

# A TWIST IN THE POGO'S TALE

**An Army Clerk's Passage from Childhood  
to War in Vietnam**

**Derek V. Smith**

*Edited by Bruce C. Gibson-Wilde*



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## **BRIEF ON BOOK WRITTEN BY DEREK V. SMITH**

*A Twist In The POGO's Tale - An Army Clerk's Passage from Childhood to War in Vietnam*  
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POGO is an acronym for 'Posted on Garrison Operations.' POGO's are generally non-combatants; clerks, cooks, storemen, drivers and the like.

The book contains 132 pages. It has fifteen (15) chapters, three (3) appendixes and six (6) maps. It has taken about five (5) years to reach this point. Derek has 'self published'. He has pledged in the book to give all profits to the ethnic minority (Montagnard) orphanages that he and his family have been supporting since 2004. The orphanages are located in Kon Tum, Central Highlands, Vietnam. For more information on this please visit [www.askatvso.com](http://www.askatvso.com)

The foreword for this book was written by LTGEN John Sanderson, AC, (ret'd) former Chief of Army and Governor of Western Australia.

Much detail for this book has been drawn from diaries that Derek kept, particularly in 1966/67 and 1969/70. There are numerous other references noted in the footnotes. There is a list of abbreviations in the back of the book. The book contains many photographs.

The book covers the period of Derek's early childhood including primary school, high school, cubs, scouts and Army cadets. It then travels into his time in the Army beginning at the Army Apprentice School, Balcombe Victoria where he was in training to be an Army Clerk. Then on graduation he leads us to his posting as a clerk in the Army Small Ship Squadron where he served on board a landing ship and cargo ship from 1964 to 1967. In that time he sailed to New Guinea three times and Vietnam three times.

Derek then leaves the Ships and is posted to the Royal Australian Engineer Field Squadrons which in 1969 see him back in Vietnam. He comes home in 1970 and finds himself back in Vietnam in 1971 which is where the book finishes.

Derek has attempted to include much of the humour that is typical of the Australian digger but which is often not included in such stories. The title denotes what Derek was, a clerk, but his story or TALE does have many twists and turns including meeting the enemy which finds this POGO feeling well out of his depth. It is a good read. Derek is selling the book for \$25. He will post to anyone wishing to buy one. Cost including postage and packaging is \$31.20. Direct deposits can be made to his bank - BSB 064823, account number 00530203 - CBA. The account is in the name of Derek and Rhonda Smith. His email contact is [dvsmith@ozemail.com.au](mailto:dvsmith@ozemail.com.au) and his mobile phone is 0438221114.



### THE AUTHOR

Derek was born at Murwillumbah, New South Wales in 1946. He was educated in Redcliffe, Queensland. He joined the army as an apprentice clerk in January 1963.

It was from this date that Derek officially donned the mantle of POGO, an acronym for "Posted on Garrison Operations". In military parlance it refers to non-combatants: clerks, cooks, storemen and the like. It is from this abbreviation that he derived the title for his book—A Twist in the POGO's Tale. The image on the front cover is not an unknown breed of kangaroo!

After graduating in 1964 he was allocated to the corps of Royal Australian Engineers and served in various units, which saw him in New

Guinea on three occasions, and Vietnam five times.

He gained a commission to the rank of lieutenant in 1975 and served in various officer appointments, finally retiring from the Army as a major in 1986.

Derek married Rhonda in 1977, and on retirement moved to Townsville. They have two sons, Michael and Stephen.

The family first visited Vietnam in 1999. Derek became involved in fund raising for the Montagnard orphanages in Kon Tum; his family made their first visit to the orphanages in 2007, and they have visited Kon Tum every year since then.

Derek Smith and his sponsored orphan A. Col at Hoang Thanh Restaurant, Kon Tum, 2015.

