

Singapore HeritageFest 2009
“Our Neighbours’ Heroes” Story Telling Competition
3rd Prize Winner (Upper Primary Category)



Participant's Details

Name: Sashvin S/O Subramanian
Gender: Male
Age: 10-year-old
NRIC: SXXXX428G
Nationality: Singaporean
School: Yishun Primary School

War Hero: Lieutenant Adnan Saidi

Between 13 and 14 February 1942, Singapore faced one of its worst battles ever known in history. There was a hero who fought fiercely throughout the battle to defend Pasir Panjang Ridge. He was Lt Adnan Saidi, a 27-year-old infantry officer.

Lt Adnan was born in the year 1915 at Selangor, Malaysia. He was the eldest son of his family. He had two younger brothers who were also soldiers in the army. Lt Adnan Saidi was an intelligent and brilliant student who excelled in his studies. After graduating, Lt Adnan was chosen to be a trainee teacher and taught at the college where he graduated. He was a trainee teacher there for one year. Fate however had other plans for him. Lt Adnan was a firm man who took discipline seriously. He decided to take up military vocation after his one year as a trainee teacher.

In 1933, when he was 18 years old, Adnan Saidi joined the Malay Regiment. A year later, he was chosen as the best recruit. He was promoted as a Sergeant. Shortly after he became the leader for the platoon he was in; he was selected to represent his platoon in London for a military parade. He was promoted as a Lt Officer as he was a very bright young soldier.

Upon his return from London, Lt Adnan married a school teacher from his village. He had three children from his marriage. Beside his tight schedule as a soldier, Lt Adnan settled down quickly as a family man. Lt Adnan loved his kids and always tried to find time for his kids.

In late 1941, Lt Adnan was posted to Singapore. He brought his family with him and lived in a big house off Pasir Panjang. When the Japanese started to plan to invade Singapore, Lt Adnan sent his family back to his hometown. The young boys kissed their father's hand without realising that was the last time they would talk to their father.

The Battle of Pasir Panjang was also known as the "Battle of Opium Hill" as the Opium processing factory used to be at the foot of the hill. The Japanese soldiers had nicely planned to attack Singapore days earlier. Two reasons for the Japanese army to invade the Opium Hill were: it overlooked the island of Singapore and secondly, it gave direct

passage to Alexandra. The British army had its main ammunition, military hospital and other key installations situated there. That was the reason the Japanese army wanted to battle through Pasir Panjang first.

On 13th February 1942, the Japanese army turned their attention to the southern coastal part of Singapore, Pasir Panjang Ridge. On that morning, the ridge was heavily bombarded. At that time Lt Adnan was stationed at Pasir Panjang village. The Japanese army was forced to retreat from there. Lt Adnan and his men had built a wall of defence for the regiment. The Japanese army couldn't breach the defence created by Lt Adnan and retreat.

At midnight, 14 February 1942, Lt Adnan and his army received instructions to move to a new position, "The Opium Hill". Lt Adnan ordered his men to further strengthen their wall of defence with sandbags. The hill was surrounded with sandbags.

In the early afternoon of 14th February 1942, the Japanese launched a sudden attack. Lt Adnan observed a team of "Sikh soldiers" from the British India army approaching. Lt Adnan's sharp eyes and quick mind noticed that something was wrong with the troops advancing towards him. He and his troops quickly opened fire at the troops and wounded all the 20 soldiers at close range. The Japanese troops quickly retreated.

Two hours later, the Japanese launched an all out attack in great numbers. Greatly outnumbered and short of ammunitions, caused the battle of death for Lt Adnan army. All kinds of weapons were used for the war. It was a fierce fight which irritated the Japanese more. In the battle even though Lt Adnan and his troops were badly wounded, they never gave up till death.

The Japanese army captured Lt Adnan. Angered by the fierce battle, the Japanese army dragged and push Lt Adnan into a gunnysack. The Japanese soldiers then hung him by his legs on a cherry tree. Angered by the death of their fellow soldiers, the Japanese soldiers stabbed him again and again. Lt Adnan throat was repeatedly slit without mercy. After Lt Adnan was killed, no one was allowed to bring down his body from the cherry tree.

Lt Adnan family realised the death of the officer through a telegram. The nightmare did not end. The Japanese army began hunting down the family. They were to be killed too. Worried that the Japanese would find the family, all the belongings of Lt Adnan were given away. Only his three British medals were kept by the sons.

In 1995, a war memorial plaque was created to honour Lt Adnan and his men. He was a hero who fought for Singapore.

Community from which the hero came from: Malay