



# The Australian Light Infantry Regimental Association of Australasia



## War Stories

*Late 60's somewhere in the north of the country;*

*PO Gray Branfield and his AC were patrolling by Landrover and while negotiating a dry river bed were ambushed by a number of CT's.*

*Gray miraculously was able to continue to drive the vehicle through the fusillade, at some point he felt a thump in his back and noticed his leg up over the AC's lap, wondering what the f..... that was doing there.*

*The Land Rover continued some way down the track and then succumbed to it's injuries at which point they took stock of there own. The AC had a finger shot off and Gray said that was because he had put his finger in the food the previous evening, PO Branfield had been shot through the side and after later surgery required a Colostomy bag which he maintained he could never get matching shoes for.*

*Kanyemba 1969, B Coy 1RR, Angry Black.*

*We were doing 5 day cross graining patrols on the Valley floor, myself Nigel Sweet ( front man for the Blackjacks of Marlborough / Mabelreign fame ) Peter Cremer and a Corporal who's name eludes me but was also Mabelreign, ex Ellis Robins I think.*

*About midday we came up a little rise and walked right on top of a black Rhino just to our right, fortunately for us he was pointing the other way and only the occassional flick of the tail distinguished him from the surroundings.*

*He was very close and without a word we all instinctively knew that flight was imminent and started to quietly disrobe, somebody dropped something and the enormous beast was bearing down on us at an incredible speed.*

*I made for a Mopani sapling to my left and went up Like a Canadian lumberjack, Nigel passed me on the other side of this pitiful little tree with his rifle in his hand and the express train passed just under us head down and very angry. Peter and the Corporal in the mean time had chosen a straighter route and we could see two trails of high speed dust with the odd bit of clothing emerging.*

*Nigel and I began to laugh hysterically at the scene. The Rhino who had in the meantime stopped about 20 metres away, zeroed in on the sound and charged in again but hit one of his own territorial dung piles on the way and went down in a large very undignified heap. This sent us apoplectic and nearly brought us out of the tree.*

*I thought that someone had shot it, but it rolled around for a while and then got up and stalked off with tail straight up almost embarrassed.*

*After a while we regrouped on a nearby log and I think had the inevitable dixie of tea to settle the nerves before carrying on.*

*Chabarra Hills Mid 70's, C Coy 1RR:*

*Cpl Fred Simoncelli went to a Kraal early at first light after hearing shots the previous evening, his command of the language was excellent and elicited that an attempted abduction had occurred and very soon picked up tracks.*

*The follow up went to early morning in a very heavily grassed riverine area where smoking cigarette ends and the odd steaming sadza snake were found.*

*At this point it was decided to call in FireForce which duly arrived and asked Fred to put down smoke to which he replied he didn't have any. The reply came back to use an Icarus, Fred sent it up into the Choppers instead of into the ground and the most terrible expletives were heard across the net as they peeled away from this menace and he was told to get the F... out of there by Baldy (?) the K car Commander. All was forgiven evidently at a later meeting at the Mt Darwin Pub.*

*RLI, Congo / Northern Rhodesia Border, early 60's:*

*Ernie Walters was a cook with the regiment in the early days and hailed from the British Army. He had a complete set of false teeth top and bottom and a wicked Londoner's sense of humour. His favourite trick to the uninitiated was to fish around in the stew and pretend to find the gnashers in it and say " I bin lookin f'dem "*

*C Coy 1 RR, Mtoko early 70's:*

*Malcolm Smith and Billy Matthee tragically killed in separate night actions, regularly still see your young faces in the clearest detail. Never forgotten.*

**3 Commando Fireforce, early 1979**  
**By Mike McDonald**

*I was 3 Commando MA3 medic at this time doing Fireforce out of Beitbridge. We had a Rhodesian K-car crew with South African G-car crews. On this particular callout the K-car orbited atop the contact centre as usual. The G-cars for some strange reason did little individual orbits each at 2, 6 and 10 o'clock position to the K-car instead of the usual one big orbit. As usual orbiting counterclockwise so the chopper's machine guns face inward toward the contact area but meant the pilot was turning into his blind spot. This brought the choppers paths more inward toward the contact area. This day we had a real cheeky bunch of terrorists who kept firing at the G-cars. I was sitting across from the chopper gunner exposed by the door. Many bullets kept cracking the air by my face constantly but we couldn't see the shooters as it was forested below. I've never received so much ground fire before in a chopper. Finally I get really pissed off and bugger the no firing rule from the G-car because of bouncing around empty casings, if I see these gooks I'm going to blast away at them. Everyone is focused on the ground looking for these gooks. Something makes me look up. I see our flight path at the 6 o'clock position and I see the flight path of the chopper at the 10 o'clock position. I instantaneously do the math and see we are on a 'collision' course. I slap the chopper gunner's leg and point to the oncoming chopper. He screams into his radio mouthpiece and both choppers do a hard right turn. Both choppers pass each other belly to belly twenty yards apart! Too damn close! Amazing the soldiers behind the pilots didn't fall out. I believe I saved the lives of 12 men, 8 RLI soldiers and four aircrew by three seconds. The next Fireforce callout we were back to one big orbit! The South African aircrews were a little different from their Rhodesian cousins but they did risk life and limb for us many a time. One good thing riding in a South African chopper on the way back from a contact we would fight for the extra headset so we could listen to Radio 5, a South African rock music station.*

**Snakes and Gogos**  
**By Mike McDonald**

*In the first week I joined RLI we went out to Mazoe for training. On the first day I was napping in my bivvy after lunch. I was awoken to find a huge baboon spider inches from my face. The next thing I remember I was outside the bivvy beating this 'deadly poisonous tarantula' to death with my water bottle. There was a couple of guilty looking RLI Rhodies sniggering nearby, welcome to Africa. On my first bush trip with 3 Cdo we stop by this small base near Buffalo Range. There are some African soldiers toasting mopane worms on a grill over coals. My RLI corporal shows me this procedure then asks me to eat one. Smartass me says I'll eat one if you do. This darn Corporal pops one into his mouth and eats it. Damn, so I had to eat one too.*

*Support Cdo had a trooper nicknamed 'Snake'. In the bush he was always turning over rocks etc looking for snakes on his patrol breaks and often finding them. At Grand Reef Fireforce base there was this big mamba. Snake would chase the mamba from the berm to the airstrip trying to catch it. The mamba would get cranky and chase Snake back to the berm. This happened back and forth several times much to the amusement of lots of Support Cdo onlookers; I don't think he was able to catch the mamba. Legend has it that Snake whilst early into a several day deployment into Mozambique caught a world record size cobra but had to let it go due to military operations. Watching television recently a herpetologist from South Africa was being interviewed, he looked hauntingly familiar like Snake. This snake expert even said he handled snakes in the army in Angola clearing them from bunkers etc. "If that's really you Snake congratulations having a career in your beloved hobby".*

*At Grand Reef I was nearby when a cobra went into the 3 Cdo's batmen's tent when they were all inside having an afternoon siesta. All the screaming batmen exited the tent immediately only one by the doorway! Aye if only we had it on video An Afrikaner 3 Cdo trooper killed the snake and skinned it. Only one batman slept in the tent that night because of a cobra's reputation of hanging around in pairs. On one extremely quiet day a very bored 3 Cdo soldier caught a chameleon and spent several minutes chasing the batmen around with it. Good thing batmen weren't armed or they would have shot me*

*One time Support Cdo was camped by the sports club of Ngundu Halt north of Beitbridge. At dusk the Recce Troop sergeant had a hell of a dramatic time killing a big cobra in his tent with a shovel. He was in quite a rattled state afterwards. I was sharing a tarp bivvy with the company clerk there. He had the 8 to 10pm radio watch in the signals truck while I did the 10 to midnight. At the end of my radio watch upon returning to our bivvy I found him sleeping about 30 yards away in the open. I thought whatever, crawled around our very dark bivvy crashed in my sleeping bag on the stretcher. I asked him the following morning why he slept out there and he said huge snake crawled into our bivvy!! I was quite angry with him for not warning me.*

*In Essexvale during troop medic course training I caught one of those huge locusts with a body the size of my index finger and big powerful back legs. I strolled over to the late Englishman Tpr. John Connelly pulled open his t-shirt and dropped it in. He mumbles "Now what have you done McDonald", pulls open his shirt neck and sees this brute as it starts kicking against his chest. He screams his head off, jumps around, drops his rifle, rips off his webbing, rips off his chest webbing and finally pulls off his t-shirt all in screaming jumping hysterics. Aye if only we had it on video. Why do Rhodesian and South African men find it extremely hilarious to see an Englishman freaking out over a gogo inside his shirt? Later that evening by my posy (sleeping place) I place my rat pack on my lap for dinner, I open the box and find this big black scorpion running around inside. My rat pack sails thirty feet into the air and curses fly toward John who his laughing his head off in the next posy over. What RLI dudes do when bored? Speaking of scorpions I'm sure I sat on one once at night. I was sitting for about 30 seconds when this fierce pain stung my right butt cheek and I jumped about 3 feet in the air. The next day I had a red welt about 8 inches in diameter on my right butt cheek, I let it heal itself.*

*In Llewellyn Barracks I find a newly hatched six inch long baby cobra/mamba. It still has its egg tooth. Sadly a poisonous snake has no place inside a military base. All I can find is a six inch flimsy stick to try to pin it down to catch it. This little snake was quite a lively cheeky devil rearing up, flaring his hood, hissing and trying to bite me. Nearby is a truck packed full of African National Servicemen watching this crazy man playing with a snake. After several minutes, it was quite tricky I'm able to pin this snake down and grab him behind his head. I hold him up wriggling for all in the truck too see. Then the RLI streak of humor takes over and I lob him slowly and high into the back of this truck full of African soldiers. All but two debus immediately, hey good ambush training for them. The biggest of the group big tough Sam stands there frozen, trembling and crying. The smallest of the group calming kills the snake with the butt of his weapon. Aye if only we had it on video. In a bush camp once the batmen called me over to kill a puff adder. I just caught it and carried it a couple hundred yards outside of camp and released it. Maybe it will bite some terrorist scouting out our camp.*

*With 3 Cdo we were operating out of Grootvlei airstrip way down in the southeast. This area was very bad for ticks. Every day I would take my boots and socks off there would hundreds of these tiny mites between my toes. Never had this problem anywhere else. Nearby was Mabalahuta base by Gona re Zhou Park. Everyone knows the infamous Mabalahuta ants there. We often heard the screams of first time visitors who unwittingly actually sat on the long drops where thousands of these little brown monsters would rush out between the planks and bite simultaneously. SAS guys poured gallons of diesel on their campgrounds to fight them. Our guys would put foot powder or grease on the legs of their stretchers to stop them at night. If the corner of your sleeping bag touched the ground, a column of them would run up it and you would find them all over your face in the middle of the night. I eventually just usually found the cab of a truck to sleep in. I have no idea how the resident game rangers put up with them. As a commando MA3 medic I twice treated soldiers who had a painful ear filled to the brim with earwax. Both times syringing flushed all the wax with a big tick.*

*With Support Cdo the day before R&R I loaned my can of Mercurochrome spray to an RLI Aussie prankster. They pinned down this handsome RLI NCO, pulled down his shorts and sprayed red all over his one-eyed trouser snake and surrounding area. We don't know how he explained it to his girlfriend on R&R.*

## **Welcome to Africa**

**Having had recent prior military service, and thus having been inserted into an RLI recruit course that was just about to start it's COIN (Counter Insurgency) phase of training, I had only been in country a few weeks when I had an interesting "Welcome to Africa" experience.**

**For the preceding week, my RLI recruit course had been on exercise in the Lake Kyle area, undergoing COIN training in the Lake Kyle game reserve area.**

**At the beginning of this deployment, my bivvy partner & I had the misfortune being allocated a large expanse of flat rock for our bivvy and rifle pit location.**

**This rock shelf was so large, it was impossible to shift to more conducive ground without such a move being immediately obvious to our instructors.**

**Unwillingly to earn the wrath of instructors that a self-initiated move or even a request for alternate site would surely bring, we made the best of a bad situation.**

**As it was impossible to "Dig-In", we carried a shifted number of large nearby rocks to construct a stone sanger that we then slung our bivvy halves across.**

**As our instructors were apparently please with the way out training had gone, on the last night at Lake Kyle, recruits were rewarded with a temporary relaxation in the normally strict RLI discipline regime and, took the form of each recruit being allowed the unheard of luxury of two bottles beers**

**Given that with any group there are some who do not drink beer, thus it came about that some resourceful recruits were able to get their hands on more than the intended quantity of beer.**

**My Welcome to Africa experience happened the next morning during those few minutes just before true dawn, when the darkness of night is still heavy but there was enough greyish light beginning to seep through that one could start to see nearby objects in vague definition.**

**As was our usual routine, my bivvy partner and I were awake well before first light and were quietly setting up our brew gear when, we heard a noise coming from a close but unseen location in the bush which we estimated to be about 30 metres to our direct front.**

**As the noise sounded like someone blowing down the neck of an empty beer bottle my partner & I came to the conclusion that it must be one of the more resourceful recruits who, still intoxicated from the previous evening, was wandering around playing the fool.**

**As I was aware that as a recruit there was no such thing as individual guilt and that punishment for any transgression was generally metered out to the whole recruit group, I felt it wise to get the bottle-blower back to his bivvy before any instructors noticed him, and the inevitable fire & brimstone descended upon us all.**

**I had only walked a couple of paces towards the noise when it changed significantly in character from a soft hollow resonate blowing sound to that of a loud deep guttural growl that, clearly was of non-human origin.**

**My reaction was instantaneous and instinctive, I turned and diving back into the sanger, and in one fluid movement, grabbed my FN as I landed and brought it around to bear over the top of the sanger wall, chambering a round in the process.**

