



The Paw Print

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



Volume 5 Issue 2

February 2025

Upcoming Events:

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

November, 2025
Rededication of the
South Carolina War
Dog Memorial in
Columbia, South
Carolina.

PPuppies with a PPurpose



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Ready for bigger and better things, this dynamic DoD puppy oozes self-confidence. Meet AAbdon, a puppy bred by the United States Air Force's 341st Training Squadron at Lackland Air Force Base, San Antonio, Texas. The headline above highlights the double first-letters on the names of these puppies. From the age of six weeks to seven months, DoD puppies thrive in the care of dedicated foster families. (Photo: Courtesy Lora Harrist)

The Department of Defense's working dog program is located at Lackland Air Force Base, Texas. A key component is the breeding program, which focuses on breeding, whelping, housing, and developing puppies destined for K9 work.

This month, we'll explore the Foster Program, where future K9 warriors learn about their world from committed foster families.

These families house and develop puppies beginning at six weeks of age. For most puppies, leaving their mothers at such an early period of development could hobble them. But leaving DoD-bred Malinois with their siblings any longer tempts fratricide. Hard-wired to succeed, these puppies need to explore, challenge, and meet their world head-on in the safety and security of their own space.

Foster families' goals include socializing and desensitizing their charges. Building on the early successes of the Bio Sensor and Super Dog program, the military learned that correctly challenging the puppies early impacts their cardiovascular system and adrenal glands, allows for greater stress tolerance and keeps them healthier. Let's see how the DoD Foster Families help with that foundation.

From the President's Desk



President, Albert Johnson



Hello to all of our faithful followers! Wait, that sounds like we are in a cult..... Ahem, hello to all of our dedicated readers. Much better! Welcome to the February issue of the Paw Print.

February brings us Valentine's Day to recognize the love between us and the person who sticks by us throughout life's arduous journey. Hug that special someone and tell them you appreciate them.

Now that we have that done, let's talk about PUPPIES! Since you are sitting here reading this newsletter, I assume you are a fan of dogs. I'm also willing to bet you love the cute little shenanigans of puppies. In this month's newsletter, you will see that we got to speak to Lora Harrist, a long-time dedicated puppy foster for the military puppy program. I don't want to give too much away from the article, but her family has helped raise many of these puppies for the military. The contact with Lora had our newsletter team chomping to dive deeply into the puppy program. Once they realized how big of a story this

would be, they decided to give an overview this month, but keep your eyes peeled for more puppy love and stories to come.

This edition also includes a story written by Michael Lemish, an author and a former Vietnam Dog Handlers Association (VDHA) historian of more than 15 years. Michael has written two books about military working dogs. He has contributed to military documentaries for several television stations and even contributed to the film *The Robert Hartsock Story*. Michael is an incredibly talented man dedicated to telling the history of the military working dog program. In this issue, Michael takes us back to the 1940s with the CBI War Dog Detachment and its history during WWII.

The edition also includes the story of the Alaskan war dogs, incredible sled dogs that saved many lives. As a handler who served in the desert throughout my career, it is hard for me to fathom the things these dog teams had to endure, including the harsh winters, lack of supplies, and hav-

ing to train a whole team of dogs to work in sync with one another for a common goal.

Our talented volunteer, David Adams, gives us a glimpse into his history, time at sentry dog school, and his first partner. The trials that were placed in his path were like mountains. Will he rise to the occasion? You will have to keep reading to find out.

We have exciting news that you will have to see to believe. Our sisters in the K9 world get their own swag, which is long overdue! If you are interested in getting some of this swag, please visit our online store and remember to get these items before March, which is Women's History Month.

I'm super proud of the work put into these designs by none other than our jack-of-all-trades volunteer, Dixie Whitman. I swear this lady can do anything in the world of MWDs!

Without further ado, please join us inside for a wonderful glimpse at all things K9. And, as always,

K9 Leads the Way!

