Private Fred Moore: A Cree “Halfbreed” at the Battle of Normandy

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Joseph Boyden’s novel *Three day road* and the 2002 film *Windtalkers* have served to remind the North American public of the contributions made by members of the First Nations in the First and Second World Wars. R. Scott Sheffield’s *The Red Man’s on the Warpath* documents the profound impact that the involvement of First Nations’ members in the Second World War had on public opinion. Comparatively little is known, however, about the role of Métis veterans east of the prairies. We know that some 7,000 Canadian Indians enlisted in the two World Wars, despite initial government discouragement and much Indian opposition, but have no reliable statistics for the participation of the “halfbreeds” or Métis who could often proudly trace some ancestry to Britain, France and other allied countries. Fred Moore’s account gives voice to the experience of Aboriginal veterans of WWII – reminding us that many also served in essential non-combat roles – and adds to our understanding of the lived experience of the Canadian Métis.

Moore’s name appears as that of the senior author of this paper because the story is his to tell, and much of it is given in his own words. As a friend, John Long recorded and transcribed Moore’s story, and it is Long’s voice that provides the narrative and commentary.¹

Frederick Moore was born at Moose Factory in 1914 to George Thomas (Tommy or Tomshee) Moore, a “halfbreed” Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) carpenter, and his second wife Beatrice, a daughter of Cree catechist, teacher, chief and treaty signatory Fred Mark² (after whom Fred was named). He volunteered for service in 1943, at the age of 29, four years after his marriage to Margaret Taylor. Although seriously wounded

1. Long is grateful to Yvonne Morrison and Anne Marie Breckon for transcribing these taped interviews. National Museums of Canada funding in 1984 assisted with the initial cost of taping and transcribing; a Nipissing University Internal Research Grant in 2004-2005 helped to finish the project.
2. Mark was ordained an Anglican deacon in 1925 and elevated to the status of priest in 1927 (Boon 1960:151; Petersen 1974:92-93).
Figure 1. Private Fred Moore (courtesy of his nephew, John O. Moore)
in France, he survived and was discharged in May, 1945. He returned to Moose Factory, where he lived to the age of 78.

In 1984, a few months before his 70th birthday, Fred told me about his military service. Although it occupied less than two years of his life, this was clearly a story that he wanted to tell and wanted me to record. With the approval of his nephews and nieces, here is the story of one Cree veteran during WWII. We tell his story to show our love and respect for him and, indirectly, to acknowledge more than a hundred Native veterans of World Wars I and II from the James Bay region (Native Veterans of James & Hudson Bay; Kataquapit n.d.; Linklater 1984). His story serves as a microcosm of the Aboriginal responses to these wars.

Military service was a family tradition for Fred Moore. His father joined the 228th Battalion, Canadian Expeditionary Force, in February 1917 and was a sapper in France two months later. As Fred put it, “They went right over, them fellas.” Fred was four years old when his father returned from the war. “I was only a kid, eh. Only a baby. Little boy. Whatever you want to call it.” He showed me a photograph of his father in uniform, and seemed pleased that his father had written to him from overseas. Fred also showed me “the old man’s stuff” (Moore 1984b): his father’s enlistment records and paybook, his medals, but not the cherished veteran’s lapel pin that was buried with Tommy Moore. Tommy’s brother, Harry Moore, had also enlisted in WWI, as had at least five of Tommy’s wife’s relatives: Andrew, James, John, Oliver and Sinclair Mark. They were recruited at Moose Factory by a man named McCarthy, from Elk Lake.

Fred had heard that, in 1917, the Anglican clergyman Robert Renison had made exaggerated promises to the Crees recruited to forestry battalions:4

That was up at Albany, and here too, I suppose … You’ll eat nothing but salt pork [here] but you’ll be eating beef and I don’t know what-not, machiikana, he says. That’s the line what I heard. That was shooting the boys quite a line, eh. That’s these fellows here. I mean in this area (Moore 1984b).

He knew that his father and his uncle Harry, like many other HBC servants,5 “got a crooked deal” during WWI. They had signed contracts with

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3. ‘Little boy’ would be the English translation of the Cree term nabeshiish.
4. See Renison 1957:100-102 for his account.
the HBC when they joined the army, but they lost their seniority and had to start all over when they returned (Moore 1986).

