

Haane Te Rauawa Manahi 1913 - 1986

Te Arawa and Ngati Raukawa; labourer, soldier, carpenter, vehicle surveyor



Haane Te Rauawa Manahi was born in Ohinemutu, Rotorua, on 28 September 1913, the youngest son of Neti Mariana Insley and her husband, Manahi Ngakahawai Te Rauawa. Haane's father belonged to Te Arawa and Ngati Raukawa and his mother was of Te Arawa and Scottish descent. Haane, better known to his friends as Jack, was educated at Rotorua High School. After leaving school he worked in road gangs and on Maori farm development schemes and assisted his uncle, Matiu, in the timber and building trade. As a young man Manahi was a promising sportsman: he excelled in swimming, and enjoyed rugby, athletics and boxing. He also loved the outdoors and was a natural huntsman and a keen trout fisherman.

Manahi joined the 28th New Zealand (Maori) Battalion shortly after the outbreak of the Second World War. Before going overseas he married Rangiwatea Te Kiri on 24 January 1940 at Rotorua. He fought in Greece, Crete and North Africa, and it was during the North African campaign that he confirmed his attributes as an outstanding leader and soldier.

He was in a platoon from the Maori Battalion that was ordered, in April 1943, to capture and secure the Takrouna feature – a steep, rocky outcrop rising almost a thousand feet above a group of olive groves. It was occupied by 300 Italian and German troops, who were causing havoc to the advancing Allied army. The assignment was extremely dangerous and difficult due to heavy mortar and small arms fire, and by the morning after the initial attack on 20 April Manahi's platoon of around 30 men was reduced in strength to 10. Manahi then led a party of three men up the western side of the pinnacle. In order to reach their objective they had to climb some 500 feet – the last 20 feet almost sheer. After a brief fight, some 60 enemy surrendered. Manahi and his party were then joined by the rest of the platoon and the pinnacle was secured.

The area they held was subjected to severe shell fire from the considerable enemy force still holding the Takrouna village and the northern and western slopes of the feature. Manahi's commanding officer was killed, and he now led the platoon. He and his men held the position, and with rations and ammunition running out, he returned alone to his battalion's base for further supplies and reinforcements – the whole time under heavy fire. During the afternoon the enemy counter-attacked in force, some of them gaining a foothold. However, in the face of grenades and small-arms fire, Manahi personally led his men against the attackers and after fierce hand-to-hand fighting the enemy were eventually driven off. Shortly after this Manahi's party was relieved.

On the morning of 21 April the enemy had once more gained a foothold and Manahi led one of two parties which attacked and drove them back, despite concentrated mortar and heavy machine-gun fire. Late in the afternoon Manahi, on his own initiative, led a small party round the north-eastern side of the feature and with cool determination captured the enemy's machine-gun and mortar posts. This courageous action led to the ultimate collapse of the enemy defence and the capture of the whole Takrouna feature, together with over 300 prisoners and an array of heavy artillery.

The battle of Takrouna had been the scene of so much dogged fighting and individual gallantry that the men who survived the struggle were regarded by the rest of the division with something akin to awe. Following the battle, Manahi was recommended for a Victoria Cross, but was instead awarded a Distinguished Conduct Medal. He returned to New Zealand in July 1943. (He was later honoured by being invited by the government to attend the Victory Parade in London at the conclusion of the war.)

On his return Manahi joined a government-sponsored rehabilitation carpentry course at a training centre in Rotorua, after which he was employed at Rotorua Hospital. He later joined the Ministry of Works as a vehicle surveyor.

Haane Manahi's interest in swimming continued in the post-war years and he coached many promising swimmers from Rotorua. He was a foundation member of the Springfield Golf Club, a vice president of the Waikite Rugby Football Club and a patron of the Rotomahana Anglers' Club. After the death of his wife in 1976, Haane Manahi retired to Maketu in the Bay of Plenty. On 29 March 1986 he died in a car accident in the Te Puke area. He was buried at the Muruika cemetery at his marae in Ohinemutu, Rotorua. He was survived by two sons.

A campaign, spanning many years, to have Manahi's Distinguished Conduct Medal replaced by a Victoria Cross, has resulted in recognition by the Queen to honour the courage of Haane Manahi. Although she would not overturn the decision of her father King George VI in 1949 that no further awards for WWII should be considered, the form of recognition agreed has been inspired by the famous refrain, 'For God! For King! For Country!' from the marching song of the 28th (Maori) Battalion. On 17th March 2007, The Queen's son, His Royal Highness the Duke of York travelled to Ohinemutu, to present these gifts to Te Arawa on behalf of the Queen. "For God" is marked by the presentation of an altar cloth for Saint Faith's Church which faces the Tamatekapua Marae, Ohinemutu Village, Rotorua. Haane Manahi is buried in the military cemetery adjacent to Saint Faith's known as Muruika, with fellow Te Arawa soldiers including those he served with in the 28th (Maori) Battalion. "For King" – a letter from the Queen acknowledging the gallantry of Haane Manahi, to be framed and hung in Tamatekapua Meeting House alongside photos of Haane Manahi and The Queen. "For Country" will be represented by a sword gifted on permanent loan to Te Arawa by The Queen. Te Arawa will in turn present the sword to the Chief of Defence Force along with a patu in memory of Haane Manahi. The sword will be displayed in the office of the Chief of Defence Force. The patu will be worn, on appropriate occasions as part of the dress of the Chief of Defence Force.

These gifts will be a tangible link between Haane Manahi, The Queen, Te Arawa and all serving members of the Defence Force.

Reference

- Dictionary of New Zealand: Biography – Manahi, Haane Te Rauawa (Norman Bennett)
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- Press Release: New Zealand Government www.scoop.co.nz/stories/PA0610/S00110.htm