Albert Johnson

DoD Puppy Foster Families Boost Success

by Dixie Whitman/ All photos by Lora Harrist

America's need for trained, determined military working dogs rises with each major event, every terrorist blast, or protective detail mission. Around 1,600 dogs work to keep the land, air, and seas surrounding our country safe.

The demand for new dogs in the pipeline is staggering, with America and other nations seeking the world's elite K9s. This global competition for exceptional dogs has never been more intense. In response, America has turned to the DoD puppy program, a resource for approximately 13% of our working dogs.

The breeding program balances on the health, trainability, and hutzpah of the puppies it produces. A significant component of creating a dog with drive, fearlessness, and grit is the period of time that a puppy spends with its foster family.

A DoD puppy embarks on a transformative journey at six weeks of age. The foster family plays a vital role in this process, socializing the puppy and exposing it to diverse sights, smells, and sounds. Their goal is to guide the puppy towards success in every challenge it faces, shaping it into a resilient and adaptable military dog.

"Lowe's is one of the best places to take the puppies," said Lora Harrist. Lora and her husband have fostered 24 different DoD puppies

over the years, averaging about two per year.

The puppies can climb on pallets, explore different textures, hear the skid loaders beeping, and see new people. "Position" is 9/10th of puppy law, so a puppy climbing to the top of a stack of wood or bundle of Craftsman boxes and sitting successfully on top bolsters its self-confidence.

The goal of DoD puppies is to build upon success. So, puppies cannot visit dog parks and pet stores. Both locations host too many unruly and often unhealthy dogs.

Once a month, the fosters gather at Lackland AFB with other puppy raisers and spend time with Doc Hilliard, the founder of the Military Working Dog Breeding Program at Lackland. They get training information, and the puppies are evaluated. A struggling puppy may get more time and attention to build it up if needed. At the other end of the spectrum, a super-star puppy may also have more interaction to mold it into something extraordinary.

Of course, the good-byes are the hardest part, but Lora says that she hates hearing the phrase, "I couldn't do it." These puppies bring people back home to their loved ones and, she adds, "there is no greater reward than knowing that the sacrifices you make help keep people safe."

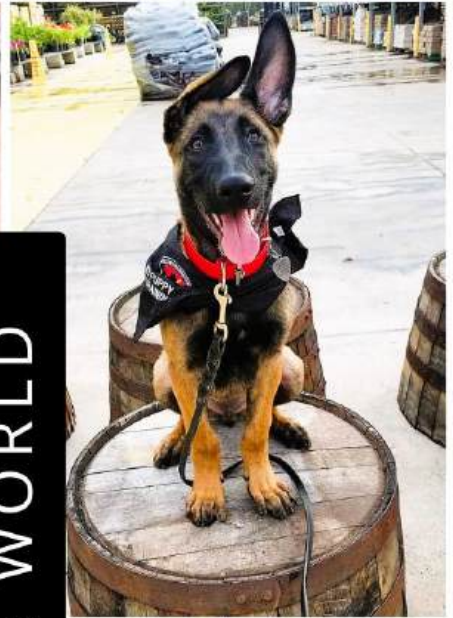


Above: Breeder SSheila and below VVampire, both fostered by Lora Harrist. We plan to highlight more puppies in future issues. For info on fostering, [Click Here!](#)

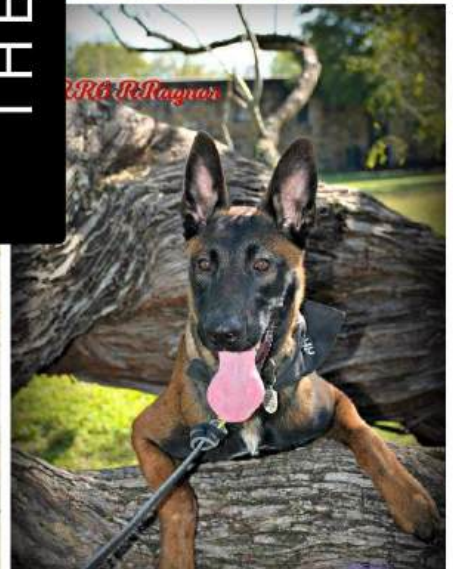




They Explore



THE WORLD



Thank You for Your Support in 2024!