When Fred enlisted in 1943, he was 29 years old, clearly a man by Cree standards, and older than some James Bay volunteers. In response to my comment, “You were a young man when you were injured,” he jokingly described himself as “only a boy,” before saying “I was fairly old, though, eh, compared to them younger fellows, you know. Lots of them 16, eh. Like Billy Faries, you know. He was just 16 when he joined” (Moore 1984b). Fred was not conscripted: “I volunteered. I never got called. I was going to wait until I got called, but no they never called” (Moore 1984a).

He took the train south from Moosonee and underwent basic training in Simcoe, Ontario. The military assigned him the number B14594: “I never forgot that. Funny, eh, John. Never forgot that number.” He was found to have a physical limitation, perhaps flat feet: “I was category B.1, eh. I couldn’t stay in infantry” (Moore 1984b). He was sent to Red Deer, Alberta for advanced training, a driver’s course, and transferred from the Algonquin Regiment to the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps. Almost immediately, he was among 100 chosen recruits who were told:

“You boys are going over.” I was only down there about two weeks, I guess … They give me one week leave, embarkation leave they call it. Come all the way down. Took about four days to come up here [to Moose Factory]. Three days, I think, from Calgary. We went into Red

5. Morton & Wright suggest that most veterans were able to find work upon their return (1987:115,117). Returning veterans of WWII had the right to be reinstated in their prior or comparable employment (Keshen 1998:66).

6. Fred was known and respected as a comical raconteur. Even when speaking of something serious, dangerous or respectful, the use of humour by Crees is not unusual. (see also Berkes 1986). Laughing when John slips and falls on an icy road, I learned, is appropriate. People still care if you are hurt, but normally it’s only your pride that is. We can smile or laugh while reading Fred’s story, and yet still feel the gravity of other situations that he describes, and gain a genuine respect for the man.

7. Renison, who served as a _______ officer in WWI, notes that his recruits had flat feet from wearing moccasins (1957:101). According to standards of the day, a B.1 rating meant the recruit could still see well enough “to shoot or drive” and was capable of marching five miles (Canada 1940:7); I am grateful to Catherine Woodcock, Librarian, Canadian War Museum, for this information.

8. This was apparently the A-20 Camp; cf. <http://www.city.red-deer.ab.ca/Connecting+with+Your+City/About+Red+Deer/History/default.htm> (accessed 21 June 2006).
Deer, to Calgary, then we come up. All I had was one night here. One day. One night and a day. Out again, right back to Red Deer, Alberta (Moore 1984a).

The recruits travelled by troop train to Debert, Nova Scotia. Fred chuckled as he recalled, “I was thinking afterwards, if I knew then what I know now in my life, I would have jumped that train there in North Bay, A.W.O.L.” (Moore 1984a). He would soon be exposed to the frustrations of military discipline and the horrors of war.

Adrian Hayes, in his biography of Francis Pegahmagabow, the celebrated Ojibwe veteran of WWI, states that “many native soldiers, especially those from isolated areas, found the discipline and order of military life to be a huge cultural shock” (2003:25). Immediately after arriving in Nova Scotia, Fred witnessed the military police in action:

> Got in there just before dinner, 11 o’clock, I guess. Got into this bar. So they asked, “Any cooks in the house?” Oh boy, ever quite a few fellas put up their hands then. They were cooks, eh. And our first meal there was – “This what you’re going to get when you get overseas,” they said – corned beef, a bit of corned beef, and one of these sea biscuits – talk about hard, you know the real hard ones – and a cup of tea. We got a cup of tea. That’s all we got, just that, one slice of corned beef, bully beef what they called it, and this hard biscuit. And one guy behind, coming in behind me, he says, “I’m not eating this stuff,” he says. So he just flung it on the floor and he jumped on this big, hard biscuit. M[ilitary] P[olice] wasn’t very far behind. They had a hold on him, threw him in the digger,11 I guess, as they called it … Guard house, I guess. I don’t even know where he went (Moore 1984a).

Fred Moore was the only Aboriginal person in an integrated unit. In Halifax, as well as overseas, he was happy to spend time with other Cree soldiers, and he fondly recalled time spent with friends and family from Moose Factory. (Since they did not have Indian status, Fred and his brother Bob, and their friend Bill Turner, could legally drink before and after the war.) He fondly recalled one such reunion in Halifax:

> I met Bill Turner there. He was going back [home] on leave and I was coming across. Oh, we got together that evening and went to a wet

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9. Fred appears to switch, perhaps for my benefit, between the typical Cree reference point, travelling “down” (river) to Moose Factory, and the typical southerner’s point of view, traveling “up” (north) on the map.
11. Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC) Webmaster Conrad Hof (e-mail 19 July 2006) confirms that “digger” is a slang term for jail.
canteen, eh. And they had these big quart bottles of Moosehead brand beer. It was kind of stuffy in that little … canteen. So the bartender says, “Oh,” he says, “You boys want to go and lay around on the lawn,” he says, “you can take your beer with you.” So a whole bunch of us went out, sat around on the lawn drinking Moosehead brand beer. So that’s the last time I seen Bill Turner [until after the war] (Moore 1984a).

