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**WOOD, FREDERICK GEORGE (FRED)** (1906–1991), army officer, manager, and orchardist, was born on 4 March 1906 at St Kilda, Melbourne, third child of South Australian-born Frederick Thomas Wood, yardman and carter, and his Victorian-born wife Katie Caroline, née Webb. After education at South Melbourne Technical School, Fred entered retailing and in 1927 joined the Myer [qq.v.10.15] Emporium as a shop assistant. Within a few years he was managing a department. On 26 March 1930 at the Methodist Church, St Kilda, he married Magdalena (Lena) Margaret Long, a saleswoman.

Wood was a keen part-time soldier, having been commissioned in the Citizen Military Forces in 1926 and risen to major in the 14th Battalion by 1938. When World War II broke out in September 1939, he volunteered for the Australian Imperial Force and was appointed on 13 October. Lieutenant Colonel Arthur Godfrey [q.v.14] selected him as a company commander in his 2/6th Battalion. The unit embarked for the Middle East in April 1940. Back home, Lena was instrumental in forming the battalion's women's auxiliary and would be its president for the entire war.

The 2/6th trained in the Middle East throughout 1940. Wood was 'fiercely determined to have his company in good order and performing better than any other' (Hay 1984, 73). Nevertheless, he developed 'a reputation for being "excitable" and occasionally erratic in the conduct of his command' (Pratten 2009, 103). In October 1940 he was elevated to second-in-command of the battalion, which saw action in Libya, at Bardia and Tobruk, in January 1941. Later the same month he was appointed as commander of the 17th Training Battalion in Palestine. His effectiveness in that role resulted in his being mentioned in despatches and, in November, promoted to lieutenant colonel and placed in temporary command of the 2/5th Battalion, on garrison duties in Syria and Lebanon. On 14 January 1942 he returned to the 2/6th Battalion as commanding officer. Embarking for Australia in March, the unit spent four months in Ceylon (Sri Lanka) before arriving home in August.

Two months later the 2/6th deployed to Milne Bay, Papua, where Wood prepared it for jungle warfare. At this stage it was apparent to outside observers that he did not have the

support of some of his men. In January 1943 he led the battalion in the defence of Wau, in the mountainous centre of New Guinea. He suffered a head wound on 9 February, while directing a counter-attack. His conduct that day won over the doubters among his troops and earned him the nickname of 'Fearless Freddie' (Pratten 2009, 233). He was awarded the Distinguished Service Order for his leadership and 'continuous gallantry under fire' (NAA B883, VX166). After a week in hospital, he resumed command for the rest of the campaign. Returning to Australia in October 1943, he rebuilt the battalion in Queensland, single-mindedly training it for its next campaign.

In early 1945 Wood was back in New Guinea, commanding the 2/6th in its advance across the Torricelli Mountain Range towards Wewak. He received a Bar to the DSO for 'sound planning and resolute leadership' (NAA). Promoted to colonel and temporary brigadier on 28 July, he was given command of the 25th Brigade in Borneo, but only arrived on 16 August, the day after the war ended. Back in Australia, he transferred to the Reserve of Officers on 19 January 1946. As shown by his decorations and rapid promotion, he had always enjoyed the confidence of his superiors. Conversely he did not gain the trust of some of his subordinates until they experienced his outstanding leadership in battle. Thereafter he was universally respected. Sir David Hay, who served under him, considered him 'a rather good-natured man, and modest. But he was man of strong character' (1984, 490).

After returning to Myers as an executive, in 1947 Wood became general manager of Feature Holidays Ltd, a seaside camp at Somers, on the Mornington Peninsula. Two years later, when the Commonwealth government purchased the camp, he became director of the immigration centre established there. He left in 1952 to become an orchardist at nearby Main Ridge. He took up lawn bowls and remained a central figure in the 2/6th Battalion association. Retiring to Mornington township, he died of a stroke on 11 July 1991, and was cremated. His wife, and their two daughters and a son survived him.

Hay, David. *Nothing Over Us: The Story of the 2/6th Australian Infantry Battalion*. Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1984; National Archives of Australia. B883, VX166; Pratten, Garth.

