



10 FOOT TALL & BULLETPROOF

Recruit training at Kapooka, a year of signals technician training, deployment to 139 Signals Squadron in Brisbane (a reinforcement Unit for 104 Sig Sqn in Vietnam) and an exercise at Shoalwater Bay had me on the right path. The final step, in November 1968, was the 3 week Battle Efficiency Course (aka Hell) at Canungra. There we were physically hammered as we learnt basic infantry tactics, were briefed about Vietnam and definitely toughened up. I emerged feeling ten foot tall, bullet proof and ready, just as the Army intended. Bring on my 19th birthday in January, I wanted to go.

Shortly after, at home with Mum and Dad for Xmas, I received a telegram telling me to take another week's pre embarkation leave as I would soon be off to Vietnam. Oddly though I was going to 110 Sig Squadron which had completely different roles to 104 Sig Sqn for which I had been trained.

104 Sigs Sqn, based at Nui Dat provided communications within the operational Task Force, often using fairly portable equipment. 110 Sqn using mostly fixed, higher powered equipment communicated from there across the whole of Vietnam and back to Australia. However 110's Deployment Troop, where I ended up, also worked alongside 104 to provide secure teletype and telephone linkages in the field.



Clockwise from top left

1. A baggy looking bunch on Day 1 of Recruit Training. We had been given second hand, ill fitting uniforms to remind us that we were just recruits not soldiers (me 3rd from left). From the very first minutes it had also been made crystal clear that the Army had no place for a “bugger you Jack, I’m alright” or “Jack Man” attitude, something I think is fundamental to its success.
2. Getting very fit (there were several blokes ahead of me but this picture makes me really look good).
3. So scary and skinny (me centre).





Clockwise from top left

1. A fine body of men, well mostly 17 year old boys, almost "Soldiers" now (me 6th from right, third row).
2. Yep I made it
3. The Passing Out Parade at Kapooka (not Puckapunyal as in the Red Gum song). This was Grenadier Guards stuff and after 10 weeks of physical and psychological conditioning, we could now be called "Diggers".

