The Paw Print

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

Volume 5 Issue 1 January 2025

Upcoming Events:

January 26-29, 2025. Anaheim, CA. 33rd Annual IPCA Law Enforcement Training Institute. Event open to law enforcement professionals.

March 29, 2025. Fredericksburg, TX. National Museum of the Pacific War. War Dog Exhibit.

Inside this issue:

A Call of the Wild

It takes a special kind of dog and special kind of human to thrive in the Alaskan winter. Over the next three newsletter issues, we are going to look at Alaska's sled dogs and their impact on America's military working dog program. Many of the earliest military uses with dog teams were by the Army's Signal Corps.
Photo: Courtesy of National Archives

The paws crunched into the crusted snow, deep enough to bury the entire dog sled. With snowfalls sometimes measuring over 100", Alaska has proven to be a challenging climate for men and dogs. Even in these brutal conditions, military men, women, and dogs ensure the safety of their military installations.

America's military working dog history began with Sled Dogs in Alaska, used for communication, search-and-rescue, and patrolling. In the first three issues of 2025, our newsletter team will present some Alaska-style K9 history.

Castner's Cutthroats, a joint unit of Native Alaskans and the military, served officially as the 1st Alaska Combat Intelligence Platoon, or Alaska Scouts. The "Cutthroats" were comprised of hearty, colorful men and proved instrumental in protecting the Aleutian Islands from the Japanese during WWII.

"I was living like a king. I was diving for king crab and eating fresh seafood and fowl – wild ptarmigan, ducks, and geese – for dinner. They told me not to break the radio sound unless I saw a Japanese plane, so I did not. When the Alaskan Scouts came to 'rescue' me, they started thinking that maybe they would like to stay with me."

—Lt. Acuff[1]

[1]*Lindsay Key. "Documentary brings back Alaskan memories"*

From the Vice President's Desk

Lane Hagerdorn

Vice President

Happy New Year to Our Handlers and Supporters!

As we welcome 2025, the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum extends heartfelt wishes for a Happy New Year to all K9 handlers, their families, and the dedicated community of supporters who have made 2024 an incredible year. Your continued support allows us to preserve and celebrate the remarkable legacy of military working dogs (MWDs) and the handlers who serve alongside them.

Looking ahead to 2025, we're thrilled about the opportunities to connect with you at events—both online and in person. Your enthusiasm and dedication drive our mission, and we hope to see you at one of our gatherings, honoring the courage and commitment of MWD teams past and present.

This January, we're highlighting a rare and fascinating chapter of U.S. Military K9 history—sled dogs. While many are familiar with the brave patrol and detection dogs who have served in conflicts worldwide, the vital role of sled dogs often remains unsung. These remarkable animals were deployed in harsh, icy terrains where their strength, resilience, and loyalty were crucial for missions in extreme climates.

We encourage you to explore this unique feature in our newsletter, which sheds light on their extraordinary contributions and underscores the diverse roles that military working dogs have played throughout history.

None of this would be possible without the tireless efforts of our volunteers. Whether working behind the scenes in social media, marketing, event coordination, or communications, these individuals are the lifeblood of our organization. They bridge the gap between the museum and our supporters, ensuring that the incredible stories of MWDs and their handlers reach a wider audience. To all our volunteers, thank you for your unwavering commitment and passion. You are the backbone of our success, and we are endlessly grateful for all you do.

Be sure to check out the updated back page of this issue! We've introduced two exciting additions. First, we're featuring recommended books dedicated to the stories of military working dogs. These carefully selected reads provide deeper insight into the lives and sacrifices of these incredible animals and their handlers.

Second, we're thrilled to showcase photographs submitted by handlers, veterinary staff, and families. These images capture the powerful bond and daily life of MWD teams and serve as a poignant reminder of why preserving their legacy is so important.

We're honored to announce the upcoming rededication of the South Carolina War Dog Memorial, which the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum will co-host and support. This incredible monument stands as a tribute to the service and sacrifice of MWDs and their handlers, and we're committed to ensuring its legacy endures.

We need your help to make this event a success! Volunteers are essential for organizing and executing the rededication ceremony. If you're interested in contributing to this meaningful project, please reach out to us—we would love to have you on the team.

