



The Paw Print

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



Volume 3 Issue 6

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Special points of interest:

- Vietnam Army Scout Dog Tells His Story (if he could talk)
- Educating the public on MWD Contributions
- Bringing MIAs Home

Inside this issue:

President's Letter 2

If I Could Only Talk 3

Determined Dog Man Takes Point 6

No Man Left Behind 8

K9 School—Week One 10

Celebrating the 248th Birthday Of the U.S. Army

"This We Will Defend"



On June 14, 1775 Congress established the Continental Army, thirteen months before declaring independence from England. Over the past 248 years the United States Army has protected our freedom as well as fighting for the freedom of others around the globe.



Drawing by U.S. Scout Dog Handler Bob Brown

From the President's Desk



President, Albert Johnson

**HUSBAND.
FATHER.
PROTECTOR.
HERO.**



U.S. Army's MWD Symposium

Hello everyone, I hope your May went well and your June is looking up! Happy Birthday to the U.S. Army! Also, Happy Father's Day to all of you dads out there. May was an incredible month for us here at MWDHM. We have continued to grow our following of people dedicated to our mission in person and on social media. In addition, we got the ball rolling on our newest fundraiser, "Coins for a Cause," where we are collecting military, police, and emergency services coins that we can raffle off in lots to raise funds for our newest venture of funding a mobile museum. The mobile museum is something we have tossed the idea around for a while now, and we finally decided there is no time like the present to start the process. There will be more to come on this subject in next month's issue, but if you have coins you would like to donate, please mail them to PO Box 54 Newport, TN 37821, and remember to include your name, address, and phone number so we can get you a ticket into the drawing.

One of our volunteers, Andy and Myself, had the honor of setting up a booth at the U.S. Army's MWD Symposium on May 14th and 15th. We met over 200 handlers. Included were Army MWD handlers, foreign military working dog handlers, police K9 handlers, Air Force and Marine handlers, and MWD leadership from several service branches. We handed

out gift bags to every handler that came by our booth. Several young handlers told us they were delighted we were in attendance because they were only taught a little of the early MWD program history. They drooled over our WWII Marine messenger dog collar, The photos, and the articles on display. Still, the piece that got the most attention at the table was the collection of patches purchased in December from collector Mark Hough that Linda Standard and Eric Queen funded. Several of the patches included in the collection that the handlers related to because the units still exist, and they served in them. We enjoyed sharing these pieces of history with handlers and the other vendors at the show. We will undoubtedly be putting this event on the calendar for next year.

This month's newsletter has incredible stories of dedication to the K9 community. You are starting with a story told from an incredibly heroic dog's perspective by Peter Peters. This article is so unique through the eyes of a military working dog that you may find yourself with your nose to the paper as you scout along the story.

Next up is an excellent story about one of our volunteer board members Johnny Mayo written by the fabulous Mrs. Dixie Whitman. Johnny's dedication to preserving the history of the military working dog pro-

gram is one of our driving forces here at MWDHM. Without men and women like him, this organization would not exist.

The following story concerns one of our other board members Al Dodds (U.S. Navy handler in Vietnam), and his time in Iraq with his human remains detection dog Tess. Dixie Whitman also writes this story. Al's commitment to bringing all our service members home is an honorable one that we don't take lightly.

Curtis Hendel then fills us in on his first week at K9 school and the behavioral modifications it took to succeed. Most that went to K9 school can relate to the culture shock of how the K9 field handled specific scenarios differently. It helped build us into disciplined, open-minded sponges taking in everything the instructors had to offer.

Lastly, remember to order your museum swag on our website at mwdheritagemuseum.org/store. Also, update your calendars to join us at upcoming events, as we can't wait to see you all!

K9 Leads the Way!

