



The Paw Print

The Voice of the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum

& Handler Center



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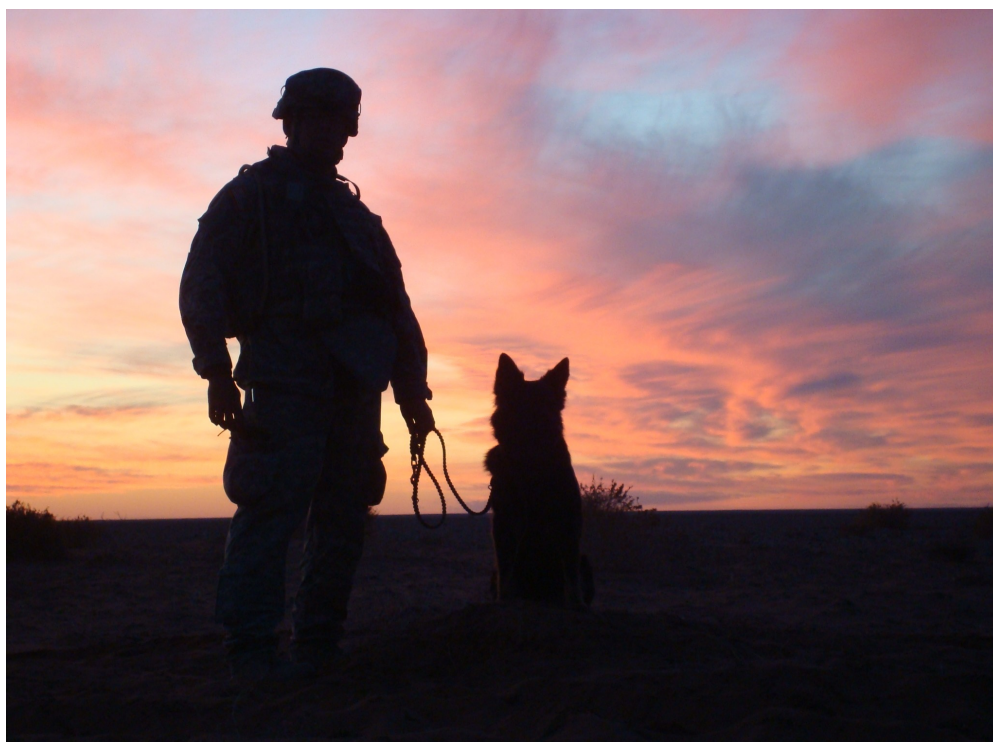
Special points of interest:

- We invite you to dream. Imagine how magnificent a War Dog Museum could be. Now, let's build it!
- Join us for a trip down Memory Lane with an article on Fort Benning and start planning your trip next spring.

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Looking For A Few Good Dog Men and Women



Silhouetted against the Iraqi sky, Al Dodds and his Human Remains Detection Dog, Tess, pause for a photo. We usually feature only military working dogs; however, Al, our Navy Coordinator, served in Vietnam with his Sentry Dog, Happy, and later scoured the desolate Iraqi landscape with Tess. He and Tess located the remains of an Ohio Guardsman and helped bring him home to his family. Al is one of our Board Members and Volunteers.

Do you want to add more zing to your life in 2022? Would you like to donate your time towards an extraordinary mission? Then become an MWDHM volunteer!

We have spectacular opportunities waiting for that great new teammate. And, the good news is that we welcome folks from every corner of the country to join

our team - virtually. All you need is a desire to become part of this unprecedented effort, part of our remarkable mission.

So, if you'd like to contribute your energy and enthusiasm towards a long-term goal, we have a job for you. Check out our most urgent organizational needs on [VolunteerMatch](https://www.volunteermatch.org) or send a message to:

volunteer@mwdhm.org and let us know how you'd like to help.

Then, close your eyes for a few moments and imagine what a stunning museum we can create, a museum worthy of the sacrifices of America's dog teams.

Please help us build it, and generations will come!

From the President's Desk



President, Albert Johnson

**HAPPY
NEW YEAR**

**volunteering
is a
work of
heart**



Welcome to 2022! We are looking forward to an exciting New Year! In that spirit, we are working hard to create a fantastic event at Fort Benning on May 13th-14th.

Our incredible board member Johnny Mayo will be bringing his highly emotional War Dog Wall. Johnny, a Vietnam Scout Dog Handler hand-built this stunning tribute to the 4-legged partners that kept those following in their footsteps safe.

We will be rededicating the War Dog Monument erected at Fort Benning to honor the service and sacrifice of our Vietnam dog teams. The original dedication took place on October 8, 2000, by the Vietnam Dog Handlers Association (VDHA). If it were not for the bravery and commitment of these dog teams in Vietnam, many more of our brothers-in-arms would have lost their lives. In addition, later generations of dog handlers would not have gained the plethora of knowledge to keep our brothers- and sisters-in-arms safe in later conflicts. Michael Hurder's story in this edition of the newsletter speaks on the importance of Fort Benning in his dog handler career.

We are looking for donations to auction at our Saturday evening banquet. The sky's the limit to what these auction items might be. We also have sponsorships spots available for companies or

individuals. If you are interested in sponsoring this event, please let me know at President@mwdhm.org.

