

SERVICE EULOGY – JOHN MORTIMER



My name is Wayne Lindsay and I am the New Zealand Ex Vietnam Services Association representative for Queensland.

777186 Private Anthony John Mortimer, Royal New Zealand Infantry Regiment who served in Vietnam with 1 Platoon , Whiskey 3 Company, 6RAR/NZ ANZAC Battalion and subsequently 2RAR/NZ ANZAC Battalion. Another giant oak tree has fallen in the forest!

Unfortunately, I only met John in the last few months of his life and our paths had not crossed whilst in the Army; however, I have been keeping John's fellow W3 Veterans updated on his condition. One of the messages I received to pass on to John was from his Platoon Commander in Vietnam which read as follows:

Hi Wayne,

I was John Mortimer's Platoon Commander (after Bill Blair) in Vietnam – from May to Nov 1970. I am very sad to hear that John is not at all well. From my memory, he was a very hard-working, loyal, trusted and friendly chap. Would you please pass on my very best regards to John and, in particular, the very high regard that I had for him as a friend and as a soldier.

Best Regards,
Jim Cutler

Subsequent to John's passing, I received another message from Jim which reads as follows:

I really have little to add from my few brief words that I sent on 7 March (as above) when I first heard about John being in bad shape. However, those words are full of meaning and fit him well. He was a hard-working chap even for his slight build, and he did go about his job with a professional attitude. If my memory serves me correctly, John was seldom seen without a friendly smile on his face – a bit of a morale booster!!

He also had a keen sense of humour. Denis King and Bill Blair will probably confirm that John was one of the least likely members of One Platoon, indeed the whole of W3 Coy, to be a "disciplinary problem" – I do not recall ever having to check John for anything. "Trust": The jobs of Commanders are made easier when those under them can be trusted to get on and get the work done. One could always be confident that if John was given a task it would be completed to the very best of his ability. John Mortimer would be one of the better soldiers I had the privilege to serve with.

May He Rest In Peace.

I also received the following message from Bill Blair who was John's original Platoon Commander in Vietnam:

Hi Wayne,

My name is Bill Blair and like Jim Cutler I was John's Platoon Commander at the time of his service in Vietnam. I endorse the remarks of Jim Cutler. John was the quintessential rifleman in an infantry platoon. He was a lead scout and a cover scout in his section...not an enviable job I assure you...which he performed with his mate, Shorty Vinall exceptionally well. He was always obliging and an open faced soldier whom I could rely on and trust and this was especially important when the platoon was low in numbers and the strain was telling on us all. I can recall times when he was asked to "give" that extra amount and he always cooperated with a smile and willingness that I appreciated. It was before the time of the often used phrase nowadays..."No worries". I'm sure he would have used it had it been around then. Thanks for helping and my thoughts are with his family and friends,

Cheers, Bill

It is obvious from all the emails that I received and have passed on to the family that John was well liked and was highly regarded as a soldier.

I will now read the Vietnam Veterans Prayer. This is a very poignant message which not only acknowledges the soldiers war service but also addresses the issues that we were confronted with on our return home by the anti-war protesters.

THE VIETNAM VETERANS PRAYER

Almighty God

We remember that as part of our nationally policy
 We engaged with our allies in the Vietnam conflict
 Our fighting men and women tried to preserve freedom
 And to resist tyranny and aggression
 Some of our people died in this conflict
 Many have subsequently suffered
 All of them served their nation with honour

We pray your blessing on all Vietnam Veterans
 May they remember with pride their service to their nation
 We pray for all citizens divided in conscience over the Vietnam conflict
 Heal our divisions and bring us together as one people
 Help us all to value freedom and peace
 Not only for ourselves, but for all people who enjoy the life you give
 We offer this prayer in the name of Jesus Christ

AMEN

I would now like to introduce Frank Heveldt, another Kiwi Vietnam Veteran to say a few words and to read a poem that one of John's W3 compatriots wrote for him, and which I read out to John a couple of days before he passed away.

Kia Ora, Welcome to John's family and members of the veteran community.