Albert Johnson

IF I COULD ONLY TALK

~by Budda 4A82 (If he could talk) through R. "Pete" Peters

My military career began in late 1965 or early 1966. I can not be sure of the exact date because as a civilian I had no use for calendars. My life consisted of sleeping and waking up whenever I felt like it, getting fed, and having the run of the house. I had it made and I knew it. I would gladly have gone through my whole life there with my job title of "Pet". But that was not to be. My life was to drastically change. One day two strangers appeared at my house. I had never seen people dressed exactly alike before, and I guess that made me a little uneasy. My natural instincts were to be wary of them so I raised the hairs on my back just enough to make them aware of just who was boss here. It didn't go un-noticed, but nothing was said. After signing a bunch of papers, my owner was given a leather, basket-like contraption that I had never seen the likes of before. When he held it out and called "here, Budda" I went to him eagerly to get what I thought was a new toy. I will never forget the shock of that thing going over my face and being buckled in place. This was the first time I had ever been muzzled. To make matters worse, a silver chain was put in place over my head and my old leather collar with the brass name and address plate on it was removed and discarded. Immediately after that I was lead out the front door

of the only home I had ever known, never to return. I was lead to the street and placed in an aluminum box with air holes in it. If I could only talk I would have let them know that this must be some sort of mix-up or something. The box was then placed in the back of a truck, and away I went to my new life in the military.

I was taken to the K-9 Processing Center at Lackland Air Force Base in Texas where I met many others who had met the same fate as I. We were constantly poked, prodded, measured, and weighed during this period of our induction. The guys in the uniforms called it "physical and emotional profiling". I called it "BS"!!! They wrote in my records that I had an "attitude problem". After a couple of weeks of this it was determined that I was physically fit, and had the required attributes to remain in the military and become a Scout Dog. I wish I could have told them my thoughts on the subject, especially about what the veterinarian did with that thermometer. Ouch!!! Next, it was back into the aluminum crate and off to basic training.

The flight to Georgia was uneventful and lasted only a couple of hours. Upon our arrival there we were assigned to the 39th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog). This unit had seen action in the Philippines in WWII and in Korea. Now, in March 1966 they were being reactivated for Vietnam and I was to be a part of it all. Sgt Bob

Brown was assigned to be my handler. We had loads of conflicts over just who was to have control over who. Eventually we came to the understanding that for the time being we would merely tolerate each other and hope for the best. After all, he was the one who fed and cared for me. Basic training was the pits. We were green dogs being trained with, and by, equally green handlers. What a circus! It was day after day of nothing but "circle training". We had a steady diet of "NO", "HEEL", "SIT", "STAY", and "DOWN". The only one I had a problem with was "NO". It just wasn't in keeping with my nature. If I could only talk I would tell them that this was all BS, and they could send me back home any time. Then one day we didn't do that circle thing. Sgt Brown strapped me into a leather harness and removed my choke chain. Then he took me for a walk down a narrow path through the woods. Not too bad so far. He kept saying things like "SEARCH", and "EASY". I had no idea what he was talking about at the time, and was unable to ask. Suddenly I sensed that we were not alone there. I had caught a whiff of someone else, and that made me nervous. My natural instincts took over, causing me to raise my head slightly and smell onto the wind to detect whoever was there. My ears perked up and rotated forward to detect any sound that might help me pinpoint this person. As I was unsure of his intent, my



Bob Brown & Budda 4A82

muscles tensed and the hairs on my back stood up. Sgt Brown quickly moved forward, kneeling just behind me and with both arms outstretched pointed in the same direction that I was looking. He began patting my shoulder and said "attaboy Budda, attaboy". Then we advanced upwind and suddenly somebody burst from the bushes and ran away. We both gave chase, but I guess Sgt Brown was a bit slower than me because I couldn't quite catch up with the decoy because the leash restrained me. If I could talk I would have said "damn, this is FUN". But all I could do was bark and jump around. We did this a few more times and it finally sank into my hard head that this was what we were supposed to do. Hey, this is easy. And the more we did it the easier it was. I was having fun, and suddenly Army life didn't seem too bad.

This all went on until July of 1966. Then one day as we were taken out in the morning we saw a line of those aluminum crates again. There were 27 crates in all, one for each of us. I knew we would be traveling again. I had no idea that I had a one way ticket to a combat zone.

The platoon had three 2 1/2 ton trucks, a jeep, and a utility trailer. We, in our crates, were loaded into two of the trucks. Our rations, water cans, veterinary supplies, tents, and other gear went into the trailer. The remaining deuce and a half was for all of our handlers and their duffel bags. We set out from Fort Benning bound for Warner Robins Air Force Base near Macon, Georgia. The 80 mile convoy trip was hot in those darned crates. If I could talk I sure would have told them a thing or two. I was really tired of this crate business! But we all thought we would be out of them now that we were here. WRONG! Our little convoy split into two groups and they drove right onto the flight line and right up the rear ramps on the two C-141 Starlifters that were waiting there for us. As soon as everything was chained down and secure, we took off. This was a far longer trip than any of us had expected. After a 2 hour refueling stop in Alaska and another in Japan, we finally landed at Ton Son Nhut airbase in Vietnam after 27 hours. Damn, did those planes ever stink by then!

