



The Paw Print

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



Volume 4 Issue 5

May 2024

Event Updates:

May 9–12, 2024
Florida Vietnam and All
Veterans Reunion
Wickham Park,
Melbourne, Florida

May 11–12, 2024
Army MWD Symposium
Alpena, Michigan

August 26–29, 2024
HITS K9 Training
Seminar Hyatt Regency
New Orleans, Louisiana

Remembering Our K9 Handler Heroes



This month, we honor those who paid the ultimate price. In this image, sailors place their badges on the casket of Master at Arms 2nd Class Sean Brazas during his funeral ceremony at Arlington National Cemetery. Brazas, a canine handler, died while conducting combat operations in Panjwa'l, Afghanistan. (U.S. Navy photo by Ensign Amber Lynn Daniel)

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Join the museum staff with this May issue as we pause to honor America's fallen K9 personnel. From the Pacific Islands of WWII to the high deserts of Afghanistan and every conflict and war in between, K9 has been at the pointed end of the spear. On Memorial Day, we will honor more than 300 KIA dog handlers.

Today, across America, from tiny hamlets to our mightiest

cities, Americans still follow the tradition of decorating graves with flowers and flags on Memorial Day. The day has become a weekend event filled with barbecues, beach trips, and boating.

And while the holiday and its celebrations may have evolved over the years, Americans still gather to honor and respect their war dead.

This month, on Memorial Day, we will honor all of the K9 personnel lost in combat as we continue our annual Facebook tradition of having dog handlers read the names of their fallen brethren.

We remember our KIA. Please consider joining us via Facebook on Memorial Day to share your thoughts and memories.



Lane Hagerdorn
Vice President



From the Vice President's Desk

I ask you to join us.

This Memorial Day, your Military Working Dog Heritage Museum will present its annual tradition of reading the names of fallen handlers throughout the years. This event is a tip of our hat to those handlers who have made the ultimate sacrifice and will forever be remembered. You can find the reading of the names on the Museum's Facebook page or reach out to us at info@mw dhm.org for more information.

Every month, we feature one of the unique artifacts the museum has in its possession. This month is a favorite – a dummy can - or Bucket as it was known when your Vice President went to Handler's Course in the late 90's. These "dummy dogs" were instrumental in training new handlers on the finer art of dealing with a dog coming up the leash for a 'handler correction' should the leash correction get a little too heavy. Also, these cans and buckets were vital in helping handlers get past their ego and bravado as they learned the power of

voice inflection – and the perfect opportunity for upper classes to come out and see the new handlers on the pad convincing the cadre that their bucket was the best bucket with a harmony of "oh bucket, you're my favorite bucket" drills!

For the first year, the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum was invited to the K9 Hold the Line Conference in Myrtle Beach, South Carolina, on April 9 – 11th. At the event, we brought a mobile display of MWD historical information and artifacts, MWD Heritage Museum Merchandise, and shared the museum's mission with K9 brothers and sisters from all corners of the United States. Check out the article for more pictures and information.

Speaking of these events, did you know they are coordinated, planned, and attended by an all-volunteer team led by former USAF Dog Handler John Homa? John is also a member of the all-volunteer board to craft the short-, mid-, and long-term planning that will allow the Museum to con-

tinue serving others infinitely.

John is one of the many dedicated volunteers who keep the Museum thriving. With no paid staff, everything you see and experience from the Museum, including this Newsletter, is a testament to their passion and commitment. Their selfless efforts ensure that the Museum's goals remain on track.

If you or someone you know has a passion for supporting the mission of discovering, curating, preserving, and exhibiting world-class displays of America's military working dog history and ensuring that the legacy and heritage of America's dog teams inspire future generations, reach out to us at info@mw dhm.org, drop us a line on Facebook Messenger, or give us a ring at 865.507.8903. We would love to have your talents as we continue to share the story of one of the mightiest military specialties in US history.

K9 Leads the Way!

Lane Hagerdorn

Please join us online on Memorial Day.

Volunteers from around the US will conduct our annual reading of the names of KIA K9 personnel.

Visit our Facebook page on Memorial Day. Click [HERE!](#)

Or go here: facebook.com/mwdheritagemuseum

Honoring Memorial Day



Please join us in honoring the following KIA dog handlers today by saying their names.

