



National Service – Victoria Park Remembers

[a post to the Town of Victoria Park Library's Facebook page on 5 December 2022 to mark 50 years since the end of National Service]

Victoria Park Remembers #OnThisDay, 50 years ago – 5 December 1972 – Newly elected Prime Minister Gough Whitlam abolished conscription. Many may not realise that Australia has had a few variations of conscription (also known as National Service) at different times, dating right back to when we first became a nation. But it was Australia's instigation of conscription to support its involvement in the Vietnam War, that is perhaps the most controversial.

During Australia's involvement in the Vietnam War (13 July 1962-11 January 1973) the government decided it required more personnel to support the regular military forces. The National Service Act 1964 was passed on 10 November 1964 and would be in operation for just over eight years (with amendments). This Act introduced compulsory National Service (conscription), which allowed for 20-year-old males to be selected for service via a 'sortition' or lottery draw. This selection by lottery was based on date of birth. Originally conscripts were required to serve two years full-time continuous service, and subsequently three years as an active reservist. At first conscripts only served on Australian shores but by March 1966 the Act had been amended several times and the government announced it would send National Servicemen to South Vietnam.

In the eight years of conscription for the Vietnam War, a little over 6,400 Western Australian men were called up to serve their country. The total number called up from suburbs within the Town of Victoria Park was 250. Of the little over 6,400 West Australians, 47 died whilst in the service of their country, and nine of these were from Victoria Park.

There is however another little known and extremely sad fact about these statistics... the National Servicemen who died in service overseas have their names listed on the Roll of Honour and are commemorated as is only fitting and right. However, for those National Servicemen who died whilst in service, BUT in Australia, there is no commemoration. This means that five of the nine of our own men from Victoria Park who died whilst serving their country, do not have their names listed on the Honour Roll in Canberra or officially commemorated on any other honour roll. This is an injustice as these men, and many others for whom the same has occurred, were

training under hazardous conditions and very sad accidents occurred. Some men became ill and died from their illnesses. However, be it accident or illness, all these men died whilst serving their country, the only thing they didn't do was die overseas. Their deaths were just as gallant as they were preparing and learning military craft as thousands of their ancestors had done before, but all whilst being called up. They had little choice but to accept the call to National Service when their birthday came up in the lottery. They didn't choose to die, as few do, but they did and their lack of acknowledgement in official realms is extraordinarily sad.

Lieutenant-Colonel (retired) Neil Smith, AM, described the story of the unsung heroes of National Service in an ANZAC Day address to ABC Victoria on 25 April 2011, which is quoted in full here following:

"CONSCRIPTION'S UNSUNG HEROES 1951-1973 by Neil Smith

"About Neil Smith – Lieutenant-Colonel Neil Smith, AM, spent 24 years in Army Service, including active service with the infantry in Vietnam as a young infantry officer and service as an ammunition technical officer. He now specialises in genealogical and service aspects of former Australian and British Defence personnel through his research service, Mostly Unsung, a MHHV member.

"For over a century National Service, or Conscription, has often been part of the Australian Army mix... In fact since World War Two, almost 300,000 young Australian Nashos have fulfilled an obligation to serve our country, in both peace and war.

"The sacrifice of many has been ignored.

"In both world wars the initial fighting force sent overseas consisted of volunteers, not Conscripts. Gisborne newsagent Jim Sumner, who was killed in action at Pozieres in 1916, was just such a volunteer. He was not compelled to enlist. He chose to join up. Other volunteers died at home in Australia. Patrick Cooney, a Light Horseman from Richmond succumbed to pneumonia in a base hospital in Fremantle. Like Jim Sumner, his supreme sacrifice is recorded on the Australian War Memorial, and other official honour rolls of the fallen.

"Although there was a form of conscription used during World War Two, it was only the early volunteers, like Cohuna resident Bill McGlone, who could be sent overseas

to fight. McGlone died beside his anti tank gun, trying to stem the Japanese advance down the Malayan Peninsula in January 1942. Fred Smith left a successful farm life behind. He didn't have to, but he offered his services to fight in early 1941. Fred died in an aircraft training accident in Western Australia before he could see any action. Like all the servicemen and women who died in World War Two, Pilot Officer Smith's name is among those on the Australian Roll of Honour and Commonwealth War Graves listings.

