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He was America's most decorated war dog in the First World War, but his military career was nearly cut short when he was spotted by the camp commander hiding under his master's trench coat. But the tough little bulldog gave the officer a sharp salute... and Sergeant Stubby stayed in France and went on to worldwide fame.

Stubby was the official mascot of the 102nd Infantry Regiment and served for 18 months in four offensives and 17 battles on the Western Front. His exploits were widely covered by American newspapers of the day and he went on after the war to lead several mass parades and was greeted by three American presidents.

Not bad for a dog who was once a stray.

He was a brindle pup "of uncertain breed" — probably a Boston Terrier or Bull Terrier mix, who showed up in July 1917 on the campus of Harvard University where members of the 102nd Infantry were training. The soldiers took Stubby under their wing. One soldier in particular, Corporal Robert Conroy, grew especially taken with the bulldog. Conroy hid Stubby aboard the troop ship bound for the war.

Conroy was able to sneak Stubby off the ship by hiding him under his bulky trench coat, but in camp, the commanding officer spotted the dog. Stubby had been trained to salute when his master did. The officer was so impressed he let him stay as the unit's official mascot. As predicted, he was a big boost to

morale.

The tough little dog quickly proved his mettle. He went into combat in February of 1918 at Chemin des Dames and was under constant fire and shelling for more than a month. A retreating German soldier injured Stubby in the front foreleg when he tossed a grenade at the 102nd. He was sent to the rear to recover and there, boosted spirits of the sick and wounded. Word of the little four-legged trooper spread.

Stubby won his second wound ribbon of the war shortly after he return to the front when he inhaled a whiff of mustard gas. After another trip to the rear, the unit made Stubby a special gas mask to protect him. And now that the dog knew the smell and dangers of gas, he warned his unit on several occasions of impending gas attacks. Stubby could also recognize the sound of incoming shells before his human friends and served as his unit's early-warning system. He helped find and lead wounded men out of No Man's Land and back to their own trenches.

When the 102nd retook the town of Chateau-Thierry, women in the town made Stubby a special chamois coat. His many medals, pins, buttons, chevrons and souvenirs were proudly attached it it.

In the Argonne, Stubby captured a German spy who was sketching the 102nd's position. He chased the enemy soldier, knocked him to the ground and held onto the seat of his pants until infantrymen apprehended the spy. For gallantry, the unit's commander nominated Stubby for the rank of sergeant.

It's unclear whether the heroic bulldog was ever actual made a member of the U.S. military — no service records can be found. But he was a soldier's soldier. With the Armistice,

walking the streets of Paris, the little sergeant was recognized and cheered by hundreds of American, British, French and Australian soldiers and a few days later, was introduced to President Woodrow Wilson and offered him his paw in friendship.

Stubby marched at the head of numerous parades across the U.S. after the war and is captured in a famous photograph with General John J. Pershing being pinned with a gold medal for his service and heroism.

After the war and the Armistice, Stubby stayed with Conroy and accompanied him to Washington, where the ex-soldier attended law school at Georgetown and later became secretary to U.S. Representative E. Hart Fenn of Connecticut. While in Washington he met Presidents Warren G. Harding and Calvin Coolidge. So famous was the former sergeant that the Grand Hotel Majestic in New York City lifted its ban on dogs so that Stubby could stay there en route to one of many visits to Washington.

While at Georgetown, Stubby was the official mascot of the Georgetown Hoyas football team and at halftime would nudge the ball around the field to entertain the fans.

Sergeant Stubby died in his sleep on April 4, 1926. He received a half-page obituary in the New York Times, more ink than many of the dignitaries of his day received on passing. The headline read, "Stubby of A.E.F. Enters Valhalla." Among those eulogizing the little sergeant was Clarence Edwards, his old regimental commander, who gave Stubby his final salute in honor of the dog who had once saluted him.

The doughdog's story doesn't end there. After his death, Stubby was preserved in his uniform, his coat bearing all his medals and he went on display in the Smithsonian in Washington, where he can be seen today in the Price of Freedom exhibit, one of the museum's more popular offerings.