



The Paw Print

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



Volume 3 Issue 7

July 2023

Special points of interest:

- The Last IPSD Vet Tech in Vietnam.
- High School History Student Advances with MWD History Project .
- A Final Texas Reunion.

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Photo by David Adams/Mike Hurder

Celebrating the 247th Birthday of a New Nation

Join us as we begin a journey in two parts with the last US Army Vet Tech to serve with a scout dog platoon in Vietnam. Steve Conner shares his story of navigating the transition from a naïve young student growing up on a farm in a small upstate New York college town to being the last Vet Tech caring for Army Scout Dogs of the 34th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon out of Long Binh, Vietnam. Steve's journey begins on page 3.

From the Vice President's Desk



Lane Hagerdorn

Vice President



As we approach Independence Day, I wanted to take a moment to highlight some very important people—the volunteers at the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum. Our incredible volunteer staff is instrumental in our mission to collect and preserve the history of these brave animals and their handlers, who have served alongside our troops in every major conflict since World War I, and they continue to make significant contributions to our national security today.

Since its inception, the museum has had a dream of a world-class collection of artifacts and stories from every generation of dogs and handlers. And set out to preserve and share them for today and future generations. On that quest, the museum has formed, found some incredibly talented volunteers and board members, collected roughly 600 pieces of artifacts and equipment from WWI to modern era working dog teams, put together mobile displays of Military Working Dog history, attended multiple events and re-dedications, and currently is working on the future of large-scale exhibitions and eventual permanent displays.

Every volunteer is also a proud supporter of the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum, but volunteering isn't the only way to get

involved. The museum's store is excellent for Military Working Dog Heritage Museum-related merchandise, such as t-shirts, stickers, drinkware, and even the exclusive Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Challenge Coin. I encourage you to visit the store and show your support for preserving the history of these heroic dog teams and support units.

In this month's Paw Print, I hope you are as inspired as I was reading the article dedicated to Esther Smith's "Dogs Expanding the Frontier - From Family Dog to Military Dog" project for the Minnesota Historical Society's National History Day. Esther's research uncovered and passionately displayed some fascinating history of Military Working Dogs.

On July 15th, the University of Tennessee's College of Veterinary Medicine will celebrate the 25th anniversary of its War Dog Memorial with a re-dedication event. Collectively, the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum will host the event. We encourage you to attend the re-dedication ceremony if you can. Check out the details in the newsletter – including a special hotel rate for those staying overnight!

For many who served with Military Working Dog units over the years, their journey traversed parts of Lackland AFB and the Medina Annex in San Antonio, Texas. Retired Master Sergeant Christopher Dion has an article this month about this "magical" place that will either take you back (if you were lucky enough to have trained there) or offer an enlightening peek into the experiences for those who missed it. Quite the read – I am sure you'll enjoy it!

The volunteers at the Newsletter committee, who have crafted the remarkable collections of stories and events you read monthly, see it as their honor to collect, craft, and share them. And the stories you read are all voluntarily submitted by the men and women who lived them – authentically bringing history to life for all of us. To help us keep the heartbeat of the newsletter strong, I would like to ask all of you and anyone you know for any stories related to Military Working Dogs that you would like to share. Please help us bring the stories of Military Working Dogs and their teams to life as an important part of our nation's history.

K9 Leads the Way!

Lane Hagerdorn

Til The Last Dog Dies

As told by Steve Conner, the Last Vet Tech To Serve With a Scout Dog Platoon in Vietnam, to Michael Hurder

Part 1: How I got there

I was a red-haired, blue-eyed country hayseed from a small college town in northwestern New York State, about an eight-hour drive northwest of New York City or seventy-five miles east of Niagara Falls. Like most of the state, I grew up in a primarily agricultural area with dairy farms and orchards for miles.

On the evening of December 18, 1970, in a northwestern New York State college town on the Erie Canal, the sky was clear and freezing. I was transferring from community college to a four-year school offering a bachelor's degree, and with a draft number of 164, I felt safe taking a semester off to earn money for the spring semester. Nope.

My pop was at his part-time job at the local college, cleaning rooms till midnight to pay my oldest sister's college costs. Mom was at the kitchen counter when I walked in. She gave me two envelopes with government return addresses with a strange look. Nothing was said, but after I opened the first announcement telling me my student deferment was reassigned to 1A or "cannon fodder," Mom had to sit down. Before I started reading the second, she started crying and cried and cried. Mom never cried, but the tears

were there because my brother had been in Cam Ranh Bay for Tet of '68 with the Air Force, and my brother-in-law was currently a weatherman in an army artillery unit living on rat-infested fire bases. She watched Dan Rather and Walter Cronkite, too; she didn't need the extra stress of having me over there.

