



# The Paw Print

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



Volume 4 Issue 11

November 2024

## Welcome!

All who enter  
**will be**  
sniffed,  
licked,  
stared at,  
slobbered on,  
and loved.  
(You've been warned)

## Marine Dogs of the Pacific



US Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Hunter Gullick, dog handler, Provost Marshal's Office, K9 Section, Marine Corps Base, Camp Smedley D. Butler, poses with his Military Working Dog (MWD) while training aboard Kadena Air Base, Okinawa, Japan. MWDs are trained to subdue or intimidate suspects and for detecting explosives, narcotics and other harmful materials. (US Marine Corps photo illustration by Sgt. Rebecca L. Floto)(This image was created using high dynamic range techniques.)

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The USMC deployed its first Marine Corps dog unit in mid-1943. Trained in North Carolina, the 1st Marine War Dog Platoon embarked for the South Pacific on June 23, 1943. They arrived after a four-and-a-half-month sea crossing.

The first Marine Corps K9 combat conditions took place during the invasion of Bougainville in November 1943. During that fierce

and prolonged battle, numerous K9 heroes, with their bravery and unwavering loyalty, left an indelible mark on Marine Corps and American history, earning the respect and awe of all who witnessed their actions.

Today, USMC working dogs still patrol and protect American and allied interests throughout the Pacific,

on land, and at sea. In our November Marine Corps-themed issue, we'll look at some fantastic dogs working with Marine Corps handlers to patrol and protect their pack.

Please join us inside for more USMC stories and photos as we celebrate the real Teufel Hunden or "Devil Dogs" of the United States Marine Corps.

## From the President's Desk



President, Albert Johnson



Here  
FOR THE  
leftovers




Welcome to the November issue of the Paw Print. November is my favorite month of the year. Not only is it cooling off outside, but it's also the month of celebrating veterans and their service. Thank you for the sacrifice of those who serve this great nation, especially those closest to our mission: the dogs and handlers of all service branches. Without them, we would not have the freedoms and stories we enjoy in every edition of *The Paw Print*. We honor them with every display or speech the organization gives to educate the public.

I would also be remiss if I didn't bring up the Marine Corps birthday. November 10th, 1775, is the celebrated birthday of the Marine Corps. While the Marine Corps officially started its dog program in early 1942, we want to pay homage to the Marine Corps in this issue of *The Paw Print*. From the Dobermans and shepherds of WWII to the war dogs of Vietnam so feared that the enemy broadcast messages on loudspeakers stating, "Marines take your dogs and go home," to stateside missions during the Cold War, to the

deserts of Afghanistan and Iraq, Marine dog teams have indeed served in every clime and place.

In WWI, the Marines were nicknamed *Teufel Hunden* or Devil Dogs. Battling their way up a hill, gas masks in place to protect against mustard gas, the Marines sweated extensively, their mouths foamed like rabid dogs, as they continued the climb on all fours. No wonder they appeared as "Devil Dogs" to the stunned Germans. The Marine Corps embraced this nickname, and Marines still use it as a term of endearment.

Another favorite part of November for me is the Thanksgiving holiday. It is a time when family and friends get together, share precious time, and create everlasting memories with one another. Whether during my formative years, when I was new to the Marine Corps and did not get to come home for the Thanksgiving holiday, or when I was deployed three years in a row during the same periods through the holiday season, I made sure to make memories with those around me, those I considered both friends and family. The only year I didn't feel

quite like this was Thanksgiving 2008, when I deployed to Baghdad, Iraq, for the second time. I included the story of that Thanksgiving in this edition. I truly hope you enjoy it as much as I did recalling and writing it. My only confidant on Thanksgiving that year was my trusty partner, Johnny F728. I wouldn't trade that memory for the world.

As November begins holiday shopping in earnest, we encourage you to take advantage of our online store and avoid any last-minute shopping. Our store is filled with tons of great products for the dog handler in your life, for yourself, or for no other reason than to support our mission, which cannot continue without you. We have added several new pieces of apparel to our offerings in hopes you find that perfect gift.