Our volunteers' and board members' ability to work side-by-side to complete much-needed tasks within our organization is awe-inspiring. Dreams are made of the synergy witnessed every month. We have an incredible team in place that continues to grow. We are always looking for passionate volunteers to help us spread the reach of our organization and further our work towards the goal of educating the public about the history, service, and sacrifice of dog teams answering our nation's call. We invite you to become part of a vast mission that will impact generations to come. Please contact:

volunteer@mwdhm.org for more information.

We have recently produced a limited number of T-Shirts which you will see on page 4. The shirts are the second product we have created to raise funds for the organization, the first being our challenge coins. We have heard from many handlers and supporters that these coins captured the essence of the dog team experience we are working to share with the world. These items are not only a physical representation of MWDHM, but they help us fund events, displays, and outreach to con-

tinue our mission. We thank everyone who has supported us so far through the purchases of these products.

This issue is full of powerful stories we know you will enjoy, such as answering the question, "Why is a Military Working Dog Museum important?" David Adams takes you through a couple of fundamental reasons. Then Todd and Bryan continue our dive into pain management for MWDs. Next, Curtis Hendel writes about K9 teams through the ages. Then, with the help of Mr. Eric Queen's collection of K9 artifacts, Dixie shares letters from a soldier named Alfred describing his training to be a handler in 1943. What a treat! Lastly, we highlight our newsletter committee's favorite stories and photos from last year.

We look forward to sharing more history with you this year and hope you are as enthusiastic about this mission as we are. From Military Working Dog Heritage Museum to you, thank you for being along on this journey with us, and we appreciate your continued support.

Happy New Year, and as always,

K9 leads the way!

Albert Johnson

Why A War Dog Museum

by David Adams

With a visit to an excellent museum, the question "Why" becomes self-evident. However, our museum does not have a physical location for people to visit. So, the answer to this question is critical to our success to attract the resources needed to bring the vision to reality.

When people learned I had served in the Air Force, friends would often ask what I did. I responded with, "I was a dog handler," and got a deer-in-the-headlights look. In the 70s and 80s, they couldn't grasp what that entailed. But, it allowed me to talk about the dogs' contributions and how their detection capabilities kept an additional 10,000 names from being etched on that black wall memorial in Washington, D.C.

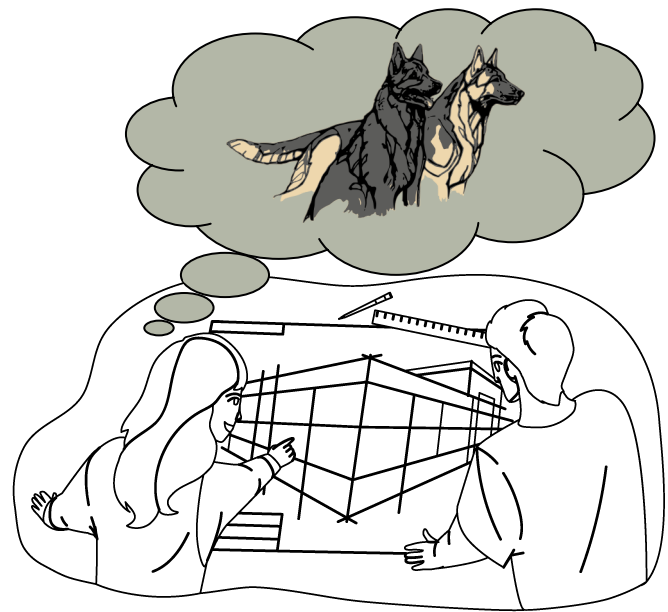
Any museum aims to educate, provide research resources and opportunities, and bring history alive to the visitor. But that is more of the "what" than the "why." The "why" in our question is why a museum focused on Military Working Dogs and Handlers.

For those of us who have served teamed with a dog, the answer to why is what we saw every time we looked into our dog's eyes.

Love. That unconditional love caused our dogs to charge headlong into any danger to protect us. The love that gave us absolute faith in our dogs. In a time and place filled with anger and hate that drives people to kill, the unconditional love of our dogs made them to do everything they could to make sure we returned home alive.

The why has added significance for those who served in Vietnam and Thailand. The U.S. deployed more than 4,000 dogs to the two countries, but we left more than ninety percent of them behind. Some were turned over to the host nation, but most were destroyed. They saved more than 10,000 U.S. servicemen's lives only to be cast aside as abandoned equipment at the war's end. We cannot allow their stories to die as the Vietnam generation of handlers pass on.

While the documented history of the military use of dogs goes back to 600 B.C., the first recorded use of dogs by the U.S. Military was in the Seminole Wars that began in 1816. [1]. The use of dogs in our military has grown significantly with a greater understanding and development of



the dog's capabilities. The training from my time in dog school in 1968 has evolved dramatically to today's K9 program.

New stories write themselves with each generation of dogs and handlers and each conflict and deployment. The stories are as individual as the dogs and those who serve with them. But, they are important stories of lives saved and how their handlers' tours are made a little easier because of the companionship that is as close to family as one can get.

The stories also include tragedies of losses and wounds. Unfortunately, what happens to handlers also happens to their dogs and vice versa. Physical injuries result from gunfire and explosive devices, but our dogs also suffer from PTSD no different from

their handlers. Then there are the exposures. A pathology study of Vietnam-era necropsies found dogs had incurred the effects from chemical exposures to an equal level of the troops they served.