By Lane Hagerdorn

As we have closed out 2024, we at the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum extend our heartfelt gratitude to all of you—our generous donors, loyal supporters, and advocates. Your contributions last year have been instrumental in helping us fulfill our mission: to discover, curate, preserve, and exhibit world-class displays of America's military working dog history. Together, we are ensuring the legacy and heritage of our nation's brave dog teams continue to inspire future generations.

Every dollar you've donated has brought us closer to our goal of honoring these incredible dogs and their handlers who have played pivotal roles in protecting freedom. Your support enables us to collect rare artifacts, curate engaging exhibits, and tell the powerful stories of courage, loyalty, and sacrifice that define America's military working dog history. With your help, we've ex-

panded our ability to share these stories, fostering appreciation for the indelible bond between humans and their canine companions in service.

Donations in Action

Last year, your donations have funded:

- **New Exhibits and Displays:** We've unveiled exhibits showcasing historic gear, photos, and memorabilia from the field, bringing to life the experiences of dog teams across decades and conflicts.
- **Preservation Efforts:** We professionally conserve rare artifacts and fragile documents, ensuring they remain accessible to future generations.

None of this would be possible without you. Your dedication reminds us that the stories of these unsung heroes resonate deeply with our supporters.

Many Ways to Give

Last year, many of you chose to support us in crea-

tive and meaningful ways. Whether through online donations, purchasing merchandise from our store, or participating in fundraising events, every act of generosity has made an impact. If you haven't yet explored all the ways to contribute, here's a reminder:

- **Online Donations:** A quick and secure way to give at any time, every dollar supports our mission.
- **Shop with Purpose:** The MWD Heritage Museum store offers unique merchandise that celebrates military working dog history, with proceeds directly benefiting the museum.
- **Fundraising Events:** This year's highlights included Women Handler's History Month, K9 Veterans Day, the Annual Beard-Off, and our limited-edition holiday ornaments. These events not only raised funds but also brought our community closer together in celebration of this remarkable heritage.

Looking Ahead

As we move through 2025, we're excited to build on this momentum. Your continued support is essential to preserving and sharing these stories with even broader audiences. We're inspired by your commitment and honored to have you as part of our growing community.

On behalf of the entire Military Working Dog Heritage Museum team, thank you for standing by us in 2024. Together, we are honoring the legacy of America's military working dogs and ensuring their contributions are never forgotten.

Here's to another year of celebrating history, heroism, and the enduring bond between handler and dog. We look forward to achieving even more in 2025 with your help!

Warmest regards,
The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum Team



GET YOUR SWAG FOR
WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!
CHECK OUT THE NEW
PRODUCTS ON OUR
WEBSITE & GRAB YOURS
IN TIME TO WEAR
DURING MARCH.

Dog Days of the CBI Detachment

by Michael Lemish

The date is January 22, 1944, and her name is the S.S. *Benjamin Ide Wheeler*. She is a Liberty ship weighing 7,176 tons and is presently tied up at the docks in a neighborhood of South Los Angeles called Wilmington, designated as a Port of Embarkation for the United States military. In a few hours, she will cast off her lines to join the war effort. The ship's manifest will include the usual materials destined for the front lines and will also comprise a complement of 104 men. But not just any men that will engage the enemy. These men will be accompanied by a hundred specially trained dogs. They will be called the CBI War Dog Detachment and will be among the pioneers from America to engage canines in combat - because this is World War II - and the lessons have just begun.