The second letter welcomed me to the US Army and instructed me to report for duty in ten days on December 28, 1970. In 1970, 215 American kids a week died in Vietnam. We watched it every night with Rather and Cronkite. I was in the interim period between college semesters and already had my spring semester schedule. However, I was not a full-time student during the interim period, so they got me. Most of the guys in my basic training company were draftees. The draft board had finally figured out college schedules.

The "report to" letter directed me to appear at the draft board in ten days. I had few options, the Marines or Army. I didn't want to get killed or worse. The Army clerk at the draft board said he knew my hometown and asked if I was a farm kid. I told him I was, and he said,

"You must know about animals; if you sign up for a third year, we can make you a Vet Tech. You'll be stationed in some cushy Post Veterinary Clinic, making



34th Infantry Scout Dog Platoon Vet Clinic

time with nursing students. There are only a few dogs in Vietnam and only one animal hospital."

The recruiter didn't seem to care that collecting eggs by shooing hens off nests and milking cows was very different from working with war dogs that didn't particularly like you.

In reality, there wasn't just one Army animal hospital in Vietnam; at one point, there were four, one each in Da Nang, Cam Ranh Bay, Long Binh, and Tan San Nut, not to mention almost 5,000 dogs. The Army's dogs were primarily Scout Dogs serving in 26 War Dog Platoons.

The bus took us from the draft board offices in Buffalo on the cold eight-hour ride to Ft. Dix, NJ. We all boarded with only a bag containing no more than a toothbrush, needed meds, and one change of socks and underwear. I thought my eight weeks of Basic Training was like scout camp, but we got to shoot more guns, run through

cool obstacle courses, and march mile upon mile.

I was a lousy baseball player, and it showed when we practiced throwing the dummy grenades down range. My throw didn't go far enough. The DI yelled, "You just killed us all, troop." I never picked up another grenade – ever.

My next military development stop was eight weeks at Walter Reed Army Medical Research Center at Vet Tech School. Thirty-one other guys and I learned the basics of animal first aid and clinical skills needed at a Post Veterinary Clinic caring for puppies and kittens or wounded war dogs in the bush. While in the last few weeks of Vet Tech School, they selected four guys to go to Vietnam. The computer chose all four guys whose last names started with "C." This interlude introduced me to my first brush with history, though I didn't know that until I was out of the Army.

While at Walter Reed, I received 150 K9s returning from Vietnam - most of the few that did get to come home. None of these dogs were suffering from their deployment like so many others. Perhaps that's why this batch got to go home.

Our next stop was not a cushy vet clinic but Ft. Benning, GA. for advanced training with military working dogs in the field. The good news was that we would get to go home for Christmas. The bad news was that we had to report to Ft. Lewis, WA, on New Year's Day 1972 to get our jungle fatigues and tropical gear and then ship out for the Republic of Vietnam.

We flew into Da Nang, landing very fast and hard, and were ushered by a bus with wire mesh for windows to a processing area. After processing, we were assigned to a temporary barracks and told by the E5 that Charlie liked to welcome new guys to the RVN by shelling the hell out of us the first night. Rumor had it that we were very likely to be hit with mortar rounds and, if so, were instructed to get our boots on, grab our flack vests and helmets, and told which bunker to go to and to fill it up from back to front. Until that day, I had never seen a bunker.

In the middle of the night, all hell broke loose, and we ran from the second floor down the stairs and packed into our assigned

bunker. I was near the door. The shelling seemed to last for over an hour, and some of the shells hit close; the sand was dropping from the ceiling, some guys were crying, and one or two were screaming; it was scary. We could hear outgoing artillery rounds and machine gun fire. After a few hours, the all-clear was given, and we went to bed without sleeping.

The next day I, with a bunch of others, flew to Tan Son Nhut Air Base in Saigon, stayed the night, then went to Long Binh reception center - the 90th Replacement Company - for several days. On January 11, 1972, I saw an E7 with the War Dog patch on his right shoulder, and as he turned a corner, I saw the 1st. Cav. Patch on his left, so I followed the $\frac{3}{4}$ ton he was driving through the compound. I introduced myself, and as soon as he heard the words "Vet Tech," he said, "Grab your orders and duffle and meet me here in an hour." I told the other two Vet Techs, Bennie and Cam, to grab their orders and that I was going to a clinic with an E7.