On behalf of the veterans I would like to thank Marcella and all of John's family for allowing us vets to be such a big part of his last few weeks here with us.

Wayne, Brad and myself really enjoyed the time we spent with him. His cheeky sense of humour was out of the box, and was typical of how we were then and still are.

John fought right to the end, rallying a number of times when we thought we would lose him. On every occasion when one of us went to visit him, members of his family were always there supporting him. We, the veteran community, appreciate how well he was looked after by all members of his family.

Quite often, John told me how much his family meant to him, his love for his grandchildren was demonstrated by the display of artwork and drawings on display in his room at the hospital. John always said that he had so much left to do.

Once again I would like to thank you all on behalf of the veteran community especially John's compatriots from W3 company who have sent condolences to the family. John also reminded me on several occasions for us to have a beer for him.

THE SOLDIER DREAM

I dreamed the soldier dream last night, it came to me so clear
 I dreamed I saw my old platoon, they seemed to me so near
 I dreamed I heard again the sounds, that only soldiers understand
 And I dreamed I smelt the jungle smells of that far distant land
 And in the dream I felt the heat, and the heavy monsoon rain
 And I felt again the comfort of the ground, in the places I have lain
 I dreamed I saw the blood red stain of the hard red laterite soil
 I saw again the thick jungle slopes, through which we had to toil
 And the dead and jumbled trees caused by Agent Orange sprays
 Devastating to the jungle and the effects will last us all our days
 I dreamed I heard the insects, mainly the mossies angry scream
 And I saw my legs festooned with leeches, after crossing any stream
 I dreamed I felt again the familiar feel, of rifle, web and pack
 And I felt again my shoulders pain, and the weight upon my back
 I dreamed of being out of water, and the terrible, burning thirst
 I felt of all the deprivations, the lack of water is the worst
 I dreamed of the itch of tinea that stretched from toes to waist
 And I dreamed of taking Paludrin and its bitter awful taste
 I heard again the rifle shots, and saw machine guns tracer lines

I heard again the crash of shells, and the blast of Claymore mines
 I dreamed I smelt the cordite and the strong iron smell of blood
 And I dreamed of finding bodies and the wounded in the mud
 I dreamed of our wounded soldiers, dusted off to waiting aid
 And I dreamed of other soldiers and the sacrifices they had made
 I dreamed of empty hours, doing sentry in a gun pit in the sun
 And I dreamed of fear filled sentry night's, in that pit behind the gun
 I dreamed of all these things, and it was if it were but only yesterday
 As I slept that restless sleep, that twists the sheets in which I lay
 I awoke to find that the world was as I'd left it, when I went to bed
 And the soldier dream was real for me to see, but now only in my head.

310415 Andy Anderson - W3

One of John's last wishes was in regard to his War Medals. I would now like to present them to Marcella as official guardian of John's medals.

Finally, I would like to thank the Kiwi Veterans who visited John in hospital during his final days, in particular Frank Heveldt and Brad Stevenson who were there every other day, Dave Kingi, and also Dick Hamon who travelled up from the Gold Coast to see him. Your visits had an immensely positive affect on John in his last few weeks.

I would also like to thank all the Veterans who have attended today as a mark of respect for a fallen fellow warrior – Thanks Boys!!

We will now conduct the Poppy Ceremony (explain its significance as a symbol of Remembrance)

If you could please line up in pairs and take a poppy from the basket and lay it on John's casket.

(when completed)

I would now like you all to stand for the playing of the Last Post, which will be followed by a minute's silence. I will then recite the Ode (Prayer to the Fallen). Following this, Green Green Grass of Home, which I guess you could say was the Kiwi anthem in Vietnam, will be played.

LAST POST

1 MINUTES SILENCE

THE ODE (PRAYER TO THE FALLEN)

They shall grow not old
As we who are left grow old
Age shall not weary them
Nor the years condemn

At the going down of the sun
And in the morning
We shall remember them

LEST WE FORGET

GREEN GREEN GRASS OF HOME