Our arrival date was July

26, 1966. We stayed there at "tent city B" for a couple of days and then our orders came down. We were being assigned to the 173rd Airborne Brigade at Bien Hoa. When we got there, our area was just a clearing in

the woods, just inside the perimeter. The squad tents went up for our handlers, and we were staked out next to our crates. Construction of my new home was started almost immediately. We were attached to the Engineer company and they had the materials, equipment, and know-how to build my kennels and the hootches for the men. Items that we couldn't get through normal channels were gotten either by trading out some extra dog food, or by a "midnight requisition". I think that was how the emergency fire pump appeared behind the kennels one morning. It was just the thing for washing down our runs each day. A little over-kill though.

My first combat mission was during Operation Toledo in August, 1966. When we returned to the kennels after the 28 day operation all of the handlers were awarded their Combat Infantryman Badges. Although we dogs were not eligible for military awards or decorations, many of our handlers passed them along to us in appreciation of a job well done.

There was little rest for us at the kennels. Dogs needed to be worked on a daily basis to maintain their sharpness and physical conditioning. New training was initiated to pass on what was learned during the previous missions. There was a 30 acre area adjacent to the kennel area that was all woods and a stream. This made an excellent training area to run our practice patrols. We got

some deactivated VC mines and "potato masher" grenades from the EOD team to help us. They were either buried in a pathway or rigged with tripwires attached to a rat trap for us to detect. Probably due to this continual training between missions, no scout teams from the 39th were injured by booby traps during my first year in country. Many were detected though.

My life became a whirlwind of missions. Brownie (as I now referred to Sgt Brown) and I had become inseparable buddies. We each trusted each other completely. That bond was our means of survival. We made it through Operations Sioux City in Xom Cat, Attleboro in Minh Than, Waco around Bien Hoa, Cedar Falls in the Iron Triangle, Big Springs in war zone D, and Junction City in war zone C near Tay Ninh. I felt honored in March of 1967 when Brownie and I were selected for a very special secret mission. Out of all the Scout Teams in country, we had been selected to go TDY with the 5th Special Forces Group and be attached to one of their A Teams. I liked to think we were chosen due to my skills and temperament, but I guess Brownie's security clearance level may have helped a little. I never told anyone where we went or what we did. Hey, I couldn't talk anyway!

After returning to our kennel at Bien Hoa I got the shock of my life. Brownie would be going home in July when his DEROS (Date of Estimated

Return from Overseas) date was up. After all we had been through together the team was being broken up. My handler for the past 15 months was now under direct orders to stay away and have no further contact with me. They said it was to prepare me to accept Brownie's replacement. Since we had all come over as a unit at one time, all of the other dogs were in the same position. How could the military screw us dogs like that? Our tour of duty had changed into a life sentence. My old "attitude problem" returned. From here on I would do my job, but I didn't have to like it or be nice to anybody. It's probably good that I couldn't talk then. Article 15 for sure. But I knew that they had to feed and water me, and since we had no rank or pay that could be taken away, I really didn't give a damn.

My next handler was an OK kind of guy, as were all of those that followed. One, Rick Hovis, even gave up his platoon clerk job to become my handler! We all worked hard, but the personal chemistry just wasn't the same. Brownie would be a part of me forever

The summer and fall of 1967 were especially rough. The 173rd was moving north into II Corps to intercept the NVA that were coming in from Laos and massing in the central highlands. I worked in Pleiku Province, sweeping the Ia Drang valley. From



Budda 4A82 in 1971

there we moved farther north into Kontum Province. It was here in the hills above Dak To that we were in the middle of some of the most vicious fighting of the war. Many of my friends and their handlers became casualties there. I still had my attitude problem, and the hand to hand fighting had shown me just what I was really capable of doing to whoever I felt was an enemy.

