

Region

Distinguished Maori war hero dies

LEAH HAINES

War historians have lost a vital piece in the jigsaw with the passing of decorated Hawke's Bay Maori soldier, scholar and musician Rangi Logan.

France Te Rangi O Nui Logan OBE was the first Maori to attend Sandhurst Military College in England and graduated with the prestigious Sword of Honour — the highest award given to graduates and never before won by a New Zealander.

And he was not only famous for his military career. Mr Logan made headlines earlier this year when, at 83, he finally wed Maude Rewiti,

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a childhood sweetheart, whose family had refused the war hero's initial request for her hand nearly 60 years before.

Mr Logan, Ngati Kahungunu ki Ngati Hawea ki Whatuiapiti, had an army career which spanned decades and which saw him awarded so many medals that his cousin would often offer to lend the distinguished soldier his chest to pin them on.



RANGI LOGAN

His career started when Maori were given permission to fight on the front line in World War 2.

The young territorial soldier was chosen as one of a select few to fight in the Maori Battalion.

After his return from Sandhurst, Mr Logan fought on in Crete, Greece, Italy and the Western Desert.

Daughter Makiana Logan remembers the countless stories told by her father whose last years were consumed by efforts to record the history of the Maori Battalion. Her father proudly told her how the battalion were the most feared of any soldiers.

The greatest story was of her father's defeat of the great German campaigner Rommel who, follow-

ing the war, saw Mr Logan awarded medals of bravery from the German government.

"If there was anything they (the Germans) were afraid of it was the Maori Battalion. They were known for their unbelievably disturbing war cry," Ms Logan said.

After the war, Mr Logan stayed on with the territorials and worked on the rehabilitation of Maori soldiers. He would later become an entrepreneur, leasing a chain of hotels throughout the North Island.

He worked tirelessly throughout his life, gathering stories and records of the 28th Maori Battalion.

"He would talk about the love of his men who

stood with him," Ms Logan said. "And he told us lots of human stories of men at war."

"These stories were important to get down. When the men came back from the war they didn't talk about it. It was only later that the truth came out."

Mr Logan was married three times. He married his first wife Jean in 1949 and they had one child, Makiana. Later he married Verity Johnstone with whom he had two more children, Kim and Wilfred.

Rangi Logan collapsed at Takitimu Marae, Wairoa on Saturday while researching for the Maori Battalion records. He will be buried at Te Pairu Urū Pa tomorrow after lying in state on Ruahapia Marae.