**The deep growl must also have been heard by fellow recruits in nearby bivvy's for, the loading of my FN was almost immediately followed by the sound heard a number of other FN's being cocked, all with the distinctive metallic crunching sound that is made as a round is chambered.**

**Without further incident, or siting of what had made the growl, the routine dawn stand-to procedure followed and about 30 minutes later, all the recruits formed up on a dirt track for the**

*usual morning run.*

*A couple of hundred metres down the track the bush opened out to a large vlie where, about 150 metres from the track was a large tree, with a small pride of adult lions lolling about underneath.*

*At breakfast, my fellow Rhodesian recruits (much to their amusement) proceeded to educate me about the habits of lions, that they often prowl around the perimeter of camps and, that the noise I took to be "bottle-blowing" was in fact, a typical lion's "cough" sound.*

*Welcome to Africa*

**RLI's First Contact - 1966**  
**by Col T.G. Desfountain**

**HQ 1 Commando, Rhodesia Light Infantry (RLI) was based at Makuti with 1 Troop as reserve and the remaining Troops on border control. There was no operation on at all and Intelligence (SS) had no knowledge of any crossing. Just normal border control operations.**

**Capt. Dick Lockley was acting OC as Major Peter Rich was attending some rifle shoot or another (Presidents Medal?)**

**Dick Lockley was bored and besides which I was constantly beating him at cards so he decided to send me out on a night patrol (!) - I ask you.**

**I was to take six men from my Troop (If I could find that many sober) and patrol from the old Nyakasanga road until we either got lost or we dropped from exhaustion.**

**Bravely and innocently we set off. Cards, french letters, passports, 22 days rats each and a couple of rounds per weapon completed our preparations. We debussed at the old Nyakasanga Bridge where 2 Lt Garth Barrett's Tp was, theoretically, on ambush. They were all asleep. Feeling that our back-up was really secure we tottered off in something resembling file formation, down the road.**

**We moved very slowly because none of us could think very fast. We stopped every 200 yards or so to "look and listen". We looked dreadful so we kept on moving.**

**At 2245, about 3 miles from our debuss point, we approached a large baobab tree on the left side of the road. Barely had the words "Dick (Lockley) you're a Prick" passed my lips for the 92nd time when I saw a dark mass of figures in front of me. They were about 20 yards in front of me and partly obscured by the baobab tree. We went to ground on either side of the road and waited. Their leader shone a torch at me and I saw vaguely, and heard, terrifyingly, rifles being re-moved from shoulders.**

**Knowing there were no other Security Forces (SF) in the area I concluded they could only be the enemy or Game Rangers. Thinking they were Game Rangers, we hated Game Rangers, I opened fire.**

**A fairly mean fire fight took place with their green tracer going right over our heads. On the very light being fired (can you believe it?) the enemy ran into the thick Jesse on the side of the road.**

**Leaving March and Foulds on the right side of the road to give us covering fire, I took the rest of the patrol in extended line searching the area between the road and the Jesse bush. The enemy commander had hidden behind the baobab tree and at about 10 yards opened fire with his AK. Boddington was hit in the arm and with great bravery and presence of mind we took cover amid shouts of "Dick you're a Prick!" I shouted to Marsh to fire around the baobab tree and, when he stopped, we ran up. We found the leader, one other body, 2 x SKS rifles, an AK, a Bamboo Bazooka and six packs. I also stole a Tokarev pistol (subsequently returned to BSAP Special Branch (SB) so that an SB man could have drinks on it for the rest of the war) a Tokarev holster and £42 cash.**

**Having cleared the area we returned to Barretts camp, woke up his ambush, told our war.. story and returned to Makuti camp. It was there that we told Dick Lockley that we hated him, hated SB and Game Rangers.**

**Early the following morning Lt Tom Douglas and his troop followed up tracks of three while my troop followed separate tracks of a further three. Lt Tom Douglas found one of the enemy left for dead, with a bullet through the mouth. The impediment in his mouth made him sound like a cross between P.K. van der Byl and an Irish Git. He was recovered to Kariba. The remaining five enemy were picked up at Kariba Township by SB within a week. This was only because SB were all on R & R in the Township at the time.**

***As a result of this contact - the first - the following points of interest arose:***

***a. Because there was no 'State of Emergency' at the time the BSAP did not know how to go about prosecuting the captured enemy.***

***"I as the Troop Commander, was subpoenaed for murder and had to give evidence in Court to defend myself. This has got to be a first!***

***b. We received shotguns, veld-schoen boots and camouflage denims shortly afterwards. Lt Col Walls was CO and had the necessary "pull" to get these items off the production line.***

## ***A Most Fortunate Day***

### ***Shall We, or Shan't We ?***

***The day in question occurred in April 1979 while I was serving with Support Commando, doing Fireforce out of Grand Reef near Umtali.***

***During the preceding weeks, Support Commando had been responding to call-outs virtually every day and sometimes, multiple times per day. Whilst there was the odd "lemon", most were genuine with the majority of these involving heavy action.***

***As anyone who was serving with RLI during that time will testify, the March-April-May '79 period was one where RLI saw a lot of action, made a heavy impact on the enemy and correspondingly, suffered a lot of casualties ourselves.***

***The day started off pretty much like any other day when on Fireforce with the usual early morning routine of a PT run by all of Support Commando down the airstrip, followed by pokey drill.***

***After this exercise, first-wave sticks dropped their webbing off next the Operations Hut near the Air force chopper bays. The bays were created by battered 44 gallon drums being filled with soil and staked several drums high, sandbag walls and, with a degree of overhead protection provided by wire mesh held up by tall timber poles.***

***The chopper bay and indeed all the rest of Grand Reef Base was plainly utilitarian in style however oddly enough, the Operations Hut was surrounded by a quaint but distinctly out-of-place, low English cottage-garden type white-picket fence...a very colonial touch!***

***Lunch time came and went with no callout and just when everyone was beginning to think that we were going to have a day off from combat, the call-out siren started it's slow wail so, off we ran to the Operations Hut to kit-up, Cammo-up and, have a quick smoke or two while the stick leaders were inside the hut getting a briefing.***

***As we had our Fireforce drill down pretty pat, stick leader briefings normally only took a few minutes however this time, it seemed ages before the stick leaders came out to give their respective sticks a run-down on what was going to happen.***

***To the loud enveloping noise of choppers whining into life and a pervasive stench of kerosene in the air, we were advised that there had been an OP siting of a group of 12 gooks who were all wearing a combination of green and blue denim clothing and armed mostly with AK-47's but also, with an RPD and RPG-7 in the group.***

***The reason given for the long briefing was that flight time to the "scene" was long thus requiring a re-fuelling stop en-route and because of this, there was concern that there would not be sufficient time to wrap the scene up and get back to Grand Reef before dark.***

***The significance of this being that the Rho AF Alouette III helicopter did not have night flight capability. In the end, it was decided to "Give it a Go" - oh well, just another day at the office.***

***Being an MAG Gunner at the time, it was not necessary for me to know where we were going, so as per normal, I sat bithly at the open door of the chopper enjoying the African scenery flash by.***

***After a while I noticed that we were roughly travelling in a Northerly direction and as we were starting to climb over some pretty high rising ground, I realized we were heading to the Inyanga highlands area.***

***Before the war really started hotting-up, Inyanga, with it's green mountain scenery, waterfalls and cool climate was considered a great holiday location however in present circumstances, what it meant to me was broken country with lots of re-entrants and in places, close (near on rainforest) type bush...all difficult ground to hunt gooks in.***

***After about 40 minutes or so, our Choppers descended and landed on a large sealed vehicle park area inside the compound of the 3rd Independent Company***

***The 3rd Indep Coy was a Territorial Army unit permanently based in the Inyanga area which had responsibility for patrolling the immediate vicinity and generally, inhibiting gook freedom of movement in the area.***

***The base had a tremendous view of the surrounding countryside which, was quite unique in that it consisted of a numerous steep-sided conical shaped hills. Although covered in thick African bush, these conical hills looked for all the world like mini extinct volcanos.***



**Although the scenery was unquestionably striking, it crossed my mind that the mini-volcanos might also offer the gooks a good view of the 3 Indep Coy.**

**It was will little surprise I later learned that the base periodically found itself the focus of attention of gook mortar crews.**

**The arrival of Fireforce had attracted the interest of off-duty Indep Coy personnel who, wandered over and attempted to engage the RLI in conversation.**

**Perhaps due to pre-combat tensions or, simply because RLI tended to view chaps from most other units as lesser mortals, we did not encourage this conversation an act of snootiness which we would later have cause to regret.**

**In quick-time the choppers were re-fuelled and we were back in the air. After what seemed to be a very short flight, the choppers off-loaded us into a wide dry creek-bed at the base of a long heavily treed ridgeline with numerous peaks and deep gullies.**

**Because of the thick tree cover, the choppers were unable to provide their usual level of overhead observation and fire support and thus, after shaking out into extended line, we cautiously started sweeping up towards the top of the ridge.**

**For a period of time it looked as though the gooks had managed to slip through the fireforce net however, about 2/3's of the way up the feature, contact was initiated.**

**Most of the gooks had hold-up in very thickly bushed re-entrant positions which offered great cover & concealment and rather un-sportingly, despite all K-Car and Lynx aircraft fire support enticements, remained content to wait for us to come in after them in person.**

**Weeding a stubborn enemy out of such positions is and exceedingly difficult & dangerous affair and thus, it took us much longer than hoped to wrap-up the scene.**

#### **Lucky Detour**

**Our normal method of clearing a re-entrant was for the stick leader to cautiously advance down the centre of the gully, with riflemen and gunner up on either bank to both protect his flanks and as required, provide fire support down into the gully.**

**During one sweep, I was up on the right bank with the MAG and came to where there was an extremely large tree growing on the very edge of the bank with a big chunk of it's root structure hanging over the 5 metre or so vertical drop into the gully.**

**Being unable to otherwise get around this obstacle, I was forced to veer away from the bank and carefully negotiate a section of bush thick with vines that continually snagged at my webbing, the MAG barrel and MAG belt.**

**I had just managed to regain the edge of the gully when virtually at my feet, there was a sudden eruption of movement and noise from what seemed to be a ground level mat of vines & grass.**

**As I knew for certain that no one friendly was to my front, I immediately brought the barrel of my MAG to bear, and rapidly put a number of short busts into the mat.**

**The end of my MAG barrel was only about one metre from target and so, the muzzle blast rapidly spread the mat allowing me a good view of a gook armed with an AK-47 and chest webbing whom, just for good measure, I gave a few more squirts.**

**My stick leader called for me to get back and as from past experience I knew it was wise to immediately obey this instruction, I promptly took cover near the big tree.**

**My stick leader then proceeded to re-kill this gook, plus another who I had not previously seen but, given they were both laying in the same small hole, was likely taken out when I dispatched the other with 20 or so rounds of point blank MAG fire.**

**The two gooks had obviously been laying in ambush for anyone coming down the centre of the gully but, my sudden appearance at very close quarters from an unexpected direction clearly gave them a nasty surprise and**

*in their rush to bring their weapons to bear, made noise & movement which alerted me to their presence.*

*Another fortunate aspect about this incident was that after having dragged the bodies out of the hole for the purpose of removing weapons and webbing, we found a number of Chinese stick grenades which, despite the timber handles having been totally shattered by gunfire, had failed to detonate either when initially struck or, when the bodies were moved. could have been messy!*

#### **Almost a TV Star**

*After gingerly disposing of the shattered stick grenades, we continued to clear the gully, stopping just above where it joined into the dry creek bed where we had originally been deposited by the Choppers.*

*It was here we received a radio message that a TV documentary film crew were being flown into our location to take footage of the contact scene.*

*My stick leader selected me to accompany him down to the dry creek bed to meet the film crew and escort them back up the gully to the site of our previous contact.*

*Just as we came to the end of the gully and reached the edge of the creek bed, we saw a Chopper land about 80 metres away and after only a momentary pause on the ground, took off and departed.*

*There was thick 2+ metre high elephant grass growing in that part of the creek bed and although we could not actually see the film crew, we started making our way to where they had obviously been dropped off.*

*Halfway there, we came across a previously unseen old timber cattle yard which took us some time to clamber over and continue on our way.*

*The sound of firefights from other nearby gullies could be clearly heard and by the time we reached the film crew, they were scared out of their wits having thought they had been accidentally dropped off in a location with no one there to meet them.*

*Telling the film crew to stick close to us, we escorted them back up "our" gully where they duly took footage of our previous contact scene and asked questions, which included a brief interview with myself.*

*What luck I thought, imagine the chances of appearing in TV footage taken at an actual battle scene.*

*My dreams of perpetual fame lasted only until I learned that the documentary was being made for a German language audience and thus, would unlikely ever be seen by any of my friends or family. bugger!*

#### **The Choice**

*Soon after the film crew departed and remaining pockets of enemy resistance eliminated, all sticks were up lifted and returned to the 3 Indep base at Inyanga where by this time, the sun was rapidly setting and was obvious to all that this was not going to be a short re-fuelling stop but instead, we would have to stay the night there.*

*While waiting by the choppers for our officers to return and advise us of meal and sleeping arrangements, we noticed that strangely, there were no Indep chaps to be seen. if we had only known what they were up to!*

*After what seemed to be ages but in reality was probably only 20 or 30 minutes, our Officers returned and intriguingly announced "Ouens'..you have a choice".*

*Our Officers then went on to advise that, there was a 10¢ Night on at the Montclair resort in nearby Juliasdale (40 km away), it was possible for the Officers to get a cash loan from the Indep Officers mess and that, transport could be made available to take us to there and back.*

*Troopies were still getting over the shock of hearing the "Choice" word, when the Officers further announced that there were some conditions, these being to go to the Montclair, we would have to forfeit getting an evening meal at the Indep Coy. and, be washed and ready to move within 30 minutes.*