The entire Brigade was now set up at An Khe and a break in action was what we all needed. I was just getting used to kennel life when the Tet Offensive began. The remainder of 1968 and 69 was split between patrolling near highway 19, the main artery into the western sector of the highlands, and then going east to the coastal plains at Bong Son.

Next we were back in our crates again. The Brigade was moving again. This time to a place called LZ English, located just north of Bong Son. We all hated those crates. It seemed that each time we were moved in them, our whole world sort of fell apart. Everything was always completely different

when we got where we were going. Dogs prefer familiar places, faces, and routines. I was tired of all the changes, and my attitude got worse. Long days on point left me tired that night and stiff the next morning. I was grumpy and the platoon all knew it. It was determined that it was time for me to retire. It was unofficial of course, but I was not assigned to another handler, therefore I had no more missions. Life was easy around the Kennel area. I had regular meals and spent much of the day sleeping in the shade. The platoon Sergeant, SFC Kelly, took a liking to me and would take me out for walks and some exercise. I only bit him once. After all, I still had an image to maintain. I was a seasoned veteran and a survivor. I felt I deserved the

praise I got. When handler Don Bradley went up for the 173rd Airborne Brigade's coveted "Sky Soldier of the month" award, he was asked which of the dogs was most famous. Without hesitation he answered "with such a long list of accomplishments, plus many confirmed enemy kills, that could only be Budda". But by now I was a little overweight and turning slightly gray. It didn't worry me though. Most of the handlers would be in similar shape by the time they retire.

Then one day in July of 1971 I noticed a different mood around the kennels. Many of the other dogs were being put into their crates and loaded into a truck. I eagerly followed because I was tired of Camp English. Since most of the handlers had left we might even be going home. That would be great. We deserved a break after all we had done. It wasn't a very long trip. We were taken to a nearby Air Base and there were many dogs there from all over the country. There were Scouts, Trackers, and Sentry dogs all together

here. I guess we really are being sent back home! Maybe they will ship me to Brownie. I wonder if he thinks about me as often as I have thought of him. Does he remember all we went through together I am so excited that I can hardly stand still. In the Veterinary Clinic I can't understand why everyone is crying. Just give me my DEROS shots and get me on that plane and I'll finally be getting out of here. I can hardly wait! In all of my excitement I barely felt the needle. I was used to them anyway. It feels just like the tranquilizer shot that we got before we left on the plane ride over here back in July of '66. I feel a little sleepy all of a sudden. I think I'll lie down and rest right here. It seems to be getting darker. Will Brownie remember me? I feel numb! I think I'll rest right here awhile and think of what it will be like to be home. I'm Tired. I - ZZZ Z Z zzzzzz zzzzzz zzzz.....

Budda (4A82) bravely served his country for the "human equivalent" of over 40 years. During his time in Vietnam he had eight handlers, all of whom survived to return home. He was wounded five times. He had five confirmed enemy kills in close combat. He protected and saved the lives of uncountable numbers of American servicemen. For all of this, the military leadership awarded him the death penalty

by: R. "Pete" Peters

39th Infantry Platoon (Scout Dog)

173rd Airborne Brigade

March 1966 - July 1967

Recognition - At Last!!



Determined Dog Man Takes Point

In front of the Vietnam Wall in Washington, DC, Johnny Mayo's image reflected back at him from the polished black granite. Tethered to his side, his silent partner, Buck, also studied the Wall. Inscribed there chronologically, the names of 58,281 of America's finest stared back at them: some high school friends, others, K9 handlers, and still others were strangers—yet all brothers, Killed-In-Action in the Vietnam War.

By all rights, Johnny Mayo's name could have been on the Wall, chiseled in honor between Charlie L. Lanier and William D. Minor. For many years, his fellow 39th IPSD brothers thought they had lost him as his punji-pit injuries medevacked him from the battlefield. In that time and place, death visited daily, unquestioned. Yet, in a field hospital, he received life-preserving care and eventually made his way back to the palmettos of South Carolina.

Johnny, a soft-spoken and introspective man, still stood motionless, looking through the Wall as it silently but dramatically shifted his future. When his dog-friendly van turned homeward

towards Columbia, South Carolina, his new passenger, the need to do something to honor the dogs left behind rode shotgun. But how to bring the history of Vietnam K9 into the light?

