



Tiny & Peter Home



RETURNED WITH DIGNITY AND HONOUR

Tiny Parker and Peter Gillson have now been returned to Australia with honour and dignity after Operation Aussies Home discovered their grave in Dong Nai Province Vietnam in April.

In a moving ceremony at Richmond RAAF Base on June 6, 2007 former 1RAR CO, Lou Brummfield and the Army's Land Commander Lt Gen Mark Kelly presented campaign and service medals for the men, medals they had not received because of their delayed return.

A crowd of more than 300 people, including many former 1RAR comrades-in-arms, welcomed Tiny Parker and Peter Gillson back to Australia.

Peter Gillson's son Robert accompanied his father back to Australia along with former A Coy 1RAR members, Gordon Peterson, Trevor Hagan and Clive Williams.

Operation Aussies Home was represented by its founder Jim Bourke who was serving in D Coy 1RAR when the two men went missing.

MINISTER PRAISES OAH

The Minister for Veterans Affairs, Mr Bruce Billson heaped praise on OAH when he spoke at Richmond RAAF Base on the return of Richard Parker and Peter Gillson.

Mr Billson described the organisation and its founder Jim Bourke as remarkable and selfless saying this final chapter could not be written without Operation Aussies Home.

Mr Billson said OAH and its supporters had persisted tirelessly with inquiries, research and advocacy, to compile insights and evidence, beyond the historical material and official records.

WHERE TO NOW FOR OAH?

OAH will continue to press on with its aim of obtaining full accounting for the remaining cases from the Vietnam War.

OAH founder, Jim Bourke, said the success of the Parker and Gillson cases had demonstrated what persistence and good research could achieve.

"Human intelligence was the key to our success in this case," Jim said.

"We must now follow up by gathering further information from Vietnamese sources on the outstanding cases," he said.

"We now have contact with the MIA Section of the Vietnamese Department of National Defence through the Australian Embassy," Jim said.

"This connection must be further exploited to gather quality intelligence on these other cases," Jim said.





VETERANS PAY RESPECTS AT TINY'S FUNERAL

Veterans made up a large part of those attending the funeral for Tiny Parker in Canberra on June 12, 2007.

The Funeral was held at the Woden Cemetery in the national capital.

Tiny was interred in the Veterans Section of the Cemetery.

A lone piper played the Lament as members of Operation Aussies Home dropped soil into Tiny's permanent resting place.

"That was the moment that most effected me," Said Jeff Wallaert, the operator of the Ground Penetrating Radar during the search and was intimately involved in unearthing Tiny and Peter's remains.

PETER'S FUNERAL DRAWS DIGNITARIES.

Leading State dignitaries including the Premier, Mr Steve Bracks attended the Funeral for Peter Gillson which was held in Melbourne.

The ceremony with full military honours was held at St Paul's Cathedral in Melbourne on the morning of June, 15 2007.

Approximately 300 people attended the church service where 2LT Robert Gillson, Peter's son, (see left) lead the Bearer Party out of the church.

The Church service was followed by a Committal Ceremony at the John Fawknor Cemetery in suburban Fawknor that afternoon.



OAH EXPRESSES ITS THANKS

OAH has expressed its thanks to the Government and the Department for the organisation of the repatriation and the funerals for Tiny Parker and Peter Gillson.

"Overall, the arrangements were excellent, said OAH's Jim Bourke.

"Full credit must go to Mr Bruce Billson and staff who were magnificently supported by the various ADF elements and the Embassy staff in Ha Noi," he said,

"I'd especially like to thank the RAR Association who funded the wakes for our two mates, Jim said.



HUEYS IN CEREMONIAL FLY PASTS

Two UH1H helicopters were featured in the ceremony at Richmond RAAF Base and at Richard Parker's funeral in Canberra.

The helicopters, perhaps the most evocative symbol of the Vietnam War were a fitting part of the activities.





OLD BATTLE GROUND GIVES UP AUSSIES

The Sunday before they found Tiny and Peter, the OAH search team was in a state of deep depression.

Exhausted from nearly a month of searching in atrocious heat, the team had no sign of the two missing men or the weapon pits that had been on the hillside.

Nearly 4000 square meters of ground had been surveyed with Ground Penetrating Radar and nearly 30 holes had been dug but nothing was forthcoming.

The group was planning its media strategy and preparing to return in the next dry season in November to continue the search.

Three days later as they dug the second last hole, the first boot was uncovered; within 24 hours after that it was clear they had discovered human remains, remains that later were confirmed as Tiny and Peter.

The success of the search is remarkable. The men were found in a small area less that two meters long and

half a meter wide.

The soil was extremely acid and had adversely affected the preservation of the remains. There were few artefacts; no clothes and little of the boots remained intact. Only plastic items survived.

One Vietnamese MIA expert remarked on the Australian's success saying he had been searching for 20 years and had yet to find a single body.



THE TEAM

This is the team that carried out the final stages of the Parker-Gillson search, shown here at the grave site.

They are from left, Jim Bourke, David Thomas, Peter Aylett, Jeff Wallaert, Walter Pearson and Ray Latimer.

Many more contributed through the 18 month in country search.

FRIENDSHIP ANOTHER OUTCOME

Friendship was another welcome outcome of the cooperation between OAH's search teams and officials of the Vietnamese Ministry of National Defence MIA Office.

“Jim Bourke and I worked closely with our Vietnamese colleagues for the better part of a month and developed personal connections” said OAH interpreter Walter Pearson.

“We are confident these will serve OAH well in the future,” he said.



OAH MEMBERS GATHER

The members of the OAH Teams that carried out the searches for Tiny Parker and Peter Gillson were among

a group of OAH members who gathered at the Colonial Motor Inn in Richmond after the official ceremony at Richmond RAAF Base.

It was the first time the teams and other members had had the opportunity to get together and meet each other.

“It was a special moment for all of us,” said Peter Aylett who was OAH Navigator and field engineering supervisor over the past 18 months.

Peter (front row, second left) also located the Gillespie crash site in February 2004.

He also played a leading role in the subsequent Government excavation of the site in February this year.

Most of the members of the various search teams are shown in the photograph opposite.

One notable exception is David Thomas who supervised the excavations in April 2007.