



# The Paw Print

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



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January 26-29, 2025  
Anaheim, California.

We are honored to have been invited to the 33rd Annual IPCA Law Enforcement Training Institute to share the heritage of America's Military Working Dogs with attendees.

This event is limited to Law Enforcement Professionals and is not open to the general public.

## Honoring Space Force K9



A US Air Force Airman and military working dog assigned to the 45th Security Forces Squadron secure a perimeter during exercise Coastal Defender on April 25, 2024, at Malabar Annex, Florida. The exercise involved day and night operations and served to reintegrate the 45th SFS to base ground defense principles. (US Space Force photo by Airman 1st Class Collin Wesson)

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The Space Force announced its new mission statement in 2023- "secure our Nation's interests in, from, and to space." Space Force designed this statement to more accurately reflect the functions Guardians perform in service to the United States.

The words and the new statement were crafted from suggestions by Guardians,

Space Force personnel who best understand what they do. The statement represents essential aspects of the Space Force mission that the President, Congress, and the American people have tasked Guardians with carrying out.

"In space" refers to activities comprehensively protecting the US from space and counter space threats.

"From space" references global mission operations like satellite communications and missile warning activities.

"To space" represents America's launch control and network infrastructure.

With dedicated dog teams, K9 leads the way, even supporting the security of missions in, from, and to space!

## From the President's Desk



President, Albert Johnson



Hello to our faithful followers, and welcome to the December edition of the Paw Print newsletter. I want to wish the Space Force a Happy Birthday. While there isn't a long history with the Space Force, their K9 teams are always vigilant and ready to protect the assets and personnel that keep America's Space Mission in the lead.

Our Battle of the Beards fundraiser was a resounding success thanks to your generous donations and the beards sacrificed by thirteen selfless handlers. We raised \$6,196.65. Thanks to all who supported this event. Donations like these help us preserve and share the history of our military working dog program.

This month also marks the Pledge of Allegiance Day, December 28th. Congress officially adopted the Pledge in 1945. Francis Bellamy penned it in 1892 to honor our nation's values of liberty and freedom. To this day, Americans speak no words more strongly or meaningfully than this Pledge, repeated daily across the country.

As we enter this festive season, I want to take a moment to express my

heartfelt appreciation for each and every one of you. Your support is not just invaluable, it's the lifeblood of our organization. We consider you an integral part of our K9 Museum Community, and we wouldn't be where we are today without you. Your backing allows us to share the inspiring stories of the incredible humans and their four-legged hero partners, and for that, we are truly grateful.

This year has been one of remarkable growth for our organization. We expanded the number of events at which we set up our public education displays. This year, we had events nationwide, from Florida to Indiana, Tennessee to Texas, and North Carolina to California. Our volunteers put in a ton of work this year to educate the public and spread awareness of the great sacrifices these teams made and continue to make. This year, we also took some time to have our first official volunteer retreat here in Tennessee. We shared many laughs, planned events for next year, ate great food, and brainstormed ideas to make our donations and mission reach even further than we did this year, all with-

out costing the museum a dime. Our volunteers are truly dedicated.

The schedule for next year is filling up fast, but if you have an event that fits well with our mission, please let us know. In the coming year, we plan to do even more interviews with handlers, K9 Corps officers, and vet staff. When our funds allow, we will add to our growing archive of artifacts and original paperwork.

Many of you have asked how you can help us. The answer is simple: we need your financial support to continue expanding our collection, and we need more volunteers. Whether you're in Florida or California, as long as you have a good internet connection and some spare time, we could use your help. Your continued support is also crucial to our mission. We wouldn't have come this far without you, and we look forward to expanding our reach with your help.

In closing, I want to express my personal gratitude for your continued support. Happy Holidays, and we look forward to talking to or seeing you next year!

**K9 Leads the Way!**

**Albert Johnson**

**If you know a Veteran in Crisis, the VA Veteran's Crisis Line is: Dial 988, Then Press 1.**

## Battle of the Beards Fundraiser—A Hair Raising Success

by Dixie Whitman

With a cast of characters so good-looking and divergent, it's no wonder that the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum's Battle of the Beards fundraiser proved competitive and vibrant.

