your attitude towards the VC or NVA or the Vietnamese people in general?
- g) Were you impressed with the casevac system in Vietnam and how did it make you feel about the possibility of you or your mates being wounded?

5. BEHAVIOUR

- a) Please describe one or more funny or amusing incident which happened in Vietnam that you can remember.
- b) Did you develop a 'black' sense of humour and if you did, why do you think you did?
- c) If you did, please describe some examples of 'black' humour you experienced.
- d) Do you think your behaviour in Vietnam was any different from the way you would have behaved at home at the time?
- e) If you do, would you please describe some examples of your behaviour and comment on why you think you behaved differently in Vietnam.
- f) Please give examples of any different language you used in Vietnam, eg. swearing, slang, euphemisms or expressions which related specifically to being in Vietnam.
- g) Can you describe any good luck charms that you carried or any beliefs or rituals that you had to keep yourself safe or lucky?
- h) Please describe any incidences that you saw or heard of regarding people doing things so they could avoid combat or go home, eg. hurting themselves or getting sick on purpose, etc.
- i) Please describe any incidences of fraggings and the reasons for them which you might have experienced or heard about.
- j) Please describe any examples of drug use you came across in Vietnam, if any.

6. THE ALLIES

- a) What did you think of the other allied soldiers in Vietnam, eg. Australian, US, and ARVN in their capacity as:
 - soldiers
 - people you had to work with

- b) Can you describe how you think the Allied soldiers got on with New Zealand soldiers and vice versa?

7. RECREATION

- a) What sorts of things did you do to unwind or relax in your free time (if you had any)?
- b) What sorts of music did you listen to in Vietnam?
- c) Can you describe what sorts of things you would do during a typical 48 hours' leave on R in C?

8. CIVILIANS

- a) Please describe what you thought about the South Vietnamese civilians and why you felt this way.
- b) In general, how do you think New Zealand, Australian and American soldiers each treated the Vietnamese civilians?

9. COMING HOME

- a) How did you feel about coming home when your tour was nearly up?
- b) When did you consider you were getting short, eg. how many months to go?
- c) Did the fact that you were getting short change your behaviour or attitudes towards being in Vietnam in any way? If so, please describe these changes.
- d) Did you get debriefed after you finished your tour?
- e) If you didn't, do you think a debriefing was needed and do you think it would have helped you to adjust to coming home?
- f) Please describe what was it like for you when you got back home.
- g) Can you describe what effects, if any, Vietnam has had on you between coming home and now?

10. IN RETROSPECT

- a) Looking back now on your experiences in Vietnam, how do you feel about the fact that you went?
- b) Have you seen films like Apocalypse Now, Platoon and Full Metal Jacket, and do you think Vietnam was really like that?
- c) Are there any songs now that you hear now that remind you of Vietnam?
- d) If so, what do you think of when you hear them now?

THANK YOU.

Appendix D: Breakdown of details of New Zealand veterans interviewed for the study

Military Occupation Specialty:

Infantry 29

Four of these men did second tours as infantrymen.

Representations from each company (these numbers include second tours)

Whiskey 1	4
Whiskey 2	6
Whiskey 3	1
Victor 1	1
Victor 2	2
Victor 3	5
Victor 4	2
Victor 5	7
Victor 6	5

161 Battery 6

One of these men did a second tour with the infantry.

SAS 1

1ALSG 3

One man did a second tour with 4th Cav, US Army.

New Zealand Services Medical Team 6

One man did a second tour with the NZ Army Training Team and another man did a second tour with the New Zealand Surgical Team.

NZ Army Training Team 1

Royal Australian Signal Corps 1

Seconded from RNZSC

Military Chaplains 1

161 Reconnaissance Flight (Australian) 1

Seconded from RNZAC

Rank (Not in any particular order, rank as at end of tour/s):

<i>Pte. 16</i>	<i>T/Sgt 1</i>
<i>Sgt. 5</i>	<i>Col. 1</i>
<i>L/Cpl. 5</i>	<i>Sig. 1</i>
<i>Lbdr. 1</i>	<i>WO2 2</i>
<i>SSgt. 2</i>	<i>Lt. 2</i>
<i>Cpl. 2</i>	<i>Fl/Sgt. 1</i>
<i>Gnr. 4</i>	<i>Capt. 2</i>
<i>Maj. 4</i>	

Length of time in the services:***Short-term, eg. 3 years 12******Mid-term, eg. 6-10 years 8******Long-term, eg. 20-30 years 29******Age range in Vietnam:***

20-41

Appendix E: Tour dates of Victor and Whiskey Companies, 1RNZIR.

