



The Paw Print

The Voice of the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum
& Handler Center



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Special points of interest:

- A nod to the tradition of excellence from the kennels at Fort Benning.
- Join us at Fort Benning in May for a great weekend.
- Meet a couple of our amazing volunteers in our Volunteer Salute.

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Fort Benning: Delivering Combat Ready Dog Teams



FORT BENNING, Ga– Kennel Master James Allred catches an MWD during a 2011 demonstration.

Photo courtesy of Fort Benning Public Affairs Office.

Fort Benning is special for Vietnam dog handlers, as many trained there before shipping to Southeast Asia. However, we invite everyone to join MWDHM at Fort Benning, GA., next May 13-15 for a fantastic event celebrating the bond of K9 across generations.

Our event will offer attendees an opportunity to reunite with friends and meet new members of the

MWD community as we rededicate the War Dog Memorials and the numerous markers which guard the large memorial and chronicle the service of handlers and dogs from various branches. We will observe each of these pedestals in our rededication. Additionally, the Fort Benning K9 kennels plan to present a dog demonstration. You may

also visit the National Infantry Museum, view Johnny Mayo's Vietnam War Dog Wall, and break bread with handlers of all generations and branches at our banquet. So many fantastic opportunities in one weekend!

Won't you join us and add your voice to honor America's handlers, vet staff, and military working dogs? [Details here.](#)



Vice President, Lane Hagerdom



From the Vice President's Desk

Albert Johnson asked me to introduce myself and include my thoughts in the February issue of The Paw Print. As Vice President, it's my honor to be part of this mighty museum design.

We are in full swing of the New Year and are getting more excited by the day for the year ahead of us. You just read about the Ft. Benning event scheduled for May 13-15th. This event has been in the making for quite some time and promises to be a riveting and impactful weekend. These events do not happen without sacrifice, though.

The Museum Board and Volunteers have been pouring countless hours into the planning, coordination, and fundraising needed to make this flagship event come to life. However, even with as much as we have completed, more is still required. We are always searching for volunteers to help support the museum and events like the Ft. Benning rededication. And the costs of putting these on are significant enough to require serious fundraising. If you, or someone you know, are interested in volunteering or donating to the 501(c)(3) charitable organization, please visit our website. Find us here: www.mwdheritagemuseum.org. Also, if you are aware of other Military Working

Dog-related dedications or events throughout the year, please share them with the Museum team. Whenever possible, we will be present and supportive!

In this newsletter, Michael Hurder's article is a worthy read, especially if you want to be taken back to or get a feel for what it was like learning about how subtle cues from the handler AND dog become the communication of saving lives and eliminating threats. For example, in the post-Vietnam era of the dog handler's course at Lackland AFB, a night patrol operations course was inspired by the lessons learned by the remarkable generation who sacrificed so much in Southeast Asia. The patrol route was littered with booby traps and awaiting "Op4" or opposition forces armed with the nastiest water balloons and squirt guns. The sole purpose of the night patrol course was to teach young and naïve handlers to "read" their dog and trust them to protect the handler from harm (unless the situation dictated confronting the danger and eliminating it, of course). In these moments, a handler would realize that their dog "spoke" to them with subtle yet obvious movements and changes of behavior. These lessons were so critical that every

handler carried them every time they picked up a leash and went to work. And in some cases, they translated into life outside of military service as lessons reapplied to new responsibilities and missions.

Allow me a moment, if you will be so kind, to tie these two paragraphs together. This organization is alive because of the group of dedicated people who believe that every moment of military working dog history, no matter how subtle, is the loudest voice in the room telling story after story of the bravery and sacrifice of dog teams across the generations. The hours and monies they have poured into the Museum are often unrecognized and "misread" but not unnoticed by those looking for the subtle "change-of-behaviors." So, if you have a moment, thank a volunteer or a board member. Learn their story. Hear their purpose. And never be afraid to volunteer to understand better and support their work of preserving the fragile heritage of the dog teams and their support staff of all generations.

We exist because of the work of many – then and now.