Starting with our fearless leader's ample beard and a goal of raising \$5000, we reached out to other dog handlers from across the military spectrum to see who might offer up their facial fur to support their museum. The tremendous response humbled us. Fourteen amazing Marine Corps, Army, Navy, and Air Force handlers submitted photos and agreed to participate, even knowing they would have to shave their stubble if they didn't raise the most funds.

The mission of our mighty MWD museum is to conserve and share the history of America's Military Working Dog Teams, a legacy that you, as dog handlers, have contributed to and continue to uphold. Vaughn Schlott, one of the earliest USMC entries, said, "I participated in the Battle of the Beards to help the museum raise funds so the handlers and K9s would not be forgotten." And, even though he feels his beard is his defining trait, he's not concerned about losing it.

David Nielsen highlighted some inter-service good-natured ribbing, "I entered because I'm a man, and I have an epic beard. Plus, the Marines needed someone to chaperone them...

so... Department of the Navy reporting..."

Lee Bartholomew entered because Albert asked him. He is a bit concerned about losing his beard, "I'm not looking forward to my chins being naked and exposed to the elements. My beard keeps my face and chins protected from the constant rain and cold in the Pacific Northwest. But maybe shaving all this gray hair off my face will help me look a little younger?"

On the flip side, supporters gave a variety of reasons for donating in honor of their favorite handlers:

"Sean Demoe continues to be a great contributor to worthy causes, and his beard should be kept intact after bringing this cause to our attention! Semper Fi!"

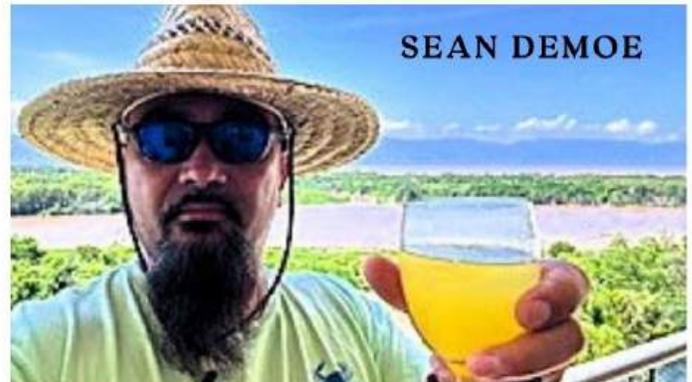
"For Mike VanCour in honor of the Army dog handlers I know!"

"We proudly support David Nielsen for his service to our nation and his unwavering and continued support for fellow Veterans. Not to mention, his beard is too fine to be shaved!" (Sorry about that!)

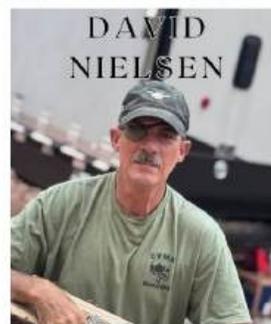
Ultimately, all but one stellar beard met the razor's edge. That beard belongs to our highest-grossing participant, Sean Demoe.

For all of the back and forth, this great fundraiser netted the museum \$6,196.65 to help us build America's mighty MWD Museum. We thank you all.

### BATTLE OF THE BEARDS



SEAN DEMOE



DAVID  
NIELSEN

Above: Sean Demoe, the winner.  
Left: Second place, also known as the most successful loser, Navy Handler David Nielsen.  
Left center: Third place, Army handler Nic Fontaine.  
Bottom left: Mike VanCour  
Bottom right: Lee Bartholomew

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



NIC FONTAINE



MIKE VANCOUR



LEE  
BARTHLOMEW

# Battle of the Beards



# Our Cast of Characters



## Like Fur-ther, Like Son: A Patrol Pup Story

Story and photos by Airman 1st Class Martha Moore

JOINT BASE ANDREWS, Md. — “SIT!” Beyond the confines of the high fences surrounding the 316th Security Support Squadron K9 unit lies a challenging obstacle course that tests skill and endurance. It is here that two devoted military working dogs, Ddrax and Rreno, found their calling. Intense training and tasks are all in a day's work for these two pups.

