

## Only 19

John Williamson

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 me young and 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 didn't even feel  
God help me, I was only 19

And can you tell me Doctor why I still can't get to sleep?  
And night time's just a jungle dark and a barking M16  
And what's this rash that comes and goes can you tell me what i  
t means?  
God help me, I was only 19.