Overseas, Fred encountered British military protocol. He recalled how much more formal it was than Canadian custom, and learned, once again, that orders were not to be questioned:

We were up in the Midlands, on a driving course again. Finished our driving course up there. We were stationed in Farnborough and there was six of us went up. We went on a driving course, you know. Were they ever strict, those fellas. I was on guard, guarding the vehicles, eh. Had an awful lot of the vehicles parked there. They had a … you couldn’t take off your equipment when you went into the guard house when you have a little snooze. You had your webbing on. You kept your boots on. Just in case, I suppose. I don’t know. I told that limey corporal. I said, “How come when we’re on guard duty in our camp we don’t have to keep all this stuff on like this?” “Well,” he says, “you’ll do it here,” he says. We were under them, eh. “Do you talk like that to your N[on]C[ommisioned] O[fficers] and superiors?” “Sure,” I said. “We call them by their first names,” And they want us to come to attention when we talk to them. We12 don’t do that, eh … “Hey there, Jack,” and, “Hi,” you know. Just by their first names, eh, the corporals and all that. But we had to salute the officers alright. Corporals or sergeants. Sergeant major, I guess. He was about the strictest. He was strict, that fellow, boy. The regimental sergeant majors, eh. Oh, boy, he was something, I’m telling ya. We were on a parade there when we were on that course, and you could hear this guy blaring away, parading away down the road. And Bill Turner13 could hear him half a mile away. Did he ever have a voice on him. Oh boy [chuckles] (Moore 1984a).

Fred would have quickly found his sea legs crossing the Atlantic, for he had travelled the waters of James Bay with the HBC, once surviving a shipwreck. He recalled the trip across to England:

It was on the Queen Mary. Didn’t see very much. She only had one promenade deck. It was very, very slow motion. Couldn’t even tell she was rolling, eh. You could just see if there was any water on the prom-

12. “They” are the British, “we” are the Canadians.
13. Fred says that he only saw Bill once, during the war, in Halifax. Bill was a Medical Corps driver, so he likely underwent the same training in England, and the two men would have reminisced back in Moose Factory.
enade deck. And there was guys getting sea sick, you know. Ah, those poor buggers ... Just like a big house. And all the decks looked the same when you went down. They only fed us twice a day. Twenty thousand troops, eh, on that Queen Mary. Twice a day, that’s all they could feed us. When you started going down some of those decks, and they all looked the same, you know. Go down to a certain deck, they start A, B, C, you know. And then we only had a certain area, too, where you could walk around. One day we’d be on the promenade deck and then the next deck down, where they had hammocks, eh. I suppose that was just to give us exercise or something, to keep us moving up and down. One night we’d be sleeping in hammocks, eh, and then the next night we’d be sleeping on the promenade deck, just on the deck. Then you had just a certain area where you could walk around (Moore 1984a).

Once in England, with deployment looming, military discipline became stricter and drinking with friends from home became an important outlet for griping at orders that seemed arbitrary and senseless, particularly to a Cree who valued reticence or non-interference (Preston 1976). And Fred’s complaints apparently provided his Cree friends with entertainment; they could laugh at his un-Cree-like expressions of anger, subtly reminding him that laughing was a more appropriate response. He chuckled as he recalled one such incident involving his friend Gilbert Faries, whose Indian status would have prevented him from drinking openly at Moose Factory:

Gilbert come to see me. And my brother. My brother came, Bob. So Gilbert come down to see me again, he was at – what the hell was that place he was at. I forget the name of that – oh, it was Farnborough, near Aldershot, eh. This one evening he came, it was a hot evening, and we were out on the parade square. Some guy didn’t shine the buttons on his greatcoat, eh. We had them all sitting on the foot of our bunks, eh, on our bed, and you’re supposed to shine these buttons, eh, whether you wear it or not. One guy didn’t shine his buttons, I guess. “You fellas fall out this evening, greatcoats on.” Hot evening, you know, and they had us parading up and down on that parade square with those greatcoats on. Up and down. And Gilbert came by there you know and he looked and, you know, “What’s the matter with those fellas, crazy or something?” Made us parade around and around on that parade square. And the civilians are walking back and forth there, you know, the streets. I guess they were wondering what happened to us. He waited around anyway, until I got off, and was I ever mad. He’s laughing. “What happened to you?” he says. I told him, “There’s one fella there,” I says, “he didn’t shine his buttons. So we all got punished over that.”
So the next time he come and see me – he used to come down pretty near every evening, eh, come and visit. We’d go out in Aldershot. And this time we were supposed to go on this special draft again. We were issued. We were up all night and before we went and get our issue and all that, I had to move out of this hut, to the other end of it. For what reason, I was all alone in one end, eh. They said, “You go to the other end there, where the other boys are.” I says, “What? Why? Why should I do that,” I says, “Too much work.” “Go. That’s an order. You’re gonna go.” So I packed up all my stuff and when I was moving it from one end of the hut to the other part, Gilbert come in. “What are you doing?” he says. Oh, boy, was I mad then, eh, cussing away there. And I told him. And then is he ever laughing at me. I told him we were going on a special draft. “I don’t know where we are going now.” And they kept us up all night. Issued us Tommy guns. And we got needles. We got a change of everything, you know. Give us inspections and all that, a medical inspection. Short-arm as they call it [chuckles] … That’s when you’re stripped right off, eh.

So, just about daylight they said, “Okay, the draft’s off.” Called that draft off. Go back to our barracks, after up all night, getting needles and everything for that. I suppose we would have ended up in Italy somewhere, I suppose, why they issued us Tommy guns. But they did (Moore 1984a).

Strict military training equipped the troops, in many ways, for deployment to the theatre of war, where routines and blind obedience were essential. Each soldier might carry a field dressing, and if he was wounded, the others would know exactly where to find it.

Several months earlier, I had showed Fred and Margaret Moore a documentary film of the Allied landing at Juno Beach, on 6 June 1944, recalling from earlier conversations that Fred had arrived at Normandy shortly after D-Day. In fact, he arrived there late on the evening of 6 June and went ashore the next afternoon after the beachhead had been secured. He began to share memories of his first few days in Operation Overlord:

The morning of D-Day. We got in there that night around midnight. We were going through, we were just coming out of the River Thames

14. If Moore slept separately from the others, we don’t know if this was his choice or theirs.
16. Thanks to RCASC Webmaster Conrad Hof (e-mail 19 July 2006) for explaining that “The term ‘short-arm inspection’ is common military slang for an inspection of the male genitalia.”
when the invasion was on, eh, that morning. Then that day we come through the Straits of Dover. You could see Dover. And a clear day. All of a sudden … We were in a convoy, eh, Liberty ships. I don’t know how many. There was quite a few. Three or four ahead of us and then there was a whole slew coming behind, eh. And they had destroyers too, with us. All of a sudden we hear a report. BANG! Seen a big splash. These fellas were coming, shooting across that English Channel, about 18 or 20 miles away. The Germans. Had these coastal guns, you know. They had them on the railroad. They shoot right across. I suppose they were putting up, probably they were sighting us and they hit this fellow behind us. Boy did they ever put up a smoke screen then, our destroyers. Put up a smokescreen. Had no smokescreen up first. After that, the next shell hit our forward, but the third one hit our mid-ship, right on the magazine. She went up in smoke. And they claim, I heard about it after I came back to England, eh, after I got wounded, that was a long time after, that winter, that nobody got hurt on that ship. When they hit her like that. They run her aground and they all got out at Dover. They were lucky, eh … Just went up in black smoke. Hit the magazines, eh (Moore 1984a).

Asked how he felt that day at Juno Beach, Fred dropped his joking manner, and his voice was subdued:

Well … you didn’t know how you felt, I suppose, that night, eh. When start strafing us with the machine guns all over. We were below decks on the Liberty ship, eh. We didn’t get off until the next afternoon. Hear them bullets. Planes would come over, eh. And I don’t know how many pounders we had there on the Liberty ship. I guess about 24 10-pounders or whatever it was. They were always banging away.

And then daylight come [7 June]. As far as we could see on both sides was ships of all descriptions. Big battleship there. The Rodney was right close to us and she was shooting inland, and the fella was telling me, he says they were shooting in about 20 miles inland. And they would get the old gun out and let off a barrage, eh. Just keel right over that way with the recoil. BANG! That’s all we were doing all day, shooting. Then we got ashore. We didn’t get far inland. They told us it was eight miles, I guess. That’s only as far as we were in, to be fighting all that day before and that night, eh. We had to be on the alert. Don’t unpack any your stuff, case you got to retreat. Cause didn’t have a very good foothold on the land there yet (Moore 1984a).