*Beside the use of the "Choice" word the other highly unusual aspect to this affair was that RLI only ever allowed troopies to go on liberty runs to nearby towns if they were properly attired in their best freshly laundered No. 4 Cammos complete with stable belt & beret, boots were appropriately polished and, each individual had been inspected to ensure they were cleanly shaved and hair not too long.*

*As it was normal RLI practice that when going out on a fireforce call out to wear whatever configuration of*

*uniform best suited each individual, not one of us came even close to the normal liberty run standard of presentation and accordingly, this simply added to the novelty of having been given a "Choice".*

*In response to the Officer's question, there was an immediate & unanimous shout of 10¢ Night, we rushed off to find the ablutions block.*

*By this time nightfall had descended and when we eventually located the showers, we discovered that as a precaution against enemy mortar fire, all unnecessary lights at the base were disconnected and much to our chagrin, this included the ablutions block*

*It was now that we discovered the reason for absence of Indep chaps - having heard that we were staying the night and obviously still miffed at our earlier ill-advised snobbery, they had got into the showers and used up ALL the hot water.*

*As if showering in darkness with cold water was not bad enough, it now also dawned on us that we had neither soap or towels and as a consequence, far from being able to wash-off our cammo-cream, all we managed to do was smear it to a slightly lighter shade than it had been prior to entering the shower.*

#### **Card-Sharp**

*Being the ever resilient RLI, undaunted we used our combat grimed jumpsuits and t-shirts as towels, re-donned our heavily soiled clothing, and with full combat weaponry in hand, climbed aboard the Indep Coy supplied truck and headed off to the Montclair.*

*Upon de-buss in the Montclair carpark, the enjoyment generated by the sheer novelty of the occasion failed to be dampened when we found that the generosity of the 3 Indep Officer's Mess loan only extended as far as enabling each tropia to be issued \$2.00 with which to gamble and make merry for the evening.*

*Having been loaded up with this grand sum, we enthusiastically swung open the large double doors to the Montclair's casino (gambling room) only to be greeted with by all the other patrons staring at us open-mouthed in stunned silence.*

*Although we of the RLI were we no unaccustomed to being viewed with a certain degree of "reservation", and admittedly we were pretty scruffy & rough looking but this immediate en-mass display of effrontery was in a league all of it's own.*

*Ruffled feathers were soon smoothed when we learned that the shocked behaviour was because of a case of mistaken identity. Apparently, some months earlier the Montclair had been attacked by the gooks and the sudden appearance of a large group of heavily armed and blackened faced men had momentarily put the fear of God into the Montclair's patrons & staff.*

*As I was desperately hungry, after we had dumped our weapons & webbing in a pile in the corner of the gaming room, I collared a waiter and after finding out that a tasted sandwich and beer were only 50¢ each, ordered same.*

*While devouring the sandwich, I checked out the gambling options and found they consisted of Roulette, Poker Machines and, a Black-Jack Table.*

*As I knew nothing of Roulette and felt that my remaining \$1.00 would not last long on Poker Machines, I decided to give the Black-Jack table a go, resolving to play cautiously to eek out my \$1.00 as long as possible.*

*Accordingly I went up and took a seat at the Black-Jack table, put down my money and asked for \$1.00 in chips and, I was promptly given a single \$1.00 chip.*

*When I queried about the 10c night, the croupier confirmed this was the case, but only for roulette and poker machines. Being too embarrassed to ask for my money back I pushed my chip forward and accepted a deal of cards.*

*Resigned to the words, much to my astonishment I won the hand, and the next, and the next and the next and so on.*

*Needless to say, the windfall enabled me to keep buying drinks and my last clear memories of the evening was, sitting at the Black-Jack table, playing multiple positions with a crowd of RLI hanging over my shoulder watching the action and the next morning, awoke to find my pockets bulging with a modest, but given the circumstances, very respectable quantity of cash and casino chips.*

*As fireforce had to be back in operation at Grand Reef ASAP, we lifted off from the Indep base at the crack of*

*dawn. It was bitterly cold in the door-less choppers and of course, I had a monstrous hang-over.*

*Regardless of this discomfort, through bleary & bloodshot eyes I was still able to appreciate the breathtaking scenery as we departed - mist filled valleys with the tips of the conical hills poking island like through the sea of fog. For rest of the flight, my focus of attention was on how horrible my bubbloss was.*

*As a postscript to the evening, for few weeks afterwards various ouens would come up and hand a small amount of cash over to me saying "thanks for the loan at the casino".*

*It is said that everyone is destined to have one special day where everything goes just right for them. On so many different levels, that was certainly a most fortunate day for me.*

## **A FLAG, A FEW NUNS, MERCENARIES and some SPORTING TROPHIES**

**A recollection by Brigadier 'Digger' Essex-Clark, DSM, Australian Army; ex OC 'A' Company 1RLI**

**A Company 1RLI was deployed on the Congo / Northern Rhodesia border in September 1961. 1 Platoon and our company headquarters held a bridge crossing the Kafue River just south of Kipushi and Elizabethville; 3 Platoon was on the border at Kipushi and controlled the airfield that overlapped the border, and 2 Platoon were happily enjoying their R&R camp outside Mwinilunga and well away from the action. Our company was spread over nearly 300 miles, 500 kilometres in today's lingo. 1 and 3 platoon for a few weeks had many a tense moment in confused contacts with the mutinied Congolese National Army, twitch French mercenaries employed by the Katangese Government (alias the massive Belgian Mining conglomerate Union Minière), and controlling panicking whites exiting the Congo shambles in droves. Our task was to prevent the United Nations, or any foreign force crossing the border or deploying their military assets via the far northern Northern Rhodesia road system. There was no adequate road system within the Congo to do so. So our bridge and the airfield were tactically important.**

**We were a great bunch of ouens, trained in infantry basics, but only semi-trained tactically, but we often needed immediate medical support and we needed a flag to represent what and who we were and we did not have the material to make one.**

**Our only medical help came from a small dispensary in Kipushi run by some very nervous and wary but altruistic Catholic Nuns and, in more severe cases, such as when one of our men had been accidentally shot during weapons cleaning and died on the operating bench, were tidied up or operated on by the French mercenary doctor from the Première Battalion Étrangère Parachutiste (Foreign Legion: 1re B.E.P.) that had deserted en bloc from the politically discontented French Army in Algeria. I am convinced that the doctor was Paul Grauwain who had been one of the doctors at Dien Bien Phu in Vietnam in seven years earlier, but I didn't ask his name because we were all overawed and somewhat shocked by his gruesome surgical techniques that were understandable under those primitive conditions.**

**On one of the visits to the dispensary in Kipushi with David Parker, my 2IC (and later to command 1 Commando, of which we were the forebears, and later still the RLI), we saw some discarded lightweight crimson nurses capes, and as red was the company colour, I suggested that we use them to make the field, plus a much washed whitish hospital sheet to make the 'A' in our company flag. Well, at least it was a 'guidon' because it could only be 85 mms x 54 cms (in Continental measurement) or approx 3' x 2' (in ours at that time) which was a bit small for a flag, but far better than nothing. The nuns and nurses were most helpful, they and their carpenters had already provided a splendid brass-handled coffin for us, and so I did a simple sketch of what we'd like done and in our execrable French we asked them to knock up a flag for us ('un rouge drapeau, s'il vous plait'). Within the next half hour while we waited for one of our ouens to have his arm splinted and we stocked up our first-aid kit with mercurochrome, cotton wool, the odd bandage and elastoplast that we swapped for some hartebeest steaks we had from one shot by Sergeant Lourens; they cut out a white 'A' and stitched it onto a hemmed crimson rectangle to make our flag that we took back to our base at the small Kafue bridge. David hacked down a suitable, but hard to find, straightish pole that was replaced later by the one borrowed from the Customs post at Kipushi and hoisted it above our company headquarters lean-to tarpaulin.. We later flew it proudly from our company headquarters on our return to Brady Barracks at Kumalo after we returned from our Congo deployment, and later still on flagpole at the A Company barrack block at our new Cranborne barracks. It was the first flag to fly there. A photo of the tattered flag as it is today, more pink than crimson, is shown here; and a sketch shows how it once proudly was.**

**Incidentally, the Union Minière, through their superb but deserted Cercle Sportif Club in Kipushi, unknowingly presented the RLI with a collection of silver sporting trophies when David Parker and I reorganised the ownership of these trophies through the willing assistance of the lonely and anxious club caretaker, a nervous and twitchy munthu of the huge and widely spread but persecuted Lunda Tribe, who 'presented' them to us in exchange for a trip back across the border into Northern Rhodesia.**

**One morning an obsequious, mousy and shabby Union Minière emissary also tried to recruit**

*some of A Company into their mercenary force, in fact he wanted to buy the services of A Company en masse for a massive sum deposited into a special Swiss bank account. I thought he must have been joking, but I still smartly told him to 'voetzak', hamba', and 'partir allez!' or, more positively, 'to piss off, and leave us and our men alone!' Nevertheless, three of our lads much later succumbed to the lure of filthy lucre and I defended them successfully against charges of desertion when they returned to Rhodesia. I realised later that the emissary hadn't been joking about the cash he was offering when Corporal 'Jumbo' Greipel later called me over to inspect the boot of a new Mercedes of the Katangese Foreign minister, a Monsieur Simba that was crammed with packages of 1000 Swiss franc bank notes. Simba and his family were travelling to Northern Rhodesia in an attempt to make contact with our Federal Government. We confiscated two brand-new unused Belgian 7.62 mm FNs and similarly three 9mm Browning automatic pistols from the car, but lamentably couldn't touch the cash.*

*Apart from the Flag and sports silver it was a most interesting deployment and the constant tension hardened many of the inexperienced and semi-trained young men in 1 and 3 Platoon of A Company, the forerunners of 1 and 3 troops of 1 Commando ~ The Big Red, some of whom I hope now are able to join our Association. I don't suppose anyone knows where those sports trophies are now? I hope those kind nuns, black and white, lived safely through that dreadful situation of massacres and bloodshed that disabled the Congo but again, who knows? We recorded no names. I now only have the flag, a diary, and some photos to recall the bold actions of our splendid young men of those confused and confusing times*

**MEETING MUGABE:  
Brigadier Digger Essex - Clark DSM**

While on a quiet orderly officer task in July 1960, as a captain at KGVI Barracks, a task in which I was completing seven extra orderly officer duties given to me by Colonel 'Sam' Putterill, a well respected and exemplary officer of the senior staff at Army Headquarters for arriving late to a previous duty. I was told by Colonel Putterill to report to the Governor of Rhodesia, Sir Humphrey Gibbs for a special task and that my European duty sergeant was to take over from me for the rest of the night. I duly did so and was flabbergasted when I, after arriving at Government house, was issued a warrant by the Governor to go to the home of one Mr Robert Mugabe, to place him under house arrest and make sure he complied with the warrant for the next seven days. Sir Humphrey then opened a 'freezer', the first I had ever seen, and gave me a few frozen chickens, a ham, a loaf of bread and a few bits and pieces 'for you and the fellows'. I was then given a sergeant and five KAR (Nyasa) askari on a signals course at KGVI barracks plus two land-rovers and a trailer, a 3 ton Bedford truck, a stack of jerricans of both fuel and water, seven days worth of ration packs and hexamine blocks, and a 62 HF Radio sets with a pile of blanket and spare batteries. We were issued all this plus rifles and ammunition, by a sleepy and irritated storeman at KG VI Barracks. An also irritated BSAP Inspector gave me a map of how to get to Mugabe's kraal in the Kutama mission in the Zwimba Reserve where, fortunately, I had been on a patrol exercise eight years earlier. I had been briefed that I was to ensure that Mr Robert Mugabe (whom I had never heard of before) was to be kept in his home as he was a security risk but I was to record the identities of all who visited him and report on the 'radio sched' at 1500 hrs every day until I was relieved. On the way there I was to pick up an incognito African policeman and his bicycle in Hartley who would come with us in our vehicles to point out Mugabe's home and cycle back when he had done so. I was suspicious that what I was doing should have been a police task controlled by the supposedly all knowing Federal Intelligence and Security Bureau - FISB), rather than a lone army patrol. But I did what I was ordered to do, but could only discover the licence plate of the cars that visited Mugabe and, I had to visit his home every morning (a white-walled but tribally decorated mud-brick structure of three rondavels joined by roofed concrete passages, near a well). My first impediment was an irate priest who demanded to know what I was up to! I managed to quieten him by showing him the warrant for Mr Mugabe's, but not his wife's, house arrest. I then met the Mugabe's. Heseemed to know and expect what was going on, but he and his wife were always polite, but this did not stop them from trying to proselytise me to their extraordinary, seditious and frightening policies for the future of Southern Rhodesia. I argued often with them, and found that they were both skilled debaters and 'masters' of sophistry and dissimulation. I also found that he listened constantly to a radio (always on Radio Lourenço Marques when I arrived). Mugabe's home always had 'piccanin' sentries and other suspicious looking men surrounding his rondavels who would send the piccanins scurrying in as soon as anyone approached, and a well-dressed Mugabe would appear on the stoep of his main rondavel. His living areas were surprisingly well furnished for a rondavel in what I felt was Mission Kraal. He was obviously a man of much stature in that area.

