

The Battle of Long Tan

A Series of Poems

STARTING

The year was 1966,

The Aussies just got involved.

A war had broken out a few years before,

And they hoped they could get it resolved.

BEFORE

Just like bingo,

But worse.

As the birthdates got pulled out,

It was more and more like a curse.

Once they got the military clothes,

That's what they had to wear.

Day in and day out,

They had to be careful for it not to tear.

Once you got into the routine,

It got quite easy.

Wake up at 6, go to bed at 9,

No time to feel queasy.

8 – 12 weeks of tough training,

Every day without an excuse.

If you tried to get out and go,

There really was no use.

D U R I N G

The base was at Nui Dat,

In the country of Phuoc Tuy.

Hidden below the sacks of sand,

There was nothing to enjoy.

Carrying a pack of food on their back,

1 kilo per bag.

That's what they'd get to eat for the day,

So no one dared to nag.

3 hours the battle lasted,

Through huge, monsoonal rains.

The Aussies fought long and hard,

Blood pumping through their veins.

Battling against North Vietnam,

The Aussies had no choice.

Gritting their teeth and persisting on,

Not even one had a voice.

Australians and New Zealanders fighting together,

To form one alliance.

Fighting together,

Nothing was an act of defiance.

Only 4 people in a tank at a time,

Operating all different parts.

'With these machines we're indestructible,' we thought,

Until the Viet Cong mastered our arts.

Five thousand metres into the plantation,

Proceeding with caution intact.

Moving in stealthily,

They ran into the Viet Cong who attacked.

No bigger than 2 football fields,

There was nowhere left to hide.

They were there to save themselves and kill the enemy,

Their inexperienced eyes wide.

40,000 rounds of ammunition fired,

Each one with hope and trust.

Every man fighting hard,

They've got each other's backs, they must.

Agent Orange,

Over the pavement it spread.

Resulting in lots of casualties,

It lathered like butter and bread.

2 lightning strikes had hit,

Illuminating the greying sky.

Reminding, reminding,

Anytime could be time to say goodbye.

Just like that the battle ended,

And bullets stopped flying.

The Viet Cong had surrendered,

Leaving the Aussies complying.

After 3 hours of fighting,

24 wounded, 18 dead.

Be proud of them;

None of them fled.

A F T E R

The next morning,

Reality started dawning.

The remaining soldiers returned to the plantation,

To find the lost generation.

10 million Vietnamese were driven from their homes,

So sad, alas, but true.

With the U.S and Australians fighting on their side,

Thinking 'I hope they will come through'.

Five thousand and twenty-one soldiers fought,

Fighting battles galore.

It happened on the 18th of August,

Marching back from war.

When returning home,

A warm welcome was expected.

When the soldiers came back,

They were less than connected.

Violence, rage, disrespect and shame,

Were all muttered in the soldiers' name.

The long-lost hope was merely forgotten,

And all the hard work was brushed aside like fruit that was rotten.

Finished so long ago,

Take a look over your left soldier.

Climb out of bed and take a breath in;

Remember it's over, soldier.

E N D I N G

The Aussies fought,

Through and through, shot for shot, blow for blow.

Because on the 18th of August, we beat the foe.