‘Bud’ leaves lasting legacy

He was characteristically filled with energy and enthusiasm, and his interests covered Australia and – unsurprisingly, given his family history – far beyond.

Brian ‘Bud’ Hubird Ford died at St Vincent’s Hospital on Friday June 10, 2011, aged 86. He was a dentist, cattle breeder and historian in the Miles region for more than four decades.

He was characteristically filled with energy and enthusiasm, and his interests covered Australia and – unsurprisingly, given his family history – far beyond.

His father Hugh Ford was with the Australian Light Horse Veterinary Corps in World War I, campaigning across Palestine to Beersheba, Jerusalem and Damascus, once encountering TE Lawrence (‘Lawrence of Arabia’) on a resupply run in the desert.

Years before she married and had children, Bud’s mother Mondi Fowles had travelled alone, at the age of 19, to China to run the household of her stepbrother LT Charles Hannam who, after service with the Bushveldt Carbineers in the Boer War, had become a successful merchant in Manchuria.

After the Great War Hugh and Mondi eloped to Melbourne and were married, and returned to Queensland to take up a soldier-settler block called Mosabi at Kandanga, near Gympie.

They had two sons, Brian in 1924 and Peter in 1929.

Young Peter nicknamed his older brother ‘Budder’ or ‘Buddie’ – and so Brian became ‘Bud’. The two brothers were very close and remained so throughout their lives.

In the middle of the Great Depression, during the devastating drought of 1935-36 and following a permanent injury to Hugh’s hand, the family moved to Miles, where Hugh became the stock inspector.

Both boys dearly wanted to become graziers. They were excellent horsemen, and learned all they could about stock, particularly from Methuen Morgan, the patriarch and owner of Arubial outside Condamine. Instead, their father decided when the time came they would both do dentistry.

Bud completed primary school in Miles, high school at Churchie, and began dental school at the University of Queensland.

Like many students early in World War II, he dropped out and joined up, enlisting in the RAAF and training on what was then highly secret technology called Radar.

He served with an early warning radar unit on Peron Island north of Australia and later at Trusscott Air base on the north-west coast, where he flew as a radar operator on Catalina flying boats on long-range reconnaissance missions.

After World War II he returned to dental school and fell in love with his glamorous and brilliant chemistry lecturer, Patricia Anne Shann.

They married, moved to Miles and later at Trusscott Air base to begin dental practice in Miles.

Bud and Patricia became active in Miles Pony Club where all their children competed.

Both boys dearly wanted to become graziers. They were excellent horsemen, and learned all they could about stock, particularly from Methuen Morgan, the patriarch and owner of Arubial outside Condamine. Instead, their father decided when the time came they would both do dentistry.

Bud completed primary school in Miles, high school at Churchie, and began dental school at the University of Queensland.

Like many students early in World War II, he dropped out and joined up, enlisting in the RAAF and training on what was then highly secret technology called Radar.

He served with an early warning radar unit on Peron Island north of Australia and later at Trusscott Air base on the north-west coast, where he flew as a radar operator on Catalina flying boats on long-range reconnaissance missions.

After World War II he returned to dental school and fell in love with his glamorous and brilliant chemistry lecturer, Patricia Anne Shann.

They married, moved to Miles and later at Trusscott Air base to begin dental practice in Miles.

Bud and Patricia became active in Miles Pony Club where all their children competed.

Bud was on the Miles Show Society for many years, serving as president and ringmaster. He was a life member in 1988. He built a polocrosse field on Aldersyde and competed for years with the Drillham team.

He became a successful stud breeder, initially with the help of Janet Officer, establishing a fine herd of Poll

Dons on Aldersyde, several of which won championships in the Brisbane and Sydney Shows.

Then his great friend Archie Nixon helped him establish a Hereford stud which also produced prize-winning bulls and heifers. Bud credited Kate Cochrane with caring for and preparing stock for shows.

Bud and Patricia were pillars of the Anglican Church; she played the organ at St Lukes in Miles and later at St James’s Toowoomba, for more than 60 years. Bud decided he made his contribution by providing four sons as altar boys.

They were active in nearly every group and organisation in the Miles district, from amateur theatre to Rotary, to the shire council.

Each year at Aldersyde they hosted Colombo Plan students from India, Pakistan, Malaysia and Singapore during holidays from the University of Queensland.

Bud – like his brother Peter – made a lifelong study of Aboriginal history and culture. Bud began collecting Aboriginal artefacts during his time...
on Peron Island. In the early 1950s he went on expeditions into the Simpson Desert with his old friends Charles Lethbridge and ‘Tiny’ Cameron, one of Australia’s leading ornithologists.

As a consequence, Bud was elected to the Royal Geographical Society in 1954. He also became an authority on the life and expeditions of the explorer Ludwig Leichhardt.

In 1964 he was invited by ANU Professor John Mulvaney to work on an archeological dig in the Carnarvon Ranges. Some of the artefacts were stored in his dental surgery in Miles before being sent on to the Queensland Museum.

Graziers who turned up artifacts on their properties regularly brought them to Bud’s surgery for safekeeping. To provide a proper place for these and other historical material in the district, Bud was a founder and first president of the Miles Historical Society. He proposed the building of the Miles Historical Village which has become a landmark for tourists and historians.

Bud’s love for flying began when he was 12 and his parents paid for him to go for a joyride with Charles Kingsford Smith on the Southern Cross, in Brisbane. He built the first private airstrip in the Miles district, on “Aldersyde” which became the regional base for Ag-Av, one of the first crop dusting companies in the region. Pilots in World War II Tiger Moths, and new Chipmunks and Pawnees regularly put on aerobatics shows over Miles before landing for the night at Aldersyde.

Over the years, Bud and Patricia were generous dinner hosts to hundreds.

Bud was a prolific letter writer, to friends, and as a campaigner for a host of causes. Continuously since World War II he has been active in Legacy, lobbying for improved rights and services for war widows and their children. He has been an effective campaigner for the rights of ex-servicemen and women, especially his old colleagues in the RAAF, and the branch which he helped win Gold Card health insurance and war service benefits. He campaigned for equitable rights for widows of members of private organisations.

He campaigned with the government and the Australian Dental Association to improve conditions for patients and dentists in remote regions. In time, he was made a Fellow of the International College of Dentists and was acknowledged with an award from the Australian Dental Association.

Over his lifetime, he became a master in his Masonic Lodge; he has been active in the RSL, the RAAF Association, the Country Party and its successors, the Churchie Council, and his dearly loved Queensland Club where he was a committee member for six years and most recently a senior member.

He always revelled in the company of friends and family.

Bud Ford is survived by his wife Patricia, their five children Peter, Steven, Annabelle, Simon and Toby, and 11 grandchildren.