

Carrier Pilot

Marines are known for their toughness, for their unswerving commitment to achieving their mission. One suspects Captain Vivian Mordaunt Moses embodied these traits. A Marine Corps fighter pilot flying from the aircraft carrier USS *Badoeng Strait*, Moses was shot down in his F4U Corsair on August 10, 1950. The Korean War was less than two months old and had already reached a critical stage.

North Korean forces, beginning in late June, had driven nearly the length of the Korean Peninsula, pushing South Korean, American and British forces into a tiny toehold around a key port city on the country's southeast coast. The Pusan Perimeter, as it came to be known, was the turning point in the conflict, allowing United Nations forces to consolidate, reinforce, resupply and eventually break the North Korean attack. Key to the success of the United Nations defenders was air superiority and the Pusan port facilities.

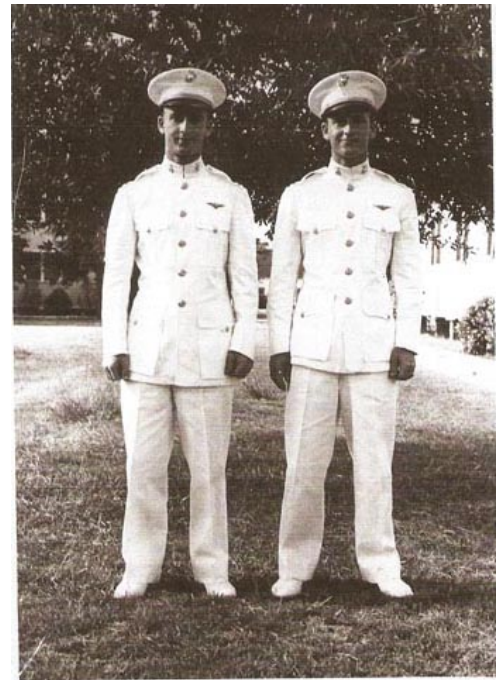
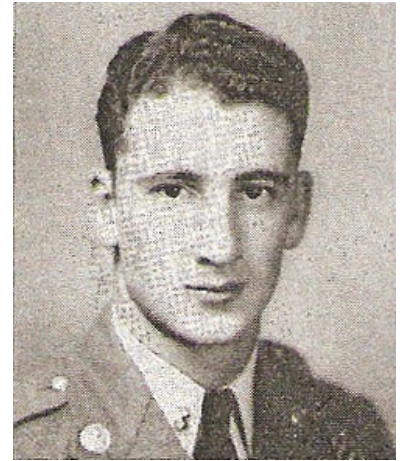
Moses, a pilot in the Marine's 323rd Fighter Group—the Death Rattlers, was flying critical close air support missions to help hold back the invading North Koreans and maintain the integrity of the Pusan Perimeter. On August 10, after being struck by heavy ground fire during a strafing mission, Moses ditched his Corsair off the Korean coast. He was rescued by a Marine Corps helicopter, a relatively new addition to the United States' growing aerial arsenal.

Vivian Moses and his twin brother Herbert grew up in Sumter. They enjoyed hunting, fishing, basketball and tennis. The brothers enrolled at Clemson College in 1940 following their graduation from Sumter High School. They were roommates at Clemson and played on the freshman basketball team coached by Banks McFadden. At the end of their junior year, in 1943, the twins were called to active duty. Perhaps influenced by their uncle, a retired Marine Corps major general, Vivian and Herbert transferred their Army commissions to the Marines. The

brothers were stationed at several Marine Air Bases training pilots in radio and radar use.

“We requested flight training when the war ended in August 1945,” Herbert recalled. “We went through the Navy Flight Training for about 18 months and ended up flying Corsairs. In December of '47, I did not want to continue in the service as a career; resigned and went to Clemson to get my degree. Viv, of course, decided to stay in the Marine Corps.”

After his helicopter rescue, Captain Moses was returned to the *Baedong Strait* the morning of August 11. UN ground forces were engaged in a desperate defense of Pusan. With the sea at their backs, there was no more



Viv.

Herb



room to retreat. Although he had been back on board the carrier for less than an hour, Captain Moses was soon back in the cockpit. On a strafing mission west of Kosong, Moses' aircraft took a direct hit from ground-based anti-aircraft fire and crashed.

The time bought by the spirited defense of the Pusan Perimeter and the sacrifices of so many United Nations soldiers, sailors, airmen and Marines helped prepare the way for General Douglas MacArthur's audacious landing at Inchon on September 15. The Inchon landings took the North Korean attackers by surprise and enabled UN troops to eventually restore the border between North and South Korea.

Captain Moses was awarded the Distinguished Flying Cross, Purple Heart, Korean Service Medal, United Nations Service Medal and the National Defense Service Medal. He was the first Clemson alumnus lost in Korea. He was survived by his mother, twin brother Herbert, brothers Richard and Robert and sister, Mrs. John Mahon, all of Sumter. He is buried in Section 3, site 1805, Arlington National Cemetery.