I was also became concerned because one of my askari on his observation duty thought he had seen a rifle moving from one rondavel to a small shed at the back of the rondavels. I checked this, 'en passant' on my next morning visit and saw nothing suspicious. When reporting this on my next 'sched' I was told I had no authority to search for anything or do anything that could be perceived as hostile, that I was only to observe, but that my report had been noted. Many vehicles visited Mugabe each day including vehicles carrying local and international media organisations, and he also received a large sack of mail and newspapers daily, carried by a very 'happy and friendly' Mashona on a bicycle who must have gone into Hartley Post Office and the Newsagents to collect it. Anyone with any common sense could see that Mugabe was cleverly developing his subversive network, after all why was he put under house arrest? In my simple view he should have then been put under close arrest and jailed. I strongly recommended this from what I and my Nyasa askari had observed but was scoffed at and told that FISB and the BSAP. Knew what he was up to, and could well control his activities, and would swoop on his network when the right time arrived. But I felt that he was too clever and internationally and media-aware for that.

On the seventh day and all of us starting to pong a little (we had used, mainly at night, the nearby bushland and mealie patch to do our ablutions when we could, out of a canvas water basin and a jerrican of water), we were told we would not be replaced and we were to return to Salisbury. On my return I asked, formally and in writing, why this task had been done by the Army and not the BSAP or FISB? I was then told, informally and verbally, that the police would 'lose face' and have its men identified by harassing Mr Mugabe in such a way; but that I would have been seen as an ordinary 'exercising army patrol'. To me that reply was dissimulating rubbish and from then on I lost all the respect I had previously had for the BSAP and FISB. I also handed in my handwritten report from the spare pages in my diary and was scoffed at for over-reacting and using excessive imagination. I then lost any confidence that they (FISB and the BSAP) would be able to provide the intelligence that the Army needed and the internal security they were believed to be providing. Incidentally the BSAP as the acknowledged and traditional 'first line of defence' in Rhodesia were always at the right of the line on any major parades in that country. It was an undeserved honour in my opinion.

As we all now know, that the paranoid and demagogue styled Mr Robert Mugabe, after cleverly 'conning' the British Government and world media, and, by attrition of Rhodesia's manpower and economy, winning a ghastly 'Bush War' in which the Rhodesian Army had fought bravely but had neither the stamina nor numbers to win, became the 'democratic' President for Life' of the once wonderful country he renamed, and autocratically ruined, Zimbabwe. Mugabe cleverly used Maoist doctrine and with Comintern and Asian Communist support, with a clever exploitation of international approbium against Rhodesia, craftily outwitted and politically outmanoeuvred the proud and embattled Rhodesian security forces and its government to defeat.

Rhodesia's downfall, exacerbated by Smith's 'UDI', that lost it many international friends, was also accelerated by the USA's Kissinger's trade and economic threats to Vorster of South Africa. This was the final stab in the back of a once grand Rhodesia; and its congé. Like proud Caesar's, it was the Cassius, 'Vorster'; and one could name the other assassinating characters of Galba, Quintus and Lucius; and the once supportive and maternal, but now traitorous ~ 'et tu UK'.

As Edmund Burke so presciently wrote:

'The only thing necessary for the triumph of evil is for good men to do nothing.'

*Not a War Story but by Wilbur Smith, a factual account:*

*The plight of the Black Rhinoceros is, of course, due mostly to the value of its horn and the ferocious poaching that this engenders. However, a contributory factor to the declining rhino population is the animal's disorganized mating habits. It seems that the female rhino only becomes receptive to the male's attentions every three years or so, while the male only becomes interested in her at the same intervals. This is a condition which is known quite appropriately as 'Must'. The problem is one of synchronization, for their amorous inclinations do not always coincide.*

*In the early Sixties, I was invited, along with a host of journalists and other luminaries, to be present at an attempt by the Rhodesian Game and Tsetse Department to solve this problem of poor timing. The idea was to capture a male rhino and induce him to deliver up that which could be stored until that day in the distant future when his mate's fancy turned lightly to thoughts of love.*

*We departed from the Zambezi Valley in an impressive convoy of trucks and landrovers, counting in our midst non-other than the Director of the game department in person, together with his minions, a veterinary surgeon, an electrician and sundry other technicians, all deemed necessary to make the harvest. The local game scouts had been sent out to search the bush for the largest, most virile rhino they could find. They had done their job to perfection and led us to a beast at least the size of a small granite kopje with a horn on his nose considerably longer than my arm.*

*The trick was to get this monster into a robust mobile pen which had been constructed to accommodate him. With the Director of the Game Department shouting frantic orders from the safety of the largest truck, the pursuit was on. The tumult and the shouting were apocalyptic. Clouds of dust flew in all directions, trees, and vegetation were destroyed, game scouts scattered like chaff, but finally the Rhino had about a litre of narcotics shot into his rump and his mood became dreamy and benign. With forty game guards heaving and shoving, and the Director still shouting orders from the truck, the rhino was wedged into his cage, and stood there with a happy grin on his face. At this stage, the Director deemed it safe to emerge from the cab of his truck and he came amongst us resplendent in starched and immaculately ironed bush jacket with a colourful silk scarf at his throat. With an imperial gesture, he ordered the portable electric generator to be brought forward and positioned behind the captured animal. This was a machine which was capable of lighting up a small city, and it was equipped with two wheels that made it resemble a roman chariot.*

*The Director climbed up on the generator to better address us. We gathered around attentively while he explained what was to happen next. It seemed that the only way to get what we had come for was to introduce an electrode into the rhino's rear end, and to deliver a mild electric shock, no more than a few volts, which would be enough to pull his trigger for him. The Director gave another order and the veterinary surgeon greased something that looked like an acoustic torpedo and which was attached to the generator with sturdy insulated wires. He then went up behind the somnolent beast and thrust it up him to a full arms length, at which the Rhino opened his eyes very wide indeed. The veterinary and his two assistants now moved into position with a large bucket and assumed expectant expressions. We, the audience, crowded closer so as not to miss a single detail of the drama. The Director still mounted on the generator trailer, nodded to the electrician who threw the switch and chaos reigned. In the subsequent departmental enquiry the blame was placed squarely on the shoulders of the electrician. It seems that in the heat of the moment his wits had deserted him and instead of connecting up his apparatus to deliver a gentle 5 volts, he had crossed his wires and the Rhino received a full 500 volts up his rear end.*

*His reaction was spectacular. Four tons of Rhodesian Rhinoceros shot six feet straight up in the air. The cage, made of great timber baulks, exploded into its separate pieces and the Rhinoceros now very much awake, took off at a gallop. We, the audience, were no less sprightly.*

*We took to the trees with alacrity. This was the only occasion on which I have ever been passed by two journalists half way up a mopane tree. From the top branches we beheld an amazing sight, for the chariot was still connected to the Rhinoceros per rectum, and the director of the game department was still mounted upon it, very much like Ben Hur, the charioteer. As they disappeared from view, the Rhinoceros was snorting and blowing like a steam locomotive and the Director was clinging to the front rail of his chariot and howling like the north wind which only encouraged the beast to greater speed.*

*The story has a happy ending for the following day after the director had returned hurriedly to his office in Salisbury, another male Rhinoceros was captured and caged and this time the electrician got his wiring right. I can still see the Rhinoceros's expression of surprised gratification as the switch was thrown. You could almost hear him think to himself, "Oh Boy! I didn't think this was going to happen to me for at least another three years."*



**Rhodesian Light Infantry: snippets from memory**  
**By 2037 Sergeant Rittey J.N. (Nigel). Served 19/2/61 to 19/2/68**

**The recruiting office King George the V1 Barracks, Salisbury in February 1961**  
**Having been far too clever to go to University, I found myself beetling along the Borrowdale Road on my way to KG V1 to join this new Rhodesian Army thing my mates were all yakking about. When I reached the boom I asked politely where the Recruiting Office might be found. This bloke with a nose spread from East to West, right across his unlovely "mush", said something impolite, followed by a description of where this office was and a warning about where I would have to "park that piece of s\*\*t motor bike OK?"**

**The office turned out to be a room in a dingy building with a mixture of various types of battered chairs, a few overflowing ashtrays, stompies all over the floor and some very peculiar characters lolling around. I found a seat in the queue between a long, tall, fair-haired character, which had come from Jo'burg. His name was Bernie Hetem who eventually turned out to be an acceptable guitarist and would-be rock star. His buddy, Brian Van Der Poel, was there too. The fellow on my left was a rugged character who looked like a soldier even before he had been attested. This was Roy Roelofse who had come from Umtali having left the furniture manufacturing business.**

**A couple of Ducktails, hidden by clouds of cigarette smoke, could be seen from time to time stamping their fag ends out on the floor and causing the eyes of the attending MP to resemble those of a Gaboon viper focusing on its prey. I think one was "Cammie" Collins. The other, like so many, is a mere flash of static in a few old brain cells perhaps the Gaboon viper got him.**

**Finally the moment arrived to join this military thing, see the world, enjoy free board and lodging, free medical care, free pension, learn a trade\* and enjoy a generous salary of £35 a month. (They only told us about all the deductions after our first payday came around.)**

**We were told, "Do come in Sir, sign here here here here there too tick this tick that great! NOW YOU ARE A F#@## SOLDIER! Get your backside into that line there for your medicals / train ticket to Bulawayo!"**

**The medicals, conducted by two medico types Doctors Ainslie and Lambert-Porter, seemed to be a matter of seeing how tall and heavy you were, whether you were alive and breathing and could we perhaps actually see and hear things. The worst crime was for any of us to have been found in possession of flat feet. (I thought it perfectly natural that we should all have flat feet how would we stand up if they were anything else?)**

**\* I am reminded of a popular legend at the time, which tells of the occasion where a recruiting officer had met with a fellow bearing a close resemblance to Quasimodo and had tried to sell the idea that this cretin could join the Army and actually get paid while learning a trade. The officer was dumbstruck by the response from this prospective soldier when he countered " But I don't wanna join the Army to learn a trade I just wanna kill people!"**

### **Brady Barracks**

**We were collected at Bulawayo station by a Private Walsh and found ourselves poured into the back of a WW11 vintage "QL" which bellowed, whined, rattled and creaked its way to the gates of Brady Barracks. My first thought was that any Hollywood producer, seeking a perfect location for movies titled, "Escape from Stalag Luft 3", or, "Breakout from Belsen" would only have to paint it all grey and sprinkle a little snow around to make it work!**

**>From the moment of arrival, the shouting started. For some reason these noisy people insisted that everything should be done "at the double". When those morons were trying to teach us to march, we quickly learned that our arms had to swing at shoulder height "parallel to the ground" they said. It was only after passing out of recruit training that we were allowed to swing them at a far less abnormal angle of about 45 degrees.**

**Kit issue was hilarious. We were all rushed to the QM Stores where we stood around until summonsed by the Gods to go get our issue. Very little fitted. They told us that if it fitted, you were deformed in some way. Funnily enough their kit fitted OK so we deduced that they must have all been a little misshapen. Their boots were smooth with a mirror shine, but the ones we got were rough and pimply as a rhino's backside.**

**Their Khaki Drill shorts and bush jackets were crisp with creases you could sharpen a pencil with. Ours were presented as piles of khaki material resembling the cleaning rags used for washing Bedford trucks. Their belt brasses and buckles belonged in the window display of Tiffany's all shiny and golden. They gave us brass objects that looked like they had been recovered from Delville Wood. Their belts were snow white. They gave us gungy "Gang" green jobs and told us about "Blanco" and how we could purchase it "for a very modest cost from the canteen". Their berets fitted. Ours looked like the kind of thing a ship's cook might wear. We never saw if their "Drawers Cellular, troops- for- the- use- of " fitted them or whether these "Jam Stealers" actually attempted to wear the darned things. We found that it was anatomically more correct to wear the brutes back to front as the "Y front" had clearly been designed by someone who hated soldiers. They became known as "Shreddies". Thanks be, to the Good Lord that the regiment never wore kilts.**

**On getting to the canteen and asking about this "Blanco" stuff, we found that we also had to have a few other things. Brasso, Starch, Cobra floor polish, yellow dusters, Kiwi polish, sandpaper (for smoothing off the Delville Wood relics prior to using the Brasso), cotton wool for "boning" the boots, an electric iron (not only for clothes but to get those blasted pimples out of the boot leather), washing powder and of course, "Bed Boards" and safety pins, so that one could painstakingly display ones spare bedding in exact box-shaped piles at the foot of one's bed for morning inspections. Having blown the coming months' pay, you were now in a position to re-manufacture just about everything they had given you.**

**The boots had to be ironed to get the darn things smooth after which it was a matter of a sort of spit and polish technique using Kiwi polish the only polish that really worked. Initially it was layered on thickly. This was followed by hours of circular applications using wet cotton wool. Private Alistair Platt, a pasty little fellow and a fine soldier, with lips that looked like Mick Jagger's, ( We couldn't use this analogy at the time as "Tackie Lips" hadn't begun to make his millions yet!), was the master of boot boning and earned the coveted "Stick Man" title several times. His boots could have been hung from the ceiling at a barn dance to replace the mirrored ball. If those boots had been caught by the spotlight, the revelers would have been blinded.**

**A few of our colleagues recalled**

**At this time we got to know more about the motley collection of characters who were to be our companions. Many are forgotten in the mists of time, but a few notables are recalled with no difficulty.**

**Jock Martin, an ex Brit army type who annoyed the Hell out of us by slow marching around the barracks at all hours of the day or night, making a dreadful noise with his bagpipes.**

**Sergeant Henry Lourens, supposedly ex Long Range Desert Group, who was a rugged looking character famous for the remark "Getting shot is b\*\*\*\*rall I've been shot before".**

**Steve Jones, Johnny Le Bron and Eddie Etheridge who were all archery enthusiasts. Eddie was killed years later while serving as a mercenary in the Congo.**

**Ted Wilde, wise in the ways of the Rhodesian bush, he grew up on a farm near the small town of Plumtree.**

**Jumbo Greipel, a giant of a man with a gentle heart.**

**Chippy Ackerman and his mate Herbie Lordan. These two were like circus acrobats. They demonstrated their prowess by swinging like orangutans from the rafters of the barrack rooms. Herbie was a master of the Bedford RL and could make those bellowing monsters really fly with superb double de-clutching.**