We here at MWDHM want to express our heartfelt gratitude to you all. We wish you a happy and safe Thanksgiving, and as always,

**K9 Leads the Way!**

*Albert Johnson*

## A Marine's Best Friend

by Capt. Jonathan Coronel, Photos by Cpl. Issac Cantrell

In 1918, the Marine Corps earned one of its many well-known nicknames at the Battle of Belleau Wood. After a ferocious offensive, the Marines forced the Germans into a retreat. Marine Corps legend has it that in the wake of their withdrawal, one German soldier left a journal in which he described the Marines as "Teufelhunden," meaning "devil dogs."

While Marines continue to fight with the courage and ferocity that earned them this nickname, one group of Marines rises above the rest in truly living up to this moniker. These are the Marine Corps' military working dogs (MWD).

Loyally accompanying warriors on battlefields around the world since ancient times, dogs have long provided militaries with their special skills and dogged determination in battle. During World War II, Marines used MWDs extensively to root out well-concealed enemy positions during the island-hopping campaigns in the Pacific. At the height of the Global War on Terror, MWDs served Marines well in Iraq and Afghanistan, using their keen senses to detect improvised explosive devices and saving numerous lives in the process. Even more recently, in October of 2019, a Belgian malinois MWD named Conan took part in the successful special operations forces raid to kill Islamic State

leader Abu Bakr al-Baghdadi in the Idlib province of Syria.

In the Marine Corps of the 21st century, MWDs are highly trained operators, putting their natural abilities to good use protecting Marines in a variety of complex environments. Specifically, MWDs are able to detect improvised explosive devices with their keen sense of smell, and can capture high value targets using their powerful nonlethal bite capability. When attached to an already formidable squad or platoon of Marines, these fierce dogs also heighten the unit's intimidation factor toward potential foes.

The Marine Corps relies on German shepherds, Belgian Malinois, and Labrador retrievers to fill its MWD program. The first stop for these motivated pups is Lackland Air Force Base in Texas, where all US MWDs are sent for training. The length of boot camp is based on each dog's abilities, and the instruction focuses on teaching obedience to orders, tracking and attacking, and physical fitness. After completing their basic training, most dogs spend six to ten years in the military before transitioning and retiring around age ten.

In order to tap into these dogs' skills, the Marine Corps relies on military working dog handlers – specially trained law-enforcement Marines that can attach to infantry and



**Jack Jack, a military working dog with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), sits after finding explosive materials during an explosive ordnance familiarization class aboard amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6). America, flagship of the America Expeditionary Strike Group, 31st MEU team, is operating in the US 7th Fleet area of operations to enhance interoperability with allies and partners and serve as a ready response force to defend peace and stability in the Indo-Pacific region. (Official US Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Isaac Cantrell)**

reconnaissance units in order to add a nonlethal capability as well as enhance the unit's situational awareness to threats.

After training, Marine Corps law enforcement and special operations units throughout the world receive their dogs and pair them with a handler. In garrison at their units, MWDs train just as all Marines do, regularly going on field operations to hone their skills in both urban and field environments and even running special obstacle courses to stay strong and agile, all alongside their trusted handler. The process of finding the right handler and dog pair is not an exact science; units will shuffle dog handlers around to get the right combination between the abilities of the Marine and the

MWD to support the necessary mission set.

For Cpl. Andrew Richter, an MWD handler with the 31st MEU's Maritime Raid Force (MRF), working with his dog is both a great honor and great responsibility. Richter and Jack are key enablers that attach to the 31st MEU's Maritime Raid Force, an elite group of Marines that specializes in reconnaissance, direct action raids, and the 31st MEU's signature mission: visit, board, search and seizure (VBSS), which is conducted to interdict hostile ships.

"This is what I enlisted in the Marine Corps after college to do. I love my job," Richter said. "It's a lot of responsibility because Jack is not just my best friend, but it's also like having both a coworker



and a child that depends on you for everything, all rolled into one."

When conducting simulated VBSS missions, Richter and Jack fast rope out of a Marine or Navy helicopter onto the target ship, ready to execute. Whether it's rescuing hostages, sniffing for bombs or drugs, or snatching a high value target, the duo is able to seamlessly integrate with the raid force to accomplish the mission. These nonlethal force and detection capabilities are skills that MWDs and their handlers can provide to infantry units in the field as well, and are regularly practiced both in garrison and on ship.

