Allan Derek Jones "A" Coy,
Junior leaders 10 September 1963 – 16 April 1966

Baker Platoon	**J/Pte & J/L/Cpl**
Steevens Platoon	**J/Cpl & J/Sgt (one or two days only)**
"A" Company Headquarters	**J/CSM**
Battalion Headquarters	**J/RSM**

There are events in one's life that stimulate action; it is not until that stimulation comes along that one realizes what impact events and people have had on one's life.

It was after reading some of the memories posted by other ex-boys as well as permanent staff that I realized that I have an obligation to contribute to the memories of others as well as to build the historical record of the famed Junior Leaders Battalion R.A.O.C.

It was Major Head's article that drove me to write this article.

We who are members of this special group all have a story to tell and ought to do so.

I joined up on September 10, 1963, and reported for duty to the recruit's company office at Dettingen Barracks Blackdown.

There are some names that immediately come to mind; Major J. K. Head was at that time the company commander. Other permanent staff names elude me with the exception of Cpl Cleary, who was in charge of my barrack block.

At that time, we had two blocks of new recruits; I believe we had roughly 60 for this particular intake. .

Major Head (J.K.) had a significant impact on me, not on the first day but on the first room inspection. I thought (wrongly) that I was pretty well prepared for the inspection.

My grandfather (retired) was a Major in the RAOC, my father (still serving) an RSM, and my brother Paul a J/L/Cpl in Steevens Platoon at the time.

One would think that with this pedigree one would have an advantage; well we all know what happens when one thinks.

In comes J.K. and (mini me) the boxer dog; I cannot remember the name of the dog, but by god J. K. was the bulldog, as he moved around the room checking for "dust" as well as other minor insignificant things,

I think all of us were scared to death.

My turn came far too early; on approaching the end of my perfectly made bed pack, J.K. took hold of the foot rail and pulled the bed from the wall; he then walked to the head rail, reaching down he ran his finger along the lower rail.

Obviously Jesus came to speak, or at least it seemed as if he had.

A further inspection took place the next day.

Although J.K. was tough, he also so had a lighter side. I know on reading this paragraph you will laugh, but life is life.

I was on the parade ground one morning and was not feeling very well. When I requested to go on sick parade, Cpl Cleary sent me to the company office where I caught the ever-watchful eye of J.K., and he called me into his office and wanted an explanation, which was forth coming with a few tears.

Although J.K. was not a qualified doctor, he knew his medicine. I was told to sit down, and then engaged in a short father to son conversation; on conclusion, I was diagnosed with being "homesick" and sent to my barrack block to lie down until lunchtime.

After this short rest, I was cured. J. K. validated one of the things my father had told me when I first decided to join up.

When you have rank you need to establish that you are in charge, later on you can show your softer side. It is easier to go from being tough to being soft as opposed to the reverse.

These small experiences once articulated cause others to well to the surface; point in case was in my second term in Baker Platoon.

My platoon Sergeant was Geoff Page; I am sure that many of you will remember him not only in boy's service but also in your subsequent military life.

Geoff rose to the rank of RSM before retiring.

However, here again was a man who established who was in charge, but also provided the guidance appropriate for his young charges.

I remember another few words of wisdom from my father upon entering junior leaders: Work hard, excel on your strong points and work on identifying and improving your weak ones.

Geoff helped raise this to a meaningful level when he called me aside and commended me on my performance and turnout, but at the same time gave me some very important advice.

As a leader your role is not only to demonstrate expectations but also to help others achieve their potential. If you see someone who needs help, offer it; these gestures will have people looking up to you.

I remember another developmental opportunity afforded me by Geoff; as you will all recollect, we had the inter-platoon block competition (cleanliness/decoration etc). It was the result of this competition that I experienced my very first ride on a motorcycle.

Jeff wanted to brighten up the place so he decided to purchase some plants (marigolds). The only way that Geoff could get the plants back to the barracks was to have a rider with him on his motorcycle; I was selected.

I don't know who was scared the most; I was hanging on for dear life as we roared down the road towards Camberley. Jeff would lean into the turns, as every one knows is the correct way to ride a motorcycle, except me. I, not knowing the dynamics of driving or riding a motorcycle, leaned the exact opposite way causing the bike to become a little unstable.

I received a very quick lesson, or should I say learnt a few new words very quickly.

In addition to the advice on helping others, Geoff encouraged me to participate in as many sports as possible. I believe that this participation gave me exposure as well as built my confidence as a young man.

I was however a little ungainly when it came to some sports (football seems to jump out as a prime example); I had no ability to control a ball with my feet. Cross Country Running however was a different matter.

I am sure all sports participants will remember CQMS Robinson, later known as "Q Robbi," who dished out all of the sports equipment, at least during my time.