When he returned an hour later, he said, "Where are you two going?"

"With him!" They said.

"Like hell you are. Go get your bunks back; you might be here a while," he told them.

Looking at me, he said, "Get your duffle and yourself in the back and hold on. This truck's brakes suck."



34th IPSD Kennels—Photo provided by Steve Conner

A few miles from the Long Binh reception center, the E7 pointed to a tan concrete block building on our right and yelled through the roar of the open windowed truck, "That's the dog hospital."

As he drove past the driveway, I yelled, "How come you're not turning?"

"You're not going there. You're going to the *Point for the Cav* - the 34th Scout Dog Platoon."

I had never heard of *The Point for the Cav* and was thinking, '*The 34th, what?*' As the E7 turned onto another dirt road, I heard them before I finally saw my 37 shepherds and labs just waiting to take a bite out of their new guy, Vet Tech. The $\frac{3}{4}$ ton truck stopped at the walkway lined on either side with white-painted rocks to the HQ of the oldest Scout Dog Platoon in Vietnam, the 34th IPSD. I dropped my duffle in the sand next to the HQ's door, walked into cold, conditioned air, and dropped my

envelope of orders on the desk of Company Clerk Spec 5 Darrow.

Hi, I'm Steve Conner, a Walter Reed and Benning-trained Vet Tech," I said.

"Holy shit, Top, we got a new Benning-trained Vet Tech," Darrow yelled.

"Boy, are we glad to see you, Doc." (All vet techs were called Doc).

Then, Darrow said, "Our last Doc took one in the head!" I never imagined hearing those words, but thanks to PTSD, I hear them all too often now.

'*Holy shit! What the hell did he say?*' I thought.

'*Our last Doc took one in the head!*' I later learned that four Vet Techs served with the 34th IPSD before me, but none were Walter Reed and Ft. Benning trained. I was the Last Replacement. I was standing in for a guy who didn't go home like the three before him because he was the guy who "took one in the head." Steve Searse was

out in the field doing "Hearts and Minds" work vaccinating animals at a small, remote Ville when they were attacked. Steve took a round in his right jaw that exited through his left. When he was later able to talk again, he said, "hell, I hardly felt a thing. Didn't think it was all that bad"—those heartland boys were tougher than most.

I thought, 'What the hell am I doing here? I'm supposed to be at the animal hospital in Long Binh. But here I am in one of the nastiest, dirtiest, hottest, most dilapidated military units and vet clinics I have ever seen.'

Welcome to the RVN, FNG.

Thus, I was assigned as the Vet Tech to the Combined 34th IPSD/62CTT (Combat Tracker Team) Company with the 1st Cavalry Division, 3rd Brigade Airmobile, rather than the Long Binh Animal Hospital, which was my expectation since it was the only operational animal hospital left in Vietnam.

Our Top was an E7 or acting first sergeant with three stripes up and two down. He got up from his desk and walked towards me, extending his hand and welcoming me to 'the first Scout Dog Platoon in Vietnam.' The 34th arrived in 1966 and would be the last to stand down in July 1972, minus shipping crates and dogs.

"Let's get you signed in, then Darrow will show you to your hooch, drop your duffle on the open bunk, and then you'll see the vet shack." He said. "You may know some of our new guys. They got here from Ft. Benning a few weeks before Christmas. Barton just came off his first mission, and he should be getting his gear squared away in his hootch. Darrow will show you the way."

I kept thinking, 'How the hell did I get here?' A few months ago, I was transferring from community college to a four-year school offering a bachelor's degree; my draft number was 164. *'Please, someone, wake me up from this nightmare.'*

I was then shown to the vet tech shack from hell, much worse than what I had at Benning. That evening as I was inspecting the vet tech shack, a bunch of dog handlers threw a hand full of stones onto the corrugated metal roof and laughed their asses off as I dove under the desk.

The vet shack had concrete-filled 55-gallon drums topped with four layers of sandbags and screening to the ceiling. The filthy concrete floor was cracked and broken, and the fridge that held meds that needed to be refrigerated was kept closed by a dog chain wrapped around it. The filing cabinet was packed; the deck was held up on one corner by a red building brick. The fluorescent ceiling light did not turn off, attracting flying termites all night.