*The diminutive Jimmy Smith-Belton, later to make a name for himself in rugby circles.*

*Tiny Clemo was first spotted by the lads when he came to sign up as a "D" Company "Boysoldier". We all thought this gawky child had got lost on his way to his primary school. It was rumoured that Orderly Officers regularly instructed the cooks to ensure he got more "graze" and milk than the other troopies in an attempt to grow him a little faster. (He spent a lot of his career as a "Jam stealer" and now lives in Randburg SA having later specialised in Logistics a sort of "civvy" version of "Jam stealing"?)*

*Tex Benzies was a fellow motorcyclist who owned a Matchless 500 twin, which ran rings around my ancient ex-police BSA 600 side-valve machine. The old runways of the Kumalo airfield next to Brady became a sort of raceway for amateur Jim Redmans and Ray Amms in the Battalion.*

*Pat Miller. A fine shottist, as I remember who served with distinction in later years.*

*Colonel John Salt, our CO, the "Main Man Wot Counted". He was a tall, cadaverous character with a booming voice, which was revered by us all. On parades, dressed in his KD's, he resembled a schooner under full sail. His shorts were impressive and cascaded down to well below the knees while the bush jacket looked just as if he had crashed through a marquee and taken the whole thing with him after wrapping it up with his belt and Sam Browne. Under the cap was a weather beaten face dominated by a massive schnozzle that, if pointed North or South, made him vulnerable to any gusts of wind from the East or West. He never did get blown over. Perhaps it was the stabilising effect of the ears of elephantine proportions that stuck out on either side of that huge bonce that did it.*

*Harry Crampton was a barrel-chested ex stevedore from Sydney Docks with a face revealing many excesses and huge paws. He was reputed to have been able to pull the cap off a bottle of Castle Lager using only his fingers. Some years later an unfortunate crocodile tried to take him while we were happily splashing around in a dam at Buhera. The croc lost and Harry was rushed to Enkeldoorn Hospital for treatment where he was reported to have spent his time fascinating the nurses. When the croc attacked Harry, he was not the only one to get injured. Alistair Platt turned the water into froth in his frenzy to get away from the commotion and failed to stop when he reached the shore. He sustained an injury when he crashed into some rocks.*

*Cammy Collins and Bruce Cromarty, who probably did more than most in the development of "RLI Speak". This may have originated from the jive talk of Joburg Duckies, the lingo of the Durban beachfront, Afrikaans, Funagalo, Rhodesian schoolboy dialects and a motley collection of bits of barracks communication from dozens of armies around the world. Even the most "frightfully frightful fellows" from Sandhurst and the like, quickly realised that they had to learn it and use it if they wished to get their points over to us and earn our respect.*

*"Bok" Wentzel. A quiet little guy who later sadly lost his life in action.*

*Jack Barratt who modeled himself on Nikita Khrushchev and who spent most of his later career as the charismatic barman at the Cranborne Corporal's Club. He was, as a Brit, most knowledgeable on all things Russian and probably caused a lot of anxiety for our "cloak and dagger" types at a time when the Russians were our enemy. They were the providers of AK 47's to all sorts of funny buggers around the world and harbourers of the cocktail-quaffing terrorist masters in Moscow.*

*Bob Hope who described himself as "six feet and then some". He had a flash of silver hair on the front of his head. He also went the "Jam stealer" route.*

*Joe Conway. The life of most parties.*

*Barry Bougaard, another vertically challenged character.*

*Derek Taylor-Memory, a corpse-like member of what we rudely referred to as the "Turd stranglers" (Medics). I worked with him as a medical rep in SA where he passed away from lung cancer (I think) a few years ago.*

**Mick (Paddy) Ryan, who was rumoured to have deserted from the navy and who consumed copious quantities of alcohol, which stimulated his passion for "a good foit". He was once found kicking the canteen jukebox to a pulp. As the new RP Sergeant, I had to go and talk him out of it. There was no argument. He fell into the Land Rover without protest and was locked in the Box until justice took its' course on CO's Orders the following day.**

**Not such a gentle and cheerful Irishman was the notorious Sam Cassidy, who really was nasty when pissed. He spent a large part of his career confined to the Box. I hope the years mellowed him. Maybe cirrhosis got him first.**

**Piet Myburgh, the raw Afrikaner who was all legs and surprised the country by winning the Sunday Mail 110 Mile March. He was a really nice fellow with limited powers of communication.**

**Bob Meacham. A fanatical runner, he was always at the front of any foot-powered events. I seem to remember that he held the record for the fastest time "running" down the Cliffsides at Kariba Heights. This started from the Sergeant's Mess, turned at the main road hundreds of feet below and then involved flying back up again. A drunken game at that time was to pitch Dumpy bottles over that precipice and to listen to hear if you had scored a direct hit on a pile of rock down below, he must therefore have risked life and limb to do it. He could easily have found himself singing an octave higher.**

**George Molder. If ever anyone fitted the description "eyes like pissholes in the snow", he was it. He was the guy who put his Bedford RL, AD 808, over the side of a cliff near Kariba.**

**Basil Rushforth was a really mad motorcyclist and scrambles enthusiast. He was the envy of all the lads because he owned a Lotus Cortina GT that went like the bats out of Hell.**

**There was Sam Maulgue, a quiet and simple soul who owned a massive American car and who was sadly killed when it left the road around the Holy Circle and hit a culvert in the ditch outside B Company.**

**One of the people who led me to hate gymnasiums was Len Monson. Built like a compact brick shithouse, with cauliflower ears from years of hitting the canvas as a wrestler, he really gave us the works. On one occasion he ordered "Tallest on the right, shortest on the left! From the right ↻ NUMBER! Odd numbers one pace FORWARD MARCH! Odd numbers ABOUT TURN! PAIR OFF! ↻ now, put on your boxing gloves ↻ you've got 10 minutes to knock the living daylight out of the oke in front of you!!" (He was a fan of the drill instructor's "Gwelo Screech" parade ground commands, which made him sound like a spaniel being kicked in the nuts.)**

**Sergeant "Beaver" Fraser-Kirk, one of the Vehicle Maintenance guys at the MT yard who, when asked by Captain Keith Dyer the MTO, why he was looking a bit rougher than usual, explained, "It was those okes last night Sir. We each bought a crate of 24 Chibulis and when they were finished, somebody bought me a meat pie. I think the thing was vrot!"**

**Interesting buck-teeth were to be found under the moustache of the Irishman, Sergeant Paddy Driver. Also ex British Army, he could have eaten an apple through the strings of a tennis racquet.**

**The Battalion loan shark was Tiny Sevenster, one of the more punch-drunk RP's. This resourceful character could always lend you five quid as long as you paid him ten at the end of the week. He was reputed to have amassed vast fortunes over the years.**

**Another financial whiz kid was Kenny Mills who became a professional investment guru back in Johannesburg in later years.**

**A notorious British Army surplus character was WO11 "Crash" Hannaway, whose nickname was derived from his love of blowing things to bits. He was very good at it and brought this skill to the attention of the authorities by flushing a stick of "808" down the toilet in the men's room of a well-known Gwelo hotel. Legend has it that the ceramic bowl was blown to smithereens whilst the**

**water tank was found swaying about still doggedly attached to its copper pipe, the sewage system was trashed and the whole place was plastered with delicate shades of dark brown. The perpetrator was reported to have retreated back to the bar after pulling the chain of the ancient "crapper" thus sending this lethal turd on its mission of destruction. He was said to have sat there with a cherubic smile on his face, quaffing his beer and occasionally checking his watch, until the moment of eruption when he casually asked, "Wot's going on chaps?" Somehow he remained in the army where his reputation as a bit of a pisscat flourished.**

**While "Crash" Hannaway was our A Company CSM, he blotted his copybook a little more by riding my very rare motorcycle (a 1000cc, vintage V twin 1937 Brough Superior SS100 and which weighed about 700 lbs) straight through the swing doors of the WO's and Sergeants Mess, while wearing a Davy Crockett hat and with a musket slung over his shoulder. Fortunately my bike survived with no damage. Having not yet attained the lofty heights of Sergeant, I could not witness the scene inside the Mess.**

**Jock Press and Tom Douglas who sang the duet "Walking my baby back home" with a professional touch and a lot of feeling. The latter was our platoon commander before going on with a distinguished career in the Life Insurance Industry.**

**The famous Sergeant Ernie Walters was a survivor of the Normandy landings who owned several mementos from that era including Nazi flags and pieces of German uniforms. He also had a set of very poor false teeth of similar vintage, which he sucked at, waggled and left lying on his bedside locker when kipping. He was a Staff Corps cook and went down in history on that fateful day at a camp kitchen in Buhera, when, in a moment of vocal excitement, the teeth fell into a pot of porridge destined for the troop's breakfast. He was seen frantically digging about in the pot with his ladle while turning the air blue with colourful language and spraying copious quantities of saliva from his naked gums.**

**Among the musically talented troopies was another great beer drinker and guitar twanging fellow, Terry Dempsey who later made a hit in the music business by composing, among many others, "Love is a beautiful song". He was not often sober at that time. Castle Breweries shares would have taken a dive if he'd chosen to go on the wagon.**

**Always bickering with each other were the Lloyd-Evans brothers. Lyle and Llewellyn were twins while Denzil, the third brother, was either the principal peace-keeper or s\*\*t-stirrer-in-chief between them. They were fine rugby players and very likeable. At one stage they chipped in to buy a very smart Ford Zephyr, which they shared and fought over regularly. At a camp in Kariba on one occasion the twins were having a "barney". Fists and epithets flew about but, when I tried to break it up, I was attacked by Denzil who seemed to want them to knock the stuffing out of each other and resented the intervention in their family feud.**

**Mike Boone was a fanatical motorcycle racer and scrambles enthusiast. On leaving the military he made a career in the motorcycle business.**

**Lofty Cawthorne was an ex-pugilist serving time as an RP. He was perhaps a little less intellectually challenged than most other Regimental Police and, when held up against the likes of "Punchy" Pretorius, Tiny Sevenster or Jimmy Thurling, could almost have been referred to as "gifted". I later served my stint as RP Sergeant and got to know him a little better.**

**Many troopies developed into ruggedly good looking fellows and broke a lot of hearts around Bulawayo, Salisbury, Gwelo and other places in the Federation where they stopped long enough to fascinate the "birds", "cookies", "gooses" or just generic "fluff". "Crumpet" or "crutch". Some however were rather challenged in terms of appearance. There was a troopie called Warren who was once told by a Drill Sergeant on a parade that he had "a face bearing a close resemblance to the scrotum of an elephant". Another unfortunate was a Private Newman who was informed by the terrifying RSM Reid-Daly that his face "was like a bucket full of arseholes". To my mind, these two were positively good looking compared to the very likeable Private Gouws who was tall but whose height was made up of about 80 % legs, 8 % torso and 12% for the rest. "The rest" was dominantly neck on which could be found a head like an inverted pear, out of which peered a pair of cheerful eyes situated either side of a snotbox modeled (badly) from a statue found in Pompeii. The whole protuberance was clad in an unhealthy yellow skin. Nobody picked on Gouws because he was a**

*true gentleman who would stop at nothing to help his colleagues. I saw him at a Riot Drill once. He looked exactly like a Hermit crab occupying a sort of khaki coloured "shell" (his steel helmet) below which trailed two legs, two long arms and an SLR rifle.*

*There were a few really handsome types in the Battalion included a well-known OC of D Company who once borrowed my boat at Kariba for a jaunt on the lake. This included a degree of "au natural" sunbathing in the company of a couple of nurses. The sunbathing (and perhaps one or two other things) was over-done and treatment was required for sunburn on some unusual parts of their bodies.*

*2nd Lieutenant Harry Harvey is remembered for a time when, as a wet-behind-the-ears "subbie" commanding our platoon on a bloody awful conventional warfare exercise on the Somabula flats, continually stated that, "the book says this / says that / says the other". Sergeant Bob Meacham, and indeed all of us, were getting a bit bored with what this "book" had to say but our subaltern rattled on quoting this tome of great knowledge until Bob had a go at him by saying, "But Sir, we haven't read this f\*\*\*\*\*g book!"*

*Major "Digger" Essex-Clarke was our first A Company OC. He was every inch a soldier and was feared but admired by all us new recruits. He was the one who ultimately decided if we got weekend passes following the dreaded Saturday morning inspections.*

**Individuals Remembered:**  
**Brigadier Digger Essex- Clark DSM**

*'I met Paddy Driver (of the buck teeth) in Vietnam on 1965 when he came and visited me at my battalion, 1RAR ,(Royal Australian Regiment) , attached to the US 173rd Airborne Brigade; when he was serving with the US 101st Airborne Brigade ("Screaming Eagles") . He was in top form and stayed overnight with me discussing our time together in 1RLI. Sadly, he was later killed in action in Vietnam.*

*John Salt was killed tangling with a hippo on the Zambezi. Rittey's description of him is an absolute classic.*

*Harry Harvey is well ensconced in Perth. He transferred to the Rhodesian SAS after I left the RLI.*

*CSM 'Crash' Hannaway was a perpetual nuisance , but an efficient CSM. I had to defend him on a nasty charge but got him off on an absurd technicality; as I did with a few of the lads who deserted to the Congo in search of 'filthy lucre'. The lucre wasn't there ,so they came back. The powers that be charged them with desertion, a charge that intent to remain deserted is paramount, and as they were there In the court room I said that there was no case to answer and got the lads off. If the powers that be had had added a secondary charge of AWOL.*