Ddrax and Rreno are a father and son team. They were both bred by the puppy program at Joint Base San Antonio Lackland, Texas, where military working dogs for the Department of Defense are trained.

The odds are slim for two dogs of the same lineage to end up at the same base according to US Air Force Master Sgt. Steven Daniel, the 316th SSPTS kennel master.

“I've been doing this for over a decade, for about 14 years now, and I've never seen the father-son combination at an installation,” Daniel said. “Heard of it a couple of times, just like the great myth, the great white buffalo, but you never really see it.”

Each pup has a unique way to showcase their personalities while they do their duty. Both are great detectives while also being slightly reckless, endearingly said US Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachory Boozel, a 316th SSPTS K9 trainer and Rreno's handler.

US Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachary Scott, also assigned to the 316th SSPTS and Ddrax's handler, expressed his care and passion for the pair's success.

Ddrax has been at Andrews since April 2021. Scott describes Ddrax as an energetic and strong-willed dog that takes toy retrieval seriously. Doing whatever it takes to get love and affection, Ddrax goes the extra mile.

Scott expressed that Ddrax has had his fair share of hardships, including experiencing a heat injury, but he still embodies grit and can be a poster pup for perseverance.

“We were going through the thick vines and bushes the other day. His tongue bled, and he got caught by like twigs,” Scott said. “Not even fazed, [Ddrax] just keeps



From left, US Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachory Boozel, a K9 trainer with the 316th Security Support Squadron, his military working dog, Rreno, US Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachary Scott, a K9 handler with the 316th SSPTS and his military working dog, Ddrax, stand outside the kennels at Joint Base Andrews, Md. Rreno and Ddrax are a father-and-son pair stationed together at Andrews. (US Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Martha Moore)



US Air Force Staff Sgt. Zachary Scott, a K9 handler with the 316th Security Support Squadron, and his military working dog, Ddrax, perform during the Capitol K9 Trials at Joint Base Andrews, Md. Scott and Ddrax competed in a series of events that included obstacles and obedience drills. (US Air Force photo by Airman 1st Class Martha Moore)

going, and that, I would say, is a perfect example of who he is. He's just a fun-loving furball who looks crazy, but he just wants to be loved, get a toy, and have a good time."

On the other paw, Rreno arrived at Andrews in December 2022. During a demonstration of daily training, Boozel shared his take on Rreno's apparent thought process while switching to detection mode to retrieve a toy that was thrown out of eyesight. In the midst of his excitement, the pup showcased his multitasking skills, seeming to effortlessly tap into his prey-hunting instincts to perform the current mission.

"Everything happening all at once" is how Boozel described his pooch.

Boozel and Rreno have been able to create many memories while on missions throughout the US, but one experience stands out to Boozel most - just spending time together and chasing waves.

"Getting him on the beach and kind of like being a dog a little bit. It's pretty neat how exciting it is for him," Boozel said.

"STAY! Good boy."

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Photos at right: Both images of Rreno taken by Airman 1st Class Martha Moore.



THEY SEE YOU WHEN YOU'RE EATING.  
THEY KNOW WHEN YOU GOT SNACKS.

mwdheritagemuseum.org

**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](mailto:newsletter@mwdhm.org)

## Deb Tanis Omernik: One Brawl, One K9

by Dixie Whitman

The medic pursed his mouth as he inspected Deb Tanis's forearm. Looking at the limb, swollen and bruised to a stunning scarlet and plum, the doc shook his head and suggested that he give her a medical excuse for two weeks. The presentation of Deb's arm, inflamed and painful from the onslaught of bite traumas caused by agitated K9s, shocked him. Despite the physical toll of her training, Deb's resilience remained unwavering. She refused the medic's offer of a two-week break, declaring, "If my arm falls off, I don't care." She was determined to keep her Drill Sergeant/Trainer from running her out of his class, so she returned with a bandaged arm.