Vet Tech Steve Conner suited up Photo provided by Steve Conner

The 34th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog (IPSD) had 37 dogs when I got there; then, in June, we adopted 20 patrol dogs. All dogs used in Vietnam were German Shepherds and Labrador Retrievers. So, if anyone tells you they handled Russian bear dogs while walking point through a rubber plantation while on patrol 25 meters in front of 25 pimple-faced kids with the temperature at 90 degrees and 99% humidity, they're full of it. There were no Russian bear dogs. And, by the way, those pimple-faced kids had guns and hand grenades and were scared spitless.

The 34th was the most experienced and highly decorated war dog unit to serve in Vietnam. We qualified as a company because we had 37 dogs and close to 60 guys. Of my first 37 dogs, about 30 were Scout Dogs; the rest were part of the 62nd Combat Tracker Team. Some of the best combat trackers – Bruce,

Beagle, Bugga Bear, and Mike. All were decorated black labs.

Our dogs lived in a "stake out" area, which consisted of a 12 sq. ft. corrugated metal roof supported by four 4" x 4" poles, and in the center was an animal transport kennel welded onto four metal stakes concreted into the red dirt with a 12ft chain attached. We had 38 stake-out areas, 37 occupied.

Part II of Steve Conner's story, "A Vet Tech's Diary" will continue in next month's issue.





You're Invited!

July 15, 2023



Re-dedication of the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine (UTCVM), War Dog Memorial.

Hosted by: the University of Tennessee College of Veterinary Medicine and The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum and Handler Center (MWDHM).

This year is the 25th Anniversary of the Memorial on-site at UTCVM. The Memorial is a replica of the Marine Memorial on Guam designed by Susan Bahary.

On Saturday, July 15, starting at 10 AM, the agenda includes speakers, a wreath ceremony, a 21-gun salute, L. E. K-9 units, refreshments, and a few local vendors. For directions to UTCVM parking, please click the following [UTCVM PARKING](#). There should be some "Road Guards" to direct you to the Lecture Hall. The [Memorial Site](#) is in the same area as the Hall, and Handicapped Parking is also at the site. Please arrive at the Hall by 9:15 AM. Program starts at 10:00 AM.

The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum has secured a block of rooms at the Holiday Inn Knoxville West at Cedar Bluff for \$119.00 a night with full breakfast for the nights of July 14th and 15th. The MWDHM will host a hospitality room with drinks and snacks on Friday July 14th. There will be a Pizza Fundraiser the evening of the 14th in the hospitality room with MWDHM Sales of Challenge Coins, T-Shirts, Patches, Books, etc. We also hope to have a few raffle items.

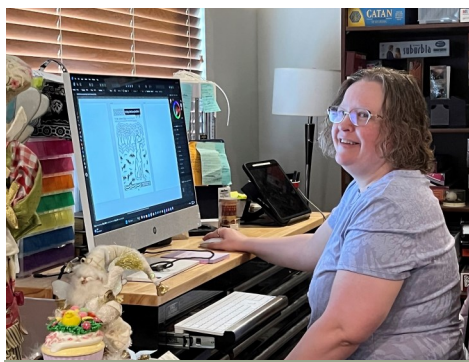
You are welcome and encouraged to wear camo jackets, vests, ball caps, berets etc. to the events.

Follow the below link to reserve your hotel room. Directly click the link or, hover over the link and do ctrl+click on the link. Once at the site, be sure to enter the dates you wish to book. For questions, email events@mwdhm.org with your phone number. Hotel Link: [UT / Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Event](#)

The MWDHM would like veteran handlers to participate in the wreath-laying ceremony as part of the escort for the two wreath layers. Please arrive at the Memorial site by 9:15 AM for a rehearsal.

WE HOPE TO SEE YOU THERE

Meet Volunteer Lisa Van Dyke



Lisa Van Dyke

Lisa Van Dyke joined our team early in 2023 and is already contributing considerably. Her area of art expertise is in illustration and character creation. Her previous volunteer opportunities drew her to help children understand and overcome challenges: disasters, food insecurity, and learning English are all interests she felt called to support.

With that valuable experience, Lisa has turned her talents toward military working dogs and helping the museum explain their history. She helped us write a history of America's Military Working Dogs focused on young children. With this creative mind and our unique story, Lisa has decided to illustrate it as a coloring book. Plans are currently to have it ready later this year.

The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum team is excited to have Lisa Van Dyke, a fabulous new artsy volunteer, in our midst.

Ms. Smith Goes to Washington

MWD Heritage Museum's mission aims to ensure that the history of America's military K9s passes to future generations. We are honored to spotlight Esther Smith, a savvy high school student from Minnesota who championed MWD history in a nationwide competition.

