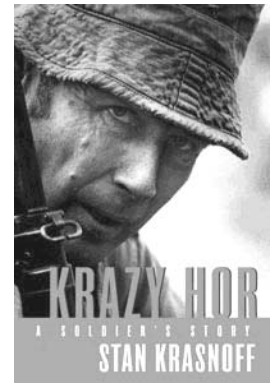


# Krazy Hor: A Soldier's Story

Stan Krasnoff

Reviewed by Brigadier John Essex-Clark



Stan Krasnoff was an infantryman who, as a lieutenant colonel, commanded the 3rd battalion of the Royal Australian Regiment after the Vietnam War. He resigned his commission after this command because he felt unwilling to join what he viewed as the 'rat race' to higher appointments.

Krasnoff experienced many of the difficulties the Australian Army faced during and post-Vietnam. *Krazy Hor* contains elements of Krasnoff's youth, army career, and activities in retirement. I know the author as we were instructors together at Canungra. Though I served in Vietnam, I did not serve with the Australian Army Training Team, or with the Pacific Islands Regiment. Therefore, in writing this review, I have had to rely on comments about Stan's book from some of my friends who did serve in those areas.

Stan Krasnoff's life was a roller-coaster ride as a child and a soldier. This is clear in the way this short book jumps from time to time and place to place without an amalgam; rather like a rapidly shaken Kaleidoscope. Krasnoff jerks his readers from event to event and the book is more a series of entertaining anecdotes rather than the account its sub-title, *A Soldier's Story*, infers. To cover a 22-year army career and an extraordinary youth in 202 easily read pages is nigh impossible. Perhaps Stan wanted this book to fill in some of the gaps about the social activities, personal dislikes and humorous incidents not covered by his earlier book, *Shadows on the Wall*, which described his experiences with the Training Team in Vietnam.

With a neat and often witty turn of phrase and the odd but quaint mixed metaphor, Krasnoff describes his evacuation from Shanghai as a child; his time in a refugee camp in the Philippines; his officer training and, far too tediously, his many amorous bouts; plus incidents in his service in Kapooka, New Guinea, Canungra, Vietnam, South Australia and Enoggera. There are a few interesting perceptions, such as that of alcohol abuse in the army. He has some good quotes, the best of which could be then Lieutenant Colonel Ron Grey's, 'I want the few, the very few, who get the job done—against all odds.' Krasnoff praises his heroes effusively, sometimes to the point of sycophancy; damns a few lesser mortals and takes a few painful jabs at, in his words,

Australia's 'Clayton's' defence force. He debunks his staff appointments and relishes the joys of command. He grumbles with disgust about some aspects of the Army and Australia's defence strategy, and makes some justifiable gripes about control of army activities sliding towards the public service, and the defence force serving political whims. He, probably purposefully, avoids the dictum that 'He who pays the piper calls the tune'.

In his penultimate chapter that he titles 'Catharsis', Krasnoff broods about his post-traumatic stress disorder and his faith—espousing the Greek stoic: Epictetus. This brooding leads into his finale: a rambling diatribe on his perceptions of Australia's defence and how to combat the ills of the world: perceptions that he then coyly but correctly annuls with the first sentence of his final paragraph—'But what do I know?'

Unfortunately there is no index and no maps or photographs, except that of the author on the front cover. This could be rectified to add interest and usefulness to any further editions or expansion of the book.

Writing this book, Stan Krasnoff gets so much 'phlegm off his chest', it was probably a catharsis in itself. Unfortunately, Stan Krasnoff, who was a fine natural leader and well-respected soldier, leaves the reader bereft of understanding as to Stan Krasnoff's true substance, and more aware of his flippancy and cynicism towards the serious art of soldiering and leadership. To a soldier, his 'story' could be fun but it is also disappointing. ♦

*Stan Krasnoff, 'Krazy Hor: A Soldier's Story', Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2004, paperback, 202pp, RRP \$35.00.*

**It can't happen here is number one on  
the list of famous last words.**

—David Crosby