Great men act. Leading from the front is never a problem for Dogmen. They don't make excuses, and they don't shy away from responsibility. They plan and dream, but they also plot a course. For without effort and elbow grease, dreams are useless.

Beginning in 2003, Johnny spent countless hours, circular saw at the ready, dissecting scads of 4X7 wood panels. At the end of the process, with his hands calloused and battle-scarred from endless splinters, Johnny had fashioned replicas of 4,000+ kennel signs representing the placards on each Vietnam War K9's run or kennel door. Every dog served, each deserved a place of honor, and each name worthy of being spoken.

Offers to bring his new display arrived quickly. Sometimes weekly, Johnny schlepped endless totes filled to the brim with kennel signs of Vietnam K9s. He engineered a 6' X 20' wall display honoring all the KIA dogs, and on the ground in front of the panels,

By Dixie Whitman



In the early 2000s, Johnny Mayo, accompanied by his Siberian Husky, Buck, traveled thousands of miles to educate and bring attention to the Vietnam War Dogs. Together, they authored a children's book, Buck's Heroes. Photographed here, in Monument Valley, on their way to the 2004 VDHA Reunion in Phoenix, AZ.



South Carolina War Dog Memorial - a testament to Johnny's dedication



Children and adults pushed in close to learn about the dogs in Vietnam. Shown here with Luke.

All Photos provided by Johnny Mayo

spread 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.

Johnny has been called on for twenty-plus years to set up his display at places across the United States. Vietnam Dog Handlers' Events, Celebrate Freedom Festival, Kokomo Veterans Reunion, Melbourne Veterans Reunion, the McEntire Air Show, and Shaw AFB shows. Accompanying him throughout were faithful partners; first Buck, then JD, followed by Luke, then Sky. All have crossed Rainbow Bridge. His new partner, Kelly, joins as his second Belgian Malinois. The goals of his display remained constant: to honor and respect the K9s of Vietnam and to educate the public about the role and skills of war dogs.

In 2015, Johnny's hard work culminated in the dedication of a glorious monument sized K9 Memorial. Placed in a city park a couple of blocks from the South Carolina capitol building, the one-and-a-half life-sized monument was designed and cast by Renee Bemis. It

includes his Vietnam dog, Kelly's, tattoo number in the ear. On the helmet, a nod to Perry Money with his dog, Missy's tattoo number, 7K37. Hundreds of dog handlers, military working dog supporters, and the dog-loving public attended the dedication ceremony on Veterans Day.

In 2017, Johnny built a smaller-scale, more mobile K9 Wall. The condensed version maintains some KIA dogs, but the ground display now includes pieces from Vietnam and today's K9s.

And that is where we find Johnny now, still devoted to education and a valuable volunteer as a Board Member with Military Working Dog Heritage Museum. As our Army Coordinator, Johnny's voice and his years of educational experience are critical to our success.

If you are or were an Army K9 handler and want to make your voice heard, reflected and remembered in the coming years, Johnny would welcome you on his Army K9 Team as a volunteer.



Kennel signs for each of the 4,000-plus dogs serving in Vietnam scattered before "The K9 Wall." Johnny Mayo Photo

Shop The Museum Store

<https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/store/>



Free Shipping On All Items

No Man Left Behind

by Dixie Whitman

From a distance, the red of Tess's feet and hocks momentarily made her appear to sprout from the soils of the alluvial plains north of Baghdad. Her movement, however, remained deliberate, as her gait mirrored what her olfactory senses were smelling.

As she slowed, the meticulous examination of each inhalation allowed her to dissect the chemical makeup of the air. As a Human Remains Detection Dog (HRD), Tess sought anything from the tiniest scent of adipocere to any remains indicating the burial of a human nearby.

Her partner, Vietnam-era Navy K9 handler Al Dodds, introduced her to the world in 2002. A feisty, driven girl, Tess had all the right stuff for the work of a Cadaver Dog. She never panicked or became quickly overwhelmed. Her steady composure and love of the search made her an excellent candidate. Because of Al's background working K9 in a combat zone in Vietnam, he and Tess were selected for a meaningful job in Iraq as a HRD Team. The military had no trained HRD teams at the time, so the call went out for contractors.