The Drill Sergeant in charge of Deb's K9 training class at Lackland didn't welcome a female handler. He shared his blunt reality, pointing his finger in her face: "Women do not belong in the military because they get pregnant and get out." He made it clear that he would challenge her resolve with the goal of forcing her out of his career field. Between 17 and 20 dogs were in this session, and he required Deb to catch multiple dogs daily. Massive military dogs grasped and shook her in numbers far exceeding the requirements of her male counterparts. And while she wore the decoy suit, the brute force of the jaw pres-

sure applied to her more petite frame allowed damage to occur. But, despite the onslaught of K9 jaws, she remained determined to shatter her sergeant's expectations, refusing to give him any satisfaction. Four or five other guys in the class knew what was happening. They had arrived with doubts about women, but she changed their minds. In the end, they stood beside Deb. The hard lesson learned is, 'Don't quit. Don't let anyone make you quit.'

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After graduating high school, Deb did not want to attend college but needed to start working. When she applied for a job at a fabric store in her local mall, the store owner pointed out that Deb couldn't sew. She went as far as lecturing Deb on what '*a woman should be doing.*' Frustrated with this response and unwilling to be confined to traditional female roles, Deb noticed an Army Recruiter Office across the mall corridor from the fabric store. Having prior experience working in kennel care for a veterinarian and a deep love for animals, she inquired about possible jobs in the Army that involved working with animals. The recruiter mentioned that she could become a K9 handler but would first need to become a military police officer. With determination to break free from the norm, Deb signed up, unaware of the unex-



Photos above courtesy of Deb Tanis—now Deb Tanis Omernik. Left: Photo of Deb Tanis and her partner, Chunga Z319 at Fort Stewart. Right photo is Deb Tanis and Chunga Z319 flanked by other Fort Stewart handlers and dogs.

pected challenges ahead and the possibility that the recruiter might have misled her. Female K9 handlers were rare.

Deb's military journey began at Ft. McClellan, a massive base near Anniston, Alabama, that churned out a half-million troops during WWII. When she arrived in the 1970s, it was home to the Women's Army Corps (WAC) and the Military Police (MP) School. After attending MP School, Deb's path led her to Fort Stewart, Georgia, as an MP, where she gained valuable patrol experience. Her journey then took her to Lackland for K9 school and back to Fort Stewart with a new set of skills.

Deb's long-cherished dream of working closely with animals became a reality when

she grabbed the leash of Chunga Z319 at Fort Stewart as its first female handler. Chunga, with his exceptional talents, became her reliable partner. He was adept at searching, guarding, growling, and barking when the situation demanded, but he also had a gentle side, especially during demos for the schools or public. His versatility was evident in his ability to search for drugs and, occasionally, people.

During a routine patrol, Deb and Chunga stumbled upon an abandoned car in a roadside ditch. Concerned for the missing driver's safety, they initiated a search. Chunga's exceptional tracking skills led them straight to the inebriated but unharmed driver, a testament to the effectiveness of their partnership.

Deb and Chunga's work extended beyond patrolling. They conducted thorough car searches at the gates, ensuring no contraband slipped past Chunga's nose. During a National Guard weekend, Chunga's keen sense led to a significant find of two kilos of heroin concealed in a Guardsman's boot. While marijuana finds were not uncommon, a heroin find of this magnitude was a considerable blow to drug trafficking on base.

There's an often-referenced Texas Ranger Motto, "One Riot, One Ranger." This saying arose from the thought that one Texas Ranger was enough to quell one riot. The same holds for K9. "One brawl, One K9." Based on Deb's experiences dealing with bar fights, if she entered the fray with Chunga lunging and barking at the end of his lead, the parties would all back up and cool down. A K9's ability to restore order in such tense situations is a testament to their training and confidence and highlights the power of their presence.