We need to be an educational resource to the non-military/non-veteran public. Today only one percent of the population has ties to the military through service or with direct family members serving. Episode 4 of PBS's "American Veteran" did an excellent job pointing out how the divide between the civilian and military has grown with all-volunteer armed forces. People are not as invested when they don't have to

Wikipedia, "Dogs in Warfare," https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dogs_in_warfare, last edited before this publication on 2 November 2021

worry about their sons receiving draft notices. The fourth episode host, Army veteran and motivational speaker J. R. Martinez, noted he had shared his story more than 10,000 times, speaking to military and civilian groups across the U.S. He has learned that the two groups are miles apart. He said veterans need to share their experiences to help people understand what has been and is being done in their name. Nothing can bring our experience to life better than a museum.

A museum will bring fellow handlers across all eras and branches of services together, validating our time on the end of a leash. The K9 experience is a bond that crosses service branches and wars. When we learn another person was K9, we instantly identify with one another. Regardless of the uniform we wore or in what country we served, we know what it is to slide our hand over that silky coat and feel the dog's breathing that gives us the courage and confidence to move forward.

Our K9 experience is unique. In a world becoming more dependent on technology, we know being teamed with a dog is far more effective at detecting danger and protecting the mission than any robotic or unmanned device. It is challenging, if not impossible, for a person who has never served in the military to comprehend the experience of serving in harm's way with a dog and how it multiplied the odds for success.

Regardless of the era, being in K9 was a voluntary

choice. However, it wasn't voluntary for our dogs. Yet, they never complained or protested, but instead, they provided us their unconditional love and protection, unlike any other human being can.

We have looked into our dogs' eyes and know that in an environment of anger and hate, the force multiplier is unconditional love, the love between our dog and us. That is an experience worth sharing. The stories of these dogs defending our nation warrant being brought to life through a museum.

The Importance of Retaining Institutional Memory



From 2014 Above L to R: Spc. John Lawrence, a military police dog handler assigned to the 89th Military Police Brigade, Spc. Cory

Rodriguez, a military police dog handler assigned to the 89th Military Police Brigade, Staff Sgt. Joshua Miller, the master dog trainer for the

89th Military Police Brigade, and Jack Goodman, a World War II military dog handler, answer the audience's questions at the showing of

Canine Soldiers at the Austin, Texas Public Library.

With each throttle down of military engagements, units reorganize, and experts are reshuffled. The collective information held in seasoned dog handlers' heads, hands, and hearts degrades as they relocate or retire. Programs change. Some institutional knowledge is lost.

Your experiences provide an understanding of the history and culture of Military Working Dogs, especially the stories that explain the reasons behind certain decisions or procedures. Please help us tell your story!

The Butcrack of Dawn On Fort Benning

by Michael Hurder

It's the butcrack of dawn. Enjoying a balmy 38 degrees, I hunker into my field jacket, trying to be quiet while generating as much heat as possible, sliding my gloved hands up and down my arms. But, as soon as the light comes up, the enemy will see my breath on this chill morning anyway, so I wonder, *What's the point?* Lady keeps looking back at me as I jiggle her leash with every stroke.

I whisper, "Sorry, girl. I'm freezing. Why aren't you cold? Damn! Isn't this Georgia? What the hell?"

Her soft brown eyes seem to say, "Silly human." She returns to her mission. Find them first.

This evolution is another of the endless training exercises that Lady and I execute every day. Today we guard a crossing on the Chattahoochee River, the border between Alabama and Georgia. The op-force will try to penetrate our position. Our job is to warn the friendlies to oppose that crossing before it's too late.

My comrades are back in a hollow 50 meters away, gathered around the chow line, waiting on the semi-warm "hot" breakfast. Rifles stacked orderly fashion, red muzzle guards pointing to the sky. I loaded my weapon for bear with blanks and slung it over my right shoulder. Lady was my real weapon. She could sniff out a bad guy from two-hundred

meters away with a decent breeze. It so happened that draft was with us this day.

As I wait for Santi and Rebel to relieve us for our turn at the mush the Army called edible, Lady stops her prowling at the end of the long leash and throws her head into the scent cone.

Gotcha. After a minute of fumbling with the handset on my PRC-25, I make the call. "Rover One to base. Rover One to base. Calamity. I say again, Calamity."

The platoon gears up for an ambush, leaving their lukewarm chow to cool further. Finally, our job done, Lady and I head for camp and a well-deserved break.

I investigate the pot that holds breakfast. My stomach turns. After feeding Lady and ensuring she has water, I reach into my field jacket for the two brownies left from the last batch mom sent me. "Bless me, Lord, for these thy gifts from my mother. Amen."

Who doesn't remember those days at the beginning of our K9 sojourn, learning what these amazing animals could do for us? Marveling at the capacity of their sensory organs and wondering why it never dawned on us, with all the pet dogs we'd had growing up, that they could smell life or death so easily.

It all started at Fort Benning, GA, for many of us who served during that time.

Scout Dog Handler School was, for me, a blessing in disguise. After washing out of Airborne because I sprained both ankles on my first tower jump, I pondered my future while recovering in a medical holding company. My choices (no choice at all) were infantry in Germany, Infantry in Korea, or Infantry in Vietnam, emphasizing Vietnam. I was screwed.

The day before my muster out to Vietnam, three dandy-looking, highly decorated soldiers came into my room pitching a bail-out option.

"How'd you like to spend four more months on beautiful Fort Benning learning the ropes of being a K9 handler at Scout Dog Handler School, troop?"

Four more months, I thought. Tricky Dick said we'd be out of Nam in six months. I'd get at least a month of leave before my next posting. They aren't going to send me to Nam for a month, are they? Calculations over, I jumped on the opportunity and began my Dogman life the very next morning. I ended up in Nam anyway.