The use of dogs for military purposes by the United States began several months after the bombing of Pearl Harbor. Civilians started an organization called Dogs for Defense to promote the public donation of their dogs to the war effort and also establish a training routine so that canines could be used effectively by the military. All Army canine train-

ing fell under the umbrella of the Quartermaster Corps, and in the summer of 1942, the QMC established several war dog reception and training centers across the country. Front Royal, Virginia, would be the first, followed by Camp Rimini, Montana (sled dogs); Fort Robinson, Nebraska; and San Carlos, California. In April 1943, Cat Island (off the coast of Mississippi) was added.

Handlers from each of the training centers assembled at the San Carlos facility in late October 1943 and were given the innocuous name "Casual Dog Detachment." As CBI handler Richard Zika would later write, "...detached, unassigned, unactivated. In other words, orphans and bastards." That would change in a few months as the men later learned they would be the largest K-9 contingent to be deployed as a single group.

As the handlers boarded the *Wheeler*, destined for an undisclosed location, no one knew what to expect. This ship was without escort and would zig-zag across the Pacific - overloaded, vulnerable, and slow. The men were crammed into the number three hold, which became their sleeping quarters, galley, and dining area. What they called "food"



Above: Soldiers attached to Merrill's Marauders Infantry show off their K9s .

Credit: National Archives

consisted of canned salmon, soda crackers, and black, unsweetened coffee. Officers, of course, fared much better as they dined with the ship's officers. The dogs also got the better deal as they were housed topside in their crates just aft of the midship house with a roof that provided protection from the sun.

The wretched conditions turned even uglier when the ship reached the Tasman Sea (located between Australia and New Zealand) and ran right into the teeth of a typhoon. The fear among the handlers was the ship would break up or that the dog crates would be swept overboard. The three-day storm

pushed the *Wheeler* back and added another five days to the trip. The handlers also found out that dogs do get seasick. Not only was it a mess, but many dogs were dehydrated from the ordeal.

It wasn't until March 4 that the detachment docked in Fremantle, Australia, for a two-day refueling stop and to provision the ship with "real" food. Handlers went ashore and gorged themselves and acquired as much food as they could carry to bring back on board. Still to come would be the most dangerous legs of the trip. The handlers at this time learned their final destination was

Calcutta via the Indian Ocean.

With no refrigeration onboard, the fruit obtained in Fremantle was quickly consumed or tossed over the side. The deck of the ship became scorching hot, blistering the pads of the dogs. The men flushed the deck with seawater, but this just brought on more problems. The handlers created canvas boots and applied ointment while keeping the dogs shaded. Incredibly just two dogs were lost to heat-related problems during the journey.

On March 21st, the *Wheeler* dropped anchor in the Bay of Ceylon. No shore leave this time as the handlers and dogs baked in the sun. Three days of boredom and heat passed before they finally set sail for the King George Docks area of Calcutta, arriving on April 4. Immediately the detachment rushed to Kancharpara, India, where they began the typical waiting game that can be so typical of the Army. Dog teams then put on demonstrations of the capability of their sentry and scout dogs. The handlers, now totally frustrated, felt like they were part of a USO outfit.

Two weeks later, twelve handlers that had trained with scout dogs linked up

with Merrill's Marauders (5307th Composite Unit (Provisional)) in Myitkyina, Burma. On the very first night, a dog was killed - not by the Japanese but by a leopard. It was an ominous start for sure. Not even in combat yet, and the handlers realized they had a Dorothy moment and were no longer in Kansas.

The scout dogs attached to the 5307th arrived during their last month of operations racked up some successful missions and patrols. Prior to the introduction of the dogs, seven incidents of sniper attacks occurred without the unit locating the sniper. It is only anecdotal, but after the introduction of scout dogs, all snipers were located with no loss of American life. It is unknown how many patrols were made.

