

**SOUTH ISLAND VETS TRAIN FOR**  
**EAST TIMOR - FIJI - RTSVN or**  
**THE BOYS " SHOOTIN FISHIN BOOZIN " WEEKEND AT**  
**FSB KOPARA (West Coast) 3 - 5 NOVEMBER 2000**

" ROUNDS IN THE AIR . . . . ."	Cliff Chappell
" ROUNDS ON TARGET . . . . ."	Dick Knowles
" LISTEN CAREFULLY, DON'T SHOOT . . . . ."	Neil (UP) Ure
" CORDITE, I LOVE THE SMELL OF CORDITE. mmmmm"	KJ Murray
" THE TRACK GETS A BIT HAIRY HERE. . . . ooops "	Archie Moore

**"TO DRUNK TO FIND HIS OWN BUNK"** headlines; NZ TRUTH, 4 Nov 2000!

Just some of the sounds echoing around the bush clad hills of Fire Support Base KOPARA. Set in a wide river valley, scoured by ancient glaciers from the Southern Alps to Greymouth, Kopara is inland from Lake Brunner on a packed dirt road heading towards Mt Hochstetter. It is surrounded by the best trout fishing streams on the West Coast with nearby Lakes Ahaura and Haupiri adding to the fishers opportunities to land the big one.

After a couple months of planning, plotting and numerous toll calls the big **Hunting, Shooting, Fishing and Four Wheel Drive Safari** weekend arrived and a dozen vets descended on the tiny timber town of KOPARA. Several ex Army staff had bought the township on their retirement from the green machine, it comprises several hundred acres of bush, a timber mill, several houses, town hall, single mens quarters, cookhouse and lease options on D.O.C land blocks. The visiting Vietnam Veterans were made royally welcome by the "Town Council";

Dave & Janet Fitzwater, Steve, Olly & Stephanie Witton, John & Raelen Craig, Neil Peterson, Gavin, Peter (ex Rhodesian Army) and Red and local vet Bill Perry (V4) We are for ever indebted to them for the hospitality, catering, range support and camaraderie extended to us over the weekend, we look forward to a renewal of friendships in the not to distant future.

The troops arrived from differing directions as per Lt Archie's detailed plans and times;  
 Southland Transport - Dino (V5) and Sally Cole Dino straight into the fishing,  
 Chch Big Red One - Archie Moore (161 Bty), Cliff Chappel (161 Bty),  
 KJ Murray (ANZAC Bn), Neil Ure (V5), and  
 Rangiora Rural Delivery - Dick Knowles (V5), Rick Edwards (161 Bty), Bob James (V4),  
 Tony (V6) & son Tane Howse.

Sadly many missed a great weekend due to, well whatever, **but book now for next year !!**

Friday saw us arrive in the above packets, the Southlanders immediately laid waste to the trout population. The Cantabs met the Kopara locals and set up Brigade HQ, we then RV'd with the 'ora-ites at the Nelson Creek pub. The pommy barmaid, Zoe, had many offers to help her with her immigration problems and the locals quickly heard the vets were in town.

Two lads in their early twenties came up and asked if we knew a Bob "Sniggs" Pike, yup, our own Bob Pike (V5), was from there, his Mum's house is opposite the pub. These kids wrote to Bob in Vietnam when they were in school, remember that Bob ? Another came in with his NSTU Intake photo starring, in the staff, Bdr Bunny Tumai (161 Bty) and Cpl Norm Foley (161 Bty), talk about old home week. After a good feed of local whitebait fritters we sped to Kopara (non drinking designated drivers naturally, sir) where a pot of soup and some sponsors products awaited. Intros and more neck oil later it was a weary lot of olds heading to the barracks, some did'nt make it, eh Victor 6, hence the NZ Truth headline **TO DRUNK TO FIND HIS OWN BLINK**, My mistake, he claims he was posted sentry at the door !

Saturday morning, crisp and clear, very crisp, great breakfast spread, thank you Olly, Jan and co. Divvy up who is going four wheel driving and who is fishing. Dino "Trout Slayer" Cole was already heading for a likely pool, so Archie took the trekkers off in search of the fabled old gold fields out the back of Ikamatua [Ikky](south of Reefton). For those interested in next trip, Arch is a top 4X4 driver and guide so you're guaranteed a safe, interesting drive, ask Dick Knowles, and the rest of us

An amusing note here the sign at the Ikky BP petrol pumps had the following prices listed;

Petrol \$ ARM, Diesel \$ LEG.