I will never forget my eventful journey. My partner in Nam, Prince 16x5, became so much a part of me in just a few days that his memory will live in me until we meet again at the bridge. It won't be so bad knowing my boy will be there to greet me when the end comes.



With assistance from the War Dog Memorial Fund, the Vietnam Dog Handler Association met its goal of creating a memorial to honor War Dog Teams on October 8, 2000, on Sacrifice Field at Fort Benning, Georgia. Most dog teams in Vietnam trained at Fort Benning, and the fabulous monument built there honors those that served in all wars.

I missed that ceremony, but not again.

We will rededicate that memorial at **10:30 am on May 14, 2022**. I've already booked my hotel, flight, and rental car. I can't wait. I wonder how much the place has changed. *Have the kennels been rebuilt? Is the company in the same area? The same barracks? Do trainees still use my room? Is there a Lady or a Rebel there?* I can't wait to see a Maligator in action. But, mostly, I can't wait to see my brothers.

Can you make it? I hope so—this is one instance where the phrase "the more, the merrier" absolutely rings true. Come on down. In May, you won't need gloves-shell-leather-black w/pile inserts or a field jacket, OD green. There may be some flies, red ants, and stink bugs, though. Bring your bug juice.

Pain Management in Retired MWDs: Part 2

By Drs. Bryan T. Torres and Todd Thomas, DVMs

Please enjoy the second part of our Pain Management article. In December, the first part discussed: weight management, activity, and rehab. The second part of the article offers options for medications, supplements, and diet.

Diet:

Once your pet reaches an ideal weight, switching to an arthritis diet may be considered. These diets typically include glucosamine, antioxidants (e.g., vitamins C and E), and omega-3 fatty acids (fish oil). These diets are well balanced, so they can potentially be fed for life. In addition, prescription food is available that helps with weight loss or control and includes joint supplements.

Joint supplements:

Evidence supporting the clinical benefits of joint supplement use is sparse, particularly in veterinary medicine. A critical aspect of discussing any nutritional supplement is efficacy disclaimers similar to those seen on labels for human products in health food stores. That said, most vets advocate their use for two main reasons: we believe benefits exist, and there is little risk to patients. Providing enough glucosamine or fish oil in any pet food is a challenge. My discharge instructions include this statement: We recommend starting patients on a quality oral joint supplement such as

Dasuquin Advanced SOFT chews. You may also consider adding Adequan, an injectable medication, to protect the cartilage in all joints. A veterinarian administers this medication intramuscularly twice weekly for the first four weeks, then monthly after that.

If patients show little to no response, owners commonly ask about stopping, which is acceptable. However, some dogs worsen, in which case the supplement can be restarted.

Anti-inflammatory drugs:

The most commonly used medications for arthritis pain are Non-Steroidal Anti-Inflammatory Drugs (NSAIDs). Many veterinarians describe these as pain medication. This can lead to a common misconception that these aren't needed if the dog doesn't appear painful. While we strive to avoid overusing NSAIDs, these are anti-inflammatory drugs, and arthritic animals have inflammation. The pain improves largely because inflammation is reduced.

Part of my client education includes explaining that pain in animals is typically subjective in nature. Because arthritis is a chronic condition, NSAIDs are often used daily to avoid patients going untreated (especially for chronic conditions). Modern veterinary NSAIDs are safer and more effective than aspirin and "human" drugs, so human NSAIDs must be avoided.

Potential side effects of veterinary NSAIDs include vom-



USAF Military Working Dog Carla looks up at her handler, U.S. Air Force Tech. Sgt. Dontae Stamps during MWD Carla's retirement ceremony at the base theater on Spangdahlem Air Base, Germany, June 3, 2021. (USAF photo by Tech. Sgt. Maeson L. Elleman)

iting and/or diarrhea, with or without blood, lack of appetite, lethargy, or jaundice (a sign of liver disease), or kidney disease. The other client education that I believe is important is that long-term chronic NSAID use is feasible, provided three goals are met:

- We achieve the desired effect.
- Owners see no adverse effects at home.
- A veterinarian isn't finding abnormalities on regular lab tests (blood and urine every 3-6 months depending on the patient's overall health).

Lastly, while all these medications work as marketed, they don't all work with equal efficacy in all patients. Trying something different is a valid strategy, provided it is done safely. While many people can swap NSAIDs with minimal to no problems, dogs need to avoid

this. A "washout period" of at least five days between NSAIDs is necessary to reduce the risk of gastrointestinal irritation or ulcers in dogs.

Pain medications

Other medications can be used when anti-inflammatory drugs cannot be used, or the desired effects aren't achieved. Pain management should be multimodal, meaning the medications we use to treat the pain work through varying mechanisms or at different levels of the pain pathways. Many adjunctive options exist. Each combination must be tailored to the individual patient. Sometimes, "trial and error" is needed until the ideal drug combination is found. Each patient is different, so there is no "ideal" treatment plan. When managing pain, I usually add medications until the desired effect is

achieved or side effects outweigh the benefits. When possible, I attempt to change, add, or remove one drug at a time so that both the owner and I can determine what is or isn't having an effect. While most options in this class are oral medications, I include tendon, epidural, and joint injections.

Pain should be tolerable if medication is given on schedule. If your dog still seems painful, also check for the need for elimination breaks or anxiousness. Do not give more pain medication than prescribed or stop giving any medication without consulting a veterinarian. Always call before changing medication plans.