One K9 experience that stands out for the wrong reasons is a flight on a C-130 to a New York training exercise. The bucket



Photo above courtesy of Deb Omernik.  
Photo of Fort Stewart kennels during her time working K9.

seats in the cargo hold of a C-130 make for an unsettling journey, and shortly into the trip, other soldiers pulled their helmets off and used the lining for hurling buckets. The longer the flight went, the greener the passengers got. Deb chuckled at the unfortunates until the seasickness hit her, as well. She handed the end of Chunga's leash to the high-ranking officer seated next to her and participated in the heaving event with the other guys. Getting off the flight, still nauseated, she held onto her helmet and had both the officer and her dog heeling beside her.

At the training exercise in the woods of Fort Drum in upstate New York, she and Chunga were part of a team. While they were

patrolling, she ran into 15 soldiers who seemed lost. They asked if she could help them find their way back to their base. "Sure," she said. "Let me show you the way." At that point, she casually walked all of them directly into her team's camp and then, from behind, said, "You're all captured. Everybody down on your knees." The "enemy" had mistaken her for a WAC out walking her dog — a crucial lesson to learn — not all women are typists.

Deb faced many questions and some resentment from men in her field. When asked what she would have changed about the program, she replied that what she would have changed has

changed. The way that people view women working with K9s has pivoted.

One fellow MP and Chunga's previous handler recently emailed her, "It was a pleasure to work with you at Stewart."

*"You were a person of good character, quick wit.*

*"If I'm being honest, I have to admit that throughout my career, I looked at female MPs with a more critical eye than my male counterparts. And, throughout my career, there were only a handful that earned my respect and trust. You are one.*

*"As hard as it was to leave Chunga behind, I knew he was in good hands."*

Another one of the handlers said, "You never showed any fear. I've used you as an example to female officers many times over the years. Always had respect for you. You never let your gender, size, physical strength define you. You didn't let others decide what your limitations were."

Deb's accomplishments came early in the history of female dog handlers when things were much more challenging for women than they are today. Since that time, there has been an increased acceptance of women's roles in many previously male-dominated career fields.

Deb credits much of her success to her dog, "Chunga taught me that you can do whatever you want to do. There will always be someone there for you. Live life without always thinking about yourself."

Her time with Chunga lasted a year and a half, but the memories continue with her today. Deb

says that her partner had integrity, honesty, protectiveness, and kindness in the appropriate proportions. She's proud of the work they did together, and if she were able to talk to him right now, she would tell him,

"Because I had you, I never had to pull out a gun.

"I love you."



## Ellsworth, Go To Hell

At Da Nang in 1968, my "cubie" was Chester A. "Chet" Moore. Chet volunteered for Vietnam to escape Ellsworth Air Force Base in South Dakota. What follows is his reason for wanting to leave so badly.

Ellsworth was a Strategic Air Command Base (SAC). General Curtis LeMay started SAC with the specific purpose of being a primary strike force. SAC had the B-52s and ICBMs (Intercontinental Ballistic Missiles) in its arsenal. It also had quite an inventory of nuclear weapons to arm these with.

This event occurred on Mother's Day, 1967. Being in South Dakota, Ellsworth had some severe weather during the winter months. I once spent a winter in South Dakota and described that experience as "There are only three trees between the Dakotas and the North Pole. Two of them lose their leaves in the fall, and the last one suffers from stunted growth. Nothing stops that freezing blast from coming down!"

Chet, a dedicated driver for a B-52 Alert Pad post-

ing at Ellsworth, was part of a unique team. He and several other dog handlers would squeeze into a van and venture into the vast, empty plains. These plains were home to B-52s sitting on the pads, loaded and ready to take off.

Chet's duty was to drop off a handler at each site and continue until he reached his pad; in this case, he was the last one out of the van. When it came time to return, he would pick everyone up, and back in they would go. Only this night was going to be different.

It had threatened to snow, and finally, it cut loose with a vengeance. Snow came down in bucketfuls, and when Chet got the call to head back in, the snow drifts covered the road and made it impossible for him to get back. The other handlers, being closer to the base, could walk back. Chet, on the other hand, was trapped. The isolation, the bitter cold, and the uncertainty of his situation must have been overwhelming.