This brought to mind more painful memories of his landing in France. Although Fred’s physical condition had precluded him from serving in the infantry, infantrymen comprised less than half of the per-

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sonnel in a Canadian infantry division. The infantry relied on support from units such as the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps (RCASC), engineers, field artillery, medical personnel and several others (Canadian Army). “By the end of the war,” writes W.E. Campbell (2006), “approximately one man in twelve was RCASC.” The Corps was responsible for transportation of troops, food, ammunition, petrol, oil and lubricants, tanks and construction equipment (Canada, DND Royal Canadian Army Service Corps; Juno Beach Centre, Royal Canadian Army Service Corps). Arnold Warren adds that “Few Army Service Corps units [saw] more action than the Motor Ambulance Convoys” (1961:257).

After a long pause, Fred resumed, his voice momentarily and uncharacteristically emotional as he described the beach:

Wasn’t very … it wasn’t a very good sight, I’m telling you, to see all the dead bodies laying around there, the poor fellas what didn’t make it to shore. They couldn’t get to them [German] pill boxes they had, eh, where they had their machine guns and all that. They tried. They bombed all that coast too, before that. But they were dug right in, I suppose, and they had it well reinforced (Moore 1984a).

After a much longer pause, he described his role in the war, transporting casualties from the battle front to the marquees where medical personnel provided treatment:

We used to go up, after we were settled down a bit, eh, go up with a jeep to the front, to go and get the casualties, eh. We were attached to the Field Ambulance, eh. 14 Canadians Field Ambulance. 18 We were Army Service Corps, drivers, eh. Go in there about three, four hundred yards from where the Germans were. Go whipping in there and they told us to, “Slow down a bit when you come in.” We were kicking up the dust, eh, giving away their position, of the infantry. 19 “You fellows slow down and behave. They’ll turn their machine guns on you.” 20 And you couldn’t whip across them fields at low speeds. You had to really give her all you could do, eh, them jeeps. You had two stretcher cases on top and one down below, and then I don’t know how many, three or four was sitting, fellas what could walk, eh. Say about seven, I suppose. And you had a M[edical] O[fficer] with you, a Major

18. “The Field Ambulance was the organization responsible for evacuation and treatment of casualties forward of the Casualty Clearing Station (CCS). Field Ambulance units were assigned to support specific brigades, for example No. 14 Canadian Field Ambulance worked with 7th Canadian Infantry Brigade” (Juno Beach. Army Medical Organization).
19. See also Warren 1961:258.
20. His own comrades might shoot at him.
or somebody, come down to our advanced dressing station. We were in marquees, that’s where we were. Then … the Germans … we’d have to guard those Germans. If we picked up any wounded Germans, we’d have to guard them when we brought them over. Treat all the, our side first. Germans would be laying around there, boy. One fella shot right through the throat. See it when you breathe, eh. Some of them guys could speak English a little bit, those younger fellows, eh (Moore 1984a).

A wounded soldier was typically moved by stretcher-bearers to an Aid Post, where he received very basic medical attention, and was then evacuated by RCASC ambulance, “within range of enemy fire,” to a dressing station, still near the front, and then to a hospital in the rear (Rawling 2001:275-8).

The first two-hour recording session between Moore and Long ended here on 29 March 1984; but by this point we were already good friends. I had been a frequent visitor, listener and questioner in the Moore home for five or six years, but the tape recorder was something new. We had talked about other matters for an hour and a half, but the last half hour had focussed exclusively on the war. Fred signaled that he was finished, “What do you think? Think you heard enough?” “Sure,” I responded, “that’s a lot, isn’t it?” “Yes,” he chuckled, good naturedly. I was grateful for all that he had shared that day. Knowing how reluctant many veterans are to speak about the horrors of war, I wondered if he would ever describe how he was wounded.