Lane Hagerdom

Fort Benning and Scout Dog Handler School

by Michael Hurder

Teaching us was one thing but learning how the dog trainers at Fort Benning trained and constantly retrained the K9s proved an education in itself. For example, the "Repetition, Praise, and Reward" method after the dog performed the proper behavior for the task at hand resulted in a scratch behind the ears and a lot of glad-handing. Repetition is critical to reinforce the appropriate behavior. Eventually, the K9 would perform the behavior for a pat on the head only and be quite thrilled with that.

In general, dogs are very personable and love the attention of their handlers more than anything. The term loyal is an understatement when referring to these marvelous creatures. Devoted is closer to the truth along with adoring, noble, fearlessly protective, and loving. Besides learning to control this creature's talents, we first learned to bond with our partners. This connection proved far more important than what size, breed, or color they were.

With this in mind, we spent eight or more hours every day with our dogs. We fed, groomed, trained, retrained, hung out with, and basically lived with them as if they were family and we were the parent. I spent more time with my training K9, Lady, in two weeks than I

did with my platoon mates. I once fell asleep in her kennel on a Saturday morning. I woke to the kennel master spraying me down along with the kennel.

Back to training, at some point in time, the trainers decided that handlers needed a prompt to inform the K9 that he was working as opposed to just being an obedient dog. The dogs wore choke chains all the time. Basic. Handlers completed obedience training with the choke chain only. When the team switched to "work" mode, the handler put a leather-working collar or a harness on his partner. Retraining remained a constant, especially when these dogs would sit for a month or so of idleness between training cycles.

The way the trainers taught or retaught MWDs (Military Working Dogs) to do their intended function, whether Scout, Sentry, Drug, Patrol or Mine and Tunnel Dog, followed the same method used to teach the basics. It consisted of "sit, stay, down, come, heel, crawl, etc.," via "Repetition, Praise, and Reward." A target, usually a tiny amount of explosives, ammo, medical supplies, or even food, like rice, would be set along a trail, and the K9 team would advance slowly past it. If your partner showed interest in the target right away, "praise and reward" happened immedi-

ately, and the team reran the course until the animal had that behavior down. Then they would hide the device under some leaves or grass or whatever and repeat the process. Then the device would be buried (like an IED or a cache of supplies etc.). If the MWD happened to skip on past the device without noticing it, the handler would stay him, perhaps show the device to the animal, let him smell it, mouth it, if appropriate, and then replace it. The MWD worked past it again until they did show interest, invoking praise and reward from the handler. A target would not be buried for a particular animal until he alerted on the device while above ground and then just slightly buried.

Repeat, repeat, and repeat again.

When they locate a target or person, the dogs' behavior is called an alert. This cue causes the handler to stay his partner and investigate. For example, when the K9 finds a device, he sits in front of it. For personnel and other scent-related alerts, his nose would point into the scent cone, or he'd tilt an ear towards a sound or shift his head if he saw movement.

After a while, they learn it's time to get serious once the handler puts on their working collar or harness. Dogs





use all their abilities to locate anything.

K9 senses are exponentially more acute than a human's. Their sight and hearing are hundreds of times more sensitive than ours, but their sense of smell is perhaps the most perceptive of all. It is difficult for a human to understand the difference without examples.

We watched a drug dog demonstrate his talents as he located a pinch of marijuana in a small plastic bag inside a dirty sock hidden within the gasoline fill spout of a 2.5-ton truck.

He tried to pull off the fill cap.

I once had my dog in Nam, Prince, scent-alerting on personnel at just over 200 meters with a steady breeze blowing our way.

When an MWD finds a tripwire, it may have used all three senses. He may hear the tripwire quivering with tension, catch the movement of the wire vibrating, or smell the person who set it for up to three days after

he left if it hasn't rained too much in the meantime.

Human scent lingers for far longer than three days, really, hence the ability to track someone via a day's old trail of scent left behind. It is important to remember that you're working an MWD along a path while under tremendous pressure to find everything as a Scouting Team. The scent left more than a few days old may not trigger the response you want from your partner because there is so much more going on that is far fresher than the days-old human scent. Just as you must train your dog to use all his senses when walking point, it is also crucial that you zone in on his every move. Some alerts are so fleeting that your partner might get a whiff for just a moment before the wind shifts, or something with a more pungent scent assails his olfactory nerves. Or if you looked at something else, like where you walked, instead of at your partner, you could easily miss that brief alert and walk yourself into trouble unless he alerted again.