*I remember well the Harry Crampton incident with the croc, on the river near Buhera. I had warned all of the lads not to go too near the water because the nearby village chief warned me that there was a rogue croc there. But Crampton and Platt decided to be stupid and did so. Harry Ceampton actually got away by gouging out the croc's eyes. He was hurt. He had his inner thigh sliced open in about four deepish slashes and his scrotum half opened and and one testicle was hanging out . So with a saliva wetted matchstick I wound up the tubes and slipped them and the testicle back inside , pinned the lot together with a safety pin, bathed the whole mess in mercurichrome , gave him a large shot of rum, and sent him back to hospital with a very shaken young Platt. Crampton returned as bright as a button but his thigh looked like the map of a busy a railway junction: ~ Clapham or De Aar?*

*Llew Lloyd-Evans later played rugby for Rhodesia and came over from RSA with his family for our R:IRA (Oz) Brisbane reunion.*

**Ernie Walters:**  
**Andy Tattam**

*Ernie was my Uncle and as a child I remember going up to Cranborne with my Mother on a number of parade occasions. She was very proud of him and, with the accompanying domestic aggravation, had to get all decked out in our finest for these events. I was allowed to touch the Regimental mascot once, a Cheetah, which I have never forgotten.*

*He was the quintessential Bachelor Uncle always appearing on family occasions with a couple of pounds as a gift for me and in later years my Brother.*

*He could never remember our names and any direct conversations were interspersed with clouds of smoke, hacking coughs and endless periods of attempted recollection all the while struggling to control his errant set of false teeth. It would have been much easier to say " I'm Andrew Uncle Ernie" but my mother taught us that it was rude to correct people. He always told a good story and afternoons with him were a major entertainment event.*

*In later years he was at KGVI Barracks although I'm not sure with what unit. I used to go and play snooker with him at the Officers Mess, he wasn't an Officer but had done some considerable cabinet work there so was an honorary entrant. Ernie was a three beer drunk and a snooker evening inevitably became a wild scene of missed cues, balls on the floor and baise ripping with increasing attendant hilarity. We usually had to make a timeous departure invariably instigated by myself, before incurring the wrath of the greater mortals lurking therein.*

*He left the Army and bought an old military ambulance that he used to live in, it became iconic around Salisbury and was invariably seen early morning billeted at the Kingsway bus terminal where he used to make use of the ablution block. The BSAP were evidently a major aggravation to Ernie as he was always being woken up and moved on, he habitually produced a torrent of invective and abuse towards them and they eventually left him alone as dangerous when roused.*

*Ernie died suddenly of a heart attack in the early 70's.*

**Brigadier Digger Essex-Clark DSM**

**A WOOLENDALE RANGE INCIDENT - MILES MacDONALD**

*In the early days of the RLI we did much of our rifle, LMG and 3.5" Rocket Launcher live firing on the bleak and dusty Woolendale rifle range outside Bulawayo. What ranges were not bleak and dusty?*

*Years later at an RLIRA reunion dinner in Sydney (Anzac Day reunion 2007) I was told by Miles Macdonald that after I had been coaching my men during a range practice being controlled by Corporal Harry Crampton, a fellow Australian built like a proverbial brick dunny or 'PK' in the Rhodesian vernacular. I was standing above Miles with Harry Campton on my left, when Miles turned and looked me in the eye and said: 'May I ask a question, Sir?' 'Of course lad', I had replied; and with that he asked: 'Are there any small Australians Sir? Miles said that I had replied: 'You're looking at one, Son!' Miles then told me that he'd told the story many times since.*

**1 Indep, Wankie, 1967**

*Eight of us were sent to a tracking course run by the famous Willy de Beer. It was early days and the insurgents were living below ground in the Zambesi Valley, this evidently had an effect on the movement patterns of resident animals and we were to be schooled in detecting these changes.*

*Somehow a picture of accomodation, regular meals and classroom tuition was set in our minds. The reality was a long RL trip into the middle of the Game reserve done in the late evening as we were not to be seen and upset the tourists. The vehicle eventually stopped in the middle of a flat area about 500 metres off the road and we were told that this open patch of ground was going to be home for the next two weeks.*

*Although we were reasonably experienced soldiers by this time, the concentration of wildlife produced an unrelenting cacophany of shrieks, howls, growls and rustling throughout the first night that had the townies among us pulling the sleeping bags a little tighter around us.*

*The next morning we met Capt de Beer, he had been attacked by a lioness some years before and had forced his hand down it's throat, his gun bearer who couldn't load or fire the weapon came to his assistance. In the fracas Capt de Beer managed to bolt load the weapon with his other hand and pull the trigger while the bearer was pointing the weapon. Later on in the course at our request he showed us the mass of scarring to his chest and stomach from this encounter, unbelievable that anyone would have the presence of mind to orchestrate his own survival while that sort of damage was being done.*

*Our first lesson was to recognise the behaviour of Elephants when approached by man and to identify the difference between a mock charge and the real thing. Evidently while the ears are out wide and there is much noise and to do this was a mock charge and the beast would hopefully stop just short of it's selected victim and in addition either kick dust or spit on you just to add insult to injury. The real thing supposedly was ears flat back, no noise and trunk tucked up, we were matter of factly informed that because of it's speed flight was futile, and that in any case flight from a mock charge may encourage the animal to change it's mind and administer the coup de grace. There then followed a discourse on the futility of shooting an angry Elephant anywhere other than in the knee. Awefully all of our defensive options involved standing still.*

*Later that first day we were taken out on a practical and told to leave our weapons behind, I instantly felt naked in the extreme. We came upon a small heard of Elephants and as predicted with some noisy encouragement from our mentor the herd coralled with trunks in the air sensing our location. Two large cows were obviously in charge and while one marshalled the young the other came our way and very soon came thundering and trumpeting angrily towards us. As one we turned and fled clearing large and small obstacles in our way with olympic hurdler speed and efficiency.*

*I'm not sure of the distance we covered but it was considerable, we were later joined by a very angry de Beer but managed to convince him that if we had our weapons it would be possible for us to control the urge to bolt. Happily we were able to make good on this undertaking.*

*Ablutions were conducted at sunset in a small pan nearby which seemed to have crocodiles of algal bloom proportions. We managed to find an area that shelved out a short distance to ankle depth and bathing consisted of a high speed entry into the water, a quick roll with the application of soap and a speedy exit.*

*Among the other stories Capt De Beer was also reputed to have gone in amongst a herd of Elephants and pulled a tail. Returning from the pan one evening we came across a small herd of Elephants blocking our route back to camp. To our horror rather than skirt around these massive rumbling shapes in the near dark, Willy chose to go quietly up to them and very gently asked them to move along. Having only just mastered daylight encounters this new seemingly suicidal act had us forming into an embarassingly intimate group, convinced we were about to be set upon by some as yet unseen angry Elephant cow. However they eventually slowly moved along with a lot of deep rumblings and a stealth surprising for such a large animal.*

*We were promised some fresh meat on our last night and left to go and shoot an Impala, we found a male a short time later grazing about 100 metres from us. Expecting some high powered weapon with a scope to be produced for this distance I was amazed to see Willy with a standard bolt action open sight rifle, at the time I thought that this was going to be ugly and potentially embarassing but with a single shot the animal went straight down, shot through the head.*

*An amazing period in our young lives and a privelege to have met such a naturalist.*



**Mike Buchanan Congo Border, early 60's:**

**Mike and some others were on OP duty overlooking the Congo Border from Zambia (then Northern Rhodesia). He noticed a suspicious looking individual making his way up the hill towards them carrying some sort of metallic object, youthful enthusiasm told him this was a weapon in the hands of the enemy.**

**Thinking that he may have some shamwaris nearby and that a shot might alert them, he decided to administer some cold steel and fixed bayonet.**

**The individual concerned disappeared into some vegetation near the OP position, Mike crept up within range and sprang upon the general area, among much screaming as he was about to administer the coup de grace he realised the poor unfortunate was doing nothing more than releasing a sadza snake.**

**The tribesman broke and ran screaming for mercy, leaving behind a pair of bicycle handle bars and Mike's reputation in tatters.**

**Moral of the story, when you shit in the bush always try to carry a wheel and face uphill.**

**THE OTHER SIDE OF INDEPENDENCE COIN (Please read and see what the UK were planning for Rhodesia)  
Bill Teague Writes:-**

**Interesting to read all the personal memories of where people were when UDI was declared. It brought to mind this account of what was going on behind the scenes, which I thought that you may find of interest? I cannot recall for sure where I obtained it from, and perhaps you have already seen it??**

**British military intervention post UDI.**

**Initial deployment was by No 51 (rifle) Squadron of the RAF Regiment to secure the airfield at Ndola, in November 1965. This was then established as a logistics 'air head', and joint force HQ. No 29 with 16 Javelin all weather fighters subsequently arrived, along with L/70 40mm Bofors guns and Tigercat missiles.**

**The role of 29 Sqn was to protect Zambian airspace, and specifically the oil air bridge into the country. They frequently flew parallel flights along the Zambian border with RRAF Canberra's on the other.**

**It was not a happy venture, two Gunners of 51 Squadron deserted to Rhodesia. They were subsequently recruited as trainee firemen on the Railways. There were a number of disciplinary incidents involving Army and RAF personnel in Zambia, these concerning their doubts about the potential of active service against 'their kith and kin'.**

**In the December 1965, a company group of the 1st Battalion, The Gloucestershire Regiment was airlifted to Bechuanaland to guard the BBC broadcasting station. This station commenced a propaganda campaign against the Salisbury regime, an old friend who was serving in the revamped 'C' Squadron at the time has stated that the unit did 'war game' operations to role play the destruction of the transmitter and towers. This small garrison was reinforced by a logistical element that had war stocks of vehicles and ammunition, and necessary stores and spares for two infantry battalions brought from the British stores depots in Kenya. This commitment ceased in August 1967 on the creation of the nation of Botswana, all stores, vehicles (including Ferret scout cars) and equipment were handed over to the new Botswana Defence Force.**

**The RAF finally left Zambia in 1967.**

**An invasion of Rhodesia was at a very high level of planning in 1966. This was to involve the use of 3rd Division (the army's Strategic Reserve) as the main part of the invasion force. Using 16th Parachute Brigade, and 5th and 19th Airborne Infantry Brigades, and the Parachute Battalion Group from Bahrain (1PARA).**

**The Royal Navy was to provide a task force in the Beira Strait's using the aircraft carriers HMS Eagle and Centaur, with Buccaneer strike aircraft and Sea Vixen fighters, with Scimitar aircraft supplying air-refueling (both vessels air squadrons had been reinforced), HMS Bulwark and Albion (both commando carriers) where to deploy each a Royal Marine Commando and it's support Wessex helicopter squadron (total of 28 aircraft) ashore at Mtwara in Tanzania. With the troops and their vehicles then being airlifted by RAF Argosy and Beverley transports to Livingstone in Zambia, the helicopters then self deploying through Malawi and Zambia.**

**The intention being to deploy the three parachute battalions and support units, four infantry battalions (19th Brigade, and the third infantry bn in 16th Bde) and a armoured reconnaissance regiment (with Saladin armoured cars and Ferret**

Scout Cars) by air into Zambia using RAF VC10, Belfast (both brand new), Comet and Britannia aircraft, also civil Britannia and Boeing 707 aircraft from BOAC and British Caledonia airways. The USAF (32 C130 Hercules, eight Globemaster and eight military versions of the 707) and Royal Canadian Air Force (which was involved in the oil airlift) (with four C130 and seven Canadian variants of the Britannia) would also give major support.

RAF Victor bombers of No's 100 and 139 Squadrons, operating from Eastleigh in Kenya, were to bomb the RRAF bases of New Sarum and Thornhill runways - each having four aircraft carrying 35 1,000 pounder bombs. At the same time troops of 22nd SAS Regiment were to seize the civil airports at Salisbury and Bulawayo by a coup de main, this followed by parachute insertion of a battalion group into both locations from Beverley and Argosy transports (the third Para battalion to remain as a mobile reserve), the four infantry bn's then to flown into both cities. Centres of government were to be taken over, along with important utilities. With the first objective in Salisbury being the Rhodesia Broadcasting Corporation studios, with a Royal Signals team specially trained by the BBC to operate the broadcasting facilities, and a PSYOPS team to broadcast a constant message to the population. Part of the messages being in Shona and Sindebele as well as English for people to tune into the broadcasts from Bechuanaland.

Kariba was to be seized by coup de main based on The Guards Parachute Company, with heli-borne elements of 40 Commando seizing the airfield, bridge and power generators. The Armoured Reconnaissance regiment was to cross over the Kariba bridge making a road advance to Salisbury, 42 Commando and elements of 40 were to leap frog down the road using the Wessex helicopters and RAF Andover and Twin Pioneer aircraft. The Fleet Air Arm strike aircraft were to act as a cab rank close air support over the two main operational sites.

5th Bde was to be flown in direct from staging areas in Malta, and the RAF base at El Adem in Libya, and the USAF Idris base in the same. They then to be followed by the artillery, armoured and engineer units of 3rd Division in a infantry role. These units were to act as holding units in Salisbury and Bulawayo. The initial strike units from Zambia and Bechuanaland then to spread out throughout the country.

The garrison in Bechuanaland to be reinforced to two battalions (not from 3rd Division) was to advance up the road to Plumtree then to Bulawayo. This to be a BETA Force.

The plan required the use of all RAF air transports available (even a squadron of obsolete Hastings aircraft was to be used a freighters bringing in supplies from Eastleigh) with maintenance being a major concern. At this time there was still a substantial logistic support system in place in Kenya - all gone by 1967.

The rational behind the operation was for large numbers of lightly armed infantry to be on the ground, saturating the urban areas, to maintain control of the population, disarm military and police, as well as the civilian population. Apart from the armoured cars and some 120mm WOMBAT recoilless anti-tank guns, no heavy weapons to be taken. A colonial administration then to assume power backed up by some 1500 British civil police.