We went up thru a forestry/mining track to a place called NAPOLEANS HILL, a former gold mine town, complete with casino. Another town was at nearby NOBLES, sadly all that remains are two forlorn overgrown cemeteries. We toured thru the water race cut out of hills to get water to the gold stamping mills, the tunnels are now of a depth to allow a safe drive thru, very eerie. Words cannot capture the beauty and tranquility of this area, the trickle of the sun-drenched streams, the calls of the birdlife, the play of shadows... *the screech of incoming squadrons of sandflies, mossies and blowflies, get the windows up, go Archie, ramp up, lets go !*

A quick pie n a pint back at Ikky pub and off to Lake Haupiri where Steve, Dave, Specs and wonderful wives had set up a lakeside BBQ lunch. Peaceful and quiet, Tony and Tane tried their hand at canoeing until the scent of sizzling steak on the barbie got them racing back to shore. Well done Kopara, all that army training, the Staff to WOs "Make a Plan " paying off.

That afternoon we got into the serious side of the weekend, the range shoot. The sight of an SLR had many old vets drooling at the wooded weapon of old, the feel, the weight, the kick in the shoulder, the wonderful scent of cordite, the warmth of the other firers hot, spent cartridge case down the back of the neck ! We were also able to try our hand at a privately owned SKS and a 5.56mm Chinese version of the venerable AK-47. Archie and Bloodnut (Rick Edwards) had brought their own Mk 4 SMLE .303s for a blast down memory lane, Rick could even remember his old drill movements for Shoulder Arms - Two Three.

The shoot was in three parts and the troops divided into three sections, points awarded for section and individual skills. The first shoot was straight foward 50m standing unsupported, aah that smell of cordite again, if only it could be bottled as a cologne eh. Anyway, suffice to say the old skills came out with cock, hook n look, first IAs etc quickly recalled, yes, found the reversed gas plug on the SLR thank you Steve Witton ! Only one A.D., L/Cpl URE, now aka U.D URE.

The second shoot was a section jungle lane with hidden Fig 11, 12 & 12C targets, well laid out and a shotgun added for lead scout. Most realised that the object was to fire at the targets as they appeared, "U.D" URE commanded his section ,as tho on UN peacekeeping duties;

his orders to his troops; " Don't shoot, OK " albeit there were points for handing back ammo unused, the jungle lane part was won by Coles Killers.

The third shoot was from the 100 yd mound, again standing unsupported, then advance to the fifty and fire off remaining rounds. A great afternoon on the range, well run, safety always to the fore and appreciated by all involved, many thanks to Archie and the Kopara team.

A semi formal dinner that night included an entree of manuka smoked fresh brown trout, a la Dino, just perfect. Neck oil and several hours discourse at the bar after recapping who, what ,where. The chainsaws were in full rev in the bunkhouse that night !

Strangely a subdued Sunday breakfast until the third caffeine fix kicked in. Must have been the fresh mountain air, or cordite aphrodisiac or sumptuous mixed grille brekky but it resulted in a ton of dishes, ex Cadets Moore and Murray found themselves back in a B Block 'pot alley' awash in crockery and suds.

Back to the Kopara rifle range and it was time to hear, feel and smell the big guns this time. No, not pack howitzers, the big bore muzzle loaders and flintlocks came out to play. The Kopara town host a lot of Black Powder meets and are enthusiasts themselves. We all took a turn with; .45 cal Hawkins flintlock and also percussion cap(called nipples), .45 Kentucky long rifle flintlock. Old cartridge rifles; 45/70 Springfield trapdoor, .32/20 Winchester, .44/40 Winchester and .410 shotgun and 12G early lever action shottie. Smoke, noise and "Yee Hahs " echoed thru the valley. No wonder combat was civilised in those days, flintlocks are tricky beasts to prime, load and aim and no play in the rain either. Thanks again Kopara for an intro to your passion and the oppertunity to see them in action.

Lunch was a fairly traditional B Block 'bulk lunch' with a nice touch, a flagon of Port, or is the modern Army into this now ? We took this to Bill Perry's (V4) farm at the end of the road. Seeing Bills collection of antlers we assumed he was into a bit of firepower too. No, he is a gentleman farmer and has a fine herd of elk and red deer. Good to see you again Bill, sadly it reminded me of where I had last seen Bill - on the deck outside a ARVN compound when a boobytrap had taken out the V4 resupply crew; Bill, Tom T, Olly T, a couple more WIA and Twiggy T. (KIA) The bulk lunch was consumed on a riverbank with the weekends' trout assassins assessing likely spots for the 'big un'.

Sadly time to part company and head for home, it was great to see the fellow vets and all in good heart. Great also to see the Kopara families and partake of their excellent hospitality and expertise on the ranges and local areas of interest. Our sincerest thanks again to all involved with the planning and execution of a fantabulous weekend. My \$60 are in the mail for next time, don't miss out guys, this is a great weekend, its only for Vietnam Veterans too.

Cheers n beers.

KJ Murray

PS; Archie Moore's web site <http://www.angelfire.com/sd/nzvets> has a lot of thumbnail pics of the weekend and a reminder he won the range shoot !