"Sixty years ago, in 1951, a new Conscription scheme was introduced for all 18 year old men. This scheme of Compulsory Military Service, provided for enlistment in the Navy and the Air Force, as well as the Army. Men like George Hellyer, from Oakleigh, received their Call-Up Notice in the mail. Then followed recruit training at Army camps such as Puckapunyal. After three months the newly trained Conscripts were released, to undertake several years Part Time or Reserve service. Although they had been forced to enlist, these men were not sent to any war zones. Roger Wood from Box Hill was a young soldier from this conscription era. After basic training he commences his Part Time commitment with the Melbourne based 2nd Commando Company. He lost his life in Port Phillip Bay, during a hazardous, Army watercraft training exercise.

"By the time the Scheme finished in 1959, over 50 young men, like Roger Wood, had died whilst serving in Australia. Their names are not to be found on any official rolls of honour.

"In the 1960's another, more contentious National Service scheme was introduced. From 1965 some young men, like Bruce Sedgman, were selected on the basis of a ballot. Those selected were obligated to serve up to two years in the Regular Army.

"For the first time, Australian Conscripts were compelled to swell the Regular Army ranks of volunteers on Active Service, and thousands were deployed to Malaysia and South Vietnam. Battle casualties among the Conscripts soon followed. Arch Williams was killed instantly by a sniper in Bien Hoa Province, South Vietnam.

"Newly married Mildura man Ramon Deed, was another. He died of wounds after an anti-personnel mine was accidentally triggered in 1967. Arch and Ramon are among the 212 Conscripts or, Nasho's as they are often called, who died on Active Service in South East Asia. Their names are recorded on the nation's honour boards at the Australian War Memorial, and elsewhere.

"On the other hand, consider David Andrews from Ascot Vale, He was drowned in Queensland's Coomera River, whilst undertaking rugged battle training at Canungra's Jungle Training Centre, only weeks before being sent to South Vietnam.

"Think also of PMG technician, Signaller David Brett from Wangaratta who succumbed to a sudden illness at Heidelberg in January 1968.

"Even though more post World War Two Nashos, like David Andrews and David Brett, died in Australia, than on Active Service, their names are not listed on the nation's honour rolls. Many saw the National Service scheme of the 60's and 70's as unfair.

"This was because only some young men, of age 20 were selected by ballot to serve.

"Bruce Sedgman [from Victoria Park, WA] for example was the only man known to have been selected from his football team. With a promising legal career in the Crown Law Department put on hold. Bruce left his family behind in 1967, and was sent to Puckapunyal to learn the basics of soldiering. After recruit camp Private Sedgman satisfactorily completed Infantry training. Next he was transferred to the 1st Division in Brisbane as a Rifleman. Bruce died, near Canungra, in a vehicle accident on 15 July 1968.

"No official recognition of Bruce Sedgman's service and sacrifice is known to exist. Apart from the initial Defence telegram and condolences, his family to this day have received little information on his fate or indeed his service.

"Hundreds of young National Servicemen in the 1960's and 70's died whilst serving in a wide range of circumstances. Motor vehicle and training accidents were common. Many lives were lost to various types of sickness.

"Former Brunswick clerk Frank Chiappazzo died when the bridge construction task he was employed on, collapsed and caved-in, at the Army Engineering School near Sydney.

"Even though they were not on Active Service, some National Servicemen died overseas as well as throughout Australia.

"Dick Simpson, a farm hand from Carlton, died suddenly from a mysterious illness in Port Moresby. Others died elsewhere in New Guinea and Singapore.

"These men did not die in a war zone. But unlike their forefathers who died in similar circumstances in both World Wars, they are not publicly recognised for their service, nor are they commemorated on any honour rolls.

"With increased public resentment towards National Service, and growing battle casualties in South East Asia, the scheme was finally scrapped in 1972.

"Too late though for David Belyea from Camperdown, who was fatally injured by an Army forklift truck near Brisbane.

"Even now, there is still little applause for those who answered the call as Conscripts after World War Two, and especially those who died while serving.