Here's to an incredible year ahead. Together, we'll continue to honor, preserve, and share the inspiring history of military working dogs.

K9 Leads the Way!

Lane Hagerdorn

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

Alaskan War Dogs: Not forgotten

by Jack Waid 354th Fighter Wing Historian

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska - **Editor's note: This story is part one of three in a series written by Jack Waid, 354th Fighter Wing historian, featuring the US military's use of sled dogs in Alaska. Part two, next month.**

On Oct. 28, 2013, at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas, a monument was dedicated to military working dog teams, specifically recognizing the sacrifices of dogs in combat, a tribute to the military working dog and their handlers.

The military dog conjures up images of the Doberman on the sands of Iwo Jima or the Belgian Malinois, as seen on many military installations today. It most certainly brings to mind the many images of the military working dog teams currently engaged in missions in the Middle East.

The importance of the monument at Lackland cannot be understated (sic). It is a memorable reminder; a picture speaking a multitude of words. Its description of military working dog teams is relevant today, even here in Alaska.

In the not-so-distant past, Alaska boasted the only military working dogs in the whole of the US military. In his book "War Dogs," author Michael Lemish shares that at the beginning of World War II, there were only about 50 military working dogs and they were all sled dogs in Alaska.

The use of dogs in Alaska is not a new concept. Author David Anderson said, "In interior Alaska, the history of dog team use ... can be traced to the contact period 150 years ago and before." He goes on to say dogs were used for a multitude of activities, including military applications such as exploration, accomplished primarily by the Army.

As a lieutenant in the Army, the late Maj. Gen. Joseph Castner explored the interior of Alaska. During his 1898-1899 exploration missions, he used dog teams and sleds as he explored from the Cook Inlet region to the areas around North Pole and Fairbanks prior to heading up the Yukon River to Fort Yukon.

During the time of the Alaskan Gold Rush of the 1890s, Army Signal Corps officer, then Lt. William Mitchell arrived in Alaska. Between 1901 and 1905, he was directed to connect Alaska by telegraph, of which previous work had been hampered by the Alaskan interior winters.

Mitchell believed he could work year round while erecting the Washington-Alaska Military Cable and Telegraph System and the big proponent of his success would come by using dogs. Thus, he sought out local dog experts who taught him the fine art of mushing.

He used his new found skills and knowledge acquired to purchase 80 dogs along with harnesses and sleds for the government. With these dogs and equipment, hundreds of miles were traversed to complete the WAMCATS within two years, well ahead of Mitchell's five-year schedule.

Lead dogs, like Rinsky, slept out in an 80 mile per hour Artic gale. Rinsky was owned by Sgt. Joseph D. Healey. Credit: National Archives

Elmendorf Field, 1946. Library of Congress photograph shows dog sled and team of dogs next to military airplane. Credit: Photographer, Vern Brickley. https://lccn.loc.gov/2013650193

As time passed, the renown of the variety of Alaskan sled and pack dogs became well-known throughout the world, and their importance would become cemented in the history of the military.

The Night of Tet 68, Large Dark Clouds

by Greg Dunlap

This article is another gem from a suite of articles by Greg Dunlap about his time serving as a USAF Sentry Dog handler with the 366th SPS during the Vietnam War.

In the July 2024 issue, we learned about Greg's introduction to his K9 partner, Blackie X129.

This piece takes us along for his first night on the Perimeter of Da Nang AFB, just in time for the Tet Offensive.

Being the new guy, having gained some respect by being Blackie's new handler, and still in possession of all my extremities with no new openings in my body, I thought things may improve now. They had even gone to the trouble of having someone who would have typically had the night off accompany me on post for my first working night. Hey, first night working and an old timer to show me the ropes, what more could I ask for?

His name was Chuck, and I remember his face to this day. He had about a month left before he rotated back home to the States and was looking forward to it. The first assignment I drew was in Alpha Company, around Kilo 5 or 6, just at the edge of the perimeter, where the fence swung to the right on the south side of the base. Handlers called it a walkout post because of its proximity to the kennels. Right after guard mount (roll call held for Security Police before going to work), we got the dogs and walked out to work.

