



Frankie & children onstage at the Sydney domain 3rd October, 1987, to celebrate the Welcome Home Parade. John Schumann is to their left about to sing 'I was only nineteen'. An audience of Vietnam veterans & families – 60000 strong, sing along.

SUITABILITY

Years 9 - 12

DURATION

55 minutes + 15 minute Q&A

COST PER STUDENT

\$8.80 (\$8 + 80c GST)

MINIMUM PER SESSION

\$880 (\$800+ \$80 GST)
if less than 100 students

NOTES

Teacher Notes provided

Vietnam: Dusted Off

The Performance

Brett Hunt grew up in a house often filled with Vietnam vets. His father, who had been brought to national attention through the lyric '*Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon*', shared the feelings of isolation and alienation felt by many and always kept his door open for a fellow veteran needing a place to sleep.

Brett, listening to these men talk, developed an understanding of the war and its impact on the men and their families. He observed firsthand the intense feelings of alienation, the destructive effects of PTSD, the break down in family relationships and the impact on woman and children.

He also witnessed the camaraderie and brotherhood that these men had forged and their ability to support each other with humility, strength and a sense of humour.

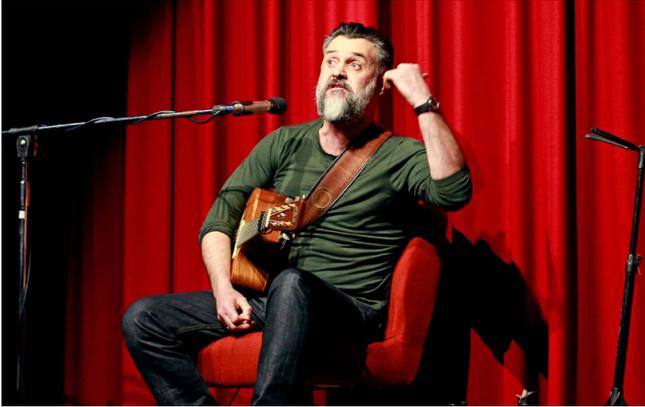
Brett's journey as the son of a Vietnam vet reached an emotional climax on the 3rd October 1987, when during the welcome home parade, he and his siblings found themselves onstage next to their father and John Schumann singing '*I Was Only Nineteen*'. In the Sydney Domain that day it is estimated that 60,000 people, veterans and their families, sang along.

In his play, *Vietnam: Dusted Off*, Brett, an accomplished actor and guitarist, shares his family story. He performs in the style of the Australian hits of the day – *Normie Rowe, Col Joye, Johnny O'Keefe* etc... as he tells of his mother Connie and his father Frank; who joined the army at 17, trained at Canungra jungle training centre, departed Townsville on the Vung Tau ferry and found himself a forward scout in the jungles of Vietnam.

After a mine contact Frank is dusted off to Vung Tau and repatriated home. Frank and Connie are determined to recover and build a loving family and a future; they are, however, confronted with a legacy of physical and emotional pain, the indifference of governments and the contempt of society.

'The 40th anniversary of the first moon landing also marks the day of a tragic twin mine incident that killed two Australian soldiers and wounded 23 others during the Vietnam War. On 21 July, 1969, soldiers of A Company, 6RAR/NZ (ANZAC) Battalion gathered around a radio to hear American astronaut Neil Armstrong declare "That's one small step for man, one giant leap for mankind" as he walked on the moon. Later, the Australian troops were patrolling in the Light Green region east of Hoi My as part of Operation Mundingburra when they triggered two mines. More than half of those wounded suffered such severe injuries that they were evacuated to Australia. Radio operator Private Frank Hunt, who was badly wounded in both legs, was later immortalized in the 1982 Redgum song I was only 19 with the line: "Frankie kicked a mine the day that mankind kicked the moon".'

Vietnam: Dusted Off cont.



Brett Hunt onstage at the Australian War Memorial. Vietnam Veterans Day, 18th August 2014. In the audience are his mum and dad and mates from 6RAR impacted by the mine blast dramatized in the play. Also in the audience were relatives of the two men, who gave their lives for their mates on 20th July, 1969: The day Apollo 11 touched down on the moon.

Testimonial

'Dear Brett, I was fortunate enough to get to see you perform recently at the AWM. I was invited by members of the War Widows guild (Mindy Sutherland). My link to Mindy is I have served in 7RAR as a Major in Afghanistan and will be returning to 7RAR next year as the Commanding Officer.

I wanted to thank you for your performance and tell you how appreciative I am that you take the time to convey (in such an entertaining way!) such an important story to the younger generations of Australian's. I suspect your performance 'connected more' with the school children than much of the static displays within the AWM. Keep up the great work.'

- Lieutenant Colonel David McCammon, DSM.

Comments from Schools

"Put simply it was a brilliant one-man performance by the son of a Vietnam veteran. A wonderful mixture of voices from the time period interfused with lyrics and solo-guitar music. Both staff and students were quite moved by the narrative being presented with such raw honesty and integrity. If you are looking for an effective means for students to appreciate the Topic 5 of the Year 10 History syllabus in NSW, especially the impact of war on veterans and their families – this is the Holy Grail!" - Mt St Joseph's GHS.

"I have nothing but the highest praise. I was riveted."
- Pembroke School, SA.

"Thank you so very much for sending Brett Hunt to our school – AWESOME held the 13 – 14 year old students for 1.5 hours spellbound with WW1, and then weaved his magic on 15 year olds on a Friday afternoon last period of the day – A truly gifted and talented gentleman. Both shows were directly relevant to our and the National curriculum. The new Vietnam show was simply amazing! Engaged students and staff as we were drawn into the biography of Brett's father and the entire family's emotional journey of Dad being at war, returning to a recognition so richly deserved. A difficult role inspiringly executed." - Mandurah Catholic College.

"Your performance... was truly amazing, it gave such a personal aspect and I was blown away by the embodiment of the different characters, the sound effects and the voices... it was lovely to laugh and cry in the space of two minutes."
- Student Meriden School.