While aboard amphibious assault ship USS America (LHA 6), deployed with the 31st MEU, MWD handlers are often found taking their partner-in-crime out for a

much needed breath of fresh air and training in the hangar bay. This includes familiarization training, where dogs are acclimated to the sound of gunfire to prepare for combat operations, bite demonstrations where participants wearing thick protective bite suits get to experience the powerful jaws of military working dogs firsthand, and regular runs on the flight deck.

Wherever they go, MWDs like Jack, who is affectionately known as "Jack-Jack", are typically the center of attention. On ship, it's not uncommon to see large groups of Sailors and Marines taking a break from work in the hangar bay to pet MWDs as they enjoy the fresh air and ocean breeze.

Even so, typically when others pet or interact with an MWD, the interaction and affection is one-sided. A



Allie, a military working dog with the 31st Marine Expeditionary Unit (MEU), searches for explosive materials. (Official US Marine Corps photo by Cpl. Isaac Cantrell)

well-trained MWD answers only to their handler, and it's this fierce loyalty that makes these dogs one of the best companions on the battlefield.

"The bond between a working dog and their handler is unlike any I've experienced before. We both bring some-

thing unique to the table that neither one of us would be able to do without the other," said Richter. "A dog team is only as successful as the trust they have in one another's abilities and knowing that in order to complete the mission, we need to work together."

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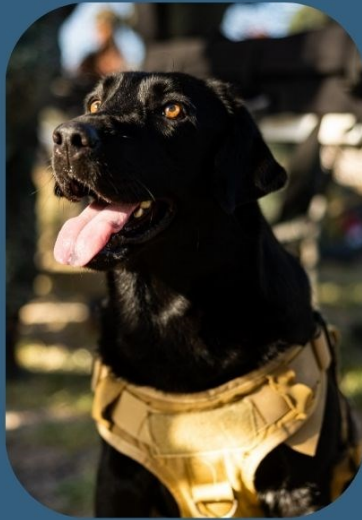


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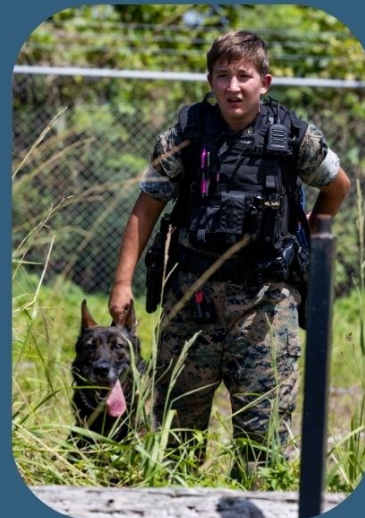
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9. Cpl. Hoppe and Poker

# DEVIL DOGS OF THE PACIFIC

DOD PHOTOGRAPHERS: 1. CPL. MALIA SPARKS, 2. SGT. DEVIN ANDREWS  
3/5/7 & 9 CPL. TYLER ANDREWS 4.SGT. MELANYE MARTINEZ 6. CPL. CODY ROWE  
8.LANCE CPL. BRIENNA TUCK



## Leaving A Paw Print: Honoring Fleck, a Military Working Dog

Story by Lance Cpl. Christian Radosti

US Marine Corps military working dog Fleck retired in July, 2024 after seven years of honorable and dedicated service at Marine Corps Air Station (MCAS) Yuma, Arizona.

Since the earliest days of our country, dogs and other animal companions have been making large impacts on service members leading to the official integration of military working dogs into the Marine Corps in 1942.

“During the Civil War, troops marching off to battle brought dogs along as unit mascots and companions. Among the most famous was Sallie, the mascot of the 11th Pennsylvania Infantry. She was with the unit from puppyhood, licking the wounds of her human comrades and lifting their spirits,” says US Department of Defense (DOD), Four-Legged Fighters, defense.gov publication.

“Two months before the war’s end, she died of a bullet wound on the front line. Years later, the 11th Pennsylvania Regimental Association built a statue in her honor at Gettysburg National Military Park.”

Like his military working dog predecessors, Fleck has made a profound impact not only on MCAS Yuma but also the Marines and sailors stationed here.

“During his service, Fleck has conducted demonstrations for the Make-A-Wish Foundation, ROTC Programs

and, college students for future career opportunities. He’s also searched various locations and swept areas for possible narcotics in a timely manner,” said US Marine Corps Cpl. Jayce Gilley, a military working dog handler with the Provost Marshal’s Office (PMO), Headquarters and Headquarters Squadron.