A Case Western Reserve University professor, David Van Tassel, created National History Day in 1974 to encourage students to dissect historical events, analyze them, and draw conclusions about their impact on society. While working on their projects, students find that studying the past builds empathy and a better connection to the world around them. Participants flex their acumen and gain crucial resource-gathering, interpretation, and selective presentation prowess. These skills provide a beneficial steppingstone to future academic and personal accomplishments.

National History Day (NHD) is a rigorous, yearlong, multi-step research project that encourages students to become classroom "experts" about a critical historical turning point of their choice. NHD is modeled after science fairs in that students are encouraged to choose which presentation format – exhibit, documentary, paper, performance, or website –

they believe best suits their research. Still, students also must connect their topic to an annual theme. This year's theme was *"Frontiers in History: People, Places, Ideas."* Students from all 50 states, the District of Columbia, four U.S. territories, and four international affiliates participate in this program, totaling more than 700,000 students annually. In Minnesota alone, 17,000 students created research projects in 2023. Just 36 projects will join Team Minnesota in Washington, D.C., in June, meaning that National competitors make up the top half of one percent of all projects statewide.

Esther's teacher, Mr. Stewart, stated, "From the outset, I knew that Esther's project had serious potential. Early in my process of helping guide students in topic selection, I keep my eye out for those that have a diverse set of historical impacts." He continued, "The story of Dogs for Defense, a program initiated and encouraged by civilians and eventually incorporated into the formal military structure, has all of those elements. You only need to look within the modern military, local police forces, and transportation hub security to understand the significance of the program and how it has had trickle effects far beyond what was originally intended."

Chris Stewart, Dixie Whitman Photos courtesy of Esther Smith



Esther Smith stands in front of her winning Canine History Display at National History Day—Minnesota.

The subjects covered by participants include the wide spectrum of history from frontiers in categories of society or science to actual frontiers, like those explored by Lewis and Clark. Of the massive numbers of projects originated by students around the world, only about 3000 students receive invitations to attend the week-long finals held in greater Washington, D.C. Esther's project, *"Dogs Expanding the Frontier: From Family Dog to Military Dog,"* shouldered its way to the top as she secured a spot on Team Minnesota.

National History Day finals competition took place in greater Washington, D.C., between June 11-15, 2023. Included during this hectic week are exhibit setups, performances, judging,

sightseeing in the Capitol, and so much more. The event's last day is a day of utter, chaotic celebration—a look between an Olympic parade and a political convention.

All of the students who arrived on campus were winners—la crème de la crème. Team Minnesota marched in the Parade of Teams, waving the North Star flag and wooden spoons, a nod to the Pillsbury Company who sponsored their trip. Next to them, students from Maine hoisted giant inflatable lobsters aloft. Arizona students raised decorative cacti over their heads as they rallied around their flag's red and weld yellow rays. Utah students ventured even further in history, sporting inflatable dinosaurs and their 1922 Beehive State Flag. Sheer joy

pushed into every niche of the arena.

Esther Smith sent us this note: "Getting to be a part of this incredible event is something I will never forget. It truly was an amazing experience, and I am honored to be part of it. Doing my project on Military Dogs has shown me what an impact they have made. Walking around D.C., I saw signs all over about K9s, which is super cool since it proves my point that dogs are still used today in many agencies. It was such an honor to represent the military dog community at the national event. Many people would come up to me to say how much they enjoyed reading my exhibit. I have so much respect for those who have had a part in working with these dogs.

Military dogs have done so much for our country that it feels good to share that with so many people from all around the world. Thank you for everything!"

K9 history education does matter to all of us. Grasping our past's stories helps us interpret and make sense of the present. By understanding our K9 history, we can move towards an improved future while side-stepping errors of the past. Ms. Smith explained the intricacies of the Dogs for Defense, illustrated her display, crafted a highly-researched paper, and brought the K9 story to Washington, D.C. Our MWD history team is incredibly honored to have her representing the K9 community at such a prestigious national event. Well done, Esther Smith, and a huge thumbs up!



Esther Smith stands in front of Minnesota's state poster for National History Day. Two thumbs up, she's heading to Washington, D.C. for the National Competition.

Shop the Museum Store



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AND MORE!

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A Final Texas Reunion

On the early morning of 5 May 2023, as the historic town of San Antonio began to rise in preparation for the celebration of Cinco De Mayo, a band of warriors journeyed southward to the Gateway of the Air Force for a celebration of their own. This was not their first visit to the crucible where Airmen are made and Defenders are born, nor were they alone in their journey. They traveled here this day accompanied by beloved wives they had met and married since coming here as young men so long ago.

