

Lieutenant Colonel Hendrik (Rik) Modderman, CSC (Retd)

*Lieutenant Colonel Eric M. Modderman*



Lieutenant Colonel Rik Modderman graduated as the BSM from the Officer Cadet School, Portsea in June 1978 having been awarded the Sword of Honour and the New Zealand Chief of the General Staff's Prize for Leadership. He joined the 8th/12th Medium Artillery Regiment and was subsequently promoted to the rank of captain and posted to 131st Divisional Locating Battery in Brisbane. In 1983, he suffered severe burns to seventy per cent of his body when he was critically injured by a phosphorous grenade that had accidentally detonated during a training exercise. He absorbed the brunt of the blast and this prevented serious injury to many.

A determined individual and not one to be deterred by anything, he took his injuries in his stride and continued his career with a transfer to the Intelligence Corps and a posting to the School of Military Intelligence. After promotion to major, in 1987 he became the Officer Commanding the 1st Division Intelligence Company. After completing Staff College in West Germany and a posting to the Office of the Military Secretary in Canberra, in 1993 he was posted to the United Nations Truce Supervision Organisation (UNTSO) and during this time he also became the Deputy Head of Security based in Jerusalem. As a result of the Hebron Massacre in 1994, he conducted high-level talks with Palestinian elders, a meeting depicted by the war artist George Gittoes in his work *A Plea for Peacekeepers*, a painting which now hangs in the Peacekeeping section of the Australian War Memorial. In 1995 he became the first Commanding Officer of the Reconnaissance, Surveillance and Target Acquisition Regiment (RISTA). The concepts and surveillance techniques developed at RISTA resulted in Lieutenant Colonel Modderman being awarded a Conspicuous Service Cross in 1998.

After postings to Headquarters 1st Division and briefly to Canberra, he retired from the Army in 2000. Upon retirement, he pursued a successful career with the Crime and Misconduct Commission and later as a senior executive with Worley Parsons. He remained involved in

intelligence training and volunteered his time to mentor Justice Studies students at the Queensland University of Technology.

Lieutenant Colonel Rik Modderman is remembered as an extraordinary and inspirational leader and a caring and compassionate soldier. His passing triggered an enormous response from his Army family including Portsea Classmates, soldiers, peers and superiors. The theme has been consistent – a respected individual without qualification, larger than life, intellectually and morally tough; a humble man and soldier's soldier who had a deep concern for the welfare of others.

Rik Modderman was a passionate and principled man, who never complained, even when times were tough, and he cared deeply for his family. After a long battle with illness, he passed away peacefully and with dignity, his family by his side on 16th August 2011 aged 56. Rik is survived by his wife Kate and their children Eric, Sebastian, Camilla and grandchildren Lachlan, Isabella, William and Jasper.

RAAHC