Walking a patrol with an MWD is an exercise in self-control. Your base instincts tell you to look where you're walking. That is wrong. Watching where you're going is the MWD's job. As a handler, your job is to moni-

tor him for alerts and keep a sense of wind direction all the time. Only after your partner alerts should you use other cues to help you discover actual wind direction and, therefore, the proper origin of the scent. For instance, scent can swirl around in the forest or high dense brush. If you want to be sure of wind direction after you stay your partner and alert everyone to take cover, look to the tops of the trees where the wind is unfettered and get an actual wind direction from watching which way the top limbs and leaves are blowing.

If you thought you might have caught one of those subtle alerts from your K9 but are not sure what kind of alert it was, hold up the folks you're leading, call your partner back to you. Re-prosecute that same terrain again and again if necessary until you're satisfied with the results.

After you and your Scout Dog were up to speed with the basics, you moved on to personnel. Alerting on people was a whole new ballgame. With a fresh scent to follow, an MWD could get excited about finding people.

Since the idea of scouting required stealth so that you didn't alert the bad guys to your presence, movement slowed. Another benefit of a

moderate pace was that you didn't stumble into something terrible because you were in too much of a hurry. You had to work with your partner deliberately and pay attention to everything he did.

Some alerts were so subtle that you could miss them if you blinked at the wrong time. As I said, a stale scent might just barely attract your partner's attention if there were any other distraction(s) around. You could easily miss that sudden heartbeat-long flick of an ear or penchant of the nose to swing left or right into a scent cone for a millisecond.

Scent falls to the earth in the rain, compounding the problem, so your partner's tendency is always to follow his nose. If you allow him to do so, his head will drop to the ground. In that case, you must urge him constantly to keep his head up, with a bit of jiggle on the leash or hissing through your teeth, or even using the dog whistle. His sight is wasted with his head down, as he sees movement ten times faster than a human. So you learn to keep his head up for everyone's benefit. K9s may not see with crystal clarity or color, but they see movement very well.

Every MWD has a unique way of displaying various



Scout Dog Training at Fort Benning during the Vietnam-era.

Photo courtesy of Dixie Whitman/ Credit Fort Benning photographer. Unknown.

alerts. For instance, Prince had his way of reacting to incoming or outgoing ordinance. His ears would flatten out to the sides, and he would crouch. Prince learned this from experience. Over time he'd heard many artillery pieces firing or mortar rounds dropping into a tube and eventually related those noises to what happened after that: big noise, bright flash, and everyone running to cover. He became conditioned to take cover, thus the crouch. The flattened ears were just a normal reaction for that particular K9. Others I saw would alert heavily on people but scarcely noticeably on things. Some would be just the opposite, and some would throw a barely recog-

nizable alert for everything but never miss anything. So you learned your partner's ways in a hurry if you wanted to live.

Personnel alerts were the coolest, I always thought. Their noses would almost dance into the scent cone. Some would get animated, while others would simply freeze and point.

When Prince got a real strong sniff (meaning either that the target was close or the wind was strong and steady), he would stand on his hind legs and rotate into the cone. On the other hand, Lady, my training partner in Ft Benning, would bob her nose in the direction of the wind. Other dogs might just toss their heads this way or

that, and you had to catch it or lose it. Knowing your partner was the rule.

We had a behavioral scientist teach us how K9s function and how repetition and praise were the best training methods. He claimed that you could teach a bright dog anything you could teach a 3-year-old child, except for some dexterity talents and how to talk. For my money, I thought that last bit was debatable. I know Lady and Prince communicated with me via tail wagging, pointing, licking, whining, barking, mouthing, and nudging. Is that not talking by another name?

There was a Staff Sergeant at Ft Benning, SSGT Dixon, who'd been around MWDs

since joining the Army. Today he'd be called a natural dog whisperer. He saw so many in-a-hurry newbies miss alerts over the years that he took it as a personal challenge not to let those folks get through the course until he'd corrected that tendency. He spent some extra time with the struggling handlers who, once they got out in the field, had their brains turn to mush, and they'd miss more alerts than they'd catch. He would work with the team, taking over the handler's role and showing them how to really see their partner's actions. SSGT Dixon, without a doubt, "talked" to these animals, and they subsequently "talked" to us if we were willing to listen

My War Dog Wall

Story and photos by Johnny Mayo

Thirty years after I returned from Vietnam, a South Carolina group planning a sizeable military event reached out to me, asking if I would share some of the history of the Military Working Dogs. I responded, "No." We didn't talk much back then about our Vietnam experiences. Bitterness, distrust, feelings of not belonging invaded the lives of many Vietnam Veterans. We butted up.