Here in this place called Lackland, these men in their youth had answered their nations call. Here they had become Airmen. Here they had become Defenders. Here they had become K9! In this place they were trained to work as one, a seamless pairing of man and beast dedicated to the security of the forces.

From here they were sent to a place, many of them had never heard of before, Vietnam. They became members of a special fraternity called the 366th Security Police Squadron K9 assigned to Da Nang. Their time here together creat-

ed a bond of brotherhood spoken of in the writings of poets, playwrights, philosophers, and kings.

It was this bond that brought them once more to this place now called JBSA-Lackland. Their trip here was coordinated by the 37th TRW PA and the Airmen Heritage Foundation who saw it as a great honor to serve those who had served us and blazed a trail for others to follow. Their first stop here would be the TSA Canine Training Center where they learned the history of the National Explosive Detection Canine Team Program which began in 1972 and had been a part of the 341st TRS DoD MWD Training School. They were also given a demonstration of Passenger Screening Canines in a simulated airport environment complete with role players as passengers.

After seeing how the place that had trained them had created a whole new entity responsible for airline travel around the nation and the standard around the globe, they next traveled to their old alma mater, the

Story and Photos by Christopher Dion, MSgt, USAF (Retired)



Reunion attendees enroute to tours and demos on JBSA-Lackland.



Attendees at USAF Security Forces Museum being briefed by CSM William Manchester, US Army, (Retired), Director, Airmen Heritage Training Complex (AHTC) and Col Mel G. Grover, USAF (Retired) President, Security Forces Museum Foundation.



TSA Chris Jakubin with dog and Mr. Joey Cruz giving a demonstration of Personnel Search Canine.

341st TRS. Here they were briefed on training techniques and shown the inner workings of the kennels and the breeding facility, ending their time here by meeting the newest future canines living in the whelping facility.

Famished from a day full of relived memories, stories of then and now, and the placement of many footsteps of familiar ground, they stopped to rest at the Gateway Club for lunch before continuing their journey. Once filled and refreshed they traveled to the Security Forces Museum and learned that their career field was unique in that it was the only one with its own museum. Inside they met a fellow warrior in Col Mel Grover who had chewed similar dirt as they had in his time at Tan Son Nhut and Airman Ken Neal a Sentry Dog Handler who served in Thailand during the war. These two warriors provided an all access tour of the Museum to include the kennel of MWD Nemo, hero of Tan Son Nhut which stands today just outside the museum doors.

After bidding farewell to the Museum and its staff these warriors and their wives mounted the bus for one last stop. It was a stop that they had looked forward to since their days of service. Not one of

them had ever forgotten the furry warriors they served with and the honor bestowed upon them in being allowed to hold the leash. Thus, it was a great joy for them to end their day at the US Military Working Dog Teams National Monument and to see the “Never Forgotten Fountain” that is dedicated as part of the Monument to all the Vietnam Handlers and the Canines they left behind. Here they learned a truth that lightened a burden many had carried since leaving Vietnam behind. They learned that because of them, their tireless efforts, and the stories they had shared, that never again would an MWD ever be left behind by the US Military.

So, with the setting of the sun these comrades left a patch of dirt in the South Texas Plains where one can still hear the warriors call “Remember the Alamo!” It is the place where Teddy Roosevelt and over a thousand Rough Riders left for San Juan Hill many to never return. It is also the place where this band of brothers, known as the 366th SPS K9, began their own chapter in history and joined the lineage of warrior brotherhoods born in Texas.



Visiting the US Air Force Security Forces Museum, the only Air Force Museum dedicated to an Air Force career field



Attendee holding young pup from K-9 Breeding Program



Attendees gather for a group photo in front of the Military Working Dog Teams National Monument

Action in the Bunker

About midway through my tour at Korat RTAFB, Thailand I was offered the opportunity to work with Blackie X850, a patrol dog. I hated to give up Rex 7A98, but I accepted it so I could have patrol dog experience when I got back to the States. This assignment meant I would work 5 nights on the perimeter and 1 night riding in a jeep with a member of Security Police Law Enforcement (LE) section.

Blackie and I were partnered with the same patrolman each night we were on LE duty, and we developed a good relationship. For the purposes of this story, and due to a failed memory, I am calling him Bob.