One incident of note occurred during a night at the command post as the men slept. A scout dog named Wotan, handled by CPL Delton Armstrong, was staked outside and off-duty. A lone Japanese soldier infiltrated the perimeter with a bag of hand grenades and just happened to crawl a bit too close to Wotan, who promptly jumped on the man and began mauling him. Unable to escape, he pulled the grenade pin and blew himself up. Sol-

diers arriving on the scene were relieved to find the Japanese soldier dead but Wotan unharmed.

Once word spread about the K-9 advantage, requests from other units came forth. Forty-three dog teams traveled to Ramgargh, India, attached to the 475th Infantry and 124th Cavalry as they prepared for a new push into Burma. The balance of the detachment traveled to Assam for sentry work at the many airstrips, ammo dumps, and Signal Corps outposts spread throughout the province. Often those on the line wanted to know what the dogs were for. In short order, they were accepted and often sought out by men to sleep with through the night.

At the sprawling supply dump in Calcutta, several sentry dog teams were requisitioned to stem a huge theft problem. This was a choke point for weapons, whiskey, cigarettes, and canned goods; everything needed to support the war effort. Although perimeter fencing was installed, it was an easy job for a black marketer to slip in and hide amongst the material stockpiled there.

On the very first night, all twelve guards were pulled from the interior of the supply dump and replaced

by four sentry/attack dog teams that randomly moved about. In his unpublished manuscript *War Dogs*, Dick Zika related:

"The first night at the dump was what can best be described as a turkey shoot. The intelligent ones [thieves] would quickly give up. Some witless ones thought their two feet could run faster than a dog's four; a folly attested to by their torn legs and slashed backsides."

The sneaky ones believed if they just hid and stayed quiet, the dog would just pass. This trick was right in the wheelhouse for the dog teams. As Zika relates:

"The hiding spots were usually dead ends and close quarters. Once the dog alerted, the handler would give the order to come out with hands-on top of the head. If the culprit remained hidden, the dog was released, and there was usually a scream of terror followed by an eruption of flailing arms and legs trying to escape the trap as best they might."

The dog would be called off, and several times during the night, the men caught were allowed to "escape." The idea was that word would circulate about these dogs and what they could do. Each succeeding night the num-

ber of encounters dwindled until the job became quite boring with just the occasional intruder.

As the dog teams scattered across the theatre of operations, the unit was officially designated at this time as "War Dog Detachment - CBI." Besides Merrill's Marauders, dog teams worked with the Signal Corps, Military Police, and Mars Taskforce. Several teams also operated with the OSS (Office of Strategic Services, precursor of the CIA) in China.

Although effective in the field, the handlers and their dogs remained on a learning curve. No matter how well the training was back in the states, nothing could properly prepare the teams for the environment they worked in. For example, there were many false alerts on wild elephants, leopards, and other wild creatures. This same type of problem would surface again years later in Vietnam.

Then again, some "false alerts" have turned out to be a Godsend. Witness the case of handlers Calvin Reister and Ted Both, who were dispatched to a small ammo dump in Ledo, India, which is close to the border with Burma. The area was not stable, and scattered Japanese forces directed machinegun and mortar fire

from concealed jungle locations. Area commanders hoped that the dogs could pinpoint the enemy positions.

Soon after their arrival, the two handlers were dispatched on a local patrol. The breeze was favorable for the dog teams, and in a short time, Reister's dog alerted, followed immediately by Both's dog. The patrol cautiously moved ahead through the dense growth until voices were heard - in English. Entering a small clearing, the patrol was greeted with the shocking sight of seven heads protruding above the ground. Beaten and clubbed, the buried men were barely alive.

The men were dug out, and it was learned they were from several scattered units captured by the Japanese within the past week. Forced to dig holes, they were then buried up to their chins, beaten, and left to die as the Japanese retreated. All suffered physical and emotional scars that would be theirs to the end of their days. They were also grateful for being rescued - but would they have been discovered if not for the "false alerts" from the scout dogs?