Aaron Joseph Blasjo Abraham Tarwoe Abron Earl Davis Adam Leigh Cann Alan Eunice Davis Alan MacDonald Sturdy Alden John Bullwinkel Alexander King Alfred Evarts Whitehead Andrew John Kiefhaber Anthony Edmond Kunz Anthony Lorin Camp Archie Burnette Jr Arnold Edward Johnson Benjamin Harrison Mason Jr. Bernard Francis Ford Billy Harrison Ratliff Billy Howard Best Billy Joe Parrish Billy Monroe Green Bobby Dean Crawford Bobby James Shelton Brandon Keith Steffey Carl Jacob Claus Carl Irving Johnson Carter Parker Jr. Charles Douglas Blair Charles Douglas Drysdale Charles H Sandberg Charles John Robinson Charles Paul Brown Christopher Zeno Czarnota Christopher Diaz Christopher Matthew Wrinkle Clarence Creaghead Claude Joseph Gaspard Jr. Clayton Dean Jenkins Clifford Wayne Marshall Colton Wesley Rusk Dale Robert Alcorn Jr. Dallas George Grundy Dan Victor Lindholm Daniel Edward Holland Daniel Eugene Spencer Jr. Danny Edward Ward Darrell Lee Colford Darrell Thomas Swanson Dave Russell Scott David Alan Nudenberg David Alfred Land David Brennan Schachner David Byron Magruder David James Ohm David James Ward David Lee Hatcher David Michael Sonka David Michael Freeman Dennis Arthur Beuke Dennis Karl Hoppough Dennis Robert Schossow Dennis W London Dick Alson Lee, Jr. Donald Lee Baker Donald Leroy Rydgig Donald Raymond Knutson Donald Sherril Sullivan Donald Therronie Tabb Donald William Mc Intosh Douglas Michael Cain Dustin Jerome Lee Earl Duane Barkley Edward Charles McGrath Edward Cowart Hughes III Edward Erlin Cox Jr. Edward Gilbert Lee Edward Henry Topka Edward Lester Lawton Edward Monroe Simpson Eligah Lamar Davis Elmer Glenn Ireland Elmer Wain Mahurin Erik Bernard Wickenberg Erling Alton Anderson Ernest Melvin Plattner Eugene Thomas Fraley Faleagafulu Ilaa Floyd Wayne Hartwick Jr. Freddie Lee Johnson Frederick Richard Levins Garson Franklin White Gary Allan Rathbun Gary Paul Baker Gary Evans Beesley Gary Gene Detrick Gary Leroy Fuller Gary Richard McFall Gary Kenneth Smith Gary Vaughn Lovellette Gary Wayne Fox George Douglas Deitrick George F Eubanks George Kenneth Koon George Michael Bevich Jr. George Tallman Gerald W Fritz Gilbert Gonzales Palacio Glenn Weldon McCarty Glynn Byron Holley Gordon Lee Crawford Gregory Allen Rodriguez Grover Clay Dixon Harlan Nathan Lockhart Harry Thomas Petersen Harry Walter Murray Herbert Burton Johnson Herbert Hoover Sweat Jr. Herschel Cyle Holt Hilburn McDowell Burdette Jr Howard David III Payne Howard Lee Webb Irving Geon Park Jack Lee Connors Jack William Conner James Albert Michael James Allen Johnson James Boyd James Bruce McLaughlin James C Tosh III James Cabarubio James Evarit Blaauw James Harold Beaver James John Morrison James Maynard Berge James Michael Selix James Michael Sunday James Michael Triplett James Paul Markey Jr. James Ray Howard James Rivera James Roger Boyer James R. Ide V Jason Lynn Norton Jeffrey Alexander Freeman Jeffrey Robert Standfest Jeremiah Joseph Sullivan Jerry Guy Giberson Jimmy Rea Burk Joel Conrad Loftis John Alan Kuefner John Douangdara John Francis Doyle John Henry Dyer John Howard Roth John Leroy Truesdell John Michael Piasecki John Montague Mansfield John Oliver White John Paul Olmstead John Paul Southwick John William Kobelin II John Willie Bennett Jon Michael Young Jose Antonio Rosas Jose Munoz Jose Soto Concepcion Joseph A Carinci Joseph Cyril Kranick Joseph Price Lipton Joseph Allen Marasco Joseph Mark Mazzone