Alpha Company's command post was on one side, and approximately 100 yards south was the other perimeter bunker. My post that night was between the two of them. The area I patrolled evened out, flat and sandy. I had one fighting bunker, a hole dug in the ground with three layers of sandbags piled up around it for us to occupy if things hit the fan. I discovered that we shared perimeter duty with three companies of the 3rd Marines: Alpha, Bravo, and Charlie Company. Other essential words of wisdom passed on that night were gems like: "Never, never, never get ham and lima beans C-rations for your midnight snack." They were inedible. Blackie wouldn't even eat them, and he'd eat almost anything else.

Chuck had this premonition of doom all night long, it being Tet and all, and he kept saying that he was sure we would get hit that night. Being the new kid on the block and full of hopeful, mindless enthusiasm, I kept reassuring him that he was just worried because he was so short in his time left in the country.

At midnight Chuck made me muzzle Blackie and get

Above: Greg Dunlap and his partner at Da Nang, Blackie X129.

Below: Looking east towards Hill 327 and a Marine Bunker.

Both photos courtesy of Greg Dunlap.

into the bunker. Even though I considered him overly cautious, I followed his instructions. Sure enough, midnight came, and all around us outside the fence, the Vietnamese were celebrating Tet. Guns were going off all over the place.

At one time, the sky was full of tracers everywhere you looked. The revelers hadn't directed their weapons at us, but we remained apprehensive. What goes up must come down! Blackie got a little stirred up, and I had to take him around the area to calm him down. He practically insisted on a walk, pulling away and straining at the leash. I later found out that Blackie knew a lot about what was going on around him and what his job was supposed to be. He must have known that I was a dummy at the time and was asserting his authority accordingly.

Right after 3 AM, Chuck went to check with Alpha Company to see if anything was in the wind, leaving me alone with Blackie. It was the first time we had been together by ourselves that evening, and as handlers do, I found myself talking to him, trying to see what he responded to and what made him tick.

I recall an unnatural quiet descending on us, and then I heard something north of my position. It is hard to describe a whooshing, whistling sound in the air. Something moved very fast through the air and with a bit of weight. Looking north, I saw the first two incoming rockets explode about 100 yards from where I stood. Right at that time, the radio went berserk.

"INCOMING, DA NANG!!

THIS IS MARINE ONE, YOU HAVE INCOMING !!!!!"

Marine One was a Marble Mountain post just west of the base. It overlooked Happy Valley, where most of the incoming rocket and mortar attacks originated. Their job was to look over the valley and give us a warning when they saw launchings that appeared headed our way. Most times, they were right on the money and caught them leaving the tubes, giving us up to about 5 seconds of warning. And sometimes, they missed seeing them until they went off around us. This event was one of those times.

Right then and there, I decided that yes, I was in Vietnam, and sometimes things may not be all fun and games. Blackie was going nuts. I had to pull him back into the bunker and hold him down. I remembered everything I had learned and followed those teachings. 'Keep your head down!', 'Get down!' I doubt if toilet paper was thicker than I was trying to make myself.

Above: Greg Dunlap at the huts.

Photo courtesy of Greg Dunlap.

Then things got exciting. The sirens were going off all over the base; those first two rockets had landed in a warehouse and set it aflame. I could see the blaze from the bottom of my bunker. We could hear more incoming rounds, followed by the accompanying explosions and flashes in the sky. I kept thinking that behind me were massive fuel bladders lying on the ground, which the base filled with JP4 (Jet Propellant-4). My brain couldn't calculate what an incoming round would do to them. And the radio? I had to turn it down with all the noise it was making.

"Incoming, incoming, Da Nang. This is Marine One. You have Incoming."

On top of this, the desk Sergeant yelled through the static, "Everyone, get down!" as if we needed to be told. This attack probably only lasted 10 minutes; it sure seemed to go on longer than that. Scuttlebutt came down later that 125 rockets hit the base that night. When I figured it was over or there was a long enough lull, I stuck my head back up and started checking around me.

Now, during the whole time, I would occasionally look up out of the bunker and make sure that the fence was still in one piece

and nothing was going on in that direction. Then the noise would start, and I would be back in my hole, keeping my head down.