"With the news of losses among Australia's Defence Forces both at home and overseas in Afghanistan and elsewhere increasingly commonplace, it is timely to remember those who fell in yesteryear. With such little attention paid to our fallen National Servicemen, we should pause to remember the 500 of their number who gave their lives whilst serving Australia.

"We should remember in particular, those Nashos who died serving, far from any battlefield, but who might otherwise, be forgotten." (Smith, Neil 2011, *Conscription's Unsung Heroes 1951-1973*, ABC TV Victoria, ANZAC Day 25 April 2011)

The images shown with this post show some of the faces of the nine men who died in service for Australia. Also included is a table listing those National Servicemen from the Victoria Park area who died in service from 1965 to 1972. This table includes the names of the five men who died in service in Australia. With kind acknowledgment to Neville Browne, JP for his research and for sharing it with us.

Victoria Park Remembers all National Servicemen who have served our country. We especially remember on this day however, the nine National Servicemen from the Victoria Park area who made the supreme sacrifice of their lives in service to their beloved Australia, both overseas and at home during the period 1965 to 1972:

Alec Ernest James BELL

Desmond N GIBSON

Harry G HOLLIER

Dennis JACKSON

Laurence R MILLER

Christopher W ROOST

Bruce John SEDGMAN

Paul Richard Peter VAN RIJSEWIJK

Gary J A YOUNG

#LestWeForget

Are you a relative or friend of one of the nine brave men listed above? We would love to be able to record more of their stories in our Local History Collection here at the Victoria Park Library, so please get in touch – vicparklibrary@vicpark.wa.gov.au.

#50YearsSinceNationalServiceEnded

National Servicemen					
Who died in Service from the Victoria Park area					
1965 to 1972					
Name	Christian name	Date of Death	Place of Death	State	Notes
Bell	Alec EJ	29-Jan-68	Vietnam		Buried Karrakatta
Gibson	Desmond N	20-Apr-70	Singapore		Cremated Karrakatta
Hollier	Harry G	07-Mar-72	Omeo	Victoria	Cremated Karrakatta
Jackson	Dennis	16-May-72	Fremantle		Buried Karrakatta
Roost	Christopher W	23-Dec-68	Vietnam		Buried Karrakatta
Sedgman	Bruce J	15-Jul-68	Canungra	Queensland	Cremated Karrakatta
Van Rijsewijk	Paul RP	19-Oct-68	Vietnam		Buried Karrakatta
Young	Gary J A	07-Nov-70	St Kilda	Victoria	Buried Karrakatta
Miller	Laurence R	19-Jul-68	Hollywood WA	NSW	Cremated Karrakatta - worked in Vic Park

Source: Research conducted by former National Serviceman, Neville Browne, J P.

Table showing National Servicemen who died in service from the Victoria Park area, 1965-1972. Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP

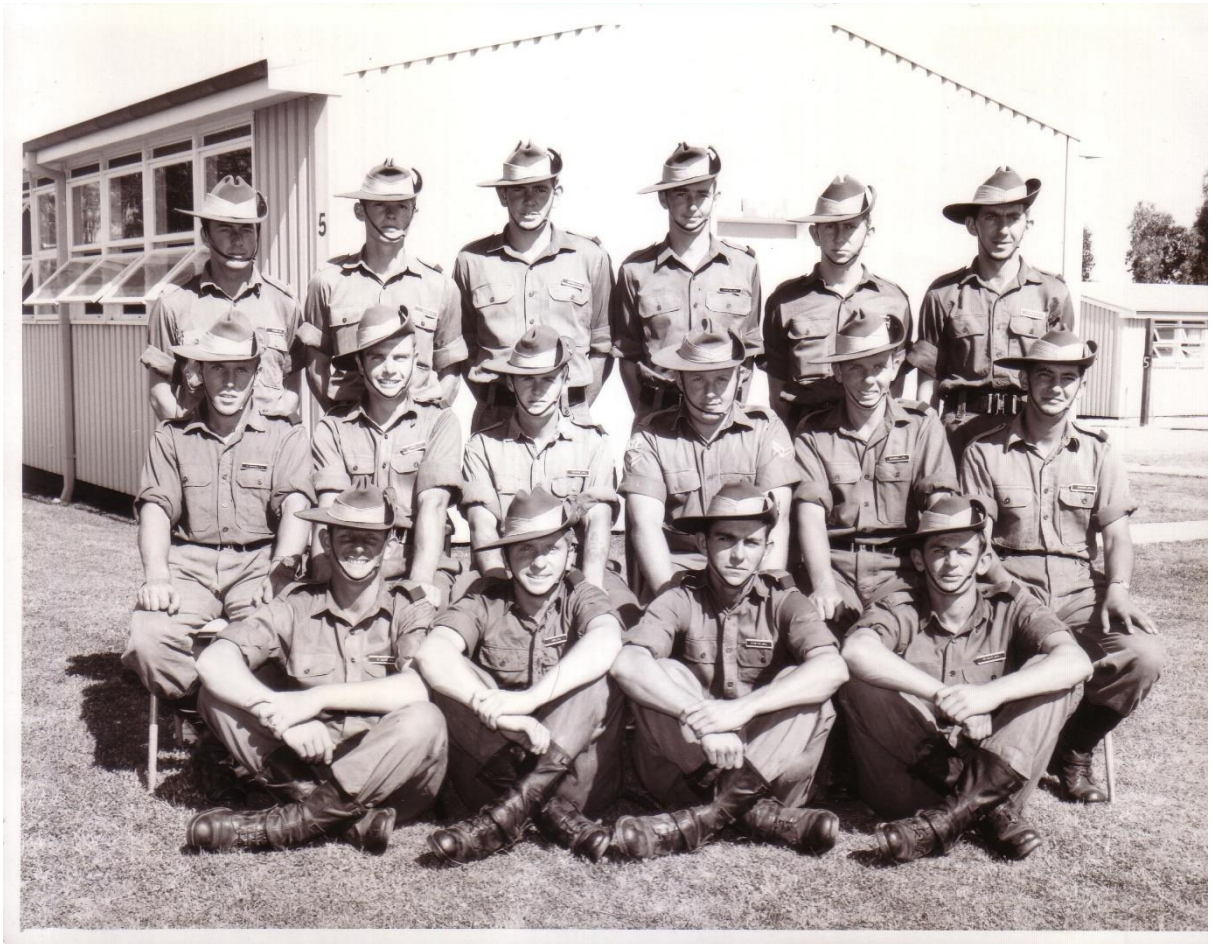


Bruce Sedgman and his football teammates, 1961.

Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP



Private Bruce Sedgman in his uniform, April 1968.
Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP



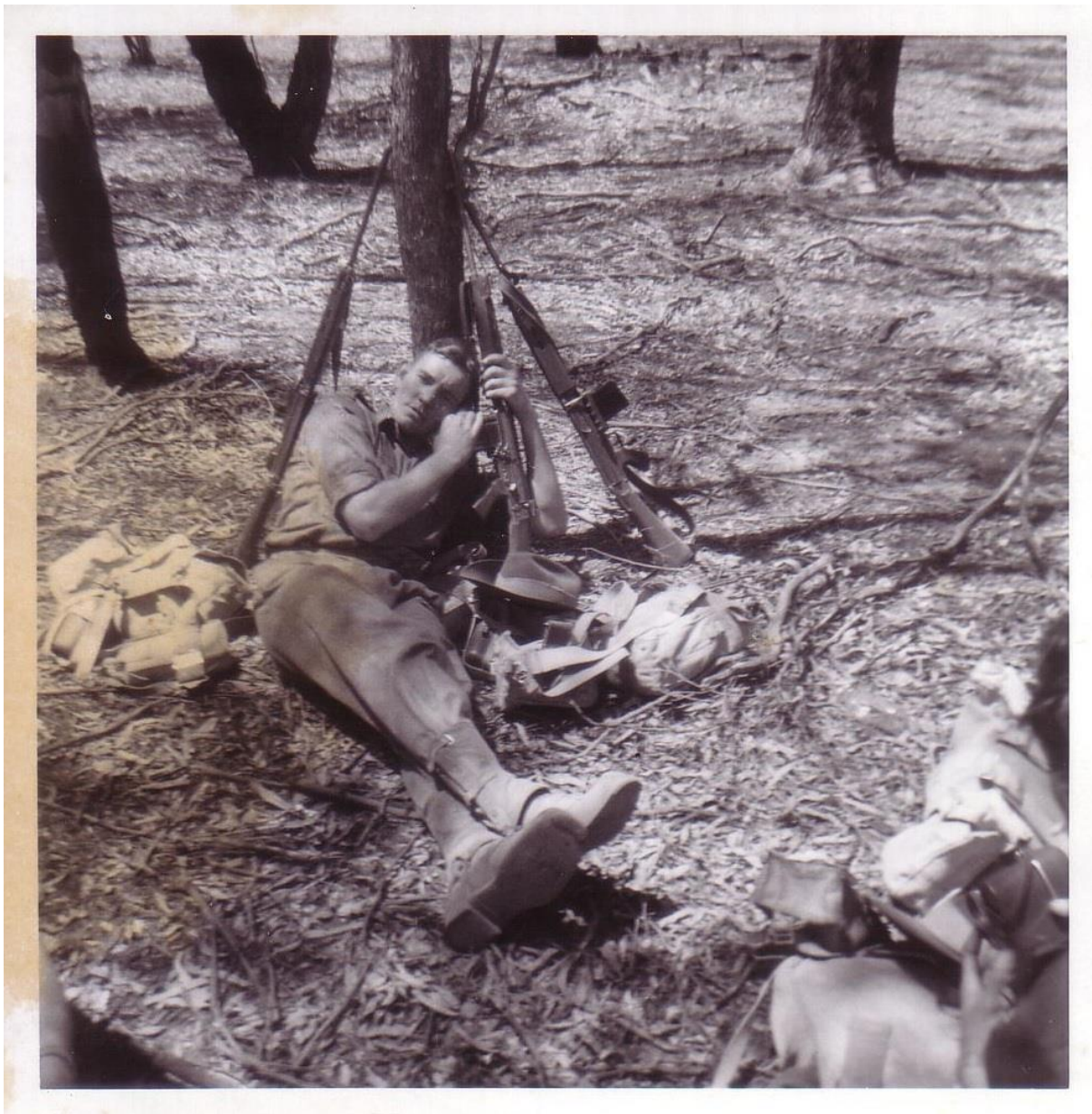
Private Bruce Sedgman (third from left, back row) and his National Service mates, unknown location and date.

Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP.



Private Bruce Sedgman larking around with a mate, unknown date.

Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP



Private Bruce Sedgman, unknown date, resting against a tree during training.
Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP

TRAGEDY

He was chosen to be best man at wedding

A national serviceman who was to be best man at a friend's wedding next month, died in Brisbane last week.

Bruce John Sedgman, of East Victoria Park, who turned 21 a few weeks ago, was killed in a road accident on July 15.

Mr Sedgman passed his Junior with flying colours at Bentley High School, then worked for the Crown Law Department for five years before he was called up last October.

He was a trainee clerk of courts and worked at Perth, Fremantle, Albany and Bunbury courts.

"He was one of those

blokes you just couldn't help liking," said one trainee clerk of courts at Fremantle.

Mr Sedgman was studying accountancy part-time before he was called up.

He was a keen footballer and played with Centrals Junior Football Club, then for the Perth thirds.

He also played cricket with a Victoria Park junior team and liked table tennis.

He expected to get leave to return to Perth in August for the wedding of his best friend **Kelvin Oliver**, of Kensington.

He had a brother and sister.

The funeral will be held in Perth this week.

'Tragedy', newspaper report on the death of Private Bruce Sedgman. Unknown newspaper and date.

Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP

COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA

DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY

Nº 6020

DEFENCE (CERTIFICATION OF DEATHS) REGULATIONS

Certificate of Death

I, Martin RYAN being the person for the
time being holding the office or performing the duties of the office of the Deputy Officer-in-Charge
of Central Army Records Office and duly authorized by the Minister of State for the Army to
issue certificates of death for the purpose of the Defence (Certification of Deaths) Regulations,

HEREBY CERTIFY that 5715539 PRIVATE Bruce John SEDGMAN

1 DIVISIONAL HEADQUARTERS DEFENCE COMPANY
.....
a member of the Defence Force within the meaning of those Regulations, while on service —

Died on the FIFTEENTH day of JULY

One thousand nine hundred and SIXTY-EIGHT

Dated the 13th day of AUGUST 1968

M Ryan
~~Lieutenant Colonel~~
Central Army Records Office

Private Bruce Sedgman's death certificate.

Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP

ARTHUR E. DAVIES & CO.

PTY. LTD.

FUNERAL DIRECTORS AND EMBALMERS

WALLACE A. H. GREEN, PRIVATE 64 1879

AFTER HOURS, PHONE 5 2225

CLAREMONT (OPPOSITE RAILWAY STATION) 3 2177

FREMANTLE (85 MARKET STREET) 5 2225

14th August, 1968.

Mr. T.J.J.Sedgman,
66 Willis Street,
East Victoria Park.

Dear Sir,

Re-late Bruce John Sedgman.

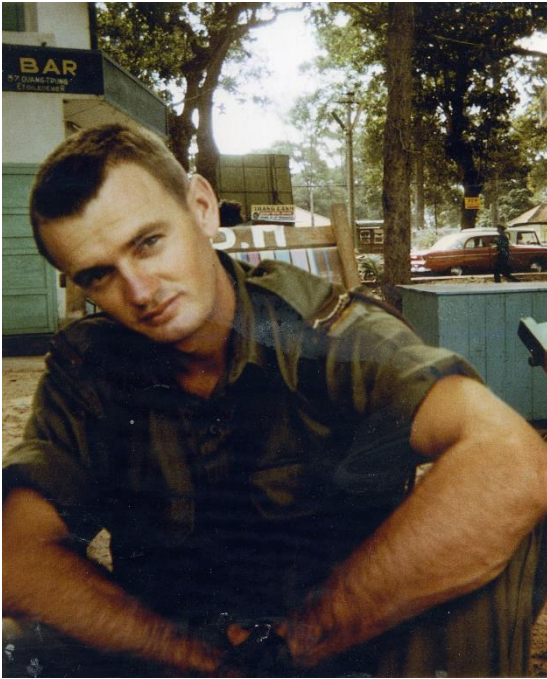
We enclose herewith a Certified Copy of the Register of
Death re the above named.

Yours faithfully,

ARTHUR E. DAVIES & CO. PTY. LTD.

Notification of Bruce Sedgman's death from the funeral directors.

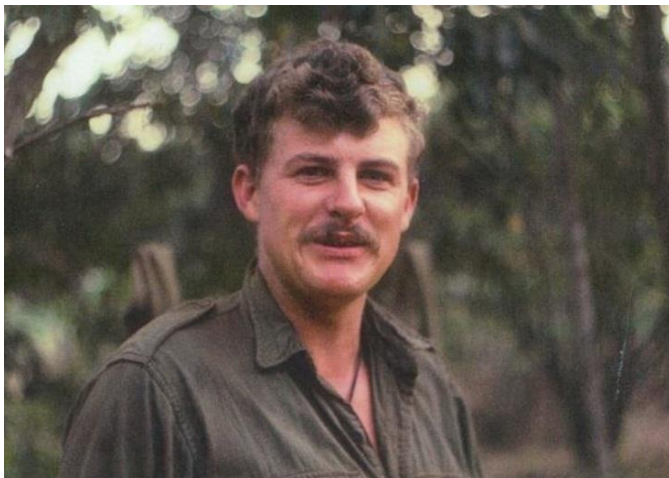
Courtesy of Neville Browne, JP.



Private Alec Ernest James BELL

Date of Death: 29 January 1968, Vietnam

(Courtesy of Janet McWhirter)



**Lance Corporal Paul Richard
Peter VAN RIJSEWIJK**

Date of Death: 19 October 1968,
Vietnam

Paul Van Rijsewijk, circa 1967-1968. Courtesy of Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund Memorial Wall
<http://australia.vvmf.org/Wall-of-Faces/476/Paul-Richard-Peter-VAN-RIJSEWIJK>



Private Christopher William ROOST

Date of Death 23 December 1968, Vietnam