It took three long, agonizing days before the snowplows could force their



Grateful to have escaped to Vietnam, Chet, also known by the nickname "Ceece" shown above, on post in Vietnam with his Sentry Dog Partner, Khan 251F. 1967. Da Nang. Courtesy photo.

way out to where Chet and his dog were. The base airdropped him food, jackets, and sleeping bags. Every day, Chet would wake up, roll down the window in the van, and dig his way up to the top of the snowfield that surrounded him. He credits the dog and his body heat for keeping the inside of the van barely habitable during this period.

When they finally got to him and dug him out, he noticed the snowdrifts covering the tops of the B-52 tails on the way back in. That is fifty feet from

the ground to the top of the tail! When he eventually returned to base, he first dropped off his dog at the kennels, then went straight into Personnel and volunteered for Vietnam. To this day, you cannot get him to visit anywhere near the Dakotas, even in the summertime.



**Thank you for the generous donation in honor of USMC handler Christopher Baity.**

## How Cool Is This?

By Lane Hagerdorn

Before you read too far into this, I want to ensure we are on the same page. Yes, I know this is the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Newsletter, and yes, I know that fast-food places typically reserve their stuffed toys for children.

In April of 1999, I was an Explosive Detector Dog Handler stationed at Travis AFB, Northern California. After losing my first dog to bloat, I was assigned and certified with MWD Morgan/T318. Morgan was much more of a lover than a fighter, having lost her patrol certification years before I picked up her leash. What she lacked in aggression was what she made up for in detection – her nose was incredible, and her ability to work to source in both training and real-world problems was nothing short of magical.

While out working one day, we got the call to return to the kennels for some news. The news was that we had deployment orders to Saudi Arabia, Prince Sultan Air Base, PSAB, Al Kharij, and Al's Garage. This deployment was our first overseas work together, and we were excited to get rolling.

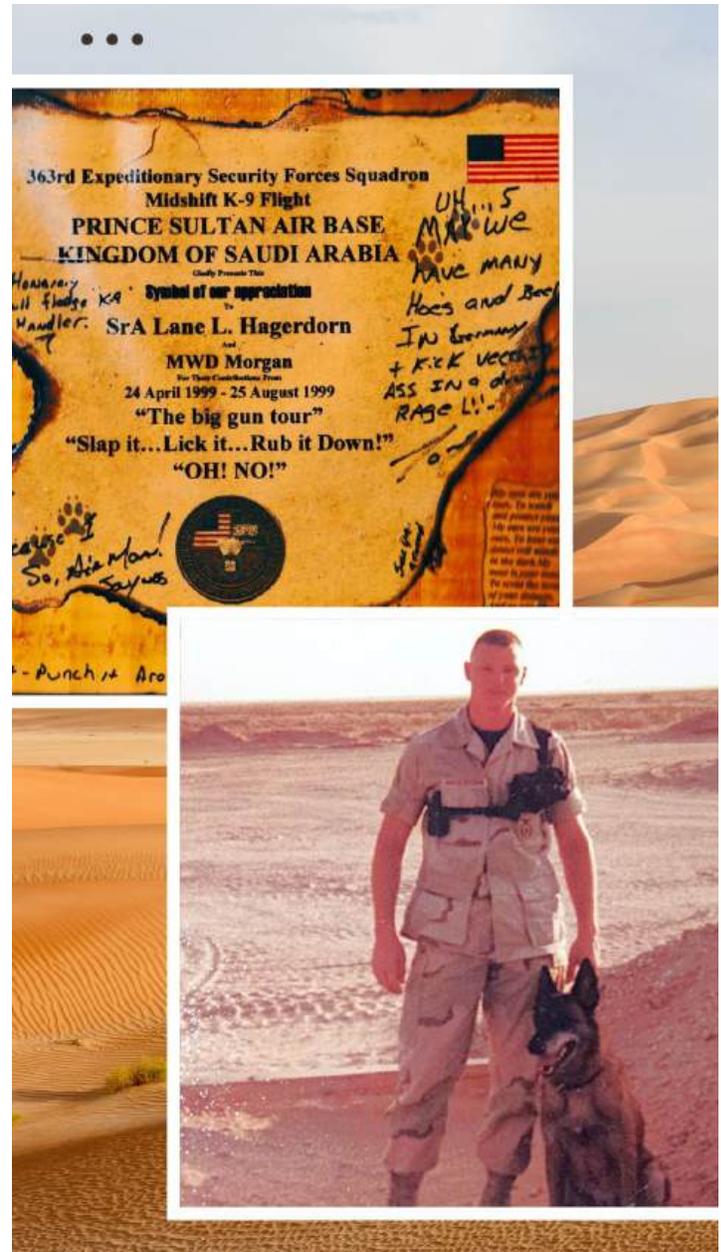
A funny thing happens when a troop gets these orders in the era of frequent and unplanned expeditionary deployments.

