



# The Paw Print

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



Volume 2 Issue 8

August 2022

## Special points of interest:

- Inside we meet an accidental Tracker and follow him on one mission.
- Stepping back into the Korean War, we are gifted with the talented writing of Michael Lemish.

## WWII Coast Guard K9– Securing Our Shores and Beyond



Among the first of their type to be used in the Pacific are these Coast Guard War Dogs on Guard and Scout detail at an isolated Coast Guard Station on a Western Pacific Island. On the alert are (left to right: Coast Guardsman Mark Sylvester, Specialist Second Class, of Columbia, SC, and his War Dog, “Hanse”; Manuel B. Navarre, Specialist Third Class, of Los Angeles, CA, and “Lobo”; and Lester L. Durgin, Specialist Third Class, of Henniker, NH, and “Major.” (Image Source: National Archives)

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Since 1790, the US Coast Guard has answered many missions, from keeping America’s ports and shorelines safe to rescuing those who’ve encountered an emergency or life-threatening challenge.

World War II introduced K9s. The dog teams of the Coast Guard stood guard on lonely stretches

of sand, patrolling to ensure that infiltrators did not make their way onto American soil. Some Coast Guard dogs made their way to the Pacific. The vast majority of WWII dogs served in the Coast Guard.

On average, 18 dog teams currently comprise the entire Coast Guard K9 force. Dogs and han-

dlers pair up and stay together longer than any other branch of service. They become part of a larger Maritime Safety and Security Team (MSST.)

We honor the Coast Guard’s birthday and recognize their incredible history this month.

Thank you, Coastie K9!



Vice President, Lane Hagerdom



ASK ME ABOUT  
  
 MY DOG

## From the Vice President's Desk

Recently someone said, "please settle it; is the US Coast Guard a part of the military?"

Indeed, and those who know, know. You see, although the US Coast Guard is not a part of the Department of Defense, they are certainly a part of the United States Armed Forces. As a matter of fact, the US Coast Guard has deployed to support and fight in every major US war since 1790!

And as both a federal law enforcement agency and a military branch within the Department of Homeland Security, you better bet they have four-legged force multipliers! In this edition of the Paw Print, we celebrate the US Coast Guard's birthday by highlighting the history, heritage, and accomplishments of Coastie K9s in an article penned by MLE2 Anthony Ross (Ret.)

Make sure to mark your calendars now for the public dedication of the Coast Guard K9 Memorial on March 13, 2023, at Coast Guard Base Alameda, California.

Some of the best stories we gather are captured by handlers-turned-authors who share their first-hand accounts of dogs in the service of our country. In this month's Paw Print, we have two such articles for your reading pleasure.

One of the most common pieces of advice given to the young men and women headed off to boot camp is "don't volunteer for ANYTHING!" This advice is well-intended. Volunteers often find themselves scrubbing unmentionable areas or being assaulted by Mother Nature's worst while posted on some seemingly imaginary watch position. Many handlers and combat troopers forgot this advice over the decades, finding themselves in some of the most interesting and scary places imaginable.

Oscar Diaz shares his story of volunteering and landing quite the job in this month's article, "The Accidental Tracker," authored by Dixie Whitman. Oscar also shares his love of working and observing a dog work the scent of a pursued enemy in snippets from his book, "Chasing Tomorrow's Nightmares."

Another fellow author and historian, Michael Lemish, who wrote and published several books, shares a riveting tale of a Korean War reconnaissance patrol. Michael poses a question war dog historians have struggled with for years – just how many lives have been saved by dogs giving us their silent alerts to the enemy's presence and attempted, but failed, ambushes?

Speaking of history, many handlers over the years have brushed shoulders

with high-ranking federal government leaders during their time in service. David Adams shares a fun twist with Lex-Loci and his connection that beats all contacts!

I would like to recognize and thank Sherri Swanson for her work and contributions to this month's newsletter. August is the first Paw Print issue that Sherri has edited; as you can see, she is a master! Just check out her fantastic artwork of a GSD playing ball in the left column.