Looking around now, I saw that there were still sirens going off all over the base. Flames and smoke erupted from several places, none close enough to me to cause any concern. A large glow from what I later discovered was the bomb dump caught my immediate attention. It seemed that at least one rocket had landed where the Air Force stored the flares belonging to the "Spooky" gunships; they were going off. Each flare would put out 2 million candlelight, so imagine several hundred going off simultaneously. The handler in that area had to abandon his post because of the heat; his gas mask had melted.

However, the magnitude of light radiating from this was the most impressive thing - it overwhelmed the night sky. In Vietnam, there wasn't much ambient light, and you could see a lot of stars. That night, so much light came from the bomb dump that the sky blazed blue, and few stars were visible. An occasional second explosion would cause me to duck back down, but for the moment, Blackie and I were content to stay put in the bunker and watch the action from there.

The marine bunker to our right fired off a flare, sending us both scurrying like scared rabbits down in our bunker. Other than that and the fires, the excitement ceased for the night.

Chuck joined us again, and there were no 'I told you so's' said. I first apologized to him for doubting his judgment, and we both agreed that this was one hell of a first night for me. We stayed close to the bunker for the rest of the evening, Chuck filling me in on things like, "That's the bomb dump burning; hope they can contain it." 'Good thought,' I remember thinking. The remainder of the evening was uneventful by comparison. The sun surfaced, and we got the call to come in off-post for the night. Walking back, we passed the warehouse. I witnessed it burn from the bottom of my bunker.

It was just charred metal and ashes now; the fire department had done its job, but the smoke was still coming from different areas of the base. The explosions had stopped, however.

THE SUN COMES OUT

Everyone reacted differently to what had happened, and all was a gaggle back at the kennels. We watered and put the dogs away. I told Blackie thanks for the evening, and I meant it. He yawned, went to the back of his kennel, and curled up to sleep. It's nice to know he was impressed.

When the sun came out the next morning, damage and destruction were everywhere. This is the charred warehouse I passed in the morning.

Photo courtesy of Greg Dunlap.

We all piled on the deuce-and-a-half and got dropped off at the chow hall. After breakfast, quite a few of us found ourselves outside the hooch. I learned that a massive ground force had planned to attack the base from the side Blackie and I guarded. They had gotten bogged down, the sun had come up, and they were now retreating, with the Vietnamese Air Force hounding them in the A-1E Skyraiders. With four 20 mm cannons and up to 10,000 lbs of assorted bombs, rockets, cluster munitions, gun pods, and flares, it didn't take long to make them scatter.

Someone had turned on a radio to the pilot's frequency. Although no one could understand what they were saying, everyone knew the intent of their words as we watched them fly down and strafe or bomb these poor stragglers. Every time they dropped a bomb, a cheer went up.

Someone passed a beer into my hand, and my initiation into the party group started. New guy, first time out, and a hell of an attack to boot. Did I mess my pants? You can't keep the banter down between guys who share what you do. I was to find out that they were a group, like the Marines who were on post with us every night, that I could count on.

In the future, I will attempt to recall all of the flavors and scents of being where I was and this incredible animal I was fortunate to have shared with me. — Greg Dunlap

The Heart of the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum: Volunteers Needed

by Albert Johnson

The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum (MWDHM) celebrates the legacy and heroism of military working dogs and their handlers, preserving their stories for generations. At the heart of this mission lies the dedication of volunteers who contribute their time, energy, and passion to ensure the museum thrives. Volunteers are the lifeblood of our nonprofit, and their contributions are vital to our success.

Volunteering at MWDHM offers a range of opportunities for every skill set. Do you enjoy connecting with people? Help us staff booth spaces at events, sharing the incredible stories of heroic military working dog teams with the public. If you're a talented writer or editor, your expertise can enrich our award-winning newsletter, bringing these narratives to life. For history buffs, we need researchers to uncover the stories of courageous dogs and their handlers who have served with valor.

A significant opportunity awaits those interested in oral histories. Volunteers can interview former and current military working dog handlers, capturing their unique and often deeply personal experiences while on active duty. These stories preserve the human-dog bond and highlight these teams' vital roles in military operations.