Joseph Alvin Teresinski Joseph Anthony Nurzynski Joshua Ryan Ashley Joshua Abraham Atkins III Juan Patricio Martinez Keaton Grant Coffey Keith Charles Buckingham Kenneth George Burlock Jr. Kenneth John Dell Kenneth Martin Kory Duane Weins Larry David Hicks Larry Lee Johnson Larry Jonathan Waddell Lawrence Alan Esterly Lawrence James Merschel Lawrence Wayne Yochum Leo Roland Meyer Leon Lovell Poland Jr. Leon Maurice Ashton, Jr. Leroy Floyd Schyska Lindsay David Baldoni Livingston Glenn Lloyd Martin Kuehn Lonnie Joseph Ducote Jr. Luis Hilerio-Padilla Mark Duane Marshall Mark Randall Taylor Mark Thomas Howard Mark Wayne Bell Marshall Colin Farley Martin Earl Brophy Martin M Mugavin Marvin Robert Pearce Max Ray Spangler Max William Donahue Melvin Carrillo Merle Keith Carter Michael Brodsky Michael A Grieve Michael Anthony Vancosky Michael Francis Smith Michael I Thibodeaux Michael James Bost Michael James Drobena Michael James Randolph Michael Joseph Yeager Michael Lee Conklin Michael R Munch Michael Thomas Rowe Mycal Lee Prince Norman Frederick Schofield Oscar Wayne Pierce Patrick Lee Henshaw Paul Edward Mattson Paul LaFontaine Marchant Paul Plambeck Jr Paul Roy Severson Pete Sprule Segundo Peter Claus Behrens Peter James Clore Peter Joseph Nicolini Peter Pulaski Jr. Phillip Randall Duff Ralph Wilson Connors Jr. Randy Eugene Dillinder Raphael Anton Futrell Raymon Draper Hales Raymond Andrew Shepard Raymond Isadore Rosinski Raymond Steptoe Rex Alan Vogelpohl Richard Albert Doria Richard Arthur Lane Richard Beauregard Richard Charles Porter Richard Ford Richard Kenneth Joecken Richard Michael Amick Richard Michael Banaszynski Richard Michael Hilt Richard Michael Schwab Richard Myers Richard Winningham Robert Anthony Schmid Robert Clokes Robert Dale Armstrong Robert David Rhodes Robert E Lansley Robert Eugene Whitten Robert Gene Smoot Robert Helm Wood Robert James Jenks Robert Joseph Taranto Robert Larry Oaks Robert Norman Norris Robert Normand Lebrun Robert Paul Ahern Robert Paul Payne Robert Preston Robert Walter May Robert Willard Hartsock (Medal of Honor) Robert William Brede Robert William Elliott Robert Winslow Belcher Rodney Elmer Marrufo Jr. Rodney Kenneth Mills Roger Thomas Lagodzinski Ronald Aaron Grider Ronald Dean Karau Ronald Eugene Sheppard Ronald James Matel Ronald Lee Chisholm Ronald Lee Evans Russell Leonard Castle Russell Martin Erickson Russell Tennyson Friedrich Sean Edward Brazas Stanley Carl Fuller Stanley Terrell Stephen Faust Stephen Edward Jesko Stephen Jay W Smith Stephen Lee Lindsay Stephen Wesley Bowman Steven Edward Collier Steven Lee Jenkins Terrence Daniel Beck Terry John Payne Theodore A Sweatt Theodore Louis Gylveszi Thomas Drum Thomas Pretter Thomas Wayne Quinn Thomas William Fisher Tim Edwin Newell Timmy Larry Miller Vernon E Whetham Victor A. Brice Victor Reyes Hernandez Virgil Jessie Roberts Walter Levon Clark Walter D Browne Walter Josefak Jr Walter Lawrence Maurer Wayne Bizzle Holland Wilhelm S Hurksman Jr. William Allison Anderson William Andrew Montano William Charles Sheldon William Clayton Ray William Donald Griffin II William E Groves William George Fraser William H. Crouse, IV William Jess Sims William Joseph Van Gorder William Ladd Campbell William M Huberty William Martin Dunning William Nelson Hendrickson William Roger Goudelock William Thomas Cumbie William Wayne Lumsden Willie Bozier Jr Winfred Lee Smith Zainah Caye Creamer

