

ROD GEAR

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AUSTRALIA

24/6/96

Dear Sir,

Your address was forwarded to me by Julie Weaver whose address I got via an open letter she wrote to all Vietnam Veterans years ago.

I'm trying to find any of the helicopter pilots involved in an incident in Vietnam on 1st June 1971 during Operation Overlord which involved Australian troops in Long Khanh Province. There were several Huey Cobras involved who with our Aussie Artillery certainly saved all our asses but I'd particularly like to contact the chopper pilot or his family (there may be more than one chopper involved as my memory is stuffed) who came in and winched our wounded out while under heavy fire after an Australian chopper was shot down killing the pilot & one door gunner. I know it's a long shot but I've never forgotten that incident which was one of the bravest things I saw in 2 tours over there as he(s) came in 8 or 9 times & was shot at everytime. I remember I was ^{more} worried about the chopper crashing on top of me than I was of being hit by a gook bullet. I'm returning to the spot in August this year with about 35 other Aussie Vietnam Veterans.

After 25 years I'd like to be able to write to the guy (guys) or their families & thank him for saving our wounded & giving us the spirit to hang in there as we were all thinking we were going to die after our chopper was shot down, as the Aussie pilots wouldn't come in & get us & then the American chopper came in, it was one fantastic feeling. I'm led to believe our pilots were ordered not to risk losing another chopper by higher authority but it's always left a nasty taste in my mouth that our own guys wouldn't come & get us out but your guys did.

A couple of years ago I found by accident the grave of the Australian Chopper Pilot who was killed that day & it turned out he wasn't an Aussie either but a 46 year old 8th African named FLT St. Everith Lance.

Anyway if you can point me in the right direction I'd appreciate it.

Please pass on my personal thanks & appreciation to the guys in your association for the job they did over there. Ask any Aussie Vietnam Vet what one thing epitomises the Vietnam War & most will say "The Huey Helicopter" We travelled in them, got air support from them, were resupplied by them & got to know the sound as a sort of security blanket. Twenty five years later I still get goose bumps when I hear one coming.

Regards

Rod Lear.

(a Proud Vietnam Vet)

P.S. MY UNIT WAS BCOY 3RD BATTALLION ROYAL AUSTRALIAN REGIMENT.