However, the committee proved relentless; they continued to ask me to be part of the air show and refused to take "No" for an answer.

The group planned a huge military extravaganza called **Celebrate Freedom** at an airfield in Columbia, SC, and begged me to present some information about military working dogs in Vietnam. I relented.

Perhaps I could pull together something, a small display of some kind, to educate the public. But, unfortunately, unlike all the information available to people now at our fingertips, we only learned of our dogs' appalling end through the Vietnam Dog Handlers' Association (vdha.us) and a Parade Magazine article. Vietnam dog handlers recognize

the VDHA, and its reunions at March AFB, CA and Fort Benning, GA, as the first events for pulling us together. Unfortunately, most Vietnam-era handlers learned the sad history of our K9s' end of tour at these events.

After that, the VDHA hosted a national reunion in Washington DC, as a couple of hundred handlers plus families would gather at the Wall nearly 30 years after the Vietnam War ended.

Not knowing anyone or finding any faces I recognized from my time as a Scout Dog Handler, I attended both events with



This is my traveling War Dog Wall, which I plan to bring to the Fort Benning event next May.



My first Scout Dog, Tiger 9A34 was killed in action. When I returned home, I brought his kennel sign with me which served as an inspiration for my War Dog Wall tribute.

only a good friend at my side, my Siberian Husky, Buck. However, this event triggered a spark that would lead me to devote the past 20 years of my life to the war dogs.

The Celebrate Freedom Foundation produced amazing air shows in the Columbia, SC area for several years after 2001 and included my K9 exhibit as part of each show. The display I put together in 2001 began the last 20 years of sharing the military working dogs' history from WWII to our modern-day use of K9s in Iraq and Afghanistan. In addition, it provided a way to educate the public about the working dogs' history before smartphones put instantaneously accessible data in our hands.

For my display, I pulled out some pictures related to handlers, scout dogs, and their service and created a visual history of the MWDs and the various branches of service on 4' X 7' panels. In 2002 and beyond, the exhibit grew even more extensive. In 2003, the VDHA sent me the names and numbers on record of the MWDs' serving in South-east Asia. I created a static display of 4,200 kennel signs with each

dog's name and tattoo number. Thirty sheets of plywood later, the War Dog Wall had its first set up on Veterans' Day weekend in 2003. The 6' X 20' wall display honored all the KIA dogs, and on the ground in front of the panels were all other Vietnam K9s who did not return home. Three thousand four hundred dogs' names piled on the ground remind us of their tragic end. Seeing the sheer volume of placards, each representing one dog, overwhelms visitors.

My first scout dog, Tiger 9A34, was killed in action; his original kennel sign came home with me and became my inspiration for much of what has happened over the past two decades. Our nation's working dogs' history, past and present, is honored through my kennel sign exhibits.

In 2016 a year after the dedication of the SC War Dog Monument, I revised a condensed version of the traveling War Dog Wall, which has become the central part of the exhibit today. This smaller display is the War Dog Wall that I will be bringing to the Fort Benning event to share with everyone. I hope to see you there.



At the original War Dog Wall with my huskies, Buck and Nakita, along side other Vietnam veteran friends and supporters from across the country. We established this huge display at LZ English War Dog Kennels to serve as an educational piece at Celebrate Freedom Festival.
"Dogman, Take the Point."



A painting of my second scout dog, Kelly 819A is set in front of all of the KIA Vietnam dogs and amid all of the others who never came home.

Pete the Pooch, Able Seaman

From the National Archives

Mascots provide military members comfort and companionship as they serve far from home. It's a tradition that is widespread and long-standing. While some mascots are unique, like the Norwegians' Brigadier Sir Nils Olav III, an Emperor Penguin, or Sri Lanka's Kandula, an Asian elephant, most mascots are the more mundane canine or feline species.