Events such as the Fort Benning all have a cost, so we graciously ask for your support. When you donate \$25 (or \$20 for a past or current handler) for an MWDHM challenge coin, we find a way to stretch them as though you donated \$50! You will find an order form for the newly received inventory of coins, or you can order them (and other swag) on the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Website [here: https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/store/](https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/store/)

And you can donate directly [here: https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/donate/](https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/donate/)

Every penny you generously donate goes towards the mission.

K9 Leads the Way!

*Lane Hagerdom*

## The Long Blue Line: Coast Guard Dogs—80 years of Canine Coasties!

By MLE2 Anthony Ross

The US Coast Guard has a long history with military working animals. During World War II, horses, dogs, and even pigeons were utilized operationally. Early in World War II, there were incidents of German spies landing in rubber boats along U.S. coast lines along with sightings of both German and Japanese subs. This led to the establishment of beach patrols, and in August 1942, the first Coast Guard dog was on patrol. All together, 2,000 dogs participated in beach patrols throughout the war effort alongside their dedicated partners.

### Narcotic detection canines in the Coast Guard

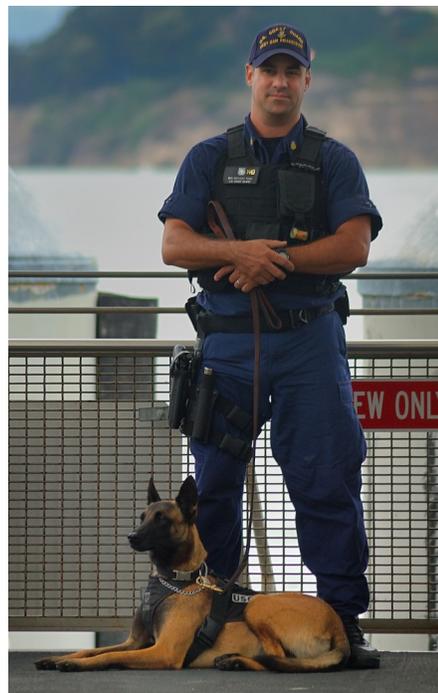
In the 1990s, there were several Coast Guard canine teams in service. The teams were mostly used for narcotics detection and located at Station Sandy Hook, New Jersey, and Station South Padre Island, Texas. In addition, there was a narcotic detection canine at the LE-DET in Miami, Florida. Many people may ask, why doesn't the Coast Guard have a bigger narcotics detection canine program? The answer lies in the type of anti-narcotic missions the Coast Guard is responsible for. Normally, when the Coast Guard makes a significant narcotic find and seizure, it's on the order of hundreds of pounds. With narcotics on this scale, you don't need a

dog to discover them; you can simply search visually and find them!

### Development of the modern Canine Explosive Detection Program (CEDP)

While the threats have evolved, the Coast Guard canine team capability has evolved with them. The modern Coast Guard Canine Explosive Detection Program was implemented as a result of the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001. As a direct result of these attacks, the Coast Guard was tasked with a multitude of Maritime Homeland Security missions. Some of those missions included high-capacity vessel safety and security for cruise ships and ferries. It soon became obvious that the best tool for the job was an explosive detection canine team. Due to the canine's unique ability to detect even the smallest levels of explosives that may be hidden in luggage, boxes, and cargo, the Coast Guard could effectively screen these vessels before and after they left port. As such, the modern Coast Guard canine program was born.

Today's Coast Guard has eighteen globally deployable Canine Explosive Detection Teams (CEDTs) assigned to Maritime Safety and Security Teams and Maritime Security and Response Teams strategically positioned throughout the United States. These highly



Anthony Ross, as a Petty Officer, and his canine, Chiquita. USCG Photo.

trained canine teams are capable of deploying from helicopters and vessels to meet a variety of onshore and offshore threats.

### The Canines

There have been many changes in the breeds of dogs used through the years of using canines to help with law enforcement and substance detection. The first Coast Guard dogs used during WWII were mainly Doberman Pinschers; however, as did the other military branches that used canines during WWII, the Coast Guard received their dogs from civilians who were willing to give up family pets for the good of the war cause.

Therefore in the early days of the program, we can see a patchwork of breeds that were utilized in the beach patrols. The first breeds used during the modern era of the Coast Guard canine program were Labrador Retrievers. As the science behind the capability has progressed, they have added German Shepherds, Belgian Malinois, German Short Haired Pointers, and Vizslas.

