

*Playing in the Aussie Rules competition I damaged my hip trying to avoid a concrete boundary edge after a solid bump. I attended the hospital each lunchtime for heat treatment but nothing seemed to work. Several other guys, who had contracted certain communicable diseases in the bars of Vung Tau, also attended for their daily penicillin jab in the bum. The medics would generally slap the intended cheek a few times before inserting the needle. One smarty slapped this fellows left cheek then firmly inserted the dagger like needle into the right one, he jumped about a meter. Occasionally the Doctor who specialised in VD treatments would present us with slide shows showing gory photos of the diseases' effects, just to remind us where dalliances could lead.*

*I'm sure the specialists thought I was just malingering over my hip because they couldn't find any pathology (xrays a few years ago did show a bone spur). "It's fine until I play sport and then it flares up again" I once said only to be told "well don't play sport then". I held my temper. However they did admit me to hospital for assessment by the physiotherapist who just happened to very attractive, I was very keen.*

*She couldn't see me on my first day there but next morning I eagerly awaited our interaction. "You pack up and go back to your Unit, you pack up and back to your Unit" commanded the nurses as they swept through the ward making room for 20 odd guys who had just been hit by mines\*. I never did get to meet the Physiotherapist.*

*Whilst in hospital I noted a Vietnamese guy slowly getting about and was told that he had been hit in the midriff by shrapnel and the surgeons had laid all of his organs out, repaired them and put everything back in place. There were stories of surgeons working for hours treating one casualty after the other especially for land mine wounds. Those things jumped up to waist height before exploding and we used to see the casualty reports "Private Smith injuries to thighs, abdomen, scrotum; Private Jones injuries to thighs, abdomen, scrotum". Remember those guys were only nineteen.*

*A Kiwi at the Horseshoe told me how one of their guys stepped on a mine which jumped up but didn't explode. "I think the Maori guys on that patrol went whiter than any white fellow you have ever seen" he added.*

**\*I think it may have been the "Frankie kicked a mine" incident in the Redgum song**

*Late one night a few of us were sitting around emptying the amber contents of some cans when one guy grabbed a machete and cut one of my loose boot laces. Much mirth followed but as I took evasive action when he went to cut the other one his misaimed (drunken?) swipe cut through the toe leather of my comfy, worn in boot. "You bastard, you cut my boot" I exclaimed as I pulled back the leather flap, adding "and you've cut me too" when I saw blood. I honestly did not feel any pain. It would not have been wise to go to hospital in my condition so I wrapped the toe with a field dressing that we all carried and went off to bed, "she'll be right".*

*Next morning it was throbbing like hell. Fronting up to the doctor who wondered why I hadn't come in to get it stitched, I explained that as "I couldn't sleep I was sitting on my bed cleaning gear when I dropped my machete onto my bare toe. It didn't seem too bad and it was late at night so I didn't seek attention". He applied some butterfly tapes and put me on light duties with permission to wear shoes instead of boots. A day or so later we were driving into the nearby Airbase, me with my shiny shoes up on the dashboard. The American sentry couldn't quite fathom the strange uniform and saluted just in case I was an officer. I snapped back a return salute "carry on soldier".*