A second recording session took place about three months later, a day after the Canada Day festivities that Fred looked forward to, especially since his nephew Floyd Martineau would usually parachute onto the schoolyard. Our July session began with an hour’s discussion about other matters, and then I asked him where he was taken after he was wounded, whether he was taken back to England or perhaps right back to Canada. He seemed glad to resume his story:

I was about two weeks in France, I guess, before they could move me, eh, to England. I got in some time in August or September, got into this 24 General Hospital in England. 24 General Hospital. It was military, eh, Canadian hospital. And stayed there. At Christmas, I was still laying in there. Christmas and New Year’s. And then in April next year – 1945, eh – in April that’s when they shipped me back here. But I come right out of the hospital, eh, in England. I didn’t have to go into the hospital on this side. I was still on crutches, eh. I got discharged from Toronto. Not right away. I had a one month leave, eh … You got
a month’s leave after you came back on this side, if you weren’t in hospital, eh. Then I went back to Toronto again. And that’s when I got discharged. One month after. It was, I forget now. May 1945, I guess. May when I got discharged.

I asked, “So you got wounded, even though you had the Red Cross signs, eh?” Fred replied:

Yeah … yeah, well, they’re not particular when they shell, eh. We had big marquees … this reminds me of this M*A*S*H, you know [chuckles].21 And they have them big marquees and all that. Big red cross on them, you know … Well, we were right beside the artillery, eh. Artillery dug in right beside us, eh. That’s what they were shelling, eh. Not fussy who they shelled (Moore 1984b).

I said, “There must have been some grizzly sights, eh?” and Fred again recalled the wounded German prisoners awaiting treatment:

That’s right. Seen lots of Germans, too, coming in through our advanced dressing stations, you know. See lots of wounded. You’d have to guard them, even though they were wounded. You’d have them laying around. Of course, they’d have to treat our side first, eh, and then the Germans. They had to wait. Some of them … one fella shot right through the throat, you could see the blood oozing out when he’d be breathing, eh. Oh, yes, you had to guard them fellas, too. You couldn’t trust them, eh (Moore 1984b).

“So you were hit in the stomach?” I asked. And Fred corrected me, patiently listing his multiple wounds:

Stomach. Chest. My leg. The abdomen [pronounced abDOmen], whatever you want, eh, above the hip. And they cut me open here to get it out. Here. I don’t know whether you can see a little scar there. It went right in there [under his nose] … stuck in my jaw, eh. Some bits of shrapnel. Small pieces they had to take out from inside here. Lost lot of blood (Moore 1984b).

I asked him, “Could you move, after you were hit?” And Fred told the rest of his story, serious as he described how close he came to death, then chuckling or laughing as he spoke of his recovery and release:

Oh, yes. I moved for a while, eh. I managed to get into the shelter. Well, it was dark, eh. You didn’t know how it looked, eh. I seen guys going in there, and I told one guy, “You know,” I said, “I got hit back there,” I told him. So he helped me down into the shelter. You had to go down sort of steps, eh, underground. He said, “Lay down here.” So

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21. The television series based on Robert Altman’s film of 197X which ran from 1972 through 1983, about the staff of a Mobile Army Surgical Hospital in Korea.
I lay down, and he opened my pants. “Oh, boy,” he said, “you got it all right.” So he put my field dressing on. We used to have field dressing, in our pocket in our pants. So he put that on there. “Don’t move.” Oh, I was moaning and groaning, I suppose. And the Sergeant says, “Ah, shut up,” he said. [chuckles] I thought, kind of cranky, eh, what the hell. So the guy didn’t leave me. He just stayed with me. “Jee whiz,” I said, “I feel thirsty.” So they wouldn’t give me nothing to drink. And that’s the last I knew. I got passed out, eh.

Next I woke up in this big marquee, a whole bunch of us laying around in there, tube stuck down my nose. And I saw the MO come along. And he said, “Oh, boy,” he said, “we pretty near lost you,” he said, “bringing you down in the ambulance,” to this big marquee. Beds on one side and then sort of a corridor, and I was on one side, laying there. Just come to for … it wasn’t very long. “Pretty near bled to death from your leg,” he told me. He said, “We didn’t know you were hit on the leg too.” Just about bled to death by the time they got me down there. So, I don’t know, again I passed out, I suppose. Quite a while before I come to my senses.

So, two weeks there, then they took us by boat to England. They wouldn’t take some of us by air, eh. They were airlifting some guys. Cause I was hit in the lung, eh, in this lung here. That’s what they told me. So when we got into England, we went down on this train, you know. This whole bunch of Negro fellas, American Army stretcher bearers,22 I guess, they were putting all aboard the train, you know, and we were laying on stretchers. Took us down, got into this hospital. I asked them, I said, “Where is this?” At last one of the nurses said, “You’re in Basingstoke.” “Oh,” I said. I heard about this Basingstoke hospital before I went over to France, eh. They used to say that’s where they put the nutty boys. So I said, I wonder now if I am nutty or something, why they put me in this place. [chuckles] I didn’t say anything. I just lay there.