Hold The Line Conference in Myrtle Beach

Coordinated by John Homa and Andy Hauser

This year, the museum has set a hectic and widely-spaced swath of events to be attended by some of our vibrant, valuable Volunteers and Board Members.

In April, John Homa and Andy Hauser coordinated and attended a multi-day K9 seminar at the Hold The Line Conference in lovely Myrtle Beach, SC. They presented a few of our artifacts to attendees, sold some of our swag, and fundraised their hearts out.

Our Events Coordinator, John Homa, and Treasurer, Andy Hauser, inspire our museum team with their passionate commitment to our mighty museum cause. Hard-working and always upbeat, they are fantastic folks to meet and have as our first points of contact.

Be a fully committed K9 leader and leave behind something that lives on well after you are gone. Join our team and be part of your museum's future. Lead and live with no regrets!



The fundraising has begun. Thanks to our volunteers, John Homa and Andy Hauser, who set up a great booth at the Hold The Line Conference in Myrtle Beach, SC. Artifacts, swag, and fundraising—yes!



Andy Hauser, Steve Kaun, and John Homa pose behind some of the K9 Memorabilia.



Above: Hold The Line K9 provided MWDHM with two free Attendee Registration Passes for the Conference.

Justin Granado with Stellen Felons coordinated with MWDHM President, Albert Johnson, to hold a drawing on Instagram for the two passes.

Pictured left to right are Justin Granado, winners Aaron Chudosky, USMC Reserve, Kaitlynn Wallace, Lawrenceville, GA, PD K9 Handler, and John Homa MWDHM Events Coordinator.

Robert Konarske: A Legacy of Purpose

by Dixie Whitman

With no time for the cutting signs to weather or fade away, they almost appeared as crisp and clear as a road sign to the Combat Tracker Team. Their unit drove onward, crossing a wide dirt path just a few minutes after their quarry pushed scurried footprints into the dirt. The team could feel the hunt in their bones and knew they would soon be upon the enemy. They were swift, agile, and focused as they closed in for the impending fight.

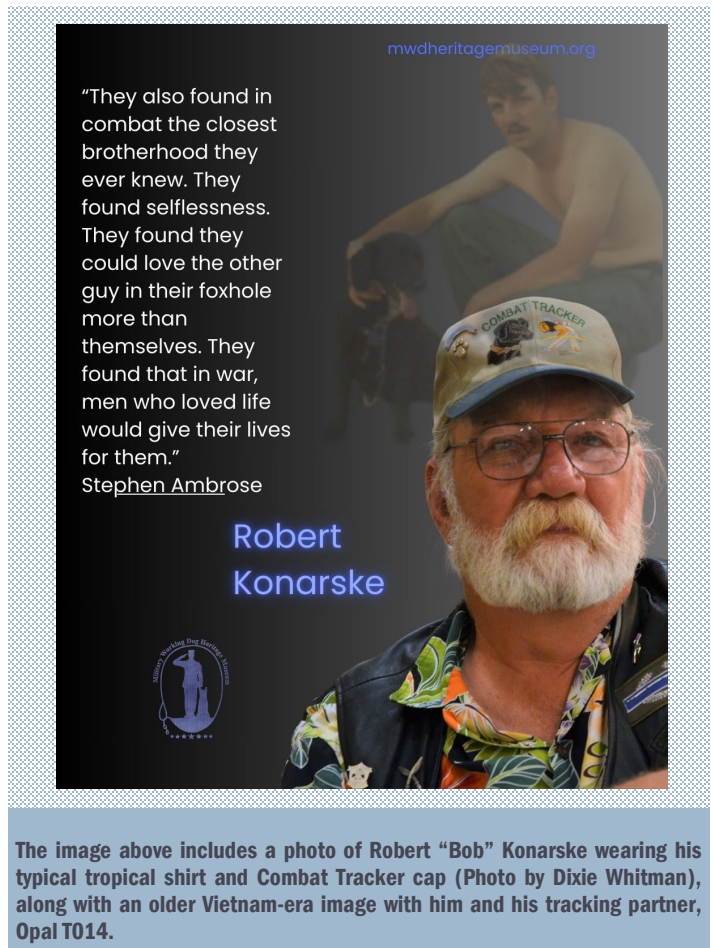
About 200 meters past the dirt road, the team began catching incoming fire—rounds pinging into the soft dirt and shredding nearby vegetation. So, they called for artillery support to hasten the enemy's defeat.

"No can do. Suggest you make a hasty retreat; you're in Laos," came the static response over the radio. "The best we can do is lob five HE rounds over their heads." Five high-explosive rounds weren't going to get it done. The trail the team had just crossed in hot pursuit, the Ho Chi Minh Trail, served the enemy as its primary supply route and paralleled the border between Laos and Vietnam. There was no border control agent, no "Welcome to Laos!" sign, only mayhem. The Army threw a few shots over the heads of their foes as the Combat Trackers *di di mau*-ed back to Vietnam. Mission over.