It was a moonless night when we made a scheduled stop for a security check of the base personnel building, a 100' long by 50' wide metal butler building. As I approached the main entrance on the long side Blackie alerts

and started taking me down the side of the building. I let Bob know I had an alert. Blackie took me around the back of the building and into a large sandbag bunker by the back door. It is pitch-black dark with no lights anywhere as Blackie led me to a corner and stopped. The air in the bunker was heavy with the musty smell of mold and mildew from the burlap sandbags that had gone through countless monsoons and constant humidity. I tried my flashlight, which worked when I tested it at the start of the shift, but now didn't. "Get up slowly and don't do anything stupid or the dog will take you," I said, not knowing who or what I was talking to. As my eyes adjusted, I could see two people slowly standing up. I called for Bob who came in and illuminated a GI and a Thai female with his flashlight. It was after curfew, and she should have been off the base.

"What are you doing here?" I asked them as if it weren't obvious. The passion had

drained from them as they were now scared spitless. "You're on the dirt ground in a smelly bunker! You don't have the decency to at least get a hotel room downtown for her?" I asked the airman.

"Oh, please don't turn her in," the guy pleaded. "She works in the Base Commander's office and if you report her, she will be fired."

"How can we not report her? She can't stay on the base and the only way off is through the main gate by taxi where she will be checked," Bob sternly tells him. It was met by silence and a deer in the headlights look.

It was obvious to me there was nothing nefarious going on. The guy's thinking was simply somewhere below his belt. "Here is what we can do," I suggested. "We will drive her to the gate and tell the guys at the gate she had to work late, and we'll put her in a cab home."

Looking at the guy, "You have any money?" I asked.



Blackie X850

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

He looks in his wallet, "400 Baht (about \$20 in 1970)." The taxi would cost 200 Baht.

"Give it to her. All of it for cab fare," I ordered him. "And, if we catch you pulling this again, we will arrest you and write it up that you were holding her against her will. Do you understand?"

"Yes I do. Thank you, thank you!"

She endured the ride to the gate in the back of the jeep sitting next to Blackie frozen like a statue.

Share Your Story

Everyone has a memory. A story! Most are not about combat Some provide insights to our history. Some are humorous. But each one is a part of the Military Working Dog History. Sharing them builds on the growing archived history for future generations.

We Want to Hear Yours!
Contact us at

Newsletter@MWDHM.org

Echoes in the Mountains

If the Perry Money cabin could talk, it would tell stories of a bygone era in the Brushy Mountains area of North Carolina. Built in 1896, this cabin sheltered its family from the harsh conditions of the outside world. Over the years, it has witnessed countless conversations, moments of joy, and sorrows shared by its occupants and guests. The cabin is a living reminder of how life used to be and how much it has changed since its construction.

One of the significant changes occurred when Perry Money, a Vietnam-era Marine Mine and Boobytrap Dog Handler, and his family became caretakers of this slice of paradise. After some restorations, Perry started the Dog Handler Reunion to offer connection and healing for himself and the community of dog handlers to whom he remained eternally devoted. The cabin is an opportunity for those touched by war to come together in a safe space and to honor and say the names of the dogs who did not return.

Most of the veteran dog handlers start showing up the day before the BBQ to enjoy the peacefulness of the cabin and property. Many will sit on the wrap-around porch thinking to themselves or quietly hav-

ing discussions about their dogs and old friends no longer with us. As more guests arrive, the conversations and stories get more lively, remembering the good times. Many feel the world's stresses lifting as they cross the K9 Memorial Bridge and look up the sweep of the hill to a wooden structure - still standing unserved by running water or electricity.

This year, the gathering occurred the weekend of June 3rd. In the late afternoon, the family conducted a small emotional ceremony to honor the Marine Mine and Boobytrap Dogs of Vietnam, none of whom returned stateside. A volunteer read the dogs' names on the family's memorial, followed by the ringing of a bell. Josie invited all dog handlers to the front to be honored and then called all Military veterans forward to be recognized.

Her daughter, Melissa, shepherded a special donation to MWDHM and presented President Albert Johnson with a gift of two panels from the original Moving Wall. The two panels contain deaths in Vietnam from April 9-19 of 1968. We haven't had a chance to research all the details yet, but we immediately found one dog handler's name: Cpl Robert

Story and photos by John Homa and Dixie Whitman



Above: The 1896 cabin serves as a place of reflection and peace.

Below: Dog handlers and veterans from all branches joined Perry Money's daughter, Melissa, in front of the Money Memorial to the Marine Mine and Boobytrap dogs at the cherished cabin in the Brushy Mountains.



