

Col Ron Lange AM(mil) MID

DOB: 11 December 1929



On Ron's coffin you'll notice a cap and a green beret of the Pacific Island's Regiment. This beret served him well in both PNG and Vietnam. Given he had to deal with Americans in Vietnam, the green beret gave him an added status, he believed, gave priority to his requests that ultimately benefited the Australian Task Force.



At 19, Ron joined the CMF (Citizen Military Forces, now known as the Army Reserve).



This was his introduction to his military career, with the 16/28 Battalion, the Cameron Highlanders of WA.

Once Ron finished his electrical apprenticeship in Perth, he joined his family in Rabaul, PNG and continued his part time role with the CMF.



In 1952, he enlisted with intentions to go to Korea. He was selected to attend Officer Cadet School in Portsea, where he graduated in June 1952 and was commissioned into the Royal Australian Infantry.



This first class at Portsea became lifelong friends who still kept in touch these past 70 years.



As newly graduated 2nd Lieutenants, Ron Lange and Roger Jackson were the first graduates to be posted off the mainland to TPNG. It was his first of five postings in PNG.



To be able to be promoted to 1st Lieutenant, Ron needed to gain his Leaving Certificate. It took two years of additional study, replacing rations for books when on patrol in the New Guinea jungle.



For 6 months he was posted to Vanimo patrolling the Dutch NG border. Ron was the platoon commander sent on patrol in areas where there were no maps. He spent time in villages where some had never seen a white man. These patrols opened up the country. In addition to intelligence gathering, the mapping and descriptions of the land helped in the country's development.

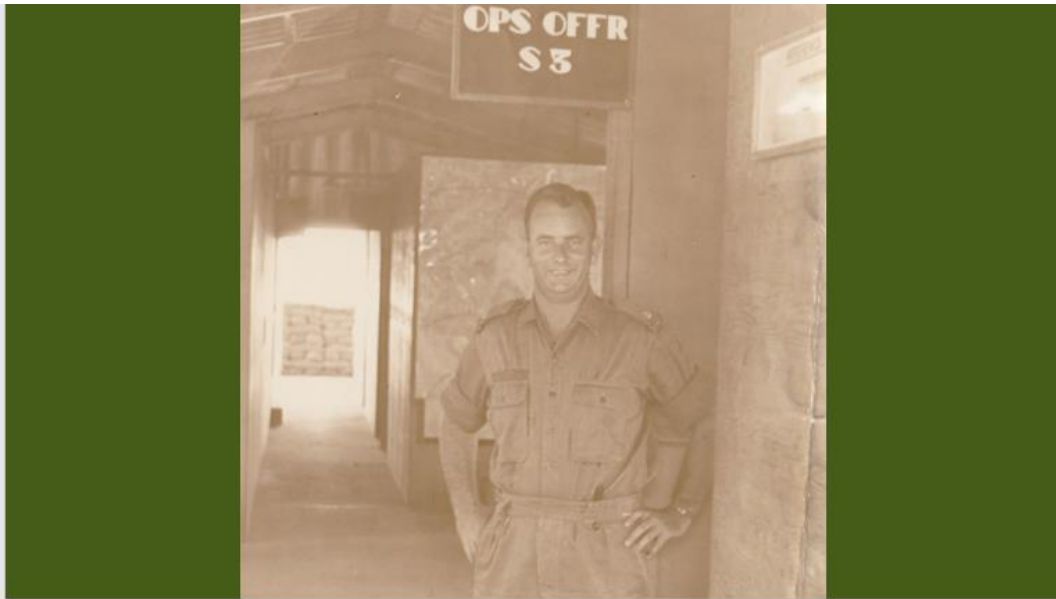
On one occasion 6 Pacific Islanders were released from prison to canoe him up the Sepik. Five were head hunters, convicted of murder, the other a sorcerer. Thank goodness he was fluent in the native Pidgin English.



He also did an attachment to the US 1st Division in Hawaii. |



Col Ron Lange served with distinction in a variety of staff and regimental appointments in Australia, Papua New Guinea, Malaya and South Vietnam. He received two awards during his career.



The first Award was a MID (Mentioned in Dispatches) received for his service in Vietnam. As a Major, he was the operations officer responsible for logistics. It was largely due to his efforts that the logistics functioned so effectively. His citation says "He displayed great drive, initiative, imagination and efficiency, and he always attempted to improve the service given to the 1st Australian Task Force. He did much to create the enviable reputation that the Logistic Support Group gained. By his devotion to duty and professional efficiency, he set an example which was an inspiration to all with whom he worked, and which was in keeping with the highest standards of the Australian Army."



The second award was his Order of Australia – Military Division. The citation included:



"From 1970 to 1973, Lieutenant Colonel Ronald Lange commanded the 1st Pacific Island Regiment during the difficult transitional period leading up to independence of PNG.



"The smoothness of changeover of the Battalion and associated sub units is a credit to his tact, competence and fine leadership."



This picture shows Lt Col Lange receiving the keys to the city of Port Moresby on behalf of the Regiment.

As an aside: Being the commander of 1PIR at Taurama Barracks was the equivalent of being a mayor to a town. He was responsible for families, schools, health services and everything that goes with living in a township. He asked that the Aussie teachers, known as "chalkies", assigned to 1PIR be acknowledged for their great work in preserving the history of PNG's role in WWII on Kokoda Day.



The citation continued – "On his return to Australia, and after serving as a highly regarded instructor at the Australian Staff College, he was appointed to Staff Officer Grade One (Operations), Headquarters 1st Division. His dedication, devotion to duty and exceptional competence have been most evident in this appointment and, due to his efforts, the operational training of the Division has been soundly and professionally based."



"Lieutenant Colonel Lange is a tireless worker who has always placed the demands of service before his own personal interests. He is an outstanding officer who by his example has earned the highest respect of all ranks of the Australian Regular Army."



Colonel Ron Lange, at 54, retired and Trixie had to rethink her statement that "she married him for better or worse but not for lunch".



Poppy Tribute:

This tribute commemorates the contribution made by defence service personnel to the defence and freedom of Australia.

Ron has asked that any current or ex servicemen or women, who would like to place a poppy, to do so now.