Robert "Bob" Konarske eyed the GI Bill to pay for college. In 1970, he left for basic training at Fort Knox and later took Infantry Training at Fort Polk. While fighting mosquitos and other critters in south Louisiana, Bob leaned in as some uniformed men asked, "Who wants to work dogs?" Remembering an old movie clip about Chips, a dog hero from World War II, Bob raised his hand to volunteer and soon found himself training at the Combat Tracker School at Fort Gordon, GA.

Tracker Dog Training started with the easy stuff: sit, down, stay. After one month of obedience work, Bob and his partner, Duke S595, moved on to ground tracking - following the invisible trail of an individual who had previously passed through. They started simply enough with straight tracks, then 90-degree turns, and longer tracks. Once Bob and Duke mastered those, other people and animals would cross the trail to offer conflicting smells. Duke needed to sort through a bouquet of aromas hitting his olfactory system and toss out every scent molecule except the ones that belonged to his quarry.

Duke tipped the scales at over 100 pounds. His shaggy, long-haired coat belied his Labrador-mixed heritage, as did his belligerent attitude. Like many grunts, Duke didn't like to follow



The image above includes a photo of Robert "Bob" Konarske wearing his typical tropical shirt and Combat Tracker cap (Photo by Dixie Whitman), along with an older Vietnam-era image with him and his tracking partner, Opal T014.

orders. During the tracking training, Duke took exception to the Flash Bangs that taught dogs to avoid and alert on trip wires. Undeterred, Duke never stopped to alert on trip wires; he just zoomed around them and grabbed hold of the track on the other side. To even the score with a couple of instructors Bob didn't care for, he would follow Duke around the obstacle and then yell "trip wire" just as the instructors tripped the wires. Flash! Bang!

After six months, they easily passed a 20-kilometer track laid over 24 hours previously. They were ready.

Only one of them went from the team—Bob. When he got to Vietnam, he partnered with superstar tracker Opal T014. Her litter, the "O" Litter, produced mixed Labrador/beagle offspring from the Super Dog Program at Edgewood Arsenal. Spawned in science, this litter included O'Brian, Orange, Oscar, Omar, Otis, and Opal, all destined as trackers in Vietnam.

Opal loved to track and cruise on an invisible highway that her nose identified from the ground disturbances and skin cells left behind. Bob held on to her tightly; he knew if he ever

dropped her leash, Opal would continue to follow the track, leaving him behind in the tall elephant grass of Vietnam while she bolted after her prey as fast as she could. To Bob and the rest of his Combat Trackers, Opal wasn't just a tracking dog; she became the sixth team member and often joined them on off days at the beach.

The usual composition of a Vietnam-era tracking team included: 1. Team Leader 2. Radioman 3. Visual Tracker (to follow sight clues) 4. Coverman (to provide cover to the trackers whose focus was on the ground) 5. Tracker Dog, and 6. Dog Handler. When they inserted, it was generally to reestablish contact with the enemy, although they did search out downed pilots and lost Lieutenants from time to time.

Bob couldn't spot danger ahead as he focused on his dog and the 5-8 feet around her. The job of a coverman is to protect and keep the trackers safe. Bob's covermen both clocked about 5'8" tall. Standing 6' 1", Bob towered over both, yet any time they needed to, they grabbed Bob by his webbing and threw him to the ground. Opal's alerts came with pinpoint precision. Bob didn't just read them as "something ahead," but "there's something ahead to the right at 75 yards."

One of Bob and Opal's more memorable missions arrived as a rescue mission for an Army fire team that had gotten themselves in a precari-

ous position. A call came in requiring immediate assistance and re-engagement with the enemy. At the chopper pad, the Combat Trackers rendezvoused with a Fast Response Team, both teams loading on the chopper. Arriving at the insertion point, they soon discovered that the entire fire team had left their rucksacks unguarded while they all swam in a nearby river. Along came a squad of Viet Cong and took all of their gear, except the radio, which the radioman had luckily carried with him.

The tracker team followed the fresh trail a few miles and encountered a dozen men rummaging through the hapless squad's rucksacks. The twelve enemies weren't keen to relinquish their spoils, and a firefight ensued. After the firefight, seven Viet Cong prisoners returned, five enemies didn't make it out of the firefight, and several court martials likely took place.