When they first arrived in Iraq, they contracted for six weeks, searching for five missing Soldiers. The time extended to three months, then four, and ultimately six months before they returned home. Al, a middle school music teacher by trade, had taken a leave of absence from his music room and needed to return to his orchestra; the school kids missed their band's leader. After two months at home, the Army called him back again. Asking if he and Tess could help find some missing soldiers—notably Scott Speicher from the first Gulf War and Matt Maupin from Operation Iraqi Freedom. He couldn't say "no" to bringing home a fellow military member.

Packing his bags for another three-month stint landed the team at Camp Slayer. A beautiful Iraqi government palace surrounded by a massive artificial lake had transformed into an American compound. Located near the Baghdad Airport, Camp Slayer served as a major kennel for the US Army, and it was here where Al and Tess made their home. His second trip, initially contracted for three months, turned into eighteen months.

Only three HRD teams



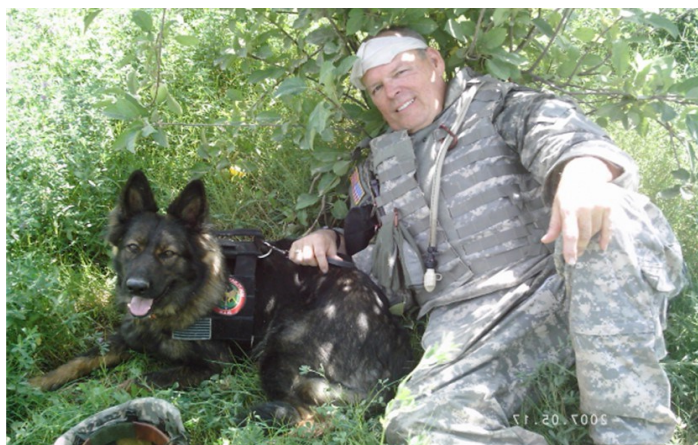
Al's partner, Tess, photographed in Iraq while searching for American Soldiers' remains in January of 2008.

Photo: DoD photo



Al and Tess load up in the back of a Stryker vehicle to head out to the Iraqi countryside for more searching.

Photo: Courtesy of Al Dodds.



Al and Tess take a shade break while searching on their first deployment. May 17, 2007. HRD dogs need some down time to clear their senses and relax from the stress of constantly searching. Photo: Courtesy of Al Dodds.

searched the Iraqi, Kuwaiti, and Afghani landscapes for remains. Finding bodies in war-ravaged areas like these isn't difficult; it's finding the correct remains. Generally, teams worked from quality intel, but even with that, the searches proved to be difficult and exhausting.

The Army provided overwatch and security details to ensure that Al and Tess remained safe while they searched. Search dogs can cover much larger areas than man can on his own, so Tess would start her day by seeking odors in larger areas directed by Al based on the current intelligence available. When she narrowed her scope down and pinpointed a location, the ground-pounding radar equipment rolled over the same patch to confirm the earth underneath showed a disturbance. By March of 2008, Al and Tess had spent much time searching for a missing US Army Soldier named Matt Maupin.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, "C'est la soupe qui fait la soldat," which, through a loose translation, means that the Army runs on its stomach. In modern warfare, that also translates to the Army runs on fuel. Convoys deliver gas to

complete missions. A brave group of drivers in Illinois' Army Reserve's 724th Transportation Company participated in that transport.

As part of a fuel convoy, drivers loaded up their tankers in Baghdad and traveled roads riddled with dangers: roadside bombs and guns. On April 9, 2004, the 724th came under the largest-to-date ambush. Numbering over 150, enemy fighters poured heavy weapons fire into the convoy, resulting in casualties and one Reservist, PFC Keith Matthew "Matt" Maupin, captured and missing in action. A week later, in a grainy video, Matt Maupin spoke through the camera to the public. In June of 2004, Al-Jazeera released a video indicating that his captors had executed SPC Maupin. His parents kept hope.

After years of following leads, in March of 2008, an Iraqi came forward with Intel of a location where the US might find the body of Matt Maupin.

The search crew made their way northwest of Baghdad into the fertile farmland between the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers. At the determined location, Tess looked up into Al's eyes as he snapped on her working harness. The gear change let her know that the time to seek

had arrived.

In tandem, her nose and brain began sorting through thousands of scents: the people, animals, organic matter, and even dirt present. Tess leaned into the scent cone that held that

tiny clue to human remains and found it.