So they would come pulling my stitches out after a while. So I asked that Limey doctor, I said, “Is there a Canadian hospital anywhere near here?” “Oh, yes,” he said, “there is one, not very far from here. Farley. A place called Farley. They got a military hospital there. Canadian. Why?” he said. I said, “I’d like to get there amongst the Canadians.” [chuckles] “Oh, you don’t like us, eh,” he said, “you don’t like us treating you?” “No, Not that,” I told him. “You don’t trust us, eh,” he’d keep going like that.

It wasn’t nationalism that was on Fred’s mind, but Cree notions of modesty:

22. These were segregated American Army units, although the British were much less colour-conscious (Astor 2001).
So finally I got moved, then. Of course in the British hospitals, eh, the English, they have them nurses doing bedpans and all that, you know. Short of nurses, I suppose. They would come in there with a bedpan for your bare ass, and shove the bedpan under you and all this, you know. I had a cast … No. I didn’t have a cast on then, yet, but still they used to have to shove the bedpan under me, and all this stuff. I didn’t care much for that, because in the Canadian hospital they had men, eh, men orderlies. So they shipped me down there anyway.

And then I got yellow jaundice again when I was in there, after they put the cast on my leg, eh. Laying there, boy oh boy, I was sick. I could get around in a wheelchair then, but I had this cast, it was right up to my thigh, eh. Wheel around in the wheelchair go to the bathroom. Boy, I used to want to … after breakfast, I’d want to vomit, go and vomit in the bathroom. So I used to have my dinner. That was breakfast. And dinner, same thing. Couldn’t hold anything down. So I told, when the MO come around, eh, I told him, “I don’t feel very good. I vomit when I eat.” So he did this [lifting my eyelid]. “Oh, boy,” he says, “have you ever got it bad.” Jaundice, eh … That’s the only way they could tell, because I’m dark, eh. [chuckles]

They put me in another ward, then, where they hold the jaundice fellas, eh. Yellow fellas, just like Japs, you know. I got in there and a guy said, “What’s the matter with you?” I said, “I got that jaundice.” “Oh, boy,” he says, “have you ever got it bad,” he says, “you’re kind of dark with it.” “Oh, I’m supposed to look that colour I told him.” [laughs] He figured I really had a dose of that jaundice. But still, it wasn’t good.

They didn’t want me to eat any fat, eh. So they started giving me this no fat diet, eh. Everything boiled. Vegetables boiled. Carrots. Meat boiled. They didn’t even put any margarine on the toast. Dry toast. God, I said, that was really tough for me, I’m telling you, being used to lots of grease, eh. One lunch hour, dinner time, I thought to myself, “I’m gonna sneak a bit of that margarine,” just to put it on my tray, eh. I put some, smeared on my bit of bread I had there. You know I just swallowed it and no sooner I had to wheel myself to the bathroom. I wanted to vomit. Just a little teeny, weeny bit of fat. Oh, that pulled me right down again for over a month. I didn’t feel the same for over a month. I was starting to feel pretty good, eh.

Stayed in that place ’til April. At last the MO come around. “Hey,” he says, “Moore. Would you like to go home?” I said, “Yeah. I wouldn’t mind,” I told him, “going home.” “Well,” he says, “you know,” he says, “we forgot all about ya.” [chuckles] … I would have stayed there for the rest of my life if they didn’t come and ask me (Moore 1984b).

Fred saved several mementos of the war, including a Christmas 1944 letter from his brother Bob, a private in the Canadian Provost Corps. He
kept his enlistment and discharge papers. “We got lots of opportunity, you know, when we came back, too,” Fred told me. “Back to city life. Vocational trainings and all that. Educational grants. Pensioners.” But then he recalled, “I applied to go in for diesel, eh. Came out of the army and they asked me a few questions. ‘You don’t need that,’ they told me. ‘You know enough about diesel.’ So, what the hell, I said. So I didn’t bother.”23 (Twenty-six years later, with no help from Canada’s Department of Veterans Affairs (DVA), Fred earned a certificate as a “Fourth class engineer of a motor driven ship.”)