“Fleck has left a lasting legacy for his successors, I guess you could say he’s left his pawprint on PMO,” said Gilley.

Gilley has been working alongside Fleck as his handler for the last nine months to which they have grown a bond akin to family.

Gilley says, “working with military working dogs is like working with another family member, there are times where you’re not going to be on the same page. Sometimes you’re going to do something they don’t like and sometimes they’ll do something you don’t like.” Gilley reflects, “Then there are these beautiful moments, where you will walk into a room and you both know what you’re looking for, it’s smooth, it’s confident, it’s fluent. Days like that really make you fall in love with what you’re doing and who you are doing it with.”

With Fleck’s retirement imminent, Gilley is in the process to adopt him, a meticulous process which includes background checks and an



**Above: MWD Fleck partnered with several handlers at Marine Corps Air Station Yuma, Arizona, including our wonderful volunteer, Gabriel Ortega. Courtesy photo: Gabriel Ortega.**

**Below: US Marine Corps Cpl. Jayce Gilley, military working dog handler, and Fleck, pose for a photo June 10, 2024. (US Marine Corps photo by Lance Cpl. Elizabeth Gallagher)**



interview, discussing where the dog would stay, who and how the legal guardian would provide and care for them, to ensure Fleck’s well-being.

After Fleck retires from service he will head to a family farm, where he can enjoy acres of land.

Gilley concluded by saying, “Back home, Fleck is just as famous over there because of the stories I tell my father, and he tells his friends. It’s a small town where everyone will support each other, including Fleck.”

## Navy Dogs—My Personal K9 Journey: Part II

Story by Stephen Kinne

This article is a continuation of Stephen's story from last month.

While serving at Da Nang, I volunteered for a new Navy program called Project Water Dog. The Navy selected only four handlers: GM3 Joseph Villante, Dale Doodigian, Ricky Morris, and me to bring military secret testing into practice.

In the segment on Water Dogs in *War Dogs: America's Forgotten Heroes*, narrator Martin Sheen says, "In secret, the Navy conducted tests at Ben Keo Naval Base to find out if dogs could smell enemy divers hiding beneath the water."

As Air Force Master Sergeant Francis Flynn explained, "Someone underneath water has got to breathe. If they're using scuba gear, then the bubbles are breaking. If they're using a reed or a piece of hose stuck up to a hyacinth clump or something, the odor's still coming out. Once we deployed at Ben Keo, they never had another significant penetration or tried to penetrate into the barge itself."

"The Water Dog program was a success," Sheen continued.

We paired up with our new partners in Saigon: Villante with Fritz, Doodigian with Jet, Morris with Pete, and a handsome black and tan, deeply saddled German shepherd named Bear be-

came my partner. After short introductions, we relocated to Cam Ranh Bay for our training. No kennel facilities were ready for our dogs, so we set up camp on an isolated spit of land accessible only by boats.

The training process for Water Dogs follows the same progression of other specialized skills: start small, be successful, and build on that. At first, we had the dogs patrolling the beach with us to detect a swimmer approaching from the water. The goal remained the same throughout training: to have the dog detect and alert on the individual in the water. When they did detect the swimmer, they got to chase him away or make a shallow water attack as a reward. We added face masks and snorkels on the "enemy" for more stealth. The dogs quickly learned to recognize intruders and enjoyed their rewards.

At this point, we started the dogs working from inside the boat, near the water's edge. After successes near the shore, we headed into deeper waters, where scuba divers submerged into the lagoon's depths. The dogs had to alert when they smelled the divers' breath. Every team passed. Sadly, during this training cycle, we lost Pete to heat exhaustion.

We stayed briefly at Cam Ranh, guarding ships at



Photos courtesy Stephen Kinne . Above: Bear, my Water Dog partner.

Below: In the center of the Cau Lon River sat SeaFloat. Our task was to ensure that it did not get attacked by swimmer/sappers. We were on post from sunset to sunrise. In the foreground is the regular Tactical Base, Solid Anchor.



anchor, moored to piers. But, we always worked from our boats. Then came a new assignment: Operation SeaFloat/Solid Anchor on the Cau Lon River.

