

The Diggers Own Stories

References and Quotes

First Commonwealth Division GOC Major-General H. Murray. *“No battalion in Korea has had such a long and distinguished record as the 3rd”*

Commander of the Eighth Army, American **General Van Fleet**. “As far as actual soldiers are concerned I have never met the like, or the equal of the Australian Digger. He’s got something that is not in the text books,” he said.

They all were incorrigible rogues and larrikins – Ginger Micks and Sentimental Blokes combined with your Clancys all rolled up into one. They could, if they put their mind to it, out guard the Guards – they could outdrink, outswear, outshoot and out anything any other Yank, Pom, Ghurkha, South Korean, Chinese, South Vietnamese, North Vietnamese, CT, Indian, Pakistani or Kiwi with whom I came in contact during my service career. *John McGhee*

“A” Company has now copped everything: mortars, artillery, infantry, tanks and planes. They all seem to pick on us. As one bloke said, he wouldn’t be surprised if a submarine came across the paddy fields and started throwing hand grenades at us. The weather in the night is around the zero mark, and now we expect snow any tick of the clock.
(*Len Smeaton – Action at Broken Bridge*)

Our battalion casualties were 24 killed, including 7 from D Coy, during our deployment. We live our day to day lives in this country in comfort and these boys can’t share this with us. We will never forget their sacrifice and they will never be forgotten. *John Creswell, Vietnam Vet*

If we ask, “Who were the heroes?” the answer would be all who served were heroes, but in your group memory – that is the veterans’ memory – and in your own telling of your stories some names keep cropping up. You have partaken in the heroic and you have become, as Henry V promised his soldiers at Agincourt, members of that special band of brothers who can stand tip toe among your countrymen. *Olwyn Green*

Blue Donnelly was captured by the Chinese; his leg is broken; his pain is intolerable and he is treated abominably. Eventually he does get his leg plastered but his wound is putrid and he is near death. At his lowest point, a Chinese, soldier, at the risk of his own life, took Blue in his arms, cradled him, and sang him a lullaby. Blue, as a consequence of the enemy Chinese soldier’s humanity, survived. *Olwyn Green*

The most poignant story in the book and the one that eulogises a very courageous man is that of Sapper John ‘Jethro’ Thompson. If you want to read about the spirit of an Australian soldier, this is the one story not to be missed.