

# Dr Reginald Morris

**BORN MIDDLESBOROUGH, MAY 10, 1916. DIED EILAT, FEBRUARY 7, AGED 95**

**A** RESIDENT OF Eilat for over 54 years, Dr Reginald Morris was responsible for the creation and development of the Eilat Hospital, and was renowned throughout Israel for his Englishness. He ran the hospital with military precision until 1973. He also instituted Eilat's public health services and had jurisdiction over the port medical matters.

His school days gave a clear indication of the future. At Manchester Central Grammar School he became head boy and won his rugby colours. After a year at Brazenose College, Oxford, he qualified in medicine at University College, London. During the war he joined the RAF as a medical officer. He was posted to Burma, where he served in a small medical unit at advanced airfields frequently under fire. Sometimes dropped by parachute behind Japanese lines to treat and rescue injured aircrew, Reg was mentioned in Dispatches. After the war, he stayed in the Far East, and served as Chief Medical Officer for Thailand.

In 1957 he married Fay Ellis from Birmingham. They took a year off to travel across Europe in a campervan and then to Israel, where they joined the World Jewish Medical Conference. In August 1958, they braved the long and virtually unknown journey south across the desert to Eilat. They decided to stay - as



**Dr Reg Morris: Israel's very own British Crocodile Dundee**

Reg joked - because they could park the campervan on the beach!

After the 1967 Six Day War, when the Bedouin in the Sinai came under Israeli rule, Reg became their doctor, driving alone into the Sinai in his white Range Rover to treat them. He developed a special understanding with the Bedouin, who looked forward to his visits, and who would travel hundreds of miles to his clinic in his Eilat home.

The house was widely known as "the house with the crocodile", thus named because of Clarence, the 3 metre long crocodile, who has resided in the gar-

den since Reg brought him back from Aswan in his luggage. Reg travelled the world including to Ethiopia, where he helped Ethiopian Jews escape to Israel and, alone at the age of 80, to Syria.

The Range Rover was not the only indication of Reg's roots. He insisted on planting a lawn at the hospital and the flagstaff flew the Union Jack. Even in the height of summer when temperatures reached 40c, Reg could be seen striding through Eilat in a shirt, tie and tweed jacket.

In later years, when he became doctor to the hotels in Eilat, sick guests would be astonished when a handsome Englishman with a deep booming voice, more suitably dressed for an English autumn, would appear with his doctor's bag. In 1963, on meeting an English lawyer from Birmingham, Ben Gurion asked, with great respect and affection, if he knew the "mad English doctor in Eilat".

As well as being a brilliant doctor, he was a gifted electronics engineer. His stereo speakers could be heard as far as Aqaba.

Reg was diagnosed with motor neuron disease at the age of 88. Throughout his illness he maintained his amazing sense of humour and dignity. Three days before he died, his son Andrew filmed him declaring his satisfaction with his life and his love of his family. He is survived by his wife Fay, his children Dolly, Uni and Andrew, and nine grandchildren.

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