### Handler Selection and Training

Selection as a Coast Guard canine handler is a challenge in and of itself. Candidates must be a Maritime Enforcement Specialist rank E4-E5 and be of the highest

caliber Petty Officer. Members that apply are required to receive a positive endorsement from their Commanding Officer and be screened by headquarters. Selectees are required to make a minimum six-year commitment to the service to ensure they are truly dedicated to meeting the needs of this highly sought-after position.

The initial training location for the first twelve teams began in 2003 at Auburn University in Anniston, Alabama. In 2005 the program shifted gears and started training alongside its DHS partners at the Customs and Border Protection. Currently, Coast Guard canine teams receive their initial training through the Transportation and Security Administration National Explosive Detection Canine Program at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, Texas. Shortly after that, the first of many Coast Guard canine handlers graduated from this school.

The initial training consists of a vigorous twelve-week course that trains handlers on how to care for and train their canine partners. Handlers are required to be able to search for and detect explosive odors with their canine partners on vessels, aircraft, railroad cars, automobiles, luggage, packages, and terminals occupied by people. In order to graduate,

the teams must achieve a 100 percent odor detection rate during a final evaluation in all these search areas. Upon graduation, the Coast Guard teams return to their units, where they are then required to obtain the other skills required to operate in their respective ports. Handlers are required to obtain qualifications as Emergency Vehicle Operators, Boarding Officer Ashore, Canine Tactical Combat Casualty Care, as well as all other qualifications required to operate as a Maritime Enforcement Specialist in the Coast Guard.

#### **Coast Guard Canine Explosive Detection Team-Special Capabilities**

Coast Guard canine teams maintain a highly specialized set of skills in order to ensure they can effectively do their part in the Maritime Homeland Security mission set. In addition to being able to deploy their teams in austere environments far offshore, the canines must be able to conduct canine searches in very tight spaces and sometimes very loud engine rooms, such as those found on board ships. In addition to these shipboard challenges, the canine teams must be able to climb ladders in order to gain access to compartments deep inside the vessels. Assuring that the canines can search in these



**Chief Petty Officer Anthony Ross and his canine Chiquita perform a vertical insertion from an helicopter. The K9 unit is a specialized entity that operates under MSST Los Angeles. (US Coast Guard photo by PO3 Andrea Anderson)**



**PO2 Jon Kimmel, a Coast Guard canine handler for MSST Seattle, and his dog, Debbie, ready to board an MH-60 Jayhawk helicopter at Coast Guard Sector Columbia River in Warrenton, Ore. Dog/handler teams are trained to detect explosives and dangerous materials; and they practice being hoisted from helicopters on a regular basis. US Coast Guard photo by PO1 Levi Read.**

environments effectively and safely takes months of initial acclimation training and requires great commitment from the handlers to ensure they continue to train in these environments.

#### **Vertical Delivery (VDEL)**

Vertical Delivery is the capability to deploy CEDTs to vessels offshore via helicopter, and it sets them apart

from their Department of Homeland Security counterparts by allowing the teams to quickly and safely interdict vessels at sea. This vital capability allows Coast Guard operational commanders the ability to ensure the safety of U.S. ports by extending their reach hundreds of miles offshore in order to meet these threats well before they are

a danger to U.S. citizens. VDEL from a helicopter requires that the team is in complete trust of each other. This trust between handler and canine is built over the years, but most importantly, the canine begins to learn over time that the handler will not put them in a situation that could harm them unless absolutely necessary to preserve human life. Before a canine team can be deployed via helicopter, the handler has taken great care to properly acclimate his canine partner to the sights, sounds, and smells of working in such an atmosphere. Additionally, after being qualified, the teams must conduct regular training to ensure their skills are sharp and ready for operational deployment at any time.

### Vessel to Vessel Hoisting (V2V)

In addition to the helicopter delivery capability, the teams are trained to conduct Vessel to Vessel hoisting. Coast Guard canine handlers are subject matter experts in the practice of hoisting their canine partners from one vessel to another while underway. Again the teams must conduct rigorous training under the most dangerous conditions, including during darkness and inclement weather, to ensure they and their canines are prepared to conduct this vital mission.