Almost a year after the arrival of the CBI detachment in India, another six

handlers arrived along with twelve replacement dogs. They were welcomed additions as malaria, typhus, dengue fever, and wounds took their toll on handlers. The dogs didn't fare much better yet were well treated by the two veterinary officers within the detachment.

In April of 1944, the detachment was dispersed throughout the theatre of operations. It remained that way until the end of the war. This is one reason why the CBI Detachment has a tiny paper trail. Many of their exploits are anecdotal, and many others were lost through time. The number of patrols conducted having never been recorded. Nor was the story of the hunt for an enlisted man who murdered an officer. Yet on record are two handlers who enlisted in the Army with their dogs and wound up in the detachment. And it is known that only one handler was KIA.

With the end of the war, the handlers would return piecemeal and not as a unit. About 85 dogs from the CBI Detachment were eventually returned to the United States. This actually created a problem as all dogs were donated through Dogs for Defense and had been promised back to their original owners. Of course, this upset just about every handler.

The Army solved this problem by providing the names and addresses of the original owners to each handler. It would be up to each man to write and ask the owner to waive their rights and be allowed to keep the dogs they endured so much with. Only a few owners denied this request.

The China Burma India Theater is the least understood and the most often overlooked part of World War II compared to the European and Pacific operations. This was true for the CBI War Dog Detachment. Although many handlers led jungle patrols under the command of the Quartermaster Corps, they were not entitled to the Combat Infantry Badge (CIB), although many of them deserved it. This story is submitted, in a very small way, to recognize the men and dogs who comprised this pioneer unit while the military working dog program was in its infancy. May we learn and respect those that were there and not let them become a footnote to history.

Thanks to Michael Lemish for sharing his talents with us. You can find and enjoy more of Michael's writings this winter by clicking the link below:

[Michael Lemish books](#)

Alaskan War Dogs: Heroism Defined

by Jack Waid 354th Fighter Wing

EIELSON AIR FORCE BASE, Alaska - **Editor's note: This story is part two 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 three, next month.**

During World War I, the French government asked Alaska's Darling Kennels and Alaskan Scotty Allan, All Alaska Sweepstakes winner of the 1909, 1911 and 1912 races, to provide and train Alaskan sled dogs and sleds for the French war effort.

One hundred-six dogs were provided from Alaska and eventually found their way to France. While in France, these dogs provided invaluable service; they opened mountainous supply routes and communication between units in the field and headquarters not previously accessible.

Their actions were so important that in his book, "Soldiers and Sled Dogs," Charles L. Dean wrote, "Three Alaskan sled dogs in French service were awarded the Croix de Guerre, France's highest military honors, for actions in combat."

It was not long after the end of World War I that the nation was again drawn into another world war. At the beginning of World War II, the only military working dogs in the whole of the US military were being utilized

by Navy and Army forces in Alaska.

After the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, there was a real need to increase the number of military personnel in the Alaskan Territory. Gov. Ernest Gruening, Alaska Territorial Governor at the time, asked for military support and a plan was derived to create a territorial guard. Thus the Alaska Territorial Guard was formed by Maj. Marvin "Muktuk" Marston, an Army Air Corps officer.

Marston, along with Gruening, agreed to use the Alaskan native population to form this guard. Being predominately comprised of Alaskan Native Americans spread out from the Aleutians, the interior and coastal areas of Alaska, a form of transportation was needed so Marston could make contact with potential members.

The ATG members put hundreds of miles behind them as they used dog teams and sleds over tundra, through woods and mountain passes. These teams not only scouted, but also transferred munitions, firearms and other supplies to remote areas. For his efforts, Marston was recognized as an inductee in the Mushing Hall of Fame in Knik, Alaska.

One of the more colorful joint Native and white Alaskan units to come out of World War II was Castner's



A team of sled dogs stand beside a Convair F-102 Delta Dagger circa 1960 at Ladd Air Force Base, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of Fort Wainwright Archives.)