On the one hand, they look forward to the change of pace, the chance to use all of the training *for real*, and, of course, the tax advantages and hostile fire/hazardous duty pay.

Then there's the other side of the coin.

The realization is that you're leaving friends and loved ones at home for an extended time, sometimes without knowing when you'll return. The imposter syndrome that can set in when contemplating the work you're about to embark on and questioning, 'Am I ready?' And finally, the food—good old American food—from home-cooked comfort to fast-food satisfaction—was often one of the top three things you know you'd be missing once you're outside the borders of the United States.

Once I had orders in hand and a planned departure date for this deployment with Morgan, I started the usual preparations – gear, medical clearance, team records, and the sort.



Two photos of Lane and Morgan's deployment to Prince Sultan's Air Base in Saudia Arabia. Top photo on left is a memento from the 363rd Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron.

Bottom photo is of Lane and his Explosive Detection partner, Morgan while deployed in the desert.

Photos courtesy of Lane Hagerdorn.

The day came to take off, and we loaded up into the Kennel Truck, a fully marked USAF Police rig we used to transport equipment, patrol, and, of course, get teams to the airport for deployments.

On the way, I was thinking about all the things mentioned—missing friends, making sure we were ready to rock-n-roll, and the food... and then, all of a sudden, rumbles and growls started.

I told the driver - "Hey man, let's swing through Taco Bell so I'm not starving on the flight to the East Coast" (my first stop on the way to the desert).

We took the next exit with a Taco Bell sign, rolling right into the drive-thru and quickly reaching the window. Popping out of the window was an early 20s woman who smiled wide when she saw Morgan perched in the truck's backseat, checking everything out.

"What's your dog's name?" she asked.

"Morgan."

"Aww, that's my cousin's name - how sweet."

"Yep - she's my girl, all right..."

After a few minutes, the young woman handed over the bag of food and,

as we started to pull away, said, "I snuck in a little something for your girl too..."

I opened the bag, and inside was Taco Bell's promotional plush Chihuahua. When I pushed the "squeeze me" button, and it said, "How Cool Is This??" Morgan popped up, her ears and nose going crazy trying to figure out what the heck this thing was.

I handed it to her, and she immediately took it in her mouth, turned, and placed it on the seat with her.

She began licking and holding onto it with her front paws, not letting it move much. Mesmerized, you would have thought she was waiting for this toy her whole life.

Fast forward a few days, and we landed in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. As we stepped off the C-141 and onto the hot tarmac, the Saudi Customs official began running through my gear and paperwork.

He then asked what my dog was carrying.

I shared that it was her new toy. He then told me he would have to inspect and possibly confiscate it.



**Morgan's Taco Bell Chihuahua toy has a permanent and proud display spot on the top of Lane's Challenge Coin rack. Sometimes it's the little things that take us back to great memories of that special dog, including this tiny Chihuahua. Photo courtesy Lane Hagerdorn.**

"You can inspect it, but you're not keeping it," I shared.

I told Morgan to drop it, and she did.

Then the inspector decided he would retrieve it - and at that moment, we understood two things. One, Morgan didn't forget her lessons of formerly being aggression certified, and two, this toy was HER baby, and no one except me was going to be able to separate her from it!