NOTE: I frequently get questions about CDB products. I realize that I can't stop an owner from using these products, so I educate them on what we do and don't know so they can make informed decisions. For now, my answer is that most information is anecdotal or preliminary at this time, but research is underway at many locations. At least one veterinary school has seen changes to liver values in dogs, so until more is known about safety, I don't recommend these products.

Environment changes

Many seemingly small changes have benefits. Keeping your pet in a dry and warm place can help, just as it would help an arthritic person. It is crucial to provide thick, soft, clean padding at all times (although some pets don't

seem to appreciate our efforts and continue lying on tile or wood floors). Minimize access to and the need to use stairs.

Building or buying ramps for porches, vehicles, and furniture can help. Whether inside or outside, ensure sound, non-slip footing, so your pet doesn't fall, or "do the splits." Slick floors can be covered with area rugs or yoga mats. For those where snow and ice are common in the winter, use caution when outdoors. Using a sling under your dog's belly is a good safeguard. Supporting their entire weight is rarely the goal, so allowing them to walk while preventing accidents can typically be accomplished, even for larger breeds, like retired MWDs.

Surgery and Regenerative Medicine (stem cells, etc.)

In some cases, surgery effectively treats injuries, arthritis, and other degenerative conditions. As with rehab, regenerative medicine (e.g., platelet-rich plasma, stem cells) is also a growing field in veterinary medicine. From common procedures (cruciate ligament repair, spinal decompression) to more complicated, salvage procedures (fusing a joint, joint replacement), ask your primary veterinarian about a referral to a surgeon to discuss whether your dog would benefit from some of these options.

Periodic re-evaluations

Follow-up exams with your veterinarian are critical to evaluate progress and adjust the plan. Pain medica-

tion prescriptions, and activity levels, may require changes depending on progress or changes to the dog's overall health. I rarely schedule follow-up examinations on an "as needed" basis for chronic conditions unless worsening occurs. I typically schedule rechecks in advance and base the timing on the anticipated needs of the individual patient. I recommend asking your veterinarian when a recheck should occur and scheduling that appointment before leaving.

Author info:

Bryan T. Torres, DVM, Ph.D., DACVS-SA, DACVSMR is an Assistant Professor of Small Animal Orthopedic Surgery and Director of the Motion Analysis Laboratory at the University of Missouri, College of Veterinary Medicine. He is a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Surgeons and a Diplomate of the American College of Veterinary Sports Medicine and Rehabilitation. Dr. Torres received his B.S. from Clemson University and his DVM from the University of Georgia (UGA). He stayed at UGA to complete a rotating internship in small animal medicine and surgery. He then worked for several years as a small animal general practitioner in the Atlanta area. He returned to UGA to complete a two-year postdoctoral research fellowship focused on gait analysis, musculoskeletal biomechanics, and osteoarthritis. He stayed at UGA for a small animal surgical residency, followed by a Ph.D. in physi-

ology. He has research interests in gait analysis, osteoarthritis and pain management, and sports medicine and rehabilitation. He is a member of several organizations, including the Orthopaedic Research Society (ORS), the Osteoarthritis Research Society International (OARSI), and the Evidence-Based Veterinary Medicine Association (EBVMA). Todd M. Thomas, DVM, MSpVM (Surgery), Diplomate ACVS-SA, is an Associate Clinical Professor of Small Animal Surgery at Auburn Veterinary Specialists-Gulf Shores. He received his B.S. and was commissioned by Auburn's Army ROTC program in 1992, followed by his DVM from Auburn in 1995. After graduation, he completed a small animal rotating internship at the Animal Medical Center in New York City. Todd completed his residency and Master's degree in small animal surgery at North Carolina State University in 2006. He retired after 20 years on active duty in the US Army Veterinary Corps. He then worked for two as an Oak Ridge Institute for Science and Education (ORISE) Knowledge Preservation Program Fellow at the LTC Daniel E. Holland Military Working Dog Hospital in San Antonio, TX, before joining the Auburn faculty in September 2018.



K9 Through the Ages

by Curtis Hendel

When you look at the history of the United States military, there are notable events that take you back over two hundred years and others only a few decades. For example, our beloved Military Working Dog program is just a bit older than the United States Air Force and has yet to reach its 80th birthday.

The first generation is, of course, from World War II. These men came into an unproven program with donated dogs and created a vision to save countless lives, especially in the Pacific Theater. The second of these generations would include the Korean War handlers and the first dogs sent to Vietnam years later. This second group is the generation of the relative unknowns, though their service proved no less dangerous. They served during the scaling back of the military after WWII and the beginning of the Cold War.

Vietnam followed. The handlers and trainers of the Vietnam War took our program and put it on steroids. The teams secured facilities from nighttime attacks, located booby traps and mines, and ventured down into enemy tunnels. Over 4,000 dogs served our country in Vietnam, most having several

handlers over many years; they had a massive impact on the lives of our Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, and Marines. Unfortunately, very few of these four-legged heroes returned home; the majority, abandoned by bureaucrats, received the deadly classification of surplus equipment.

Excuse me while I skip a generation and move on to the warriors of the last two decades. Talk about slapping a turbocharger on the K9 MOS! The men and women of today's Military Working Dog Program have brought so much more out of their four-legged battle buddies. From locating IEDs to serving side by side with Special Operations, the Global War on Terror (GWOT) generation has rocked the K9 field and set the bar higher than ever.