Through rotations, Bob worked with a couple of different teams and considers all his tracker brothers as his best friends in Vietnam. They slept in the same humid, weather-worn hootches, ate the same pre-packaged foods, and stalked the same trails. Because of their precision training and their status as a covert special force, they had to be able to swap out people in positions and know exactly how those individuals would react in every situation. And that uniqueness remains one reason

Right: A Combat Tracker Team in the field. Led by a dog team, the movements and functions of each position were carefully choreographed for precision so that each man could count on the exact response from the men around him.

Source : A huge thank you to the Combat Trackers for allowing us to share this photo. Stop by their website for more: combattrackerteam.org



why Bob is so proud of the Combat Tracker Teams and his service with them. They did a job that not many others did, a specialty so small and quiet that few back in the real world knew of their existence.

When Bob spoke of Opal, his voice cut deep edges, tinged with a heaviness caused by over a half-century of grief. "Opal saved my life," She alerted on two separate missions to ambushes ahead of our team and the infantry unit to which we were attached." Without her alerts, the ambushes would likely have resulted in numerous American lives lost. Americans often say that without the dogs in Vietnam, we would probably have lost another 10,000 American lives. Opal did her part.

If he'd had the chance to change things in the dog program, his answer, echoed by all Vietnam-era dogmen, would be, "Bring our dogs home,"

Bob continues to honor Opal, the other tracker dogs,

and his fellow veterans with his woodworking. He has handcrafted over 1900 canes for mobility-impaired veterans and possibly around 100 wooden urns for remains of Global War on Terror dogs who, thanks to Robbie's Law, get to live out their last days on American soil.

We still miss our Vietnam K9 partners because of the relationships built. Not only does that bond include a deep and unconditional love, but it also includes the dog's devotion to duty and returning men home to their families. These K9 connections never carry all the baggage that human relationships do. When asked what he would say to Opal if he could send her a message, he said, "I miss you."

We are honored to spotlight Bob Konarske and ask everyone to remember his girl, Opal T014. They did their jobs well.



Bozo W416, A WWII M-Dog

by Dixie Whitman

By early spring of 1945, Bozo W416 sat on the side platform of the Crawford, Nebraska train station loaded into an official USA K9 wooden crate. His return ticket punched for home: Chicago, Illinois. The thermometer in northwestern Nebraska begins its march towards reasonable weather about that time of year. Still, the solid wooden crate provided Bozo some protection against the chill in the air as he waited on the loading dock.

Bozo began life with a different name: Pal. His first owner, a Windy City Swede, ran a junkyard. One of his regulars, Gilbert Roos, served the northwest quadrant of Chicago during WWII by collecting metals and paper for the war effort. During multiple trips to drop off the materials, Gilbert admired the yard's affable, tan cocker spaniel, and the two friends struck a deal to send Pal home with the Roos family. Mr. Roos changed Pal's name to Bozo as a reference to some of the transients who hung around the area.

Mr. Roos should have consulted Mrs. Roos before bringing a second dog home to the family. It wasn't too

long afterward that the family bundled Bozo into a crate and shipped him off for military service to become one of America's first Mine Detection Dogs.

The Army established the 228th Engineer Mine Detection Company (Dog) in November 1943, about the same time that Bozo became a Soldier. About 140 Mine Dogs (M-dogs) received mine detection training during WWII.

One hundred Mine Dogs, including Bozo, formed into two units, which arrived in North Africa in May 1944. They later crossed the Mediterranean into Italy, where the Mine Dog teams immediately began having excessive casualties among both dogs and handlers.

Unfortunately, the original mine dog training didn't understand the complexities and depth of the dogs' abilities. The training had been aversive-based, causing the dogs to alert on anything they associated with burying the training aid. The instructors intended for dogs to find trip wires, booby traps, and metallic and non-metallic mines but inadvertently trained the dogs to identify and alert on overturned earth.



Above: A photo of Bozo W416, a Chicago cocker spaniel, retired from active duty. Image edited for clarity.

Image Source: Nebraska State Historical Society Photograph Collection. RG1517.AM

In a battlefield where shells and bombs have exploded, overturned earth is widespread. Unsurprisingly, they were successful less than a third of the time.

By February of 1945, the Mine Dog program was considered a failure, and both Mine Dog units returned stateside. After demilitarization training at Fort Robinson, Bozo returned to the Roos home, where the family welcomed him as a returning Soldier.

In the summer of 1946, a Chicago Transit Bus hit and

killed the cheerful cocker, and the family buried him under the lilac bush where he loved to gnaw on his beef bones.