Behind the scenes, volunteers play key roles in fundraising, artifact discovery, and archiving—ensuring the preservation of priceless pieces of history. For tech-savvy individuals, our social media team could use your creativity to expand our online presence. Digital designers have the opportunity to elevate the MWDHM brand, while organized leaders can step in to manage and coordinate volunteer efforts. The volunteer opportunities are endless, and our needs constantly change as our organization grows.

Your involvement's impact reaches far beyond the museum's "walls." By volunteering, you contribute to the noble mission of honoring those who have served and educating the world about their bravery.

If you're ready to make a difference, join our team today. Whether you can spare a few hours a month or dive into a bigger commitment, we welcome your talents and enthusiasm. Together, we can ensure the legacy of military working dogs and their handlers continues to inspire future generations.

To volunteer, visit mwdheritagemuseum.org/volunteer or email us at info@mwdhm.org.

Jag

by Dennis Dow

Jag, my black Lab partner, possessed the typical attention span of a squirrel. Gregarious and outgoing, he loved people, I mean, all humans, without reservation. He zipped from one outstretched hand to the next, 'Pet, me! Pet, me!'

We counted ourselves fortunate to work with one Special Forces Operational Detachment Alpha (ODA) for over four months. These ODA teams are elite teams of mature, intense, and highly trained operators. They recognized our efforts and had already promoted me to E-5 Sgt. and put Jag and me in for a Bronze Star and CABs (Combat Action Badges).

On this day, the temperature soared over 102° well before the sun hit its zenith. The coal-black coat of a Labrador retriever suffers under the unrelenting rays of the Afghan sun, so I had already inserted a full liter of IV fluid into Jag subcutaneously to avoid a severe heat injury. If he overheated, Jag would start panting so fiercely that he refused to drink water.

We were tasked with stopping Taliban supplies traveling on Route 1, a ribbon of highway stretching from Kandahar to Kabul and so lethal it held the nickname "The Highway of Death."

The day would bring us dozens of sputtering, hot vehicles, choking smoke, and trash-filled roadway culverts to search. About an hour after we started the searches, around high noon, Jag balked at searching on lead, his first indication that he was running out of steam.

So we started free scouting the area. Whenever I saw Jag panting hard, I tried to bring him in for ice packs and fluids. Instead of coming to me, he would seek one of the other ODA members, sit in their shadows, and drink their water while resting. He knew coming back to me might mean the end of his day, and he did not want to stop.

He continued his evasive ways; three or four times, he took refuge in the shade provided by other resting Soldiers. He continued searching until he found a rusty, crusty AK mag in the dirt. Exhausted, he did not even want his reward — a ball. The medic and I started the heat exhaustion treatment protocol on Jag. He was on his feet and drinking independently in a few minutes; he did not want to stop until he found the odor's source and had completed his task.

What a devoted K9 and fabulous partner!

Above: Dennis Dow and his Special Search Dog partner (SSD) Jag worked Highway 1 with the goal of stopping the Taliban's movement of supplies. On 15 March 2002, the CJSOTF-A (Combined Joint Special Operations Task Force—Afghanistan), formed from Task Force K-Bar and Task Force Dagger, was given operational control over all Joint Special Operations, including Coalition Forces.

Dennis Dow and Jag deployed from Fort Bliss, Texas, and served with the CJSOT-A forces during their significant impact on Operation Enduring Freedom.

Below: Fellow team members watch as Jag searches. The searched area was near Qalat, in the southern Afghanistan province of Zabul.

Both photos courtesy of Dennis Dow.

Meeting General Chain

by Curtis Hendel

During the summer of 1987, I had been in the Republic of Korea (ROK) for a year and a half, considered myself a mighty two-striper with time in the country, and was overloaded with confidence. Still a perimeter rat who loved the dark, I was suddenly thrust into a daytime foot patrol on the VIP hill.

This watch was a part of the normal Kilo post every night, but that day took on a different role. General Chain, Commander of Strategic Air Command, planned a visit, and on that day, I was a big part of the beefed-up security. My post pulled back from the normal one a bit, keeping a serious eye on the visiting General's quarters. I received my orders from our Lt. Colonel Commander; you will ID everyone you don't personally know. No exceptions. '*Easy enough,'* I thought.