Back to the fourth generation, my generation. A well-respected Vietnam-era handler, Jon Hemp, calls us "tweeners," the age between Vietnam and the GWOT. Many of my contemporaries worked in law enforcement roles. They attended Patrol Dog School and then moved on to Drug or Bomb School. Most of them would go straight into having a patrol vehicle, skipping gate guard duty and foot patrols with their dog.

My time in Patrol Dog School straddled the 1985 holiday season, encompassing both Thanksgiving and Christmas break. As future K9 handlers, a big part of our training involved the history of our program. We deeply respected everyone who had been on leash before us, but we strove to live up to the example that the Vietnam generation had set. I felt extremely fortunate to know a few Vietnam handlers that stayed in the military and served with me at Lackland. They seemed like giants in whose shadows we would live.

Dino Polselli, an Air Force instructor, not only preached the Vietnam generation, but he and other instructors made it clear to the students that to be K9, truly K9, you needed to spend time on the perimeter. The perimeter would be where dog handlers cut their teeth, alone in the dark, just you and your dog.

The United States Air Force only had two bases left that manned much of the perimeter 365 days, er, nights, a year. Clark Air Base in the Philippines, the big one, had over one hundred dogs in the kennel. Osan Air Base, the Republic of Korea, the other huge base, housed

about 65 dogs at any given time. Both bases relied heavily on the nighttime detection capabilities of their Patrol Dog Teams.

Out of the five ages of America's Military K9s, I would have to say that my generation, the tweeners, probably made the fewest leaps forward with the program and, most certainly, saw the least action. Yet, we worked hard, held our heads high, and constantly worked to do our heritage justice. We felt honored with our efforts on leash and in upholding many of the traditions our elders taught us.

We were, possibly, the most fortunate group as very few of us would ever face the enemy on the field of battle. However, the one thing that is identical to the other four generations is that we were, and we remain fiercely proud to be K9!



A Letter From Somewhere In Time

by Dixie Whitman with the Eric Queen Collection

Dogs for Defense, the initial thrust into America's procurement and use of MWDs, produced dogs with a high wash-out rate and inconsistent training. As a response, the Army Quartermaster Corps created four military locations that ramped up training uniformity: Camp Rimini, Montana; San Carlos, California; Fort Robinson, Nebraska; and Front Royal, Virginia.

This article shares a photograph and an eloquent letter written by a WWII dog trainer, Alfred Edwards. In it, he provides a glimpse of Front Royal dog training.

As shared by Eric Queen, we present this letter as Alfred wrote it—punctuation and spelling uniqueness included. Please enjoy his writing.

"January 3, 1943

Dear Erna:

"First of all I must apologize for my neglect in failing to answer your frequent and delightful letters. Having picked on you for more mail, I myself have committed that most grievous mistake. Your letters have been veritable bonanzas what with colored illustrations,

sketches and varied snap-shots. In comparison, my letters must be boring and color-less but this has to be over-looked due to the fact that I am unable to draw a straight line and I am further handicapped by being unable to get 35 m.m. film for my camera. Besides, we are in a restricted area and cameras are verboten.

"It snowed soon after Christmas and it left the hills covered with six inches of snow. Forty men and dogs trekking across the newly fallen snow turned grey by the low, rolling mists made a striking portrait. Breath coming in gasps and the crunching snow under foot were the only sounds to break the stillness of the mist-covered slopes. The constant slipping uphill and down made all of us nervous for once a dog gets within reach of another dog or trainer, the result is unpleasant. We reached the wooded hillside used as a teasing area and, having dispursed, leaned against the trees to await our turn. The ice-coated trees and shrubs made the forest a fantastic cavern of white. It happened as one of my buddies moved



The author, Alfred Edwards, poses at Front Royal, Virginia WWII Reception and Dog Training Center with his partner.
Source: The Eric Queen Collection

up into the ready spot—he slipped. The dog—a large, burly Chesapeake Retriever—lunged at the nearest thing—a large German Shepard. The trainer was unable to gain any kind of a foothold even though he clutched vainly at the icy trees. The dogs were ripping at each other, turning the trampled snow a bright red. The other trainer was unable to hang on to his dog and was striving frantically to keep from sliding into the snarling mess.

"Once anchored behind trees they tried unsuccessfully to pull them apart by pulling the leashes around the trunks of the trees. Although both dogs were bleeding freely and badly mauled, they had locked jaws and neither would give up. The rest of us were helpless bystanders, clinging to the nearest trees and hardly able to control our own dogs. The end was brought about by the trainers concerned who opened their

dogs' jaws by hand. The bloody, subdued dogs were lead away leaving a scarlet trail on the glistening snow.

"Last week we finished our training. Our class was broken up into smaller units, each with a particular job or assignment. Some went to train casualty dogs, others went to attack dogs, and the majority, including myself, were farmed out as assistant instructors. This means that each of us will be assigned a segment of a class of Coastguardsmen and their dogs. This novel experience gives me a queer feeling for, never having had to exercise authority over a group of men, it implies responsibility for the actions of others. Oh well — you may call me the "Führer" henceforth.

