

# RTA (RETURN TO AUSTRALIA)

*Finally, a couple of days short of 13 months, it was finally my "wakey", I was headed for home. Looks like, even then, I only just made the list as my name is the last of the "march outs" in the War Diary (left). If I had stayed another week I would have been given extra leave so I don't think I scored that well all round.*

*We were ferried up to Saigon and hopped aboard a chartered Qantas plane for the trip home. This time there was a huge roar of relief, not silence, as we sped down the runway. As soon as the seat belt signs were off the beer flowed. If I remember rightly the first one was compliments of Qantas but the stewards (for some reason there were no female attendants) assured me that they were never as busy as they were serving beer on these return flights.*

*Some time later I looked over some lagoon enclosed islands, probably in Indonesia, and just wanted to parachute out to some peaceful paradise. Rationality and responsibility prevailed as I knew that I now had to fit back into "The World" (as the Yanks called anywhere other than Vietnam). However I also intended to have one hell of a good time after that last year.*

MARCH INS

370705	Sig	HARVEY E.J.	Sgt PO ORDER	7163/69
2792081	Pte	COOMES T.W.	"	6600/69
4719704	Sig	HOLES T.J.	"	7152/69
1735585	Sig	ROCKEY G.D.	"	7160/69
6709505	Sig	HEATHER N.C.	"	7154/69
6709472	Sig	MONTGOMERY A.R.	"	7175/69
5716663	Sig	GRIFFITHS P.R.	"	7161/69
217974	Sig	DASH R.J.	"	7157/69
215579	Sig	BURTON J.R.	"	7171/69
50849	Sig	CLARE G.J.	"	7150/69
312934	Sig	HARL J.L.	"	7151/69
2239579	Sig	BOWE P.G.	"	7168/69
210708	Sig	SMITH C.S.	"	7165/69
313145	Sig	STEVENS H.A.	"	7162/69
210090	Sig	ANDERSON A.G.	"	"
218714	Sig	LAWRENCE G.D.	"	7174/69
15025	Cpl	LEACH S.W.	"	7148/69
37935	Lt Col	MURCOTT M.J.	"	7169/69
3795981	Sig	DALY D.P.	"	7175/69
219944	Sig	BLAIR G.W.	"	7158/69
2791090	Sig	BROWN S.	"	7145/69
313031	Sig	BARCHAY D.J.	"	7153/69
312766	Sig	WEBB L.M.	"	7165/69
218162	Sig	LAWRENCE W.J.	"	7174/69
2792433	Sig	GREENWOOD W.C.	"	7156/69
217455	Lt Col	WEBSTER G.W.	"	7172/69
3411715	Cpl	TORNEY J.S.	"	7176/69

MARCH OUTS

312508	Lt Col	MOON R.H.	"	7144/69
39384	Sig	GOULD D.R.	"	7144/69
44347	Sig	BYARS J.R.	"	7134/69
3167826	Sig	WATSON P.A.	"	5799/69
44251	Sig	FISHER R.A.	"	7136/69

*Paradoxically (insanely?) I was also contemplating the idea of going back again as there were close bonds in Deployment Troop and a sense of making a real contribution which I would miss.*

*Finally, late that night, we arrived back in Sydney. "Oh what a feeling" when my feet hit that tarmac, it really was all over. We proceeded to customs where everyone was still in uniform, everything still quite regimented. After the checks I walked off to a closed exit door. As I walked through there were all these families, right there in front of me, waiting for their loved ones. That step had me back in the country I had missed so much. I stopped with my jaw literally dropped. My shock was so obviously stark that everyone laughed at me and I joined them. Some of my reaction may also have been to the sight of so many young Aussie girls in the crowd.*

*It really was stepping from one world to another as I went through that door, However a couple of minutes later I wondered if it had all been a dream. We had headed over to a paymasters office to collect our Aussie currency and there standing guard, in public, was a Military Policeman with a loaded sub machine gun. "Was I back there?" That was a very unusual level of precaution but the payroll had recently been robbed so they had stepped up security. I was certainly a little **Dazed and Confused** by it all and perhaps even more so later when I found it hard to sleep in a motel room as Sydney, of all places, was too quiet, there weren't constant explosions, gunfire, aircraft etc.*

**Led Zeppelin - Dazed and Confused**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IC6SwzXvyzw>



Next morning it was off to Adelaide to reunite with my family. As I walked off the plane I couldn't see my Mum just her sister Gwen who had grey hair. A little further on I realised that it was my Mum, she had gone grey, I was not going back to Vietnam.

If ever a picture speaks a thousand words the one top left does. Me with a great big grin, my father at left and my mother in front with tears of relief, joy, gratitude, pride.

Back home in Port Pirie that night there was quite a family party. My father took me aside and asked how I got on "that night at the Horseshoe." "What are you talking about". "You know what I'm talking about, that night you got mortared at the Horseshoe." "How did you know about that?" "It was in the papers and I knew from your letters you were there." He told me how he used to have nightmares about me, undoubtedly related to his own horrific experiences in world war two where he was decorated for bravery.

