

***TAG (A MAN, A WOMAN, AND THE WAR TO END ALL WARS)* by Barry Heard**

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Barry Heard, author of the bestselling Vietnam War memoir *Well Done, Those Men*, has written his first novel, *TAG*, based on the experiences of a WW1 digger, whom Heard knew as a boy. *TAG* is not just for military personnel, it has the ability to cross over to a wider audience with this beautifully written anti war story.

TAG is the story of Tag Wardell and his mates who grew up in the High Country of Eastern Victoria around the turn of the century. It chronicles Tag's experiences as a young Blacksmith before the "War to end all Wars", and his involvement in WW1.

Growing up in the bush, Tag becomes a legend around the district with his horse whispering talents and his love of horses. For Tag and his mates war begins as a great adventure. On board the troopship, Tag is called upon to work closely with the distressed horses that are to be used during the war.

Heard describes the hardships that Tag faced along with his boyhood mates in the trenches of Gallipoli and the battle fields of the Western Front. Heard brings to life the horror and extremely difficult task that the Australians had to endure in the trenches and field hospitals at Gallipoli. During his time in Gallipoli on the front line, Tag brings about changes to the handling of horses under fire. This is evident when Tag is shipped off to the Western Front to face more madness working with the horses used for battlefield clearances.

While on leave in Egypt, Tag meets Jill, an Australian Nurse. Their romance blossoms despite the chaotic surroundings of war, however their courtship is cut short with Tags impending orders for Gallipoli. It is here where Heard reveals his talent for research, evident with his graphic descriptions of the conditions and courage of the Australian Nurses. I believe he could have another novel waiting here.

Heard made me forget that *TAG* was a novel. With all its mayhem, madness, appalling carnage and war time love, I felt like I was in the trenches of Gallipoli and the Western Front with Tag, Tiger, Bucket and Golly. Heard brings the reader to a deeper level of understanding of the exceptional work our diggers did under a great deal of stress, both physically and emotionally.

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