Hammy the Hero

During the Second World War, from 1939 to 1945, more than one million Canadian men and women served to help people in many countries, and to protect people at home. Going to war was very dangerous, and sadly, many of them were hurt and died.

It is important to remember all those who served. They deserve our thanks and recognition. During wars, danger can come from many sources. Everyone who served was brave. Some of them were even awarded medals for their great courage!

Robert Hampton Gray (nicknamed Hammy), was born in British Columbia. He is one of those courageous people who received medals during the war. Hammy joined the Royal Canadian Naval Volunteer Reserve in 1940 and he eventually served with the British Royal Navy. Many Canadians, like him, served with the armed forces of other Allied countries during the war.

Robert trained hard to become a pilot, taking off and landing his airplane on the large decks of huge ships called aircraft carriers. These massive vessels were used during battles at sea. Robert and his squadron were based on the aircraft carrier HMS *Formidable.* Robert was a skilled and courageous pilot. In August 1944, he was recognized for his actions during an important attack on a big German battleship.

As the war in Europe was nearing an end, but fighting continued in Asia, HMS *Formidable* was sent to the Pacific Ocean. In July 1945, Hammy sank a Japanese destroyer with his aircraft. He was again recognized for his bravery and earned the Distinguished Service Cross.

The war was almost over, but on 9 August 1945, Hammy led a group of airplanes from HMS *Formidable* on another mission. He spotted an enemy warship close to the Japanese coast and attacked.

The enemy fire was heavy. His plane was hit and caught on fire. Despite the damage and danger, Hammy continued his mission with great courage. He flew very low and scored a direct hit on the Japanese vessel, sinking it. Sadly, his plane then crashed into the bay. And Hammy was never seen again. He was one of the last Canadians to die during the Second World War.

After his death, Robert was awarded the Victoria Cross for his courageous actions. The Victoria Cross is the highest recognition we have for bravery. He was the last person to earn the medal during the war.

We will remember Robert Hampton Gray and all Canadians who helped win the Second World War.

Image of Robert Hampton Gray
https://www.canada.ca/en/immigration-refugees-citizenship/corporate/publications-manuals/discover-canada/read-online/canadian-symbols-images.html

Painting of aircraft carrier and airplane
'INTO THE WIND'
Courtesy of Rich Thistle

Canada