She and Al helped bring Matt home, providing his family with definitive answers and a closure.



Al Dodds and his Human Remains Detection Dog, Tess, met with the Army's Criminal Investigation Division (CID) lead at a location targeted by military intelligence. Behind him, a piece of ground-penetrating radar equipment is held by a technician. Photo: DoD photo



Keith Matthew Maupin, a member of the 724th Transportation Company, served as a motor transport operator. His family never gave up hope. Once remains were confirmed to be his, his brother, Micah, a US Marine, escorted him home. The entire community turned out at the Great American Ball Park in Cincinnati, Ohio for his funeral. The need for closure is fundamental and we are forever grateful for people like Al who do the hard work to make that happen. Please join us today as we say his name: Matt Maupin #WeRemember (DoD Photo)

K9 School Week One

By Curtis Hendel

As the yelling shattered the early morning peace in Texas, my heart sank a beat, thinking that this third “first day” would be different from the two previous first days. Once again, a new instructor was tearing up a new set of recruits.

This was the third time in 1985 that I was at the bottom of the ladder looking up. The first was, of course, Basic Training.

Next was the Security Police Law Enforcement Course. This one had an interesting twist to it. Air Force Law Enforcement and Marine Corps Military Police attended the same training course. This course was held at Lackland, the same base where Basic Training was conducted for us Air Force troops. This unique situation delivered the Air Force students, who dramatically outnumbered the Marines, a serious wake-up call. The Air Force Instructors in the course wanted to be tougher than the Marine Corps Instructors, and the Marine Corps Instructors were drooling over Air Force recruits that had just graduated from easy Basic Training. It was much more demanding than Basic Training, but not terrible.

Those two “first days” were meant to be strict

and loud. Discipline was the order of the day, and military bearing was demanded. We had long inspections in the morning before training, and honestly, it just wasn't that much fun.

About two thirds of the way through Law Enforcement training we had been given our orders to where we would be stationed when we were done with school. I received orders for Anderson Air Force Base in Guam. My chance to avoid the beaches of Guam came just days later.

Two instructors from the Military Working Dog Program came and spoke with our class about becoming K9. This opportunity drove my entry into the Air Force, knowing that the Air Force had more dogs than the other services. This was my dream. We had five slots, and a sizable number of my classmates were interested.

We were tested on physical abilities, including physical strength and coordination and the strength of our voices. I knew that I had some advantages there. My only real weakness was that most of the other candidates were more agile than I was. The last piece of the puzzle was to write a one-page essay on why you wanted in.



Curtis Hendel's 1985 Patrol Dog Class. Curtis is front row left ~ Photo provided by Curtis Hendel

I put my heart into that essay and believe that it could have been what put me over the edge and into K9 school. Back to the yelling.

My third “first day” was not starting out as I had envisioned. Our Air Force Instructor barked at us for a short time in the darkness of a November morning at the Medina Annex. We were a group of future handlers that shared military experience from just a few months, in the case of half of us, to several years. The six Air Force and one Marine Corps students were all pipeline, straight out of Boot Camp and Technical Training. The six Army and one Navy students came from the field and were, mostly, NCOs. We also had one civilian student.

As my disappointment took hold, our instructor's tone suddenly changed, and he issued his first order. “You guys look pathetic! Smile: you are going to be K9! You have all made

it to this level and you will be a part of a proud family. I want to see smiles every day when you come to work, be proud of your accomplishment.”

The mood in the formation quickly changed. We all relaxed just a bit, and we started to understand that we had made it into a world where we would be elite in our services. That first day saw us being issued all the necessary gear we would need before sitting down in the classroom.

The unique style of briefing continued that morning. “Look,” our instructor said, “we are going to have fun during this training. K9 is a special choice of career, and you are going to become a member of a close family. As we have fun, I know some of you are going to cross the line with us. We can have fun, but there are still boundaries.” The instructor made it a point

to look at me and another of the Air Force handlers. "When this happens, and we expect it will, we will give you two choices. You can either be written up, which could hang over your heads or even see you out of the course, or you can accept K9 punishment on the spot."

The other Air Force handler (as I had learned my lesson about opening my mouth the first night of Basic Training) asked the million-dollar question. "So, what is over the line, and what is K9 punishment?"