*Australian Battalion Commanders in the Second World War.* Port Melbourne, Vic.: Cambridge University Press, 2009.

JOHN MOREMON

**WOOD, GILLAM ALBERT (PAT)** (1910–1993), Presbyterian and Uniting Church minister, was born on 6 December 1910 at Geelong, Victoria, eldest of four children of Edward Gillam Wood, labourer, and his wife Elizabeth, née McConnell, both Victorian born. He was raised in the Western District, where his father obtained a soldier settlement farm near Noorat, and he attended Terang State, Kolora State, and Terang Higher Elementary schools. Sponsored by a wealthy spinster who worshipped at the Noorat Presbyterian Church, he completed his secondary education as a boarder (1927–30) at Geelong College, where he was a prefect and house captain in his final year. At school he received the nickname ‘Pat’, by which he was widely known for the rest of his life. The college principal, Rev. (Sir) Frank Rolland [q.v.11], who had been the minister at Noorat, was a strong influence.

As a resident (1931–37) of Ormond [q.v.5] College, Wood studied at the University of Melbourne (BA, 1935) and then at the theological hall of the Presbyterian Church. At Ormond he was chairman (1936–37) of the students’ committee and rowed in the college crew, also rowing for the university (1935–37). On 28 December 1937 at the Presbyterian Church, Mosman, Sydney, he married Mary Seavington Stuckey, a social worker. They had met at a Student Christian Movement conference and Wood twice rode his bicycle to Sydney during their courtship. The next year he was ordained and appointed to the Whyalla Presbyterian Church, South Australia. From there he was called to Sale Presbyterian Church, Victoria, in 1942.

While a student, Wood had served (1931–33) in the Melbourne University Rifles. From 1943 to 1949, in the rank of flight lieutenant, he was a respected part-time chaplain at the Royal Australian Air Force Station, East Sale. His ecumenical interests developed while he was at Sale. He was present at the first meeting of the World Council of Churches in Amsterdam in August 1948 and at the Geneva meeting of the World Presbyterian Alliance in September. From that time on, he played a prominent role in ecumenical affairs.

Wood moved to St Andrew’s Presbyterian Church, Geelong, in 1949. His administrative abilities, which he had demonstrated at Whyalla and Sale, led to his appointment as clerk of the Presbytery of Geelong. He took a prominent part in its centenary celebrations in 1959 and authored the published souvenir. He was also a council member at Geelong College (1950–63) and Ormond College (1958–76). In 1961 he was elected moderator of the Presbyterian Church of Victoria.

In 1963 Wood was called to the Scots Presbyterian Church, Hobart. As a senior minister of a prominent congregation he had many other commitments, such as looking after vacant parishes and chairing committees, including the council of Fahan Presbyterian Girls’ College. He was moderator (1969) and then clerk (1970–76) of the Presbyterian Church of Tasmania and the author of numerous entries in the book commemorating its 150th anniversary in 1973. His ecumenical interests continued and he was twice the secretary of the Tasmanian Council of Churches.

Wood was a member from 1964 and chairman (1969–77) of the Australian Presbyterian Board of Missions (from 1972 the Board of Ecumenical Mission and Relations). With his wife, who was a member of the Presbyterian Women’s Missionary Union, he travelled widely as a representative of these boards. In 1965 they visited missions at Ernabella, South Australia, and Mowanjum, Western Australia, also travelling to South Korea and Indonesia. Wood flew to Port Vila, New Hebrides (Vanuatu), in 1969 and 1972 to arrange the handover of control of the Paton Memorial Hospital from the Australian Presbyterian Church to the British administration. He also visited Hong Kong and South Korea in 1972, the latter in connection with the transfer of the Il Shin Hospital, Pusan, to the Presbyterian Church of Korea.

In 1973 Wood became the first minister from Tasmania to be elected as moderator-general of the Presbyterian Church of Australia. He served in this role until 1977, overseeing the move of most Presbyterian congregations into the Uniting Church of Australia. After retiring from full-time ministry in 1976, he returned to Geelong and served in a part-time capacity in Uniting