The U Minh Forest surrounding the Cau Lon River

lived up to its reputation as a haven for the Viet Cong. As Water Dog teams, our goal was to ensure that our partners would alert on any swimmer/sappers that approached the mobile SeaFloat base while the



Seabees constructed the permanent Solid Anchor base.

Working scent in a river is tricky; you have several different flow rates. The top level of water moves the quickest, the second thermocline of water can be much stiller, and the very bottom, the coldest water, will move at yet a different rate. Stack that on top of tidal flows, and things can get complicated. That means that depending on which depth the diver exhaled, his breath would break the surface at varying distances. He could be as close as five feet or as far as 50 yards.

This point is where I started my story: I patrolled with Bear at night on August 15, 1970, upstream of Sea-Float, hunting an invisible enemy. Our Boston Whaler skimming across the river, with Bear's nose lifted high into the air, as high as his legs could push him, searching for any sign of breath coming from the turbid waters.

Suddenly, Bear alerted and scrambled back towards the stern, indicating that we had passed someone in the water. We turned around and tried to zero in on the point-last-smelled, but the scent had disappeared, and we couldn't pick it up again. I advised all watches to toss grenades, and while we continued our search, working downstream, everyone threw grenades from both sides of the boats.

Three days later, a body surfaced.

The morning of August 18, 1970, broke overcast and drizzly. If not for the weather, the circling vultures would likely have alerted us to the body of a dead sapper. His body washed up at our sister site on the shoreline, Solid Anchor. As described by Commander US Naval Forces Vietnam Monthly Historical Summary, August 1970, on the morning of August 18, "the body of a dead swimmer sapper, apparently targeted for Sea Float, washed ashore at the Solid Anchor site. His chest had been crushed, and a medical examination determined that he had been dead for two to five days. It appears that this sapper was killed by one of the concussion grenades, which were randomly thrown from Sea Float as a swimmer deterrent.

"A combination of chemical and metal fatigue delayed-fused mine was attached to the body. The mine consisted of a wood box approximately 10" x 10" x 22". A spool of line was connected to each end of the box, with each spool containing approximately 70 meters of line. A flotation device attached to the top of the box consisted of three plastic floats. The mine contained a total of 118 pounds of TNT plus 13 blasting caps."

While I can't say for sure that Bear's alert resulted in this dead sapper, the chances remain pretty good



Photos courtesy: Stephen Kinne.

Above: Me in the water with a wrap, being a decoy for Jet, another of the four Water Dogs.

Below: In Nam Can, we had to check out one of Jet's paws.



that it did. Chances are equally good that we saved some lives that night.

In September 1970, the *Solid Anchor* base took on the logistic support job ashore, and *Sea Float* stood down. Soon after that date, the Navy moved the barges out of the area to serve other needs.

We returned to Cam Ranh in the fall of the year, and a few weeks later, I reported to Instrument Man "A" school. I remained in the Navy until 1988, but those nights spent in the company of my steadfast partners, Tip and Bear, as we guarded bases in the dead of night will stay with me forever.



## First Detachment of Fighting Marine Dogs (Historic WWII Dispatch)

by 2Lt Penn T. Kimball

The first detachment of fighting Marine dogs has arrived safely at a South Pacific port and will soon go into action against the Japanese.

Trained as scouts, sentries, or messengers, the dogs will be attached to front-line units fighting in the equatorial jungles. They are the first of their breed to be called upon to perform under enemy fire in the South Pacific War zone.

Composed of Doberman pinchers and German shepherds donated to the Marine Corps by private owners, the dog outfit underwent extensive schooling at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina, and Camp Pendleton, Oceanside, California, before embarking overseas.

The combat-trained "Devildogs" and their handlers made the long overwater trip from the United States aboard a Navy troop transport. The dogs survived the difficult journey through tropical seas without a casualty and all arrived here in excellent condition.

For the trip over, the dogs lived in individual crates placed on the open deck

of the crowded transport. Handlers exercised their charges on a leash for two hours daily, and fed them reduced rations of canned meat and dehydrated biscuit. Most of the trainers suffered from seasickness during the voyage. Not a single case was reported among the dogs.

Special equipment taken aboard included canvas slings for lowering the dogs over the side in case the ship had to be abandoned. A wooden post of fire-hydrant dimensions was also provided for other emergencies.

