

I Was Only Nineteen

John Schumann (Redgum)

A C G D A G A

Mum and Dad and Denny saw the passing-out
parade at Puckapunyal

It was a long march from cadets
The sixth battalion was the next to tour, and 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 us young and
strong and clean

And there's me in me slouch hat with me 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
But we made our tents a home, VB and pinups on
the lockers

And an asian orange sunset through the scrub

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 M
sixteen?

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 when each step could mean
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 thought about
something else

Then someone yelled out "Contact!" and the bloke
behind me swore
We hooked in there for hours, then a god all mighty
roar

Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked
the moon
God help me, he was going home in June

I can still see Frankie, drinking tinnies in the Grand
Hotel

On a thirty-six hour rec leave in Vung Tau

And I can still hear Frankie, lying screaming 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

I caught some pieces in my back that I didn't even
feel

God help me, I was only nineteen

And can you tell me, doctor, why I still can't get to
isleep?

And why the Channel Seven chopper chills me to
my feet?

And what's this rash that comes and goes, can you
tell me what it means?

God help me, I was only nineteen

A C G D A G A

