WHERE OLD FRIENDS MEET

In the English winter of 1957, Australian stage personality Lorrae Desmond chatted with a group of seven shivering, homeless children at London's Waterloo railway station.

She handed each of them a pound note, and told them about the wide country that was to become their home.

One of the boys in the group was a gangling, bewildered 10-year-old.

This week, in the steaming heat of Viet Nam, Lorrae met a tall, young Digger, an ardent fan who bought her a bunch of flowers and showed her around Saigon.

The Australian soldier was Trooper Ian Bryce, now grown up, but the same gangling boy who stood on the Waterloo boat train platform 12 years ago.

Trooper Bryce said: "There were seven kids including myself. We were going to Australia under the sponsorship of Dr. Barnardo's Homes.

"While we waited for the boat train to take us to Southampton, Lorrae Desmond met us. She said we were going to a terrific country, and that we would really like living there.

"Then she gave each of us a pound note to spend, and kissed us goodbye.

"After arriving in Australia most of us went to a Barnardo Home at Normanhurst, in New South Wales.

"We had been there six months when Lorrae returned to Australia. One of the first things she did was collect us and take us out to a show at the Tivoli in Sydney.

"Since then though, the only times I've seen her have been on television and in the papers. In that time I'd finished school, joined the Army three years ago, and got engaged to a girl from Maitland.

"But I've always wanted to thank Lorrae in some way, and when I heard she was coming to Viet Nam with the ABC dance band the chance presented itself.
"I made a point of seeing her and introducing myself. Then I spent a couple of hours showing her around Saigon.

"She was just as nice as I remembered her from before," Ian added.

And Lorrae really enjoyed her conducted tour of Saigon.

"It was marvellous," she said. "We rode about in one of those cyclos - you know, the three-wheel things where you sit in front of the driver.

"Actually, I vividly remember the time I saw Ian in London... it was two days after Christmas. In fact, I still have photographs of our farewell," Lorrae said.

"At the time I was in London for seven years. Every Easter and Christmas I usually took part in pantomimes for Dr. Barnardo Homes.

"They invited me to the station to see the kiddies off... probably because I was Australian.

"But the last place I expected to meet one of those children was here in Viet Nam," she said.

Lists: A

Further information:

CANBERRA: Major Allan S. Hinds (65-4061) (49-6030)

OTHER STATES: ADPR AT COMMAND HEADQUARTERS.

28 March 1967

Directorate of Public Relations,
Army Headquarters,
CANBERRA, A.C.T.
Author/s: Fraser, Malcolm

Title: Where old friends meet

Date: 28 March 1967

Persistent Link: http://hdl.handle.net/11343/40208

File Description: Where old friends meet

Terms and Conditions: Copyright courtesy of Malcolm Fraser. Contact the University of Melbourne Archives for permission requests.