

Town builds monument to Sept. 11 canine heroes

'Beautiful Joe's' home honours dog that died in WTC attacks

BY ROBERTA AVERY
SPECIAL TO THE STAR

MEAFORD — David Lim was speechless when he heard that this small Georgian Bay community is building a monument to honour his dog that died in the Sept. 11 terrorist attacks on New York.

"I was very surprised when they contacted me," said Lim, a New York Port Authority police officer whose canine partner Sirius, a 4-year-old yellow Labrador, died in the collapse of the second of the World Trade Center's towers.

"The human loss was so significant that the death of one dog kind of gets lost in the shuffle. This is a great honour to be recognized by another country," said Lim.

The monument, which Lim will unveil in Meaford's Beautiful Joe Park on May 11, will pay tribute to all the dogs from the United States, Canada and Mexico that

searched the rubble of the World Trade Center and the Pentagon for survivors.

"We feel for these people for all they been through and we're hoping that we can bring a little comfort by doing this, kind of like citizens from this country putting their arms around them to show we care," said Michael Biggins, the spokesperson for Beautiful Joe Heritage Society yesterday.

The story of Meaford's *Beautiful Joe*, written by Nova Scotia author Margaret Marshall Saunders, became the first Canadian book to become an international best seller. Saunders heard the sad story of Joe, an Airedale pup, while visiting her brother in Meaford, 35 kilometres west of Collingwood, in 1892.

Beautiful Joe fell victim to an abusive owner who chopped his ears and tail off.

Saunders immortalized the story of his rescue by the Moore family of Meaford in the first Canadian book to sell more than 1 million

copies.

Joe is buried in the park that bears his name, which is also home to a memorial to Canadian police dogs and will eventually have half a dozen memorials recognizing the contributions of animals.

Initially there was some hesitation about a Sept. 11 monument.

But society secretary Peter Francis thought differently.

"Every picture of the search for survivors had a dog in it, so this seemed to be the right thing to do," Francis said.

The monument consists of two giant slabs of stone, each about three metres tall, inset in a pentagon-shaped mound. A local quarry donated the stone slabs and Biggins, a local real estate agent, raised \$1,500 by holding a sponsored cut of his shoulder-length hair.

Lim was devastated at the loss of Sirius — the only dog to die in the attacks — who was his constant companion.

"I still have nights where I get up and step over the spot where he used to lay beside my bed, because I forget he's not there any more," Lim said.



MAN'S BEST FRIEND: New York Port Authority police officer David Lim with his yellow Lab Sirius.

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