At the time we had large scale maps issued showing Rhodesia, all the names changed to that of British garrison towns, Winchester, Aldershot, Colchester, Portsmouth, Munster, Berlin, Singapore etc. Fooled no one!

This information released in 1998 following the 30 year rule (1968).

There was much opposition to any attempt to bring Rhodesia under control; within 16th Para at the time there was tremendous ill feeling. An example of the dislike in the operation was a Fleet Air Arm Lt Commander commanding a Scimitar aircraft air-refuelling flight; he married to a lady from Gwelo, and refused to take part in the build up to the operation.

It took the arrival of Major General Tony Deane-Drummond as GOC 3rd Division in the autumn of 1966 to bring the invasions plans to a halt when he confronted the Labour Prime Minister and Minister for Defence with the concerns of the officers and men, as well as the logistical problems confronting the operation.

#### **Land Mine in the Kandeya:**

Deploying from a Keep early one morning, my MAG gunner Willy van Rensberg and myself were seated at the back of the RL back to back with the other two members of my callsign, unhappily as it would transpire we were accompanied by some recently reclassified and enthusiastic S cats on vehicle guard.

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*In the early morning darkness the vehicle exited the keep gates, it had just been fitted with the new 3 way break quick release harness, we travelled unfettered for a short time before flicking away the daily heart starter and buckling up.*

*Seconds later there was an immense white flash and an ear splitting crack at the front followed by a prolonged sensation of smooth travel and considerable quiet which I can only put down to being largely airborne and in the eye of the shock wave.*

*After what appeared to be an eternity the remains of the vehicle which had been travelling at some speed dug into the road and everything that wasn't bolted down took off into the inky blackness ahead of us, including my rifle, Willy's MAG and it's belt of ammunition. The snap of our still moving bodies against the harness was stupefying but it was milliseconds before we were free and scrambling off the back and up the road to avoid any possible AP's that may have been placed in the bush around.*

*Unfortunately elements of the vehicle guard detail had managed to retain their weapons and despite the lack of incoming fire proceeded to generously spray our immediate environment with reckless enthusiasm. We now came bolting back down the dirt road and covered beneath the now skyward pointing rear of the vehicle for cover, after much bellowing the fusillade of fire subsided and I was able to regain control of the situation.*

*As the conversations started up we realised we were wet from the water in the RL tyres, our faces were completely blackened by the blast and only white teeth were visible in the early morning twilight, nervous sniggers turned into gales of laughter until Willy said "what about Pete" who was his mate and the driver.*

*We rushed to where the front of the vehicle had been, the entire front end and Cab was missing, the front left wheel was gone and the Engine and Gearbox hanging drunkenly in it's void. There was a chilling groaning and we expected the worst, we could just make out a human form hanging limp in a foetal position in the seat and it's armour plate, Willy shouted "Pete, Pete are you OK" and miraculously out of the blackness came the reply "Ya" to which he replied "will you for Fuck sake stop making that noise". We cut him down from the harness and unbelievably he only had a small cut on the leg.*

*We started to recover weapons in the early light and found the jagged remains of the Cab some 20 metres away in the bush, it was a miracle that Pete was not decapitated as it peeled off the front of the RL, his Mess tins and Magazines were flattened by the concussion in the Cab.*

*The RLI wrecking team from Darwin said it was the worst they had ever seen, evidently boosted on the left front wheel.*

*Pete was driving again the same day.*

Norman Travers 1921 - 2010



*Only the elephants could have delivered such a moving tribute to Norman Travers. Shortly before he was buried last month on his farm, Imire, in eastern Zimbabwe, two 40-year-old bulls arrived unbidden, wandered through the crowd of 250 mourners, lumbered up to the coffin and sniffed it, long and intently.*

*When the last spadeful of earth had been cast on the grave, they stood together on the heap of ground he lay beneath. Three times in the ensuing week, they returned and stood by the grave. Travers's family is convinced they were mourning, for elephants are known to have a fascination with death.*

*Travers was an eccentric Englishman, a war hero, an inspiring community leader and a lover of wildlife whose affection for his elephants, rhinos, lions, leopards, hyenas and warthogs was as close as it was for his children. His numerous innovations in breeding, training and establishing techniques to enhance their survival drew scorn from experts but he was always proved right.*

*His three sons and daughter grew up in a household where his animals, including a half-ton juvenile rhino, wandered in and out of the house, ate up the flower beds and shared breakfast with the family on the lawn on Sundays. Most days he and his wife would go for walks with Cassius the lion (named after Cassius Clay, later Muhammad Ali), Bere the hyena, Dudley the warthog, Potter the otter, two labradors, a dachshund and a cat.*

*Cassius was barred from the sunset strolls after Travers noticed the lion slaving at the farm workers' children they passed. Cassius' favourite treat was being fed ice cream from a bowl by Travers, but despite that, died when he was well into his twenties, advanced years for a lion. His pelt ended up on the Travers' lounge wall.*

*Rough-and-tumbles on the lawn with their pets often resulted in serious accidents. His wife, Gill, had a chunk of her calf taken out by a pet hyena. His son John nearly lost an eye to the swipe of a leopard. Cassius once tried to "serve" Travers, leaving him badly bruised and scratched.*

*But he was best known for being the first person to prove that African elephants, hitherto regarded as too dangerous and unpredictable, could in fact be domesticated. He developed a rhino breeding programme that doubled the rate of their unusually drawn-out reproduction. He pioneered the first buffalo herd free from foot-and-mouth disease that is endemic in the species.*

*Norman Meckiffe Travers was born in 1921 in what is now North Korea, where his mother, Amelia, ran a seaside hotel. His father used to hunt Siberian tigers before he abandoned the family for good when Travers was 6.*

*The boy was put on a boat to England to attend school in Tunbridge Wells. While back in Korea on holiday in the 1930s he was interned for three years with his mother by the Japanese during their annexation of the peninsula.*

*He joined the British Army in the war and rose to command a tank regiment. In a battle with a German Panzer unit in Italy, one of his tanks took a direct hit, and Travers plunged into the blazing vehicle to pull one of the men out, an act for which he was awarded the Military Cross.*

*After the war he joined thousands of British veterans looking for a better life in Rhodesia, where he worked on a farm in the rolling hills of the Wedza district, about 110km east of Salisbury (now Harare). In 1950 he bought Imire nearby and began farming tobacco, maize and cattle.*

*In the late 1970s, during the country's independence civil war, he was awarded the Legion of Merit award from the Rhodesian government for holding together the small white farming community at Wedza while under frequent attack from black nationalist guerrillas.*

*Around the same time, bored with conventional agriculture and longing for the presence of wild animals, Travers decided to branch out into game farming, and bought a herd of impala. They thrived and in ten years the farm was fully stocked with waterbuck, kudu, sable and eland as well.*

*In 1980 he took on an orphaned baby elephant from a wildlife sanctuary in Harare. As Nzou began to grow out of the confines of the Travers' yard he decided to train her, defying the conventional wisdom that the African elephant was safe only behind a solid stockade.*

*The Indian mahouts's technique - of subduing elephants with painful jabs behind the ear from a sharp iron rod - was anathema to him. Instead, he used kindness, affection and rewards of bucketfuls of horse cubes to overcome the animal's mistrust of humans and to condition it to heed commands willingly. Soon Nzou was taking tourists for rides on her back, and Travers, simultaneously with a separate project on a farm north of Harare, could claim to be the first to domesticate the species.*

*He put Nzou and a bull elephant in a large paddock to breed, alongside a herd of buffalo. The bull died, and Travers stumbled onto another nuance of animal behaviour - that elephants, rather like Konrad Lorenz's geese, could take on the identity of species other than their own. Nzou adopted the buffalo and became their matriarch.*

*She has continued to protect the bovines fiercely since then, and has killed 13 buffalo bulls who tried to separate females from the herd. When a bull pinned down one of Imire's guides and was on the point of goring him, Nzou came to the man's rescue and crushed the bull under her knees.*

*Ironically, Travers learnt of elephant behaviour close at hand from hunting expeditions since the 1950s in the Zambezi Valley. With curious detachment, he shot his last elephant at the age of 72. He argued that keeping down elephant populations was a vital strategy for their conservation in the wild.*

*In the 1980s, when Zimbabwe's black rhino population crashed in an onslaught of poachers seeking rhino horn, Travers recognised the threat to the suddenly endangered species' gene pool and decided to set up a breeding programme. Most experts derided him, insisting that a species from the dry heat of the Zambezi valley could not possibly survive in the freezing winters of Wedza. Travers' answer was the 700-year-old cave paintings of the San people (Bushmen) near his farm and the many rhino depicted in them. If they were abounding there then, they could survive there now. He got approval for his project.*

*However, the two-and-a-half year weaning period for a baby rhino - after gestation of 15 months - would be too slow to stabilise the population. Travers applied the basic barnyard precedent of early separation of cattle calves from their mothers. He took baby rhinos from their mothers at a year to be bottle-fed, and had the mother back in oestrus within months. In 20 years Imire's three female rhinos produced 14 calves to restock private and national reserves, twice as fast as other rhino breeding programmes.*

*Travers also pioneered the first introduction of wild buffalo on to farmland in 1980. Until then, buffalo were natural carriers of foot-and-mouth disease and had been restricted to corridors on the country's extremities, outside a foot-and-mouth disease barrier. The African buffalo is one of the "big five" large mammals prized by big-game hunters, and its absence from private wildlife ranches in the rest of the country was a drawback to the industry.*

*Scientists at a research station near Harare, however, had developed the nucleus of a herd bred free of the pathogen and needed to test their hypothesis that buffalo could live on ordinary cattle-ranching land. Travers took them, and Imire soon became a breeding centre for foot-and-mouth-free buffalo too.*

*Travers is survived by his wife, Gillian, two sons and a daughter.*

*Norman Travers, MC, farmer and game conservationist, was born on October 10, 1921. He died of a heart attack on March 18, 2010, aged 88*

*joined the Rhodesian Woman Services after my fiancé, Sgt Peter White was killed. At his funeral I found that just being with the Commando guys and talking with them gave me great comfort. That was when I decided that I would join up. When I did join my request was that I wanted to be posted to 1 CDO, The Rhodesian Light Infantry. If that did not happen I would leave. It helps to have friends in high places, as I knew the officer in charge of the RWS and also Major Matkovich of 1Cdo. The rest is history.*

*I did not have an easy time when I first arrived at the CDO as they did not think that the RLI Commando was a place for a lady. I also felt that they thought it was not cool to have a woman posted there. It took me ages to get used to the way things worked in the army. We only did about five minutes of training in the RWS which was mainly Drill, Weapons, Military Law and learning the rank structure. The worst part for me was having to salute. I found it very embarrassing.*

*We did not have any camouflage uniforms that were made for woman, so we had to wear what the guys wore and just make do. We eventually got dresses, shoes and hats. I don't think that the instructors quite knew what to do with us, initially we had no rank it was Miss or Mrs. Some of the woman loved playing up to the instructors, like resting their head on their shoulders while they were trying to show them how to hold a pistol.*

*When I arrived at the Cdo, I found that not much had been done in the office and I set about getting the place set up according to regulations, made sure all the amendments to the amendments of the Rules and Regulations were up to date, and also made sure every guy had a will, etc. Quite a few of the foreign guys did not like to give any information as far as that went. I think many had dubious pasts. My best was getting all the medical things up to date. I would take great delight when they had muster parade in the morning in dishing out Malaria tablets. I would have someone follow me with a bucket of water. I would have a cup and a container of tablets and stand in front of each guy and make him swallow them. They could not object because the Officer Commanding (OC) was standing there, watching. I also helped to give them their vaccinations at the camp hospital. That caused a bit of alarm when I had to scratch their arm and blow the drops into the scratch. Then came the TABT's (Tetanus, Paratyphoid A and B, and typhoid). Because they moaned so much I had to have mine first in front of them, afterwards they took great delight in hitting me on that arm. I had one Colour Sergeant that was so petrified of needles I had to get the medic to come to the Cdo with the jab and get an officer to order him to stand still. Well? I had to tick all the boxes didn't I?*

*I hated using the radio as we had not been trained in voice procedure and I was petrified I would say something wrong. They used to love trying to get me to have a conversation with them, but my main words were "roger" and "negative". Once the OC asked me to order some flowers for his wife, which I did, and when I reported back to him, telling him I had done it, he said "describe them for me". I declined. They loved to embarrass me. The one day I got a radio message asking me to send out 6 desert lilies. Not wanting to sound stupid I said "roger that", then proceeded to the CQ store to ask what the hell was a desert lily? Well! Did they have a good laugh?*

*Some of my other duties included, getting the guys' cars serviced, sending flowers to wives and girlfriends and I was even allowed to sit in the officers car park and run the 2lc's new car for a few minutes once a week. I also had the privilege of taking their film spools in to be developed at OK Bazaars. Not knowing what was on them one particular spool I left to be developed was picked up as usual when it was ready and I hung on to it for when the "particular" person (no names, no pack drill) that it belonged to came back from the bush. What I didn't know was that OK Bazaars (or any developing place for that matter) reported stuff which they didn't think was appropriate to*

*the Army. In the mean time I had a nasty visit from SB (Special Branch). I didn't think that I could lie the way I did. They wanted to know if the photos belonged to me and who were the guys in the photo's. I just said "No they were not mine. I work with over a hundred guys how the hell was I supposed to know all their names." They pushed and pushed but I did not tell them the names of the people in the photo's. The pictures were of a little machine that got attached to a certain part of the anatomy and a handle was "gaaiered"(Rhodesianism for "turned vigorously"). I think you know what I am talking about!*

*Nothing was sacred as far as the guys were concerned. I was not allowed to be in a bad mood, or I would be told, "Oh! It must be Red Flag day!" One day, a guy ran his hand up my legs and said "I see you haven't shaved today." I was even mocked about my moustache. My reply to that was, "At least I can grow one." I was very shy when I joined and if I had let them get to me my life would have been hell.*

