

## AUSTRALIAN GUNNER OBITUARY RESOURCE

### James Leslie Menz

(1 February 1946 – 18 February 1968)

By Peter Bruce, OAM



Nearly all locators will be familiar with the Menz Club. Initially set up in South Vietnam in the base at Nui Dat and eventually transferred to the home of locators at Enoggera in Queensland. The Menz Club was named after Jimmy Menz who was killed in action in South Vietnam on the 18<sup>th</sup> of February, 1968.

James was born in Melbourne and grew up in the small forestry town of Buxton in Victoria. His family were involved in the timber industry. Jimmy left school and worked in the building industry. At the age of 19, Jimmy joined the Army and was allocated to Artillery and trained as a surveyor. He spent time at Holsworthy and with the 131 Divisional Locating Battery in Brisbane. Jimmy married Helen in August 1967, only months before deploying to Vietnam.

Bill Howe recalled in a letter to Jim's wife Helen that:

*"Jim was one of the most conscientious men under my command". He went on to say "His pleasantness and kindness of character singled him out as a man to be proud of. Jim was a country boy, his sincerity in caring about people gave him the touch of humanity that many of us lack."*

Another mate of Jims wrote: *"We always found him easy to get along with and provide a good and human balance to the other NCOs"*.

Jim deployed to South Vietnam on the 10<sup>th</sup> of October 1967 and served with the Detachment of 131 Divisional Locating Battery attached to 4<sup>th</sup> Field Regiment. By this time Jim had been promoted to Lance Bombardier.

On Wednesday the 2<sup>nd</sup> of January 1968, Australian troops commenced Operation Coburg to the north of Nui Dat near Xuyen Loc, east of Bien Hoa. The Locators including Jim were trucked to Xa Tran Bom on Route 1 and dug in on a small hill about one kilometre north of that village. Listening Posts were established to support the operation. The next day, Jimmy was with the Survey team at Fire Support Base Anderson and they formed a Listening Post, 31G. This was the time of the TET Offensive and VC and North Vietnamese staged massive attacks all over South Vietnam.

On the 13<sup>th</sup> of February, several Listening Posts were set up in and around Fire Support Base Anderson. On the night of Saturday the 17<sup>th</sup> of February, there was an initial contact in the rubber about 1500 meters away from their position. In the early hours of the morning of Sunday the 28<sup>th</sup>, the VC blew up the magazine in Bien Hoa and a green flare was fired from Xa Tran Bom and the VC launched a mortar and rocket attack on the Fire Support Base. One of those mortar rounds was to kill Jim near their listening post 31G.

The VC had dug small pits and had been covered with sand and they jumped out of the holes and killed most of the Australian Standing Patrol in front of the American lines. They

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then charged across the wire and were killed after causing considerable damage. A green flare from the village ended the attack. A helicopter gunship arrived and shot up the rubber trees as the VC were removing their dead and wounded.

Jimmy had been home with his family on R and R only two weeks earlier.

### **Acknowledgment:**

My thanks to Jimmy's brother Tony and his family for sharing special family photos, articles and letters.

RAAHIC