

## John Williams

### "Only 19"

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Mum and Dad and Danny saw the passing out parade  
at Puckapunyal  
It was a long march from cadets  
The sixth battalion was next to tour, it was me who drew  
the card  
We did Canungra, Shoalwater, before we left  
And Townsville lined the footpaths as we marched  
down to the quay  
This clipping from the paper shows a youngon', strong  
and clean  
And there's me with me slouch hat, my SLR and greens  
God help me - I was only nineteen  
From Vung Tau riding Chinooks to the dust at Nui Dat  
I'd been in and out of choppers now for months  
We made our tents a home, V.B. and pinups on the  
lockers  
And an Asian orange sunset through the scrub  
And can you tell me, doctor, why I can't get to sleep?  
And night time's just a jungle dark and a barking M.16?  
And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you tell  
me what it means?  
God help me - I was only nineteen  
A four week operation, any step could be your last one  
on two legs  
It was a war within yourself  
But you wouldn't let your mates down 'til they had you  
dusted off  
So you closed your eyes and you thought about  
somethin' else  
Then someone yelled out "Contact", and the bloke  
behind me swore  
We hooked in there for hours, then a God almighty roar  
Frankie kicked the mine the day that mankind kicked  
the moon  
God help me - he was goin' home in June  
I can still see Frankie, drinkin' tinnies in the Grand  
Hotel  
On a thirty-six hour rec. leave in Vung Tau  
And I can still hear Frankie, lyin' screamin' in the jungle  
'Til the morphine came and killed the bloody row  
And the Anzac legends didn't mention mud and blood

and tears  
And the stories that my father told me never seemed  
quite real  
And I caught some pieces in my back that I d

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