### Other Missions

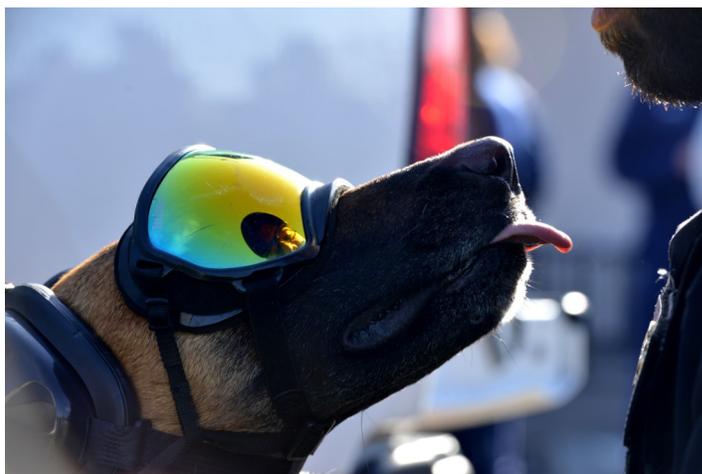
In addition to providing security for maritime infrastructure, CEDTs support local, state, and federal agencies during National Special Security Events, concerts, sports events, and VIP protective services. Coast Guard CEDTs have provided security to thousands of people by conducting explosive detection searches during such events as the Super Bowl, Rose Bowl game and Parade, and San Francisco Fleet Week. Working alongside their U.S. Secret Service partners, Coast Guard canine teams have been responsible for the safety of diplomats, kings, first ladies, and Presidents at such events as the Presidential State of the Union Address, the United Nations General Assembly, and the Democratic and Republican National Conventions.

### A Special Bond

The true success of the Coast Guard canine programs lie in the fact that the handlers take their canine partners home with them, as opposed to the other military services that have canine teams which require their canines to live in kennels for the duration of their service. The fact that the canines live with their handlers exponentially strengthens the bond and trust that is critical to the success of the team when they are con-



Coast Guard Canine "Niki", an explosives detection canine assigned to MSST Seattle, is lowered from a Pierce County ferry to a 29-foot Coast Guard response boat using ropes techniques. This training familiarizes the teams with the techniques needed to respond to a variety of threats, such as explosives, in the maritime environment. (US Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 3rd Class Michael Clark) To see full video, click [here](#).



P01 Jordan Brosowski and his canine partner, Ricky, assigned to Maritime Safety and Security Team 91105 based in Alameda, Calif. Brosowski and Ricky conducted an odor detection demonstration for members of Coast Guard Base Alameda during an informational session educating and demonstrating the teams unique skills. US Coast Guard photo by Petty Officer 1st class Matthew S. Masaschi.

ducting these high-risk missions.

The Coast Guard canine program has adapted and evolved to the changing times, much like our service has done throughout the course of history. The ca-

nines and handlers remain just as critical to our national security today as they did when the first canines were put into service during World War II.

# Military Working Dog Heritage Museum

DONATION FUND RAISER

[mwdhm.org](http://mwdhm.org)



**The MWDHM just received a new shipment of coins.** [mwdhm.org](http://mwdhm.org)

For A Suggested \$25 Minimum Donation to the 'MWDHM',

the Museum Will Provide its Inaugural Challenge Coin.

Additional Coins Are Available at the Suggested Minimum Donation.

Please allow 7 to 10 days once your donation is received for free handling and shipping, through the USPS.

**Note:** If you are a Dog Handler or Past Dog Handler, (Military or Law Enforcement), the Suggested Minimum Donation is just \$20 per coin.

**PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY and Mail with your check or money order.**

Qty: \_\_\_\_\_ Coin(s) & Donation Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

And or, a Separate Additional Donation, (no coin), Amount: \$ \_\_\_\_\_.

First Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Last Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_ City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number: \_\_\_\_\_ E-Mail Address: \_\_\_\_\_

**At this time, the MWDHM has obtained its 501 C3 Non Profit Designation**  
**Please make donations payable to MWDHM. John Homa, one of our board members,**  
**is handling our coin project. Email [projectmanager@mwdhm.org](mailto:projectmanager@mwdhm.org) with questions.**

Please Mail your check or money order (NO CASH) with the above form to:

John Homa P. O. Box 204, Hixson, TN 37343

## Oscar Diaz: The Accidental Tracker

by Dixie Whitman

In 1968, in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, another hard-working family saved to send their son to his dream school, Louisiana State University (LSU). Instead of making the fall tuition check payable to the school, Oscar's father made the check payable to his son. This mistake would change the trajectory of Oscar's life. Fun-loving and immature, Oscar blew through every penny his parents had lovingly set aside for his first semester.

Oscar knew he needed maturation and joined the Army, signing up for Communications school on the buddy program.

An urgent need for Combat Trackers occurred as Oscar's excessive partying moved him into Basic Training at Fort Bliss. Later at Fort Gordon, Oscar erroneously received an assignment for an Airborne unit. When he refused to sign that paperwork, his orders changed to Vietnam, reporting to the 9th Inf. Div. Infantry and the swamps of the Mekong Delta.

Coming from Louisiana, Oscar realized he wanted nothing to do with swamps. So when an offer came to do anything else, he jumped on it, perhaps a bit too quickly.

He agreed to sign up as a "tractor" driver in his sleep-deprived status. Instead, he'd volunteered to become a member of an elite, clandestine unit. Accidentally, he became a Combat Tracker.

The Vietcong used hit-and-run tactics, rarely choosing to stand in a pitched battle of armies. Instead, they initiated an attack and then vanished back into the jungle to fight another day.

The English had reported previous successes in jungle battles using a concept called "Combat Tracking." With Combat Trackers, when the guerillas retreated into the forests, they were no longer safe. A coordinated team of five highly trained men and one dog created the Combat Tracker Team. These teams followed the fleeing fighters' path, seeking to remove them from further combat. These tracker teams played on offense.

His proudest moment as a tracker came during his second mission: a trail confirmed by both the visual tracker and the dog. The team moved quickly and quietly, closing the distance between them and an unsuspecting enemy. With a fourteen-hour head start, the Vietcong remained blissfully un-



**Above: Oscar (O.G.) Diaz, former Combat Tracker, LSU graduate, and author of four books. Image captured from our interview.**

aware they'd changed from aggressors to quarry. Each team member carried out their role with quiet professionalism and cohesiveness. The dog took the lead, pulling them forward.

The track required more than seven hours to complete, following a path invisible to normal humans. The visual tracker took the lead as the dog waned, exhausted from the heat and the activity.

At Tracking School, students receive training in visual tracking that teaches them to look at every nuance in a pathway: overturned dirt, grasses flattened beneath retreating feet, or branches snapped by the brush of an arm.

In his book, [Chasing Tomorrow's Nightmares](#), Oscar says, "It is fascinating to see the tracking process at work. We are all trained to perform this very task, but it is something totally different to witness a tracking team in action. Like young Grim Reapers, the process has us quickly descending upon unsuspecting victims to harvest their lives."

When the trackers caught up to the Vietcong, they called in the platoon support to come and reengage. A firefight erupted, but, thanks to the trackers, all Americans made it home.

O. G. Diaz, [Chasing Tomorrow's Nightmares](#)

## Yankee—Take Your Dog and Go Home

Courtesy of Michael Lemish

Submitted for your approval is a short narrative of a reconnaissance patrol that involves several characters. The date is May 16, 1952. Nighttime. The place is somewhere in Korea. Leading the American squad of sixteen men is Lt. Peter Jourdonnias. Opposing them, somewhere out in the darkness, are an unknown number of Chinese soldiers. Both participants are drawn together in a brutal war that will bring these combatants together - or perhaps not. For the Americans have a *weapon*, the Chinese do not possess - a scout dog named Arlo. And alongside this so-called weapon is his handler, Sgt. Jack North. Each side will be separated by just a few hundred yards in a deadly cat and mouse game between two opposing forces. Ultimately, what takes place during this encounter will not be decided by the men involved but by a six-year-old German shepherd dog that has just one purpose in mind - one that he was trained to do - to protect the men that follow him.