Yeah, easy enough until a staff car pulls up with a four-star General inside who wants to go in his quarters. For whatever reason, four-star Generals go to their quarters at 1100 hours. I squared up on the sidewalk between the entrance door and the staff car and did my Air Force algebra. Let's see, four stars are superior to two stripes, right? In most cases, that was accurate, but now I had the authority of the base commander with my shield, and he was a two-star General. Oh boy, my math was not adding up. And had I mentioned that Ero was reading my anxiety like an open book?

As General Chain, the guy in charge of almost all the United States Air Force's nuclear weapon arsenal, stepped towards me, my brain, overloaded with decision-making algorithms, threw caution to the wind and decided to wing it! The first decision was to decline the opportunity to salute a freakin' four-star General. I knew Ero wouldn't appreciate the General saluting me back because I had trained him to hate saluting. (Everyone knows the enemy uses a salute-like move when they attack you, right?) When I didn't salute, the General looked at me with some Clint Eastwood side-eye, wondering what my next move would be.

My second mind-boggling decision was to advise a four-star General that I, a mere two-striper with

Curtis Hendel and his K9, Ero, taking their role in the "beefed up" security to heart.
Photo courtesy of Curtis Hendel.

less time in service than he had in chow halls, needed to see his ID. At this point, I believed that Ero was along for the ride, too, wondering if his handler would end up in correctional custody for this display of potential disrespect. Ero might have guesstimated in K9 how many "years" I would "be away."

General Chain proved to be a great man and a cool dude. He almost seemed impressed that I would pull his ID. His aide was another story. This Major went utterly berserk on me, asking, "How dare you pull a four-star General's ID?" and "Why the heck didn't you salute the Commander of SAC?" A slight growl reverberated through the short leash I held Ero on. I prayed he would keep his cool.

The General reclaimed his ID after I looked at it and turned to his aide. "This young airman is just doing his job. Leave him alone, OK?" Then he looked at me. "I do have to ask why you didn't salute me, though."

I had practiced answering this question when I taught, um, realized that Ero hated salutes. "Sir," I said, "my dog and I spend our lives in the dark on the perimeter, and if I salute you and you salute me back, he will take it as an aggressive move to-

wards me and will probably try to bite you, Sir."

General Chain cocked his head as if taking it all in and then said, "I want to see it." I have no idea where my composure came from (probably from my desire not to end up in correctional custody or worse), but I set it all up. I put about 15 feet between the General and me, took up a short leash, put Ero in the heel/sit/stay position, and saluted the man who kept his finger on the button of our nuclear arsenal. When he saluted back, Ero performed just as trained, er, as I expected he would. He thrust towards General Chain, standing on his back legs, barking, growling, and trying to remove the General's face.

I called my dog "out/heel" and praised him loudly and proudly when he returned to my side. "What a good boy!"

Aide Major went right back at me, screaming at me for praising my dog, which had just attempted to bite a four-star General.

This time I was a bit quicker and cockier with my response. "Sir, my dog only knows his mission and what he needs to do to perform it. He was protecting me from another human he had never met, so he did good."

Another pat on the head for Ero.

Then, the General launched the day's last surprise at me. "Airman," the General said, "let's take a walk; I want to see your post."

The General's aide guy tried to horn in, but the General quickly rebuffed him. "Major, just wait here; we'll be back in a bit."

So, I end up taking a walk with General Freakin' Chain, Commander of Strategic Air Command. I wasn't really star-struck by his rank, but I was happier that he had not been the type to destroy a young Airman. And, at the end of the day, I had learned a huge lesson. It just so happened that the Commander of the largest nuclear arsenal in the world was a man, just like me. Sure, he was older and held the keys to the end of the world, but he was very, very human and treated me like an essential part of the mission.

We had a nice chat about home and my dog. He never asked about work conditions or anything that could have made me wonder if he was trying to use me for information. He left a great impression on a 20-year-old just two years removed from Minnesota farm country.

"Good Boy Ero! Get you some General."