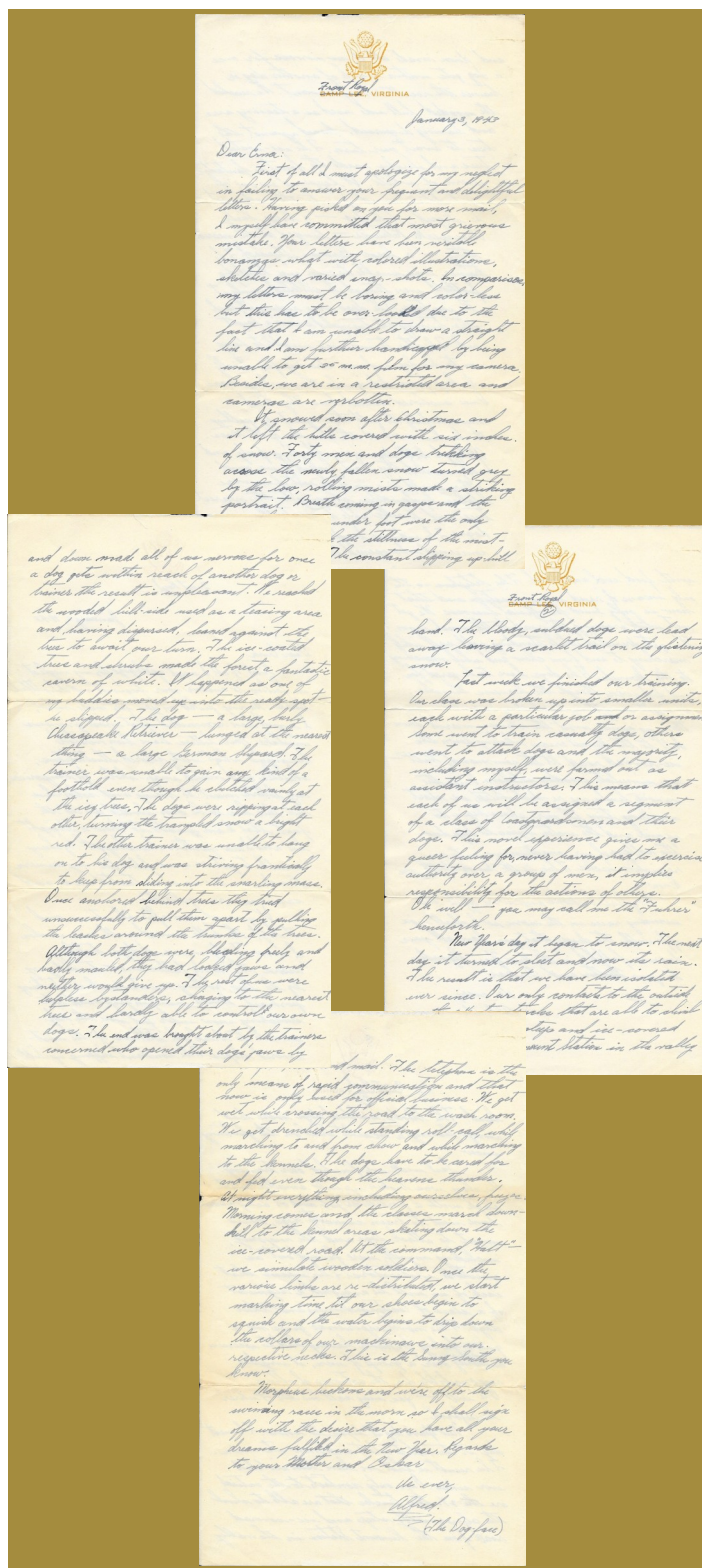
"New Year's Day it began to snow. The next day it turned to sleet and now its rain. The result is that we have been isolated ever since. Our only contacts to the outside are the 2 1/2 ton trucks that are able to climb the abnormally steep and ice-covered road from the Remount Station in the valley with food, coal, and mail. The telephone is the only means of rapid

communication and that now is only used for official business. We get wet while crossing the road to the wash room. We get drenched while standing roll-call, while marching to and from chow and while marching to the kennels. The dogs have to be cared for and fed even though the heavens thunder. At night everything, including ourselves, freezes. Morning comes and the classes march down-hill to the kennel areas skating down the ice-covered road. At the command, "Halt"— we simulate wooden soldiers. Once the various limbs are re-distributed, we start marking time til our shoes begin to squish and the water begins to drip down the collars of our mackinaws into our respective necks. This is the Sunny South you know.

"Morpheus beckons and we're off to the swimming races in the morn so I shall sign off with the desire that you have all your dreams fulfilled in the New Year.

"Regards to your Mother and Oskar.

"As ever,
Alfred (The Dog-Face)"



A special thank you to the Eric Queen Collection for sharing this piece of correspondence with our newsletter team.

Our Favorite Stories and Photos From Last Year

by the Newsletter Team

Our newsletter team remains exceptionally proud of the publications we've produced during our first year. We've interviewed several members of the K9 world, including a World War II dogman, presented some incredible photos and artifacts, and composed some fantastic articles.

We thought it might be fun to have a look back at our team's favorite photos and stories and share them with you, in case you missed them. In addition, you can view older issues in our [archives here](#).

Michael Hurder talks about his favorite article. Global War On Terror (GWOT) Air Force Handler, Lane Hagerdorn, crafted the piece about his partner, Gabe. Gabe's incredible legacy includes being one of the two puppies from the Air Force's rebooted puppy program. Gabe's numerous deployments, fabulous health, and accurate nose proved to be a rousing success for the new breeding system. The statistics and photos proved compelling to Michael. This article starts on page 3 of our September 2021 issue.