Bozo helped to pave the way for the current Army Mine Dog Program at Ft. Leonard Wood, Missouri, where the lessons of the past have helped formulate a mine training program for dogs with a hugely successful rate.



Announcement: All Da Nang Dog Handlers –regardless of branch of service.

There will be a reunion of all Da Nang Dog Handlers in Plymouth, Massachusetts this 17th through the 19th of October. Information can be found on the website at <http://366thSPSK-9>.

A Dogman Comes Home

by Michael Hurder

May 1, 1972.

I got off the medivac flight on the springtime tarmac at Hanscom Air Base in Ayer, Massachusetts. I looked like a wanna-be mummy, my achy head wrapped in gauze and a sling supporting my left arm. I still couldn't remember what happened two weeks prior, but boy, Red Sox country never seemed so alluring.

Unfortunately, my homecoming, like so many others, proved traumatizing. No one seemed to want us home, and folks had a penchant for expressing that. The melee getting off the plane and funneling into a trap of protestors, landed several of us in jail overnight.

I made it to Chelsea Naval Hospital just outside of Boston and hoped to be released soon to go home. That didn't happen, not for quite a while. I had trouble with the shrinks. Paranoid, I felt that anyone with any authority, from orderlies to the hospital commander, wanted to "get me," so my cooperation stopped. I wanted out, and I couldn't get there. My behavior reeked. I tried to escape a couple of times. Making it off a military base in

your pajamas proved more difficult than I imagined. They locked me down three times in the first month.

On June 20, 1972, the Army finally cut me loose after 51 days of decompression, making things even scarier. I still had no idea what had happened in Vietnam and wondered if I'd imagined everything. I took up residence in the local VA hospital. The shrinks kept harping on me to tell them what I'd done and how my injury occurred. I kept telling them, "I don't know. Can't you tell me? Isn't there a report? WTF, over?"

It turns out they believed me to be a malingerer and somehow managed to concuss myself three times and dislocate my shoulder twice, all in the last two weeks in-country. I couldn't argue with them. I didn't know.

Eventually, the little bit of paperwork that made up my records caught up with me. I was indeed in Vietnam, and apparently, I served as a Dog Handler. With what unit, no one knew. My records stopped on February 14 when I signed for Prince, my War Dog partner, at the Dog Training Detach-



Firefly Image

ment on Bien Hoa. Those records had a black hole until April 19, when I manifested out from Tan Son Nhut Air Base on a medivac flight.

Suddenly, I remembered Prince. I remembered his face that last night on duty. I remembered looking up at the nose of a helicopter, trying to get up, and then someone screaming. I drew a blank from then until I woke on a flight between the Philippines and Guam.

In July of 1972, a man who attended Scout Dog Handler School with me on Fort Benning in Georgia called my home

phone and asked my mother to tell me that Santiago Escobar had died on Bien Hoa on May 19. She got the info to me through a friend. I wasn't welcome at home yet. That started a process of remembrances that took 40-plus years to come full circle. Santi and I were best friends from Fort Benning through my time in Vietnam.

Slowly, over the years, I recalled more and more of my time in Nam, though I didn't know in what Dog Unit I served. My sparse records offered no clues. I did recognize some of my other

buddies; faces, but no names. I even remembered some of the patrols I worked and the names of some of my buddies' MWDs: Bodie, Duke, and Santi's partner, Rex.

I woke one night from a nightmare with two numbers stuck in my head: 16X5 and 34. I dug out my records again, and the hand receipt I signed for Prince showed his serial number to be 16X5. The paper described him as a Scout Dog, but the term Patrol Dog somehow stuck in my head. I later thought "34" might have had something to do with my unit. So, in my head,

the 34th Patrol Dogs became my unit.

I had to be satisfied with that. There was no more. In 2003, I found a group online called the Vietnam Dog Handler Association. I quietly made my way into this group, hoping to find more information. I became frustrated because although I found a 34th IPSD, 34th Patrol Dogs didn't exist. I faded back into obscurity and stayed there. I didn't belong with those heroes. I tried to push it all into the back of my mind, but the nightmares and flashbacks wouldn't let it remain there. They crept forward in the darkness

like a leopard, ready to pounce.

Before he passed away, Perry Money, the VDHA President, got involved in my case. It took him three days to hit the jackpot. He'd contacted Donnie Lassiter in North Carolina, who not only remembered the 34th Patrol Dogs, a subset of the 34th IPSD, but Donnie remembered me. We graduated from Scout Dog Handler School together and flew to Vietnam from Fort Dix, New Jersey. Perry put us in touch, and many tears later, I started to feel like I belonged.