Above: A few Board Members and volunteers from Military Working Dog Heritage Museum and Handler Center joined Perry's widow, Josie Money, at the cabin.

Front row: (l to r) Ruthie Player, Josie Money, John Homa

Back row: (l to r) Johnny Mayo, Jerry Whitman, Albert Johnson, Drew Hauser, and Ann Wilkerson.

Winslow Belcher, who died in a chopper crash on April 11, 1968. His UH-34 collided with another helicopter.

Following the somber ceremony, the mood lightened as tables laden with son Elijah Money's BBQ pork, chicken, and all the required cookout essentials spread across the upper lawn. Local friends delivered their favorite specialties: tasty mac and cheese and bacon, baked beans kissed with sweetness, country green beans, finely chopped cole slaw, and bread, all followed by piles of every southern diabetes-inducing dessert known to mankind.

Volunteers and board members with Military Working Dog Heritage Museum and Handler Center had an opportunity to connect with their heritage, each other, and their community. Attendees shared

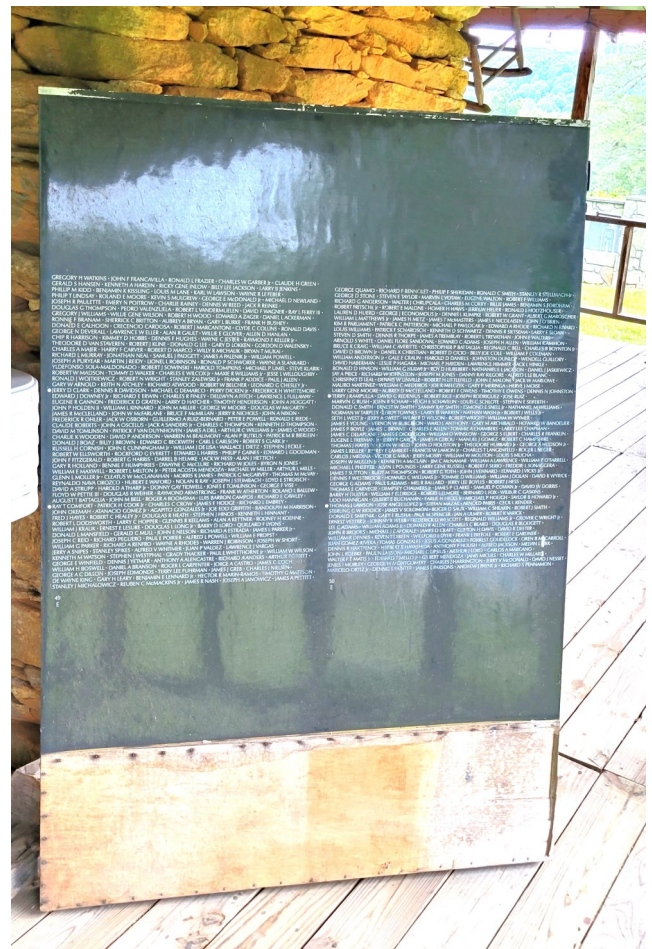
conversations and jokes as they made connections while witnessing children toss balls and chase each other with reckless abandon. The event offered ample opportunities for friendship, food, fun, and the familial relationship all dog handlers have, regardless of generation or branch of service.

As the late afternoon turned towards twilight, the conversations ended, promises were made to keep in touch, and all came away with a renewed sense of purpose—new ideas and energies. We thank Josie, Melissa, Elijah Money, and the wonderful folks from the Brushy Mountain area who have created this unique and cherished reunion in the mountains. And we thank the cabin, too, for inspiring and grounding us all.



Above: MWDHM President, Albert Johnson, relaxes inside the cabin that inspired him to undertake the building of a museum from scratch.

Below: Two panels of the original Moving Wall, include at least one dog handler— Marine Cpl. Robert W. Belcher. Deaths from April 9-19, 1968.



Left: Perry welcomed visitors to his mountain cabin via a small gravel road that crosses a small creek. A private covered bridge that Perry dedicated to his beloved K9s spans the stream.



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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

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

**October 4-8, 2023 Vietnam Security Police Assoc.
28th Reunion Joint Base Charleston, SC. [Get Registration
Form Here](#)**

**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



WWII Soldier and MWD with Chemical Warfare Protection

After chemical agents were first deployed by Germany during World War I, the allied forces developed gas masks to filter the lethal chemicals. Due to the importance of Military Working Dogs to the war effort as sentry, messenger, scout, and trackers the masks were developed for the protection of the soldiers' canine partners as well.

DoD photograph.