Morgan and I completed that tour in August of 1999 and headed back stateside with her proudly carrying her baby all the way home.

Morgan crossed the rainbow many, many years ago, but on top of my coin and medal display sits a 4 1/2" tall Chihuahua that is still covered in desert dirt and Morgan drool marks. With a push of a button on his body, he still declares, "How Cool Is This."



## The Only Decorated Hut at Da Nang, Christmas 1968

Story and photos by Greg Dunlap

It's Christmas, and I am certainly not around my family to celebrate it. When I enlisted, I knew this would sometimes be the case. The first time I didn't make it home for the holidays was in 1965 because I was in "Boot Camp!" **YUCK!!** And now, in 1968, I am not at home because I am in, of all places, **"VIETNAM!" DOUBLE YUCK!!** (plus words that are adjectives, verbs, pronouns, and nouns that are too unacceptable to express or print.)

So I am out tonight in the most boring of assignments, the supply yard. Walking up and down endless rows of machine parts, brake pads, officer crap (who said that?), what have you, what not, and I notice there are cases of computer programming cards stacked on a shelf.

Computer programming cards? Wait, what the hell are these, and can I use them? 3 X 7-inch-thick paper cards with punch indicators and crap printed on them. Could they be useful? My mind starts whirling. I can fold, staple, and paint on them to create make-shift Christmas decorations! A garland and a wreath - or a facsimile thereof. So here I come in the next morning, having stuffed two boxes of these cards in my bag and carrying two under my arm. It's not noticeable at all, nope!

My roommate Chet thought I was nuts when I came in with those. Every so often, one of us dog handlers

would "discover" something usable in the supply yard, and the word would go out that you could get fans, mosquito nets, ponchos, whatever there, and Holy Cow! Wartime Shortages would occur! But what the hell are we going to use computer punch cards for? The better question is how are they supposed to be used, and what the hell is a computer anyway? Remember, this is 1968, and that device, unlike now, did not run our lives like the present day.

"You'll see," I say, and after getting a little shuteye and waking up, I take the boxes out and study them. Fold the narrow end back loosely like you are making a paper airplane, but do not crease it. Keep it bowed, and then staple the ends together. People would walk by and look at me as if I had lost it. Stapling the ends of computer punch cards together, Greg's off to the funny farm. They always figured I'd end up there anyway. I am sometimes tempted to start an argument with myself, including gestures, anger, shouting, and such, to cement that standing a little further in people's minds.

When I had quite a few made, I started stapling them onto a stiff circular cardboard cutout. Starting on the outside and working inwards, a wreath slowly took shape. Others noticed, and when I told them what I was doing, I had others



helping me put this together. I also sent a letter home requesting cans of red and green spray paint, bulb ornaments, glitter, and tinsel.

We also discovered that if you folded one end one way and the opposite end the other, poked a hole in the middle, and strung that together, a garland would start to form.

Now, everyone in the hooch engaged in one way or another, and within a brief time, Hut 6, the K9 Hut, was the only fully decorated Hut in the compound! We even

mounted speakers behind the outside louvers on the face of the building so we could project Christmas Carols outside for everyone to enjoy. When we came off the post on Christmas morning, there was caroling, drinking (of course), and goodwill to all, except for the LIFERS Hut next door, who were doing their usual, complaining about the noise. We did not care.

Merry Christmas!



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## Artifacts of the Month



This leather muzzle covered the snarling mouths of countless military working dogs at Lackland Air Force Base's dog school. Dating from the late 1960s and into the early 1970s, this Ray Allen muzzle is part of a large collection of artifacts acquired by the museum during 2024.

The insert shows more detail stamped into the leather: RAY ALLEN MFG CO. COLO SPGS, COLO.

## Historic Pooch Pic of the Month



**Members of the 30th Security Forces Squadron gathered during a K9 Veterans Day Ceremony at Vandenberg Space Force Base, Calif., March 13, 2024. This ceremony honored present and past military working dogs and their contributions to our nation. (Photo by US Space Force Senior Airman Tiarra Sibley)**