In 2018, I attended the VDHA reunion in San Diego, CA. Still unsure, my nerves made me feel like I didn't belong with these great men. Yet, the camaraderie these Dogmen had for each other burned infectiously. I wanted it so bad. If not for my wife, Donna, I'd have hidden in a corner, but the first night there, a man kept staring at me, shaking his head. He eventually came over and said, "Shorty? Is that you?" His name is Joe Robinson, a brother-in-arms. It felt like I'd come home at last.

Tell Your Story



Tell Your Story

Everyone has a memory. A story! Most are not about combat. Some provide insights to our heritage. 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

Decontamination Training with MWDs

Story and photos by Mauricio Campino

Members of the Dover Air Force Base Veterinary Treatment Facility, 436th Security Forces Squadron Military Working Dog section, and the 436th Medical Group Warm Zone Team held a training session on January 10, 2024, to practice the skills necessary to properly decontaminate MWDs and possibly save their lives in the aftermath of a nuclear, biological or chemical attack or spill.

“Military working dogs are part of the military family. We have to make sure we know how to care for them in any scenario,” said Tech. Sgt. Terrence Jasso, 436th Healthcare Operations Squadron noncommissioned officer in charge of diagnostic imaging and Warm Zone Team leader.

In the event of an incident or an accident involving CBRN agents, the Warm Zone Team is responsible for decontaminating patients before they are triaged and treated, ensuring healthcare workers can help

the wounded without becoming casualties themselves. The team holds monthly training days to practice donning protective equipment and setting up the decontamination tent. This month’s training went a step further. To ensure they know how to properly care for every member of Team Dover, the Warm Zone Team hosted members of the 436th SFS MWD section and staff from the Dover Veterinary Clinic.

“Decontamination of military working dogs is actually an annual requirement for our veterinary technicians,” said Capt. Alicia Bailey, Dover AFB Veterinary Treatment Facility officer in charge. “We really wanted to have a more hands-on training session as well as share this important knowledge.”

Bailey reached out to the Warm Zone Team to plan the event, and within a week, the vet clinic was able to set up a training session alongside the Warm Zone Team and members of the



Members of the Dover Air Force Base Veterinary Treatment Facility, 436th Security Forces Squadron Military Working Dog section, and the 436th Medical Group Warm Zone Team held a training session, to practice the skills necessary to properly decontaminate MWDs and possibly save their lives in the aftermath of a nuclear, biological or chemical attack or spill.

436th SFS MWD section. During the training, Bailey covered the proper technique for decontaminating dogs and demonstrated how to safely restrain dogs for decontamination when the dog’s handler is incapacitated or unavailable to help.

“Training like this is important for all those who attended,” said Bailey. “Especially the Warm Zone Team because it’s not likely

that veterinary technicians will be present following an incident involving CBRN agents in a deployed environment.”

The training was the first of its kind on Dover AFB, and there are plans to continue involving all three sections to ensure the vet clinic staff and Warm Zone Team are fully capable of decontaminating MWDs.



Left: US Air Force Senior Airman Courtney Burns, 436th Security Forces Squadron military working dog handler, demonstrates proper restraining techniques on MWD Zorro during a training session at Dover Air Force Base, Delaware.

Right: US Army Capt. Alicia Bailey, left, Dover Air Force Base Veterinary Treatment Facility officer in charge, supervises US Air Force Staff Sgt. Dominique Hedges, 436th Operational Medical Readiness Squadron physical therapy assistant, as he practices decontamination techniques on Military Working Dog Zorro.



Lively Labradors In Every Hue

Photos by: A1C Stolze, LCpl Lopez, Pfc. England, and P01 Polish

Ivan



Jett



Lively Labradors

**Rudder
&
Turner**



**Hawk
&
Csitar**





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From the Team at MWDHM...

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Artifacts of the Month



This funny-looking, fuzzy ammo can is quite a sight, but would you believe it was created to train dog handlers? An attached leash would allow the new or on-the-job trainee a command to give to their "dog". It allows the soon-to-be-handler a way to experience handling a "dog" before they are responsible for a living, breathing partner. Normally undecorated, the Camp Lejeune Dog Handlers crafted this can into a beautiful, goofy dog.

Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



Part of a group of 31 Army War Dogs leaving for Okinawa in 1950 after training in the San Francisco area. (Photo credit: Acme Telephoto via Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Archives.)