Victor One :	May 1967 - December 1967
Victor Two:	December 1967 - May 1968
Victor Three:	May 1968 - May 1969
Victor Four:	May 1969 - May 1970
Victor Five:	May 1970 - May 1971
Victor Six:	May 1971 - December 1971
Whiskey One:	December 1967 - November 1968
Whiskey Two:	November 1968 - November 1969
Whiskey Three:	November 1969 - November 1970

Colin Smith, *The Killing Zone; New Zealand Infantry in Vietnam 1967 to 1971* (Auckland, 1995), pp. 7-10.

**Appendix F: Symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder
(as described in the Australian Royal Commission report XV-23)**

Flashbacks to terrifying events	Low back pain
Nightmares	Migraine
Irritability	[Gastric] Ulcer
Rage reaction	Irritable bowel syndrome
Dizzy spells	Irritable colon
Anxiety	Hypertension
Insomnia	Paranoia
Depression	Suspicion
Guilt feelings	Crowd phobia
Headaches	Alcoholism

Jane Ross, 'Australia's Legacy; the Vietnam Veterans', in *Vietnam Remembered* edited by Gregory Pemberton (New South Wales, 1990), p. 202.

Appendix G: Photographs

- Photograph 1:* Bill Peachey and small friend, Nui Dat 1970/71. *Private collection Bill Peachey.*
- Photograph 2:* 'The Boys' - members of No. 1 Section Victor 3 Cpy, Nui Dat 1968. Note soldiers wearing New Zealand jungle greens, Australian calf boots, and non-New Zealand issue hats. *Private collection Alistar Allan.*
- Photograph 3:* Victor 5 Cpy prior to embarking on an operation, Nui Dat 1970/71. *Private collection 'Sniper'.*
- Photograph 4:* Victor 5 Cpy on parade in 'dress' uniforms, Nui Dat 1970/71. *Private collection 'Sniper'.*
- Photograph 5:* Bill Peachey and colleague prior to an operation, Nui Dat 1971. *Private collection Bill Peachey.*
- Photograph 6:* The ammunition 'Sniper' carried on a routine operation, photographed for posterity. *Private collection 'Sniper'.*
- Photograph 7:* Members of 161 Battery on leave at Vung Tau - note 'love beads'. *Private collection Noel Evans.*
- Photograph 8:* 161 Battery late afternoon 'sing-along' with guitar at Fire Support Base Bruiser. *Private collection Jeff Waters.*
- Photograph 9:* Maori soldier performing 'victory haka' over Vietcong bodies. Victor 4 Cpy, Fire Support Base Thrust. *Kippenberger Military Archive and Library, Waiouru. Risetto Collection, Ref: 9200072.*
- Photograph 10:* Nui Dat Q Store. Sign reads 'Another Friendly Woolworths Store, "Service With A Grin". Caution: We Employ Store Detectives.' *Kippenberger Military Archive and Library, Waiouru. Risetto Collection, Ref: 9200072.*
- Photograph 11:* Concert at Nui Dat, 1968. *Private collection Ted Brooker.*
- Photograph 12:* Anti-war protest march, Myers Park, 1967 - note placards supporting New Zealand troops but protesting the war. *New Zealand Herald.*
- Photograph 13:* Anti-war, anti-New Zealand Army protest march, Queen St, 1970. *New Zealand Herald.*



Photograph 1



Photograph 2



0/5-13

Photograph 3



Photograph 4



Photograph 5



Photograph 6



Photograph 7



Photograph 8



Photograph 9



Photograph 10



Photograph 11



Photograph 12



Photograph 13

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