*The one day I was ambushed by two Cdo Ouens on the front verandah and along piece of mutton cloth was pulled over my head and tied at my feet and head, they then proceeded to drag me up and down the corridor finishing up in the shower block under a cold shower - Excellent fun!*

*Another time I was working in the Cdo garden when one of them turned the hose on me, Padre Wood happened to drivepast and saw this, swung into the Cdo drive and shouted at them demanding, "What are you doing to her?" Then he proceeded to do the same thing. They thought that was great. I also had condoms put over the exhaust of my car, and as I left the back gate and was driving down the road they exploded, I nearly ended up in a ditch I got such a fright.*

*When it was my birthday they blew up lots of condoms and would decorate my office with them, or I might find a frog pinned to the bulletin board that was still doing breast stroke, or a dead bird hanging off my car aerial.*

*Yet I did get my own back in other ways though. I am sure they must have wondered why they had not heard from those lovely ladies like Zilla and her python for a long while? Well everytime I got a card from them asking if they could come to the bush and perform I would throw it in the bin. After all they had enough frustrations I just figured they didn't need anymore. Padre Wood agreed with me too.*

*I really tried to make the Cdo garden nice and in order to stop the guy sparking the trucks on the grass at the back of the Cdo, I would string wire between the trees that were growing there. Did that stop them? No! RSM Springer happened to walk past one day and must have heard me muttering and said, "The only way you will keep those buggers off the lawn my dear, is to plant some land mines."As I was saying before, I was quite shy and naïve. Once, before a couple of the Ouens went out to the bush, I was given some pot plants to look after, you know, "Aag Dawn please man! Can you water these plants for us till we get back?" Here I was thinking, "Aah! Isn't that nice? They are also interested in gardening!" Till I found out what the plants were!!!!*

*Another time I was walking along the corridor on the top floor of the Cdo block and as I came round the corner there were a group of them moking a joint, I shouted, "What the hell are you doing?" and ran off. I believe one of the guys got such a fright he nearly swallowed the whole joint.*

*I managed to get all my truck licenses mainly to have an excuse to go out to the bush because I loved it there and if they needed anything I could take it out. My instructor, Stu Hammond, made sure that I knew every gear and lever in those vehicles, especially the 2.5 (a two and a half ton bush terrain vehicle - also referred to as the Unimog) and the Land Rover. I was put through all sorts of tests including taking a 2.5 up this steep hill and when it came time to drive down all the guys in the back jumped out as they did not think they would survive the trip. Not like most of you guys if you had a civvy license - you just drove round the block and got your Army one. I loved going to the bush.*

*I had my other office in the back of a 2.5 which I shared with another clerk. In some op area's we had a room that was used as an office. It was quite a challenge initially, as they did not have ablution facilities for women. What I would do is get Dave Firth to clear the men's showers first and then he would have to stand guard at the door. On this one occasion he did the clearing bit but*



*when I walked in I noticed that this one door was closed. Thinking maybe it was out of order or something I went in and did what I had to do and as I opened my door, the one that was closed opened and this Air Force officer walked out. I don't know who was more embarrassed. I could have killed Dave. When the WVS moved into the op areas, they built showers and toilets, but I don't think they liked me using their facilities, I was one of those rough RWS chicks and being with the RLI was even worse.*

*When I did go out to the bush with the guys and they all stopped for a pee parade and watered the tyres on the truck, I had to go into the bush with an escort - just in case of gooks. I had just got my trousers down round my knees this one time when someone came charging through the bush shouting. I didn't need to go after that I got such a fright. Hilarious!!! I even had to use a toilet at some munt hotel (I think it was on the way to Marewa) and all it was, was a hole in the floor.*

*I got to experience a lot of things in the bush. I was taught to fire the 20mm cannon in the Kcar. When the guys heard it was me up in the Kcar, they all took cover. Once, while deployed in Shabani, I was up in the Kcar again and we were flying round this dam which had a large bush growing in it, but I couldn't quite get the sights lined up. I said to Flames, the chopper tech, "I know, I will just aim the barrel in the general direction of the bush". He nearly had a fit as there was a munt (local villager) fishing on the side of the dam. Anyway, they brought the chopper down and put a tin can on the LZ and made me line the sights up properly.*

*That same bush trip we heard that we were going to be mortared that night and for some reason I was put in a mortar position with one other guy. My only training on this event was the instruction, "Dawn, for shit sake! Make sure you drop the shell down the tube the right way." I found out afterwards the guy I was with was gay, What a team!!!*

*The OC at that time was not chuffed with the time it took the guys to get ready for a call out, so he was doing some timing runs. I asked if I could also do it and got the look - Anyway, after they had done a couple of runs, he shouted at me to get my kit and get on the chopper. I didn't have any webbing so I had to borrow that and an FN rifle. Needless to say, the webbing was so big it was hanging down around my knees. We took off and had to deplane and do a sweep line through the bush. Of course, being gentlemen I was not the first off the chopper, was I? - And by the time it came for me to jump, we were quite high off the ground, I jumped and ended up with my knees round my ears. Then, while we were sweeping through the bush, one of the guys fell in this hole. That was me finished! I got the giggles and couldn't stop.*

*I tried not to have too much to do with the officers as the guys would give me a hard time. Again the same Shabani bush trip this Air Force officer wanted to take me out to dinner in town, but he was so scared the guys would give him the gears so he went and asked them for permission ...*

*I also used to fly in the Daks with them when there was a call out, or I would always stand on the side of the runway and say goodbye to them. If I was in the dak I never spoke to them until they spoke to me, it was very tense in there and each guy had his way of dealing with what was about to happen. I would see these big eyes, face black with cammo cream, some would hum to themselves or tap their foot, if they asked, I would adjust whatever was bugging them, then they would be out the door and I would wave to them as they went down.*

*My closest encounter with a contact was near Crooks corner, we had landed on this runway and were waiting for the chopper to uplift them, it was very hot and we were lying under the wings of the plane and I was using a water bottle as a pillow. Next thing the choppers arrived and they took the Ouens off. I flew back to Chiredzi with the Dak right over the contact area, it was amazing.*

*I have been to quite a few of the op areas; Mt Darwin, Mtoko, Rutenga, Malapati, and loved going to all of them. It was in Rutenga that I got tick bite fever. I thought my eye balls were going to fall out of my head, I was so sick. I had to go to the medic for muti (medicine). Of course the bite had to be under my one bum cheek which meant I had to drop the trousers again. This poor little guy that was helping the medic was so embarrassed. He also had to hold a blanket over the window so no body could see in. That bush trip was quite eventful. We had one guy die from a fractured skull. One of the officers wanted to burn down the TF (Territorial Force) bar because he was drunk and did not like their CSM, he had been very rude to me and Capt Codyre would throw stones at him when he patrolled around at night.*

**Coonie Marnaweck thought it would be great fun to hold the guys down and give them huge lovebites on their necks, he also grabbed me and gave me one the size of a golfball .As you can imagine the guys were fed up as they were going back to their wives and girlfriends in a couple of days. My then boyfriend had left the Cdo and was doing a call up with a TF company in Bindura. I had to go to a court marshal there and was so scared he would see this thing that I put a hugeplaster on my neck. He found out and was not amused.**

**When B-b-b-basil Dippenaar was with 1 Cdo he used to drive me insane. He would follow me around when we were in the bush with a loud hailer and make all these rude noises. He had this one saying that used to get up my nose, which was "We are getting up at the crack of Dawn". We were in the Mt. Darwin pub and he did it again so I threw a beer bottle at his head. Lucky for him it hit the top of the door frame as he was walking out.**

**When I stayed in the bush I had my own tent. It was bright orange and blue. I loved it because I could zip up the room inside and no creepy crawlies could get in, I had a thing about scorpions getting into my clothes. We were in Fort Victoria this on time and the guys were bored waiting for something to happen. They had tied three tents together and had been sitting in the tents burning cardboard. They thought they had put it all out and left the tents. A while later the tents caught fire and my tent was right next to theirs. We all had to take cover as gas cylinders and rounds were going off and flying through the air, we couldn't even get near it to put it out. The Air Force thought they would be quite helpful and try to put the fire out with sand bag inners filled with water. They had a small plane and flew over the scene letting fly with the water bombs. The only thing was that they hit my tent. I was so angry as it made a huge hole in it and I had mud all over my kit. They came round after to see us and with sheepish looks asked if everything was ok. I gave them what for and told them they had to fix the tent, which they did. We lost quite a few weapons in that fire.**

**I was often asked if I was scared when I went out to the bush? My answer to that was that nothing had happened to me so I did not know what to be scared of. Plus, when I was with about 90 guys armed to the teeth, nothing phased me. All I needed was my trusty Uzi and my 9mm - The only thing was that at target practice my groupings always seemed to end up in the crotch area. It must be a woman thing.**

**I learnt quite a lot from the guys as far as how to do things in the army. Our RWS training left much to be desired. We were only meant to take over from the guys in the office, but that never seemed to happen. I had a couple of exercises with the RWS while I was in the Cdo which I had to go on. Anyway, the first was going out the back of New Sarum and doing jungle lane, not that we knew what that was. On the way there, we were in the back of the trucks, when we got ambushed, it was quite embarrassing really. The guys that ambushed us threw smoke grenades and fired blanks at us, all I could hear were screams and things like, "Throw me my handbag", as the girls jumped out the side of trucks, some onto the backs of other girls. They then tried to teach us the fundamentals of jungle lane, but this one Air Force Sergeant kept throwing thunder flashes at us. He thought it was great fun. He got on my nerves so much I said to him, "If you do that again, my instinct will be to turn round and shoot you."**

**The other exercise was not much better, we were trucked out to the SelousScouts area. Driving down the Lomagundi road, we would get waves from the civvies as we went past them. Thinking that we were guys, their mouths would drop open when they realised that there were birds on the back of the trucks.**

**We had to set up camp for the weekend. Now, if we had been told how to do this and many other things, we may have learnt something. We were given bivies, radios, plus other kit which most of us didn't know what to do with. And of course the women officers had tents and stretchers, we, the rankers,slept on the floor. I found the whole thing to be a joke from start to finish.**

**We had to do PT in burnt grass at 05.00 hrs, bearing in mind some of the women there were in their 40's and older. We had to do drill and had this cocky little Sergeant that thought she was God. The one day we were taken out into the bush and told when the driver slams on breaks we must debus and sweep through the bush. Once again the screams happen as the driver slams the breaks on so hard, we all end up sliding into the cab area and once we were untangled leapt over the side. What they didn't tell us is when you do a sweep line you do have to go over the gomo (Mountain) not around it !**

**The first night there we had to do guard duty, none of us had done that either - Anyway, during the night this drunk Selous Scouts soldier comes staggering along till he heard "Halt! Who goes there!?" His arms shot up in the air in disbelief, probably thought, "What the hell are these madams doing here"? Anyway - We marched him out of the camp much to his relief.**

**Then the best of all we had to do a route march. A route march is quite interesting when you don't know how to read a map. We started near the Banket railway line, then we had to proceed to an undisclosed location and report to the people hiding there. Now my map reading knowledge is to turn the map in the direction we are going and try and pin point features. Apparently our team was the first to arrive at this hidden location. I know this because my mother was there and saw us, but for some reason we kept on going, probably because we couldn't find them.**

**While we were doing this march, I hear our female officer shout "Takeover! Enemy approaching!" I thought "What the hell is she talking about?" Anyway - About a km away are two munts (Locals) walking along a path, so I said to her "Ma'am, if those were gooks (Communist Terrorist) we would have been dead long ago."**

**Then we had to pretend we were crossing this road and there were Land mines buried there. We had to slide on our stomach with a stick and poke the ground to look for them. I can't even tell you what was going through my mind then. We had our Uzi's with us but we were not allowed to put the magazine in. We had to carry it in our pocket. After half a day of walking it wears a hole in the material. The radios didn't work properly because of the rock in the area. We could hear them but they couldn't hear us, which suited me just fine. You know the part where I said I learnt things from the guys? Well when we were given the radio and battery separate and expected to know what to do with it, that's when I could say I knew what to do. It was getting on into the afternoon and we still didn't find this place, I had enough. A Scouts girl and I told the officer that we were going to find our way back to the main road and go to the Banket garage to phone for the transport to pick us up. We got to a dirt road that ran parallel to the railway line and flagged down this old zephyr - and another embarrassing moment coming up - which happened to be driven by an RAR (Rhodesian African Rifles) guy that was on RnR. To make matters worse, when he stopped his car, we had to push it to get it going again and the cheeky bugger mocked us because we were lost. We arrived at the Banket Garage looking like hell, if you can imagine filthy with camo cream and armed to the teeth. There were two youngsters working on a car in the pits, when we said "Excuse me, do you think we could borrow your phone?" Well! The look on their faces was priceless. They took us to the house next to the garage which was owned by their parents. They gave us a drink and asked us if we wanted a bath, I even got the offer of using their mother's hairbrush. By this time the rest of the group had arrived. The last embarrassment of the day was being picked up by guys from scouts and taken back to camp. Thank goodness it was dark by then. Most of us ended up with the gastro's and had to be taken to the KG6 hospital for treatment. All in all, it was a disaster.**

**By the end of my three years in the RLI I felt like I had been accepted by 1 Cdo - especially after hearing about a couple of incidents when anyone said anything degrading about me. They were taken out in true RLI style. On a recent visit to Johannesburg where I caught up with some of the Ovens from 1 Cdo, Huxy said to Glyn, "Dawn was one of the most protected people in Rhodesia, including Ian Smith" And on that note I would just like to say that it was an honour and a privilege to serve with the men of 1Cdo RLI, we had sad times, good times and all in between. What a journey!**