Cutthroats, officially the 1st Alaska Combat Intelligence Platoon, or Alaska Scouts.

Led by Col. Lawrence Castner, men of this special unit knew how to live off the land, and by the war's end they traveled thousands of miles to gather intelligence. They did so by means of boat and submarine, on foot, and by US Army-owned dog teams and sleds.

Search and rescue teams were also operated throughout Alaska during World War II, often used to locate and retrieve downed pilots. At Ladd Field, later Ladd Air Force Base, experienced Alaskan dog handlers in the Army were brought in to help train and create policies on dog care and use in the field.

During this time, all dog operations, handling and care were the overall responsibility of the US Army Quartermaster Corps. With regard to policy development, it is believed two privates at Ladd Field were utilized by the Army in particular; Pvts. George Lockwood of Unalakleet, Alaska, and Car Kawagley of Nome, Alaska, who were instrumental in the search and rescue program at Ladd.

It goes without saying that during the entirety of World War II, dogsled racing was severely interrupted. However, it was not long after the war that dogsled racing came back full swing to Alaska.

The First Alert: Sentry Dog School Remembered

by David Adams

With basic training nearing completion, the much-awaited tech school assignments arrived, revealing what our lives would look like for the next four years. I looked at my assignment with dismay. It was OSL or Other Side of Lackland to the Security Police (SP) School. Of the various technical fields available for me to sign up for, Security Police was not one of the selections I chose. As I tried to absorb the news, I realized only a few SPs were in law enforcement. The rest guarded airplanes. Envisioning guarding a B-52 bomber for the next four years, the reality set in that I could do nothing to alter this fate.

After sharing my dismay with my Drill Instructor, he told me he had been Security Police before taking the opportunity to break cocky kids into young airmen. He told me that K9 was an excellent option. I thought about pictures I had seen of GIs with their German Shepherds and realized it was the answer. It would also be something better to share with my kids, if I ever had any, than simply walking around an airplane. I decided to sign up for K9 and continued the rest of the day with a new hope. The next morning, I thought about what my German Shepherd would be like when an old haunting memory hit me. I distinctly remember being bitten by a German Shepherd when I

was about four; the breed had petrified me ever since. Then I thought about that B-52 and said, *Adams, 'You're just going to have to get over that fear because you can't handle the boredom of walking in a circle around a plane for four years.'*

Following Security Police School and a ten-day leave, I returned to Lackland with eager anticipation to meet my dog and begin our training. After a week of classroom sessions with veterinarians and trainers, that day finally arrived. The instructor introduced me to a German Shepherd named King 12M5, a large dog with a solid black saddle, medium brown coat, and huge ears. As I talked to him chained in his birdhouse kennel, I could tell he wanted someone to befriend him. I walked into a wagging tail, and he was in paradise as I rubbed and scratched behind his huge ears.

King and I worked through our first week together, grooming and learning basic obedience and marching. We were progressing well with our classmates. We began aggression training, lining up downwind from a thicket of tall shrubs. Then, a perpetrator came out aggressively from the thicket, shaking a burlap bag and yelling at the dogs. Some dogs reacted aggressively, while others were not sure. I could see King looking at what the other dogs were doing, figuring it out quickly,



David Adams and his first partner, King 12M5.
Photo courtesy of the author.

and joining in barking and lunging at the aggressor.

After some time working through various forms of aggression training came the attack sleeve, where the aggressor came out wearing an attack sleeve to let the dogs get the reward of getting their teeth into him. Then we graduated to cutting our dogs loose on the full attack suit. King thoroughly loved getting ahold of that padded sleeve and suit. He was a strong dog, and it took some effort to get him to let loose.

Once our dogs proved themselves at attack, it was time to test their detection and response. An area was

marked off, and we were to verify the wind direction and then begin quartering the plot, starting at the furthest downwind boundary and walking the length. Then, we moved in 20 or so yards, walked back, and continued to work our way through the plot until our dogs found the decoy. We had to watch for any changes in our dog's behavior that could indicate an alert. Every dog would be a little different, so it was a matter of learning our dog's alert.