The dog unit is commanded by First Lieutenant Clyde A. Henderson, USMC, Oakhurst Drive, Brecksville, Ohio, an owner and trainer of champions himself. Before being commissioned last February, Lieutenant Henderson was president of the Doberman Pincher Club of Greater Cleveland and Co-director of training for the Western Reserve Kennel Club. A graduate of Pomona College and Ohio State University, he was an instructor in chemistry at James Ford Rhodes High School, Cleveland.



Above: Camp Lejeune Marine K9 training. The Marine Corps favored Dobermans because some of the early dogmen had raised and trained Dobbies in their civilian life.

Photo source: National Archives



Above: On the island of Bougainville, the first Marine K9 handlers joined the island-hopping campaign in the Pacific.

Photo source: National Archives

## A Honey Bun Thanksgiving

by Albert Johnson

The relationship between military units and requested dog teams could go one of two ways:

1. A unit would be excited to work with a dog team, recognizing an enhanced capability, such as sniffing out explosives or providing a psychological deterrent.

2. On occasion, if unit leadership didn't fully understand the additional assets a dog team brought, they might be soured by perceived problems that the dog teams might cause. Here, the role of a good handler is pivotal in maintaining a unit's support for current and future dog teams. Having experienced both scenarios, I understood the weight of this responsibility. I had a reputation for diffusing most of these tense moments, but I recognized that my actions sometimes exacerbated the situation. This story is leaning towards the latter, at least for one young soldier in the unit.

I remember a small Army patrol base in Baghdad that the engineer K9 unit I was attached to would regularly support. I can't recall the name of the base, but its location on the edge of Baghdad, T-walled off from the rest of the city and with no high ground, is etched in my memory. The base was home to a small detachment of tanks and other assets. When it rained, the base would often flood due to the lack of drainage. The unit

solved this issue with raised walkways made of pavers and 2x6 boards. The housing for K9 handlers was containerized housing units (CHUs), essentially single-wide trailers with three to four rooms sectioned off, all with access outside the building.

This base rarely received hot meals; we mostly had MREs (Meals Ready to Eat), with occasional treats like pop tarts, muffins, cookies, or the coveted honey buns. Despite the challenges, they only strengthened our resolve and camaraderie.

Johnny and I rotated to this base on certain mission days. This rotation was a mix of good and bad. It offered a welcome break from the usual rotation of high-risk missions or heavy walking patrols, but it tended to be more routine and less exciting. We mainly conducted vehicle patrols, the occasional short walking patrols, or waited for a passing unit to need a dog team to help them clear a village. Despite the regular nature of the base, it was one of my least favorite. However, my strong working relationship with the HQ unit command staff made it bearable and even enjoyable at times.

By the time Thanksgiving arrived, I had spent two uneventful days at the base. The leadership decided to suspend regular patrols for Thanksgiving afternoon to give everyone a break and



Johnny F728 and Albert taking turns eating Honey Buns on Thanksgiving Day 2008. Iraq, during Operation Iraqi Freedom.

Credit: Canva.

enjoy a special hot meal brought in for the holiday. The meal would consist of trays overflowing with turkey, stuffing, potatoes, green beans, hot rolls with real butter, cranberry sauce, and other delicious treats spread across large tables. Finally, a feast!

However, just a few hours before the scheduled arrival of the meal convoy, a loud explosion occurred along the back wall of the base. I quickly grabbed Johnny and my battle gear and ran to the command center, which was working in overdrive, to figure out what had happened. Their best guess was that an RPG (rocket-propelled grenade) had been fired at the back wall

in an attempt to breach it for a surprise attack. Luckily, the RPG exploded against the protective t-wall and did not breach it. The attackers fled before they could even fire a shot. The command center immediately organized a Quick Reaction Force (QRF) to deal with the threat. I was eager to be part of the mission, hoping to help find the explosives and weapons, but the command center declined, deeming it too dangerous to deploy their best assets too soon before assessing any potential heavy resistance. I spent the next hour badgering the command to let me out with the next patrol.

Johnny and I were given that chance about two hours



after the explosion. We teamed up with Bravo team QRF and went out with a few vehicles to search for threats. While the patrol proved uneventful, it deterred any additional attacks that day. After two hours on patrol, we returned to base dirty, tired, and hungry. While most of the soldiers in the patrol got right out of the vehicles and went straight to chow, I had to drop all my gear off at my CHU and ensure Johnny was settled in, fed, and watered. I then headed towards my vision of tables laboring under the weight of a feast. At the food staging area, my eyes trailed the dust kicked up by the convoy as it left. No food remained; just the faint smell of a delicious, missed meal lingered to tease me.