The plan was simple: the American infantrymen would leave their post at the MLR (main line of resistance) during the night and reconnoiter a road that might be used as a tank route north toward enemy-held territory. The patrol is to check three bridges to see if they could support

tanks. Jourdonnias was instructed not to engage the enemy unless absolutely necessary. The men carried two BARs and sixteen M2 carbines. Each man carried 400 rounds of 30-caliber ammunition and two fragmentation grenades.

The patrol did not have Sgt. North or Arlo on the point when they first started out as the wind was on their backs. For the scout dog team to be effective, they needed the wind on their nose. After scouting the three bridges, North and Arlo were placed on the point. In his own words, North later related in an after-action interview report:

“After walking about twenty-five yards, Arlo gave me a very strong scent alert. I signaled for the group to drop to the ground and motioned for Lt. Jourdonnias to come forward. I told him that Arlo had given a very strong scent alert and that someone was immediately ahead but did not know how far. He [Jourdonnias] deployed fourteen men on the right side of the road and two on the left. I remained on the road with Arlo.

“Lt. Jourdonnias stated that the patrol was to remain in position until daylight. After about 30 minutes, Arlo, his ears pointed straight up, appeared to sense some movement to his left. His head seemed to move as if he detected some noises.



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

No one in the patrol was able to hear a sound. About fifteen minutes later, a noise rang out to the left [in] front of us. Voices could then be heard.

“At this point, Lt. Jourdonnais decided to move up the road to see if the enemy could be detected. We moved about 100 yards without further alert from the dog. The group returned to the MLR without incident, arriving about 0100. It is the alertness of the dog that saved the reconnaissance patrol from certain ambush.”

Did Arlo save the platoon? It is really not known what would have happened to the patrol had there not been a scout dog along. One aspect of using dogs in warfare is just how many lives may have been saved by not

engaging the enemy when an early silent alert is given of their position. There is no true way to measure that. For North and, for that matter, Arlo, the results speak for themselves - everyone came back in one piece.

This was just one patrol, which went without incident during one night by handlers of the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon (ISDP). But it would be played out time and time again. The only scout dog team involved during the Korean War was the 26th ISDP. Yet this platoon made more than 1500 combat patrols during the course of the war, and just about everyone was conducted at night.

After WWII, with the military dog program gutted, just the 26th ISDP remained active. Their mission at that time

was to show the American public the capabilities of the military working dog in demonstrations around the country. The 26th ISDP landed in Korea in July 1950, piecemeal, with just seven handlers and dogs. The others were soon to follow. Their missions were simple yet dangerous: have the scout dog provide a silent alert of the enemy during patrols, observation posts, and outposts forward of the allied battle position. Their effectiveness was well documented. In a review of after-action reports, patrols led by scout dogs teams were credited with reducing causality rates by 65%.

One scout dog, in particular, was noted for his service. An eight-year-old German shepherd named York (011X) was presented an "Award for Distinguished Service." York led 148 combat patrols and never lost a man. He eventually returned to Fort Benning and was interred with honors at the age of twelve.

As good as they were, patrols led by scout teams suffered. Scout dog Champ was on his 39th patrol when he stepped on a mine. Champ was killed instantly, and his handler wounded severely. Scout dogs operating in Korea were not trained to alert to mines or booby-traps. So how does one account for the actions of scout dog Happy?

While on a nighttime patrol and working point, handler Alvin Steenick noticed his scout dog Happy stop in his tracks and freeze. It was not the type of alert that Steenick had seen before. He pushed the dog ahead, but Happy refused to move.

Steenick told the platoon leader that there was an unknown danger ahead. With the platoon leader pissed that there was no forward progress, he stepped ahead of the stalled war dog. And a second later, there was an immediate explosion. It was a grenade booby trap. The platoon leader and Happy were killed instantly. Steenick received serious injuries.

