

## **The Royal Canadian Regiment The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct**

The Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct, an equivalent award to the modern Medal of Bravery in the Canadian Honours system, was awarded to Canadians between 1940 and the late 1960s. (Prior to Queen's Elizabeth's ascension to the throne, it was known as the King's Commendation for Brave Conduct.) In 1972, the establishment of the Medal of Bravery and other valour awards replaced the Queen's Commendation among other honours from the shared British system.

In reviewing honours and awards to Royal Canadians of the Korean War, the appearance of a single name from 1961 on a list found in the archives of The Royal Canadian Regiment Museum led to a search of recipients of the the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct within The RCR. Further searches turned up two more names of regimental recipients. Of these, two were confirmed in the Canada Gazette, and two were mentioned in regimental publications.

Commander John Blatherwick, in "*Canadian Army; Honours – Decoration – Medals, 1902-1968*" lists a total of 31 Canadian Army recipients of the Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct.

The three Royal Canadians who were awarded the *Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct* are:

- SB178180 LCpl Kenneth Allan Barrett (1961)
- SF21476 Sgt Russell John Philip Cormier (1965)
- SB186918 Lance Corporal Douglas Joseph O'Connell (1966)

The following details have been found on each of these recipients:

1. **SB178180 LCpl Kenneth Allan Barrett (1961)**

**Canada Gazette**, Part I (1947-1997), vol. 95, no. 30, Regular Issue, July 29, 1961

*“DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE*

*“Ottawa, Ontario, July 29, 1961.*

*“The Minister of National Defence has announced that Her Majesty the QUEEN has been graciously pleased to approve the following award:*

*“Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct*

*“SB173180 Lance Corporal Kenneth Allan Barrett, 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment.”*

*"RCR SOLDIER IS PROMOTED FOR BRAVERY*

*"Pte K. A. BARRETT, 23-year-old member of Second Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment, who saved the life of a comrade during paradrop Exercise Sparrowhawk April 1961, was honored by his Commanding Officer and promoted to lance corporal in recognition on his quick and courageous action. Special Parade During a special parade called by Lt-Col J. A. Clancy, Pte Barrett was called from the ranks. Col Clancy read to the battalion a communication from Col Peter Bingham, Director of Infantry, Army Headquarters, Ottawa. The message stated that "the Director of Infantry and His Staff wish to extend most sincere congratulations to Pte KA Barrett for his presence of mind and heroic efforts which resulted in possibly saving the life of Drum Major J Lanzrath during the parachute drop which took place during Exercise Sparrowhawk".*

*"Promotion*

*"After reading the communication, Lt-Col Clancy announced that in recognition of the incident, he would appoint Pte Barrett a lance corporal. Pte Barrett grabbed the canopy of the parachute of Drum Major Lanzrath during a drop, after it had snarled his own lines over London Airport. Realizing that Lanzrath's canopy would probably malfunction if he released it Pte Barrett secured the mass of billowing silk, carried his fellow soldier dangling beneath him, for a heavy landing on the ground.*

*"After the parade LCpl Barrett said he had no idea what to anticipate during the special parade, but admitted that he had been set to "expect and be ready for anything"."*

**Official Citation:**

*Award of Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct to  
SB178180 Private Kenneth Allen Barrett  
2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment*

*On 19 April 1961 Private Barrett participated in Exercise Sparrow-Hawk. This was a continuation parachute training exercise held by 2nd Battalion, The Royal Canadian Regiment at Crumlin Airfield, London, Ontario. Immediately after Private Barrett had made his exit at 1250 feet above ground level and during the few seconds before the canopy of his parachute had developed, he saw a parachutist (later identified as Lance Sergeant Lanzrath) hurtling towards him feet first from high above. Lance Sergeant Lanzrath's boot struck Private Barrett's helmet and he passed through the risers and suspension lines of the soldier's parachute. Private Barrett's parachute was not yet fully developed and the other parachutist's canopy started to wrap around his lines. With great presence of mind, Private Barrett first ensured that his own parachute was properly developed and then started to unravel Lance Sergeant Lanzrath's parachute and lines so that he could be lowered and make a normal descent. he succeeded in disentangling the lines of the other parachute except for one twist. By this time Private Barrett*

*decided that they were too close to the ground to permit the development of Lance Sergeant Lanzrath's main or reserve parachute. He therefore maintained his grip on Lance Sergeant Lanzrath's parachute lines and brought both of them in one his own parachute although he realized that a landing on the concrete runway was unavoidable. During the descent private Barrett talked to the other parachutist and coached him on making a proper landing. Private Barrett's presence of mind, prompt action and disregard for any injuries that he himself might have suffered with an additional load on his parachute saved Lance Sergeant Lanzrath from death or, at least, severe injury."*

2. **SF21476 Sgt Russell John Philip Cormier (1965)**

**Canada Gazette**, Part I (1947-1997), vol. 99, no. 13, Regular Issue, March 27, 1965

*"DEPARTMENT OF NATIONAL DEFENCE*

*"Ottawa 4, Ontario, March 27, 1965.*

*"The Minister of National Defence has announced that Her Majesty the QUEEN has been pleased to approve the following awards:*

*"Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct*

*"SF 21476 Sergeant Russell John Philip Cormier, CD, The Royal Canadian Regiment."*

3. **SB186918 Lance Corporal Douglas Joseph O'Connell (1966)**

**The Connecting File**, 1967, p. 582

*"CORPORAL AWARDED FOR BRAVERY*

*"On 9 Nov 66, Lieutenant Colonel Baile presented the award of "Queen's Commendation for Brave Conduct" to SB 186918, Lance Corporal Douglas Joseph O'Connell of Second Battalion. The citation reads in part " ... Lance Corporal O'Connell displayed exceptional courage when he disarmed a potentially dangerous man armed with a C2 rifle ... By this act of courage and selflessness made with the full knowledge of the danger to himself and possibly others, Lance Corporal O'Connell prevented what could have become a most tragic incident".*

*"Corporal O'Connell is presently serving with A Company as Company Signal NCO."*

**Citation published in "Canadian Army; Honours – Decoration – Medals, 1902-1968"** (Blatherwick, 1993):

*Lance Corporal Douglas Joseph O'CONNELL, The Royal Canadian Regiment*

*“At approximately 0100 hours, 3 April 1966, at Fort Victoria, Werl, Germany, Lance Corporal O’Connell displayed exceptional courage when he disarmed a potentially dangerous man armed with a C-2 rifle. Approximately thirty minutes earlier, as Lance Corporal O’Connell in company with three comrades entered the main gate of Fort Victoria, a man fired two shots in their direction forcing them to take cover and then he disappeared. Failing to find the man in the subsequent search, Lance Corporal O’Connell left his three comrades and went to the guardroom to warn the personnel on duty. On rounding the corner of the guardroom he saw the man leaving. As Lance Corporal O’Connell appeared, the man turned towards him and pointing the weapon said "I am going to kill you" and it is believed he pressed the trigger. The weapon failed to fire and the man turned to flee. He had taken but a few steps when Lance Corporal O’Connell caught him and after a brief struggle succeeded, with the assistance of another soldier, in disarming him. By this act of courage and selflessness, made with the full knowledge of the danger to himself and possible others, Lance Corporal O’Connell prevented what could have become a most tragic incident.”*