K9 Programs That Didn't Make the Cut

by Dixie Whitman

The field of dog training has undergone a significant evolution, particularly in the methods used and in the application of that training. In the past, trainers relied on punishment, such as the Koehler method, to break dogs down. However, a notable shift has occurred, and most dogs are now trained using more positive reinforcement, such as praise, pay (in the form of food), or play rewards. This change has led to a more harmonious relationship between dogs and their trainers, with correct performance being rewarded with a "Good Boy," a pat on the head, or early on, possibly training tidbits.

Knowledge is like that; we polish and fine-tune training methods to produce better dogs. Over the years, some trainers have proposed using dogs for unique military tasks. Some have worked wonders, such as the Combat Tracking Dog or the Combat Assault Dog. Others, like these two concepts, were dropped by the wayside:

1. Bill Wanderlick, a WWII Army trainer who had served at Fort Robinson, Nebraska, in an August 29, 1977 interview, shared that during the war, civilians involved with the Dogs for Defense proposed training military working dogs as airplane spotters. The idea that dogs could differentiate between American and enemy planes and then alert their handlers to the enemy's presence was, in Wanderlick's words, "crazy."[1]

2. Another World War II training concept tested on Cat Island, Mississippi, involved free-roaming military working dogs. A Swiss trainer, William Prestre, proposed that dogs, without a handler present, could differentiate between Japanese and Americans based on hereditary/genetic body odors. He suggested that these dogs would be capable of finding and attacking Japanese fighters on the Pacific Islands, where they had embedded themselves. If effective, it could save the lives of the men who had to explore the caves and crevices where the Japanese hid effectively.

On an uninhabited island, he trained dogs to seek and attack Japanese-American decoys from the 100th Infantry Division. From the outset, problems occurred. Prestre's initial premise about different ethnicities smelling differently proved untrue. Because the Japanese-Americans, who were Americans in every sense, were eating the same foods that their fellow soldiers ate, they smelled the same. The military quickly recognized the program's failure and pulled the plug.

Canva. AI Creation. An early concept proposed by civilian trainers during WWII is that dogs could be trained to detect enemy aircraft and alert on their presence.

Credit: National Park Service—A photo taken of dogs being trained on Cat Island, Mississippi during WWII.

[1] History Nebraska. RG6001_b001_0_Wanderlicki0001-0009 Bill Wanderlick Fort Robinson Interview Transcript, 1977.

Military Working Dog Heritage Museum & Handler Center
P.O. Box 54
Newport, TN 37822
Phone: 865-507-8903

From the Team at MWDHM...
We invite you to join the museum's journey by signing up for a free *Paw Print* subscription.
Email: info@mwdhm.org

Military Working Dog Heritage:
Always on Point

We're on the Web: mwdhm.org
We're on Facebook:
Military Working Dog Heritage Museum

Share your story.

Share your vision.

Share your voice.

Share your copy of our newsletter.

Book of the Month

Told through the unique perspective of Buck, his loyal Siberian Husky, our Army Coordinator, Johnny Mayo, penned this book to introduce War Dogs to children. Buck, who accompanied Johnny to a War Dog handler reunion at the Wall in Washington, DC, provides a fascinating insight into the world of War Dogs. In the book, Johnny vividly recalls the cross-generation K9 chat between Buck and the War Dogs of the Vietnam Era, on the other side of the black granite wall.
This book is a rare find. See us at one of our events to buy your copy.

Submitted photo of the month

Thanks to Kip Schultz for this submitted photo of him with his partner, Nero 311J, a United States Marine Corps Explosive Detection Dog. This photo was taken at Al Jaber, Kuwait in 1991. Nero was the first dog forward in combat since Vietnam.
"We were assigned to the Combat Infantry Unit of the Marine Wing Support Squadron 374. MWSS 374 was an aviation ground support unit of the United States Marine Corps.
"We started at Jubail Naval Station, then moved to a location called Tanajib and operated around there. Later, we inserted into Al Jaber to clear the location for the first FARP Site, a remote site to refuel aircraft."
~~ Kip Schutlz

Submit one of your photos for consideration to: newsletter@mwdhm.org