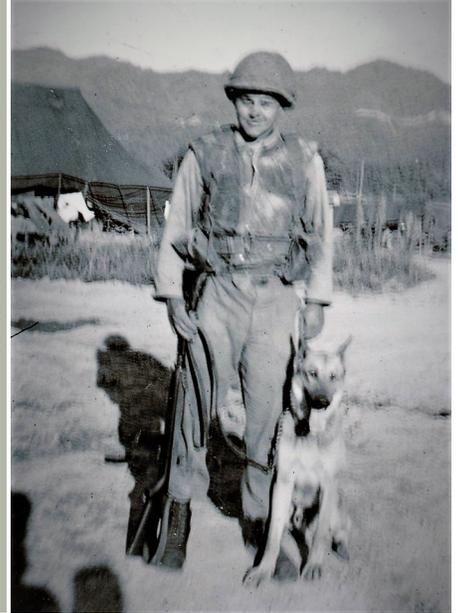
This action and the serious consequences that followed would be repeated again many times - not just in Korea but in Vietnam. Although not trained to detect booby traps, Happy had sensed something amiss. The handler knew it also but couldn't pin it down. When someone decides not to trust the dog, the ramifications can and often are deadly.

In every conflict starting with World War II, what military dog teams have accomplished has been overshadowed by the sheer size of the war that encompassed them. It was true then and is the same today. In Korea, the impact of military dogs is minuscule, but not if you

**Right: Army dog handler Robert Fickbohm and his dog, Hasso, trained at Fort Riley, KS. They served in South Korea as part of the 26th ISDP.**

**Suggested further reading: [Cold Noses, Brave Hearts: Dogs and Men of the 26th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon](#) by Robert Fickbohm and Sandra Fickbohm Granger.**

**Photo courtesy Robert Fickbohm.**



happen to be one of the soldiers that owes his life to one.

Robert Fickbohm was a handler with the 26th and worked with Hasso. In his book *Cold Noses, Brave Hearts: Dogs and Men of the 26th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog*, he says, "Between June of 1951 and the end of the war on July 27, 1953, they [the 26th] were never put in reserve. They gave support to every United States Division and went on patrols with many United Nations Units. The members were awarded a total of three Silver Stars, six bronze stars for Valor, and 35 Bronze Stars for meritorious service. Too many of them earned Purple Hearts."

Did the handlers and scout dogs like Happy, Champ, York, Hasso, Arlo, and many others, have an impact on

the war? I suppose it depends on your perspective. But the Chinese obviously did respect them. When front lines stagnated, the Chinese sometimes would set up loudspeakers and pierce the quiet night with propaganda announcements aimed at American troops. On one occasion, which is documented in military records, they bellowed, "Yankee - Take your dog and go home!"

We sincerely appreciate Michael sharing his writing with us. Books by the author, Michael Lemish are available online. Some of these are:

[War Dogs: A History of Loyalty and Heroism](#)

[War Dogs: Canines in Combat](#)

[Before Pearl Harbor: China, FDR and the Plot to Bomb Japan](#)

## A Dog With Clout

by David Adams

Tom Lucha picked up Lex-Loci (a legal term meaning "the law of the place") at Basic Dog School. His donation to the Air Force came via a family from LA, California.

Tom and Lex spent a couple of years at Homestead AFB in Florida until the Air Force removed the Strategic Air Command unit from the base. Tom received orders to Korat RTAFB and was at Combat Preparedness School at Lackland when Lex and the other dogs from Homestead arrived. Tom went to the "powers-to-be" and requested an assignment again with Lex. Their answer was NO! The reason cited was that the recently arriving dogs needed physicals, and some had ticks. Due to the ticks, the vet even threatened Lucha with "charges." The fact that he

and Lex had gone their separate ways for a couple of months seemed to carry no weight.

Tom kept an ongoing dialog with Lex's donors, as suggested by the Air Force. He called the donors, informed them of the Lackland Vet's decision, and returned to his duties.

Several days later, Tom was called off the shotgun range and ordered to the vet's office. Fearing the worse, Lucha entered the vet's office with trepidation. The vet's demeanor had changed entirely; where he had been threatening and too busy previously, he now was friendly and affable. He informed Airman Lucha that Mrs. Johnson, President Johnson's wife, had called the base commander and "suggested" that Lex-Loci be returned to his handler.



Lex-Loci poses behind the wheel.

(Image courtesy the David Adams collection (AR.2011.037) via the National Museum of the United States Air Force.)

Therefore, Lex would also receive an assignment to Korat RTAFB.