Up to this point, my life experiences convinced me that some guy named Murphy had found his way into my Irish grandmother's gene

pool. If there were some way for something not to work for me, it would happen. So, I began this exercise with considerable doubt about how King would know what to do, or more to the point that I would fail to read him. We stepped off with me encouraging him. “*Find him, boy!? Where is he?*”

We got halfway through our first pass when he raised his head slightly higher. Then, he started weaving in a figure 8 pattern at the end of the leash. There was no doubt he had picked something up. The change in behavior was unmistakable. Suddenly, without warning, he made a hard lunge to the left and tried to run, digging his paws and claws into the soil to get a grip as I held the leash tight to make a slow, controlled approach, constantly encouraging him, although he obviously needed none. As we approached a thicket of brush, the decoy jumped and started running,

and we gave a short chase when the decoy stopped. I praised King up. Praising that was more my pure joy and total amazement at what had just happened. In the first attempt, my dog had found a man hiding by scent alone and knew exactly what to do. It was a magical and thrilling moment that gave me a new level of confidence in my dog and myself.

As we neared the end of our training, we moved to night exercises and qualifications that would bring the training closer to what we would be doing at our assigned bases because sentry dogs only worked at night. The last section of the qualifications was to walk a single-track loop road surrounded by mesquite trees, scrub brush, and prickly pear cactus. Handlers took turns being decoys as the K9 teams would walk the road, return to the start point, and tell the instructor how many

decoys they had found. This exercise seemed strange to me as we were not quartering a road, so you were not always downwind. King found everyone. However, on one pass, King gave his unmistakable figure 8 weaving, moved straight ahead, not moving off the road right or left. Then he stopped and started moving in circles. I could tell he lost the scent. We turned back up the road, approached again, and did the same thing at the same spot. Then I heard a voice say “Bang!” above me. The decoy hid in a tree with the scent cone coming down. King would lose it after passing under it. While the experience of patrolling that road was a significant lesson, it didn’t seem to fit in with the 200 square yard post we would be patrolling on the perimeter of our air bases.

Less than two years later, I would find myself patrolling that dark road again, full of foliage and trees on both sides. This time, it was not in Texas, but 8,000 miles on the other side of the world on a combat support air base in Thailand, and I would be with a different dog, one that I was just getting to know.

In the fifty-six years since I attended sentry dog school, many things have disappeared into the recesses of my mind, but the memory that remains as vivid to me as the day it occurred was King’s first alert on that training search. He knew exactly what to do without hesitation. That experience taught me to trust my dog with my life forever. It was a true bonding moment that extended to every dog I partnered with.



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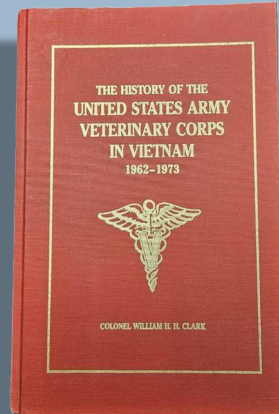
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Book of the Month



Thinking what book to chat about initially, I decided to highlight a pillar of the MWD program: veterinarians. *The History of the United States Army Veterinary Corps In Vietnam 1962-1973* by Colonel William H. H. Clark from 1991 is a trove of archival information. It's also incredibly difficult to find. That fact aside, this jewel details a timeline from the first Veterinary Corps officer receiving Vietnam orders in December 1961 through the fateful draw down and notorious dog return policy. It's not a light read with its charts and such, but it is incredibly important.

By Joel Burton

Submitted photo of the month



**July 13, 2001—
Joyce Gibson, a
visitor to the Fort
Benning Kennels,
is suited up by
the Kennel Mas-
ter and a handler
to decoy her first
MWD.**