Besides dishing out the sports equipment, Q Robbi dished out the business to the Cross Country team, mainly by example, how could you not try to beat an old man at his own game, and then learning that it was not going to happen.

In 1965, Q Robbi led a group of us junior leaders on a march from Deepcut to Browndown ranges just outside of Portsmouth/Gosport, a good 45 miles.

The company was on its annual camp, taking place in the New Forrest, so I thought that it would be a good idea to join Q Robbi on this little trip. Initially we thought that we could make it in one day, however, it rained all day long, and the rest of our mates passed us on the road we looking like a bunch of drowned rats.

Due to the rain we only made it to Petersfield, just over half way.

Q Robbi put us all up (paid from his own pocket) in a Bed and Breakfast for the night.

Devil's Bridge in Wales was another of those summer camps that comes to mind. The weather was really hot and most of us got a little sun-burnt. Late one evening whilst trying to get to sleep amidst the chatter in our tent, a head pokes through the open flap. Unfortunately my mouth was quicker than my brain (I was only 16 not quite coordinated yet), and I asked that "Rudolf" remove his nose, as it was so bright we could not sleep. With a whack of a swagger stick I soon found out who Rudolf was, J.K. was on the prowl.

I often wonder why J. K. always seemed to be around when I made a fool of myself.

To J. K's credit, he did not hold any of my smart mouth comments against me. I guess as a father he knew that we, his kids, had a lot to learn in a short time and therefore gave some leeway in our growth.

It was the nurturing of people like J.K, and Geoff Page, that lead to a rather swift move up the ladder, the example being from J/Cpl for one term to J/Sgt at the beginning of the next term, then being promoted one day after my promotion to J/Sgt to J/CSM of A Company.

I remember that day vividly: I was the junior of the J/Sgt's, and was taking the company on parade; some of the company had gone to the ranges.

Included in the group going to the ranges were all of the other J/Sgt's, hence I was left to run the parade. About ten minutes into the parade, I heard this booming voice (Jesus had come to speak yet again). Here was J.K. standing on the edge of the parade ground down by the company office, about one hundred and fifty yards or so away.

I heard "J/Sgt Jones, "booming" across the field and then it was repeated; one of the J/Cpl's in front of me mentioned that J.K. was calling. I handed the parade over to J/Cpl J. Tullett (Jerry) of Gordon Platoon and legged it over the parade ground as quick as I could.

J.K. gave me the great news telling me to get changed and report to battalion HQ by 0900hrs. I ran back to the parade and assumed command; at this point J/Cpl J. Tullett commented that I was moving as if I wanted, or was getting, another promotion, little did he know.

So, from full screw to J/CSM in the space of one or two days. It was Jerry Tullett who helped me move my belongings from Steevens Platoon over to Gordon where I set up residence for the remainder of my time in Blackdown.

When I started this article, I could not remember many of the names of people that influenced my life at Blackdown but as you can see the process of remembering and writing has triggered the memory.

Some of you may remember Cpl R. (Bob) Douglas from the guardroom.

I had a little experience with him; I cannot remember the exact time frame, but I was a J/Pte in Baker Platoon. A friend of mine, 'Tich' Harrop, and I decided to have a little fun.

The main road from Camberley to Deepcut ran right past the barracks. We decided to put a barrier across the main road and divert the traffic into the barracks past the guardroom.

Everything went very well until "Tich" Harrop and my self decided to lie around in the bushes to admire our great work. In my defence, I had not acquired any common sense yet.

I was told by Cpl Douglas that common sense would come a little later on, after about three or four terms. I cannot remember how many nails there were in the walls of the jail cell, but I was there long enough to count them.

Later on, it was Bob Douglas who offered to let my girlfriend stay overnight with his family the night before my passing out parade.

It was during my time as J/RSM that I got to know the Adj. Capt Alistair MacDonald, what a character; he had no time for junior Officers who did not know how to drill well.

I remember him getting RSM Maul to take the Officers into the drill sheds and teach them a thing or two.

Alistair held the boy soldiers in very high regard in terms of their ability. I might mention that he was also a mentor of mine and provided some very helpful guidance.

In addition, he made sure that he was invited over to Bob Douglas' house the evening that my girlfriend was there.

CQMS Allen was another person that comes to mind, although I did not have many dealings with him in boy's service. I ran into him a few years later in Germany at 7 OFP just outside of Celle.

Some of you may also remember Capt Fullilove from Body platoon, I ran into him in 1968 in 11 OFP, which was co-located with 7 OFP outside of Celle.

Although I only served a short time in the army, I left in September 1970, it was a great experience. The lessons I learned have helped me not only in my business life but also in my personal life.

The permanent staff, even if we did not appreciate it at the time, had our best interests at heart. Yes, there were some uncomfortable events, but on the whole I would go back and do it again in an instant.