Robin Jarvis Brownlie (1998) has described how Indian veterans of WWI in Ontario failed to benefit from the Soldier Settlement scheme. Fred Moore recalled that his WWII Indian friends and neighbours received veteran lands on the Moose Factory reserve (although their grants were not properly surveyed at the time) “and then they got a grant, eh, a $2,500 grant from the Queen. Queen’s grant they called it” to build a nicer house than the Indian Affairs program provided (Moore 1984b). But, like the 160 acres of land promised to “halfbreed” petitioners following the signing of Treaty No. 9 in 1905, which never materialized (Long 1985), Fred and his non-Indian relatives received no such benefit. “Well we could have got land I suppose,” he said, “but not on the Island.” When I asked if this was because of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s opposition,24 Fred replied, “Well, I wouldn’t know that. I never inquired about it” (Moore 1984c). As with the post-treaty land offer, Fred had simply dismissed the idea – he considered any land not already taken at Moose Factory and Moosonee to be unfit even for a muskrat (Moore 1984b).

Fred’s war ended, but he sometimes encountered officials who reminded him of the strict Army life. In 1971, at the age of 57, Fred had a medical checkup at the request of the DVA. Two years after that, in 1973, he met an arbitrary DVA official who likely reminded him of the military discipline he experienced in WWII:

I got another letter saying I got to have a checkup again, a medical checkup, eh, from the DVA, down in North Bay. So I went down – the

23. Neary notes that the counselors who reviewed such requests for education and training were “powerful authority figure[s]” (1998:8). See Keshen (1998:72-74) for details of the training opportunities for veterans.

24. Following WWI, the HBC made some western lands available for soldier settlers (Morton & Wright 1987:103,146-147).
train used to get in fairly late, around 2:00, 2:30 in the morning, I suppose – and go to a hotel, the Empire Hotel. The fella says, “You want a bath, too?” I says, “Okay. Give me a bath.” Used my traveling warrant I had for traveling. My train fare and my room, eh, for so much. And I was over 50¢ for that bath. Fifty cents. They wouldn’t pay that. They told me, too. When they gave me my expenses when I got there, they gave me my meals what I had going down on the train. I was only allowed so much for a meal, too. I was alright on the meals, but I was over on my room, 50¢. They wouldn’t pay it. I had to pay it. [chuckles] They were really strict like that. And then they allowed you so much for a meal, but I was kind of under every meal, eh. They didn’t give you any money to dish it out. But there, then they had an idea then what it would cost you to get home.

I was on unemployment that last time I went out there. Used to go on unemployment during the winter months, eh. So I told them. They said, “Where are you going now?” I said, “I’m going to go into Timmins on my way home.” “Why?” They wanted to know everything like that. “It’s alright,” I said, “I’ll pay my way from Porquis Junction into Timmins.” So they kind of agreed, but they didn’t like it. They said, “How long you going to be in Timmins?” “I don’t know, maybe one night.” I told them I had to go in and tell them that I wasn’t available for work, eh, during that period I was out. So that’s what I went in for and I stayed there damn near a week. [chuckles] Met some buddies down there. [chuckles] So the next morning I went in to see the Unemployment. I told them. “Oh,” they said, “that’s okay,” they told me. They didn’t cut anything off, eh. I got my full cheque.

One way, I got treated pretty good, but that fella what told me, he said, “You don’t have to go into Timmins,” he told me [chuckles] (Moore 1984b).

Fred returned to civilian life after the war, working at construction during the winter when he could, and working as engineer on the Hudson Bay Transport boats each summer. During his final years, a DVA official would visit him in his home. These were enjoyable occasions, for the position was held by a fellow Cree, and distant in-law, Roy Cheechoo.

Fred jokingly referred to himself as a “tin can,” a play on the Cree term *wemistikoshiikan* ‘surrogate English-speaker, Whiteman; halfbreed’. Although his parents had spoken English in their home, Fred learned Crees from his friends. He spoke both languages fluently, and referred to himself as a “halfbreed.” The term *Métis* (pronounced by elderly Crees at Moose Factory so it rhymes with *Betty*) was introduced in Moose Factory in the 1970s. In 1985 Fred applied for Indian status, for his mother lost her status upon marrying his father, and was pleased to announce “I got
my feathers back.” Following the death of his wife Margaret in 1990, Fred began to decline and moved to a senior citizens’ complex in Moosonee, where he died in 1993.

On 7 June 2004 a plaque (affixed to a Sherman tank) was unveiled near Juno Beach, commemorating members of the Royal Canadian Army Service Corps who, like Fred Moore, had landed there 60 years before. Fred’s name is inscribed on the veterans’ memorial in Moose Factory, on the grounds of St. Thomas Anglican Church, outside the stained glass window that he donated in honour of his maternal grandfather, and not far from where Fred was buried – wearing, like his father before him, a veteran’s discharge pin on his left lapel.

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