



James (Jim) Frederick Moodie

Jim Moodie saw more war than most New Zealanders, but he never ceased to be affected by it.



After fighting through North Africa and Italy in World War 2, Moodie served in Malaya and Vietnam as a medical officer.

His close friend, Bill Hunter, says Moodie almost never mentioned war. However, he once explained the overwhelming distress he felt on hearing the Viet Cong had strung up residents of the Vietnamese village of Bon Song, where Moodie had been based with New Zealand forces.

Moodie rose from the ranks to command a tank squadron as a major in World War 2. He received the Military Cross (MC) for bravery at Minqar Qaim, in North Africa.

He retired from the army in 1972 with the rank of Lieutenant Colonel.

A doctor and cardiologist, Moodie served as physician and consultant at Ashburton Hospital for 12 years. He moved to Christchurch's Rannerdale War Veterans' Home a year ago and died there recently. He was 90.

The good all-round sportsman, who also played piano and ukulele, was born in Dunedin and attended Maori Hill School and Otago Boys' High School. He left at 17 to train as a teacher but joined the army soon after war was declared in 1939. He was selected for officer training and sent to North Africa with the 20th Battalion of Infantry (which later became a tank regiment).

As a lieutenant, he was heavily involved in action at Minqar Qaim to halt the German advance on Cairo. His courage in driving across open country to retrieve abandoned German equipment brought him the MC, which was presented to him later at Cassino in Italy.

The New Zealanders became surrounded at Minqar Qaim and staged their famous night-time breakout. Moodie spent some time in hospital recovering from wounds.

After the war, he studied medicine at Otago University, graduating in 1951. He married Barbara Aitken, of Dunedin, in 1952 and worked as a doctor in Nelson and Christchurch before rejoining the army in 1956. He then took his family to Scotland, where he completed studies in his specialty of cardiology.

Moodie was stationed at Burnham Camp until the army posted him as a medical officer to Malaya from 1962 to 1964. The family lived in the Terendak Military Camp, from which Moodie travelled with the troops on jungle patrols against insurgents. He carried a heavy medical pack and attended to the men's health needs in the most difficult conditions.

On return from Malaya, he was awarded the MBE for his services. He continued with the army, treating Territorial soldiers at Tekapo and becoming Chief Medical Officer

for the NZ armed forces. He went into active service again, treating soldiers and civilians at Bon Song Hospital during the Vietnam War for 6 months in 1971.

Moodie left the army soon after serving in Vietnam and spent the next 12 years at Ashburton Hospital. His wife died in 1984 and he retired in 1986. He then found time for his hobbies of golf, fishing, gardening, and travel. He indulged his passion for jazz and wide-ranging reading. He revisited Cassino for the 50th and 60th anniversaries of the battle and enjoyed sharing experiences with old foes, one of whom he hosted on a tour of the South Island in 1997.

Bill Hunter says Moodie was "a man who did not like to sit in the front, always in the back. He did not like any smart alics. He was actually a shy person, though he had lived a great life. He was a grand fellow."

Hunter says Moodie loved army life and kept in touch with army mates. However, his only reference to the war was to comment, when the topic of tanks arose, that they were the workhorse of the war.

Moodie never told him he had won the MC, Hunter says. When Hunter, an interior decorator, was asked to paint the Moodies' lounge, he found a photo of his friend wearing the medal. If he had not noticed it, he would never have known about the award.

Moodie valued physical fitness and was a good golfer who got his handicap as low as 5. He was very methodical in golf, as in all things. "He was Mr Steady. He never got excited," Hunter says.

Moodie's daughter, Annabel, says her father was "incredibly loyal" to family members, friends, and military contemporaries. He had a great sense of humour but also "upheld the fundamental principles of life". "He was extremely principled. He stuck to his principles. He was extremely modest. He loved animals and was interested in all people."

He could speak five languages (besides English): French, German, Italian, Arabic, and Indonesian.

James Frederick Moodie was born in Dunedin on 13 January 1917 and died in Christchurch on 23 August 2007. Pre-deceased by wife Barbara; survived by daughters Victoria and Annabel, sons Jamie and Hamish, and five grandchildren.

This obituary entitled *War hero modest and loyal* originally appeared in *The Press* newspaper (Christchurch) on September 8 and was written by Mike Crean. We are also grateful to Bruce Rennie of *The Press*.