I felt crushed. Not only was I away from my family on Thanksgiving, but my make-shift tribe didn't leave me even a scrap of food. I ended up at the snack Connex box, a metal shipping container full of what Chris Willingham,

my Staff Sergeant, would call 'fatty cakes.' I quickly surveyed the slim pickings for something to fill my stomach's gurgling, empty pit. My eyes fell on the last two honey buns, which I quickly snagged.

Just as I was about to leave, a young Specialist entered and saw that I had taken the last two honey buns. He berated me for taking them both. I asked if he had eaten Thanksgiving dinner, and he responded, "Yeah, everyone did. I even got seconds. There was so much food."

I couldn't help but see red at this point.

I explained that I was on the last convoy outside the wire and I didn't get any dinner. I told him, "I'm taking both honey buns. You're SOL."

He said, "At least leave me one!"

I responded as I walked away, "Sorry, can't do that. Johnny dog needs his Thanksgiving dinner, too."

The kid was appalled and tried to argue further, but I just walked away, smiling widely, with the last two honey buns clutched in my grasp. I returned to my CHU just in time to see the young man arrive simultaneously with a Staff Sergeant in tow.

The SSGT looked smug when he asked me, "Did you take the last two honey buns? And one is for your dog?"

I said, "Yes, Staff Sergeant. I am going to feed it to him now since we didn't get any dinner."

The SSGT looked at me, then back at the Specialist, and said to the young man, "Grab that milk crate and sit right there. You are going to sit here and watch this Marine feed his dog YOUR honey bun."

I opened the door to the CHU, put Johnny on a leash, sat him at the door, and we both took turns taking bites of the honey buns till they were both gone. The SSGT was grinning from ear to ear,

chuckling, the Specialist was beet red, and Johnny and I were as happy as school kids given an extra snack at recess.

Since that Thanksgiving Day in 2008, every year, I have bought a box of honey buns to share with Johnny. He has been gone several years now, but I still buy them and have one in his honor. This annual tradition is not a celebration, but a way to keep his memory alive and remember the good times we shared. As I write this, I'm left wondering if that Specialist remembers back to that Thanksgiving, the day he didn't get to eat a honey bun, but my beloved dog did.

TO THE DOGS!



**Battle of The Beards**

"I'm Sorry, I Can't Hear You Over My Awesome Beard."

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[mwdheritagemuseum.org/2024-beard-battle/](https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/2024-beard-battle/)

**Results from the Battle of the Beard fundraiser will be available soon online. Don't miss the recap in our December newsletter.**

**Thank you to the handlers who participated by putting their beards on the chopping block.**



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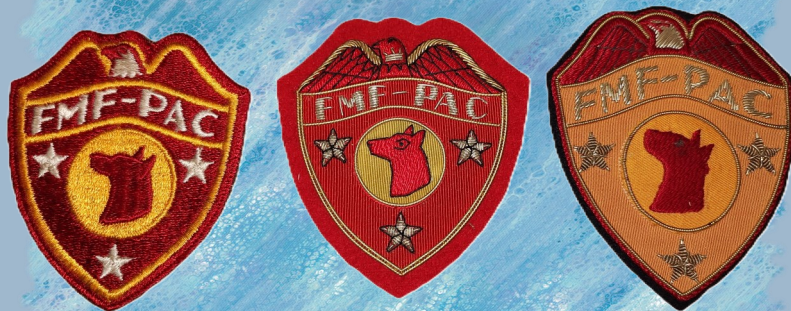
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## Artifacts of the Month



Until a redesign this year, the Fleet Marine Forces-Pacific (FMF-Pac) K9 patches were the only Marine K9 patches authorized. This unit, activated November 26, 1942, was trained in far-flung locations, such as Fort Robinson, Nebraska, and New River, North Carolina. Due to the isolated locations, miscommunications resulted in varied versions of this patch. These three patches are part of the museum archives.

## Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



K9 Veterans of the Battle of Bougainville and their handlers review the Marine handlers-in-training and their dogs.

USMC Photo