Michael Hurder often inspires us with his brilliant prose and touching insights. One of Curtis Hendel's favorite MK articles, *A Letter From My Soul*, popped up on page 6 of the August issue. Curtis says, "I think we all, as K9 handlers, have that 'one dog' or maybe more that you will think of every day of your life even after decades have passed. I pray that I have a certain dog waiting there someday."

It's not surprising that Michael Hurder's articles received mention from many in our group. Still, Albert Johnson specifically enjoyed the article *Homeward Bound* in the June issue about Michael's return from Vietnam. It's painfully honest, yet both humorous and heart-breaking. If you haven't had a chance to read it yet, don't miss it.

Curtis Hendel's work has zoomed to the top of Dixie's favorite pieces. Curtis' ability to paint a compelling image and give it breath and life intrigues her. Don't miss the October issue where we published two of his articles. It's hard to select a favorite, but the image of this giant mid-western farm boy training his new



"We first met Rex, a dog donated during WWII, in the December issue. His owner's grandchildren submitted this photo. Something about Rex is so relatable, so real. He reminds me a bit of my first dog. I've fallen in love with this beautiful boy and will continue to keep his memory alive." ~ ~ Dixie Whitman



"I love this Army photo by Bob Sholes from our June issue. It features the famous dog, York, from the Korean War. One of the things that resonated with me is that this is where transport of dogs by helicopter began and the fact that one of our Board Members met and talked with Larry Gittleson, second from left, at a previous event, makes an amazing connection through the generations." ~ ~ Albert Johnson

Photo source: NARA

partner, a food bucket, as he starts K9 School is powerful and deliciously humorous. So please do yourself a favor and read *Valley, The Dog Who Trained Me*, starting on page 4.

Another member of our newsletter staff, Sherri Swanson, also selected a Curtis Hendel piece as her favorite article of 2021. In our December issue, you can find Curtis' *The Greatest Christmas Gift* on page 11. We've become enchanted with the way he takes our emotions on a roller coaster and somehow ends up on a high note.

This piece brilliantly punctuates our first year of newsletters.

We hope you'll take some time to go back and catch up with the previous issues you may have missed.

Our newsletter team wants to share vibrant, relatable, honest stories and photos with our subscribers. If you have an idea for an article, contact us to share your thoughts at info@mwdhm.org.

Thanks for your support and all of the kind words of encouragement that we've received this year.

Here's to a great 2022!



"My favorite photo was featured in the March issue about War Dog Chips. This was the birth of our program. The WWII photos always amaze me to think that these were the Soldiers, Sailors, and Marines that started this whole thing that we love." ~ ~ Curtis Hendel

Photo source: NARA

We Need Your Help!

We Need Your Help! Our Events Committee is working diligently to bring all of our resources to the Fort Benning Rededication next May.

One crucial piece of that will be an auction to raise funds for the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum.

You can help by donating quality auction goods or soliciting these items on our behalf. What do you have or what can you make that would rock someone else's world and cause them to open their wallet? If you know of an MWD-related craftsperson, please share this call to action with them.

This museum will become a reality with the efforts of everyone. Can you help? Please get in touch with John Homa at: events@mwdhm.org with your item donation.

Agenda for Fort Benning Memorial Rededication



May 13, 3:00 PM –11:00 PM 2022 **Arrival and registration at hotel.
Hospitality room open.**

May 14, 10:30 AM 2022 **Rededication at War Dog Memorial
Fort Benning, GA— Participation by
dog handlers, led by Albert Johnson
& Speaker Chris Willingham**

May 14, Noon—1:30 PM 2022 **Dog Demonstration following.
Location to be determined.**

May 14, 6:00 PM 2022 **Banquet, auction, events at the
National Infantry Museum. Tickets
will be available soon.**

May 15, Morning departures. 2022 **Hospitality room open. Bon voyage.**

Want more info? Email: info@mwdhm.org

Text/call: 865-507-8903

Link for hotel rooms: [click here](#).

[Click here](#) to plan your museum visit.



*Military Working Dog
Heritage Museum
Handler Center
P.O. Box 54
Newport, TN 37822
Phone: 865-507-8903*



From the Team at MWDHM...

We invite you to join the museum's journey
by signing up for a free *Paw Print* subscription.

Email: info@mwdhm.org

**Military Working Dog Heritage:
Always on Point**

We're on the Web: mwdhm.org

We're on Facebook:

Military Working Dog Heritage Museum



Recycle, please.

Share your story.

Share your vision.

Share your voice.

Share your copy of
our newsletter.

Important dates with Trooper and Scout

For more information on any of our events, please email info@mwdhm.org

April 23, 2022 – War Dog Memorial March at Pellissippi State Community College in Knoxville, TN.

May 12, 2022— Fundraiser at Semper Fi Bar and Grille, 9770 Main St, Woodstock, GA 30188 with Dog Handlers.

May 13-15 2022 Events at Fort Benning.: Hospitality room. War Dog Memorial Rededication, K9 Demonstration, Tours of the National Infantry Museum, Banquet and Auction.

**July 17, 2023 –
25th Rededication of the
War Dog Memorial at the
University of Tennessee
in Knoxville.**



Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



Left: A scenario set-up for the media during the Korean War. Scout Dog, York, and his handler reenact going on patrol to catch a “line-crosser” from the north. Other members of the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon support the dog team for this photo op. (Source: NARA.)

Note: Robert Fickbohm, the Korean Dog Handler who read names last Memorial Day on our Facebook event, is the third troop in line.