Before, during, and after the D-Day Invasion on June 4, 1944, Coast Guard ships and crews worked around the clock, transporting men and supplies and providing life-saving expertise in the waters off the Normandy coast and the English Channel. After the invasion, they ferried cargo from England to support the men on the continent, docking at various ports in Northern France, including Le Havre. Here they found one of the most valuable mascots, Pete, who helped with the hawser.

From the National Archives:

"Coast Guardsman who have put in at LeHavre are familiar with the singular talents of Pete the Pooch, able seaman. This wire-haired fox terrier has lent a hand to many a line when a vessel comes into dock. Impatience is the name for

Pete, who can't wait for a line to be tossed from the chock be dives into the sea and swims ashore guiding the Coast Guard cutter to its berth."

"There's only one time Pete the Pooch, able Seaman of LeHavre, needs a little help and that's when he's guided the vessel into dock and wants to reach dry land himself. Then it is that another must lift Pete and his line out of the sea, as a Coast Guardsman is doing here. Pete is known by all Coast Guardsmen whose ships have put in at LeHavre. This wire-haired fox terrier knows a line when he sees one."

"Pete the Pooch, Able Seaman, isn't like other dogs. To him, a bollard serves one purpose. About it, you make a line fast when a ship is being moored. Pete, LeHavre's mooring expert, knows all about ships and the way to moor them. He's handled many vessels in his war-time life, such as this Coast Guard 83 foot cutter about to be tied up. Pete goes into the sea after the line, brings it ashore, and then makes the vessel fast. It's all in the day's work of a sea-dog."



Mascot, Pete the Pooch, dived in to speed up the docking process. (Image source: National Archives)



Pete swam, line in mouth, to the dock. He needed help getting back up. (Image source: National Archives)



Pete the Pooch held the line tight while securing to the bollard. (Image source: National Archives)

Unluckiest Lucky Guy

by Curtis Hendel

A few months ago, a close friend mentioned that I had earned the title of "probably the unluckiest guy" that he knew. Ok, I admit that Murphy was looking for a guy like me when he penned his law, but misfortune has not been the story of my entire life.

As many things have gone awry in my life, I still see so many great things that I have good reason to give thanks. Sure, it took me a couple of times, but I married the woman I truly belong with nine years ago. Same with jobs, it took me a while, but I ended up in a perfect one. I have many extraordinary blessings in my life.

When taking inventory of those blessings, one of my most outstanding personal achievements included earning the title of Dog Handler. I had set my heart on it from the beginning of my service and did not come up short. As K9 handlers, we all know we were a small slice of the military law enforcement community. However, we are members of an elite bunch, unique in that we trained to work with a four-legged partner. In addition, K9 just happened to be one of the coolest jobs out there!

But beyond the job and the dog lay the greatest gift of all, the people. During my time as a K9 handler at Osan and trainer at Lackland, I met, worked, and partied with some of the most extraordinary human beings on the planet.

Osan Air Base had the second-largest kennel in the Air Force at the time, so there were over sixty handlers. With that many of us, we were a formidable group in the ville. Our clique included a diverse mix of people from all parts of the country with different personalities, but as K9 handlers, we took care of each other.

The dog school and dog training section at Lackland happened to be thick with dog handlers, but now we threw in all four services and a few civilians. Did that spoil the brew? Absolutely not!

We have one step left. One more chance to throw off this awe-inspiring relationship dog handlers share no matter where they serve. For example, how would this bond survive when challenged to transcend decades that included various conflicts, political changes, and the ebb and flow of each mili-



Curtis Hendel, one of our important newsletter team members.
Courtesy photo: Curtis Hendel.

tary service's evolution? I recently stood at the memorial service for a Marine dog handler who died while serving in Okinawa. I stood there with a Vietnam handler from my home area and an active-duty Marine Corps handler, and, just seconds into our first face-to-face meeting, we talked dogs and compared scars. It was that simple.

So there you go. One of the greatest gifts I have ever received in my life that is above even the title of Dog Handler is the community of people that were or are still active today in K9. Whether we are 21 or 81, we all have memories of "that dog that broke your heart." We all have memories of "that time" when we stood eye-

to-tooth with a dog that would make a piranha look nice. And we all have stories of "that guy," the one that could handle any dog put at him and come back for more. Or the losses, human or canine, for any reason, that will forever live in our minds.

