

MEDALS AND MEMORIES MINUTES



Canada's Canine Hero "Sergeant Gander"

PDSA Dickin Medal Award citation:
 "For saving the lives of Canadian infantrymen during the Battle of Lye Mun on Hong Kong Island in December 1941."

As a black 60 kilo family pet chasing planes on the Gander airstrip, Pal the Newfoundland dog, was a nuisance. As a playful mascot for the Royal Rifles of Canada Regiment, the newly-named Gander was a joy; he learned to drink draft beer and even showered with the men. When the regiment shipped out with "C Force" to defend Hong Kong in fall 1941, "Sergeant" Gander was on board.

On three documented occasions Gander engaged the enemy. When the Japanese landed on the beach near Lye Mun, Gander faced them down with frightening barks and nipped at their legs. On another occasion he charged at the enemy when they neared a group of wounded soldiers. Seeing a ferocious bear-like force bearing down upon them, the surprised Japanese quickly changed routes. In a final act of bravery December 19, 1941, Gander, who knew what grenades were, rushed to pick one up that had landed next to a group of seven Canadian soldiers. The grenade exploded in his mouth as he was carrying it out of range; he died instantly. *i*

Sgt. Gander's August 15, 2000, Dickin award was the first for a dog in 55 years. During the award ceremony in Ottawa at a gathering of veterans, Fred Kelly, the soldier responsible for Gander's care in WWII, had with him another Newfoundland dog to represent Gander, the brave Canadian mascot-soldier.

Listen to August 11, 2000 CBC Radio Archives with Fred Kelly and Jeremy Swanson from the Canadian War Museum at http://archives.cbc.ca/war_conflict/veterans/topics/1039-5847/

i "Dog-Roll of Honour" PDSA Dickin Medal: the animals' VC, www.pdsa.org.uk/page309_2.htm