The instructor smiled at the young Airman, "Both of those situations are fluid and can change by the day."

That statement left us with unanswered questions, and the only thing that remained was to have that first knuckle-head cross the line.

It was me. Either I had just volunteered to help my classmates understand the line and the punishment, or I was just stupid. The latter leads in the polls.

The same instructor that had briefed us on "the line" and "the choice" asked me politely to accompany him outside of the classroom to discuss my poor choice of words (otherwise known as a

strong comeback).

"You know you crossed the line, don't you?" he asked.

Yes, Sergeant, I know it was too much."

"So, what is your choice?"

"K9" was all I said.

Through a series of movements to open me up to an outstanding physical strike, I suddenly understood everything.

What I didn't realize at the time, because corporal punishment hurt like hell, and I thought for a moment that I was dying, was

that it was not only a lesson in accountability for my mouth but also a leadership lesson I would use years later with much success. And, for the record, I did it again several days later and suffered once again, with a smile on my face.

Week one of K9 school would go in the books, but the impression it left on an 18-year-old farm kid from Minnesota would last decades. Basic Training and Law Enforcement School taught me about the military, discipline, and my chosen profession.

The Military Working Dog Patrol Dog Course taught me so much more. From the opening salvo, the instructors pushed pride, dedication, our history, and our mission. The in-

structors didn't need to beat us into submission or insult us to get their point across.

Patrol Dog Instructors had one of the most difficult jobs out there. Not only did they have to teach us to be dog handlers, but they also had to teach safety in a physically demanding job that included a powerful dog to bite and hold a subject. They also had to teach us to respect our dog, be firm and never allow it to handle us, all the while ensuring we did not abuse our dog in any way, shape, or form.

Yes, week one was in the books and my leash and choke chain were still tightly wrapped and clipped to my belt.

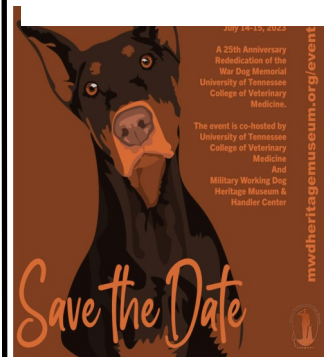
*Happy
Father's
Day to all
our
Fathers*

Share Your Story

We Want to Hear Yours!

Contact us at

Please Join Us In Tennessee In July



This year is the 25th anniversary of the memorial on site at University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM). This event is hosted by: University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum and Handler Center, (MWDHM).

The Memorial is a replica of the Marine Memorial on

Guam designed by Susan Bahary.

Stop by our website's event page for updated details: mwdheritagemuseum.org/events

Join us for all of the activities. For questions, email our events coordinator, John Homa : events@mwdhm.org



*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.

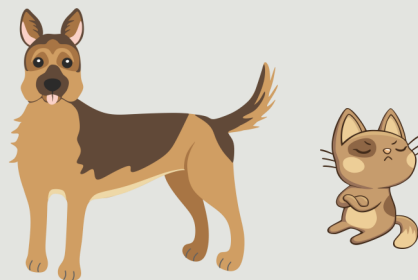
Share your copy of
our newsletter.

Important dates with Trooper and Scout

July 14-15, 2023 – 25th Rededication of the War Dog Memorial at the University of Tennessee in Knoxville (see Museum Events Page for more details <https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/events/>)

**Sept 10-16, 2023 – 41st Vietnam and All Veterans Reunion
Howard County Healing Field
8313 East 400, South Greentown, IN**

October 27, 2023— A commemoration of the 10th Anniversary of the Military Working Dog Teams National Monument— Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, TX



Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



Vietnam Era Attack Suit

Attack suits have changed to resemble, at least at a distance to a dog, normal clothing. However, early attack suits were made of thick padding covered with heavy burlap. Over the course of time small critters like chiggers and ticks found the suits to be a most welcoming home.

To keep dogs from looking for a "Michelin Man," muzzle attacks were included in the training. Getting hit by a muzzled 85 lb. German Shepherd at full speed was not unlike being hit by a 200 linebacker, except handlers weren't in football pads.

Here Air Force K-9 Clipper 65M5 of the 388th Security Police Squadron at Korat RTAFB, Thailand in 1970 hits the suited target at full speed.

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