Now is my time to say "thank you." Thank you to all of you glorious bastards that stepped outside the comfort zone of human interaction to put that leash on your arm and do amazing things with man's best friend. All of you mattered, regardless of where or when you served. Whether narcotics, explosives, IEDs, mines, tunnels, or humans intent on harming your facility or your service, you stepped up and

did the job. Through monsoon rains, blizzards, heat, cold, bugs, snakes, and other critters, you humped posts around the world and searched vehicles and buildings. While you were working on completing your missions, you still cared no matter how exhausted you were. Yeah, you cared for your

fuzzy partner and the other handlers. Dog handlers are unique and elite, as dedicated as you are crazy and always willing to cover the six of the other handlers.

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen, Marines, and Coastguardsmen of all eras, at this moment, stand tall, continue to be proud of

your time on the leash, and never forget the feeling of snuggling your best friend on a night when things weren't going your way. Never let the men and women who served beside you in war and peace slip far from the front of your mind. And always say a prayer for those on two legs or four that never came home.

We worked hard, trained hard, partied hard, and had each others' backs in the worst of times.

K9 Leads the Way!



Spotlight On Our Volunteers: Linda Standard and Sherri Swanson



A self-described beer snob, **Linda Standard** can always be counted on for fun and hard work. As an MWDHM volunteer, she's taken on the task of seeking event sponsors for the upcoming Fort Benning Rededication.

We couldn't do without the hard work and dedication of our Sponsorship Committee. When you don't find Linda volun-

teering on behalf of MWDHM, she's likely working at her kennel or enjoying a trip to a local brewhouse to investigate and enjoy a new stout with her friends.

Beers and axe-throwing? Oh my! Linda, we love you and your absolute zest for life. Thanks for all that you do on behalf of MWDHM.



An enthusiastic and multi-talented volunteer, **Sherri Swanson** has jumped into the organization with both feet.

She's established herself as a go-to person in every area of communication: writing, editing, photography, creating social media options, and so much more.

She trains her dog, Mosey, alongside area K9s in her downtime.

We are blessed to have such a vibrant, talented individual on our team. She brings a wealth of knowledge and dynamic energy that hasn't gone unnoticed.

Thank you, Sherri, for all your support and efforts on our team's behalf. You are amazing!



Fort Benning Memorial Rededication



**Join us for a weekend of events on
May 13-15 at Fort Benning, Georgia.**

**Make plans, reserve your room, and
get your banquet tickets here:**

www.mwdheritagemuseum.org/events

Need help?

Email: info@mwdhm.org

Text/call: 865-507-8903



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From the Team at MWDHM...

We invite you to join the museum's journey
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Military Working Dog Heritage: Always on Point

We're on the Web: mwdhm.org

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Recycle, please.

Share your story.

Share your vision.

Share your voice.

Share your copy of
our newsletter.

Important dates with Trooper and Scout

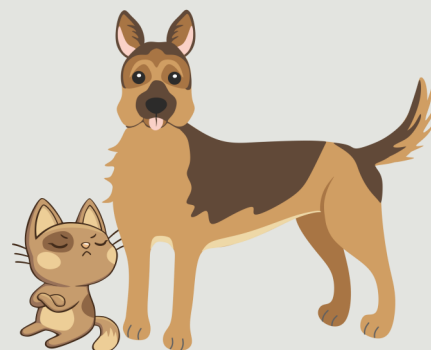
For more information on any of our events, please email info@mwdhm.org

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

May 16, 2022— MWDHM Fundraiser at Semper Fi Bar and Grille, 9770 Main St, Woodstock, GA 30188 with former War Dog Handlers.

July 17, 2023 -

25th Rededication of the War Dog Memorial at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville



Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



Left: Horse and Dog Beach Patrol—WWII Archives

Two U.S. Coast Guardsmen, one with a dog and the other mounted on horseback with a walkie-talkie, patrol the coast-line somewhere on the Pacific coast.

Members of the Coast Guard Beach Patrol maintained a vigilant watch for vessels in distress or possible enemy landings of troops or saboteurs.

(Source: NARA.)