The vet told Tom, "You have friends in high places." Tom replied, "No, I'm just a regular guy. Lex-Loci has friends in high places."

Tom later learned that Lex's donors were influential folks associated with the "LA Times" and had made a few phone calls.

It's good to be a handler of a dog with clout.

## Volunteer Spotlight—Eleanor Anne Wilkerson



If you attended the Fort Benning Event, you might have encountered fantastic Southern hospitality, thanks to this Energizer Bunny of a Volunteer.

Eleanor Anne (Anne) Wilkerson worked non-stop to ensure that the Hospitality Room's decorations, snacks, and refreshments were on point, stocked, and flowing. She mobilized support from local Columbus-area vendors for our Silent Auction.

When Anne joined the team a few months back, she not only jumped in with two feet, she pole-vaulted into the mix. And, her joie-de-vivre and enthusiasm for all things MWD-related mean that rallying support is much easier.

Please join us this month in recognizing and honoring Anne Wilkerson, a fantastic volunteer and valuable team member.

## The Best Bargain Man Has Ever Made

by Dixie Whitman From the National Archives

Weather is a fickle friend, especially in a place such as the Outer Banks (OBX) of North Carolina. As islands that appear to melt into the sea with merely a trace of sand threading itself along the barrier between land and vastness, the OBX have no rock nor foundation to anchor them to Earth. Miles may separate these sandbars on steroids from the mainland, providing an easy target for Nor'easters, storms that produce pelting rains, vicious winds, and high tides.

During WWII, the eastern seaboard became a hunting ground for Hitler's lethal U-Boats as they stalked and killed American Merchant Marine ships up and down the Eastern seaboard. The United States Coast Guard started Beach Patrols with one man and one dog to protect the isolated areas from enemy subversion or infiltration.

Evans Mitchell's Coast Guard station hunkered down near Oregon Inlet, NC, just north of the hamlet made famous in a 2008 movie, "Nights in Rodanthe." Alongside his partner, Nora, purchased for 50 cents from a nearby family, Evans' posting required them to keep watch over miles of prime landing area for insurgents.

One November evening during a frigid Nor'easter,

Mitchell lost consciousness while walking post with his partner, falling onto the rain-soaked sands. The Coast-guardsmen lay exposed, drenched, with the bitter winds tempting his fate.

His K9, Nora, an eight-month-old German shepherd puppy, unable to rouse him, grasped his cap in her teeth and raced back to the Coast Guard station, alerting the personnel there. Her presence with his name on the cap communicated her needs as eloquently as if she had spoken.

She persisted. After raising the alarm at the station, she raced back to the beaches, tracked down another Guardsman from a different post, and led him to the aid of her partner. Evans Mitchell recovered at the closest Marine Hospital facility in Norfolk, VA. A puppy, purchased for 50 cents, saved him.

Roger Caras, famed author, news correspondent, and host of the Westminster Dog Shows, once famously said, "Dogs have given us their absolute all. We are the center of their universe. We are the focus of their love and faith, and trust. They serve us in return for scraps. It is without a doubt the best deal man has ever made." Nora, a heroine, purchased for so little, gave her handler so much in return.



Left: Reenactment of event. Nora tried unsuccessfully to rouse her handler.

Source: National Archives.



Right: Reenactment of event. Nora asked for help at the Coast Guard Station.

Source: National Archives.



Left: Evans Mitchell and Nora reunited at the hospital in Norfolk.

Source: National Archives.



*Military Working Dog  
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## **Important dates with Trooper and Scout**

**March 13, 2023— Dedication of the Coast Guard K9  
Memorial— Coast Guard Base Alameda, California. Open  
to the public. For more information, click [here](#)**

**July 17, 2023 - 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Dedication of the War  
Dog Memorial at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville**



## **Historic Pooch Pic of the Month**



### **SPCA Awards Medal to 50-Cent Coast Guard Dog.**

**Nora, an eight-month-old German  
shepherd puppy who rescued a Coast  
Guardman, received the Bronze John  
P. Haines Medal. This presentation  
occurred at the 78th Annual Meeting  
of the American Society for the Pre-  
vention of Cruelty to Animals.**

**(Image Source: National Archives)**