



# *The Paw Print*

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



## Upcoming Events:

September 14-21, 2025  
Kokomo, IN. All Veterans  
Reunion

October 17, 2025  
San Antonio, TX. US War  
Dogs 25th Anniversary  
Celebration ( You must RSVP  
to [rsvp@uswardogs.org](mailto:rsvp@uswardogs.org) by  
September 17, 2025.)

November 10-11 2025  
Columbia, SC  
10th Anniversary  
Rededication of the South  
Carolina War Dog Memorial

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## First Dogs to Vietnam: Project Top Dog



Above: Project Top Dog XLV—Lackland AFB Sentry Dog School, 1965. The first twenty dog teams destined for Vietnam load into the back of a truck for transport to San Francisco, first stop on their way to Da Nang. Photo: Vance McCrumb.

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After a successful Viet Cong (VC) sapper attack on the Da Nang Air Force Base in the summer of 1965, the U.S. began deploying its Military Working Dogs (MWDs). The attack took place on July 1, which prompted the Air Force to initiate Project Top Dog, sending over 40 sentry dogs and their handlers to the region.

Throughout the hours of darkness, sentry dogs

and their handlers patrolled the perimeters of air bases in Vietnam and Thailand. The keen senses of the sentry dogs often prevented the enemy from moving undetected, making these teams the most effective means of detecting enemy activity at night.

Shortly after Project Top Dog was launched, the Army, Marines, and Navy

sent additional dogs to reinforce the defenses of their bases and to assist in scouting and tracking missions. By the end of the war, nearly 4,200 dogs were deployed in the jungles, along flight lines, and around the perimeters of bases throughout Southeast Asia, with the Air Force dogs leading the way. 🐾

## From the Vice President's Desk



Vice President  
Scott Daubert

I want to start this month's letter with a big HAPPY BIRTHDAY to the United States Air Force!!

As a former Air Force handler, I'm very proud that the Air Force leads the way in MWD programs. The US Air Force MWD program has a long history that dates back to World War II, when it was still part of the US Army. During this time, military working dogs (MWDs) were first trained for sentry duty, primarily to guard



airfields and supply depots. In 1942, the War Dog Program, also known as the "K-9 Corps," began procuring and training

11,000 dogs for military service. The Army managed Dogs for Defense. These dogs were used in multiple roles such as sentry, scout, and messenger.



Almost ten years after the establishment of the US Air Force as a separate branch, responsibility for training sentry dogs was transferred from the Army to the Air Force on May 1, 1957. The first Air Force dog school was established at Lackland AFB, TX, where it remains today as the Department of Defense Military Working Dog School. All things MWD start at Lackland AFB.

The Air Force Military Working Dog School trains all MWD handlers regardless of branch of service. Instructors at the

schoolhouse are all certified MWD handlers, coming from every branch of service. The MWD school is responsible for procuring all dogs for the DoD, including training them at the Dog Training School. The only exceptions are the Special Forces and the US Army Ranger Regiment, both of which have their own procurement and training programs.

During the Korean War, MWDs were used extensively to guard air bases, particularly at night. It wasn't until the Vietnam War that the average Soldier would see the benefits of the MWD program, as these dogs played vital roles in perimeter security, detecting intruders, and locating hidden explosives—over 4,200 dogs served in Vietnam, saving countless lives.

MWDs progressed from guard, sentry, and combat patrol work to also being certified for law enforcement duties, until 2005, when the Specialized Search Dogs (SSD) program was established. All MWDs were dual certified in patrol and ei-



ther explosive detection or narcotic detection. The SSD program was the Air Force's response to counter IEDs. Specialized Search Dogs are only trained in explosive detection and not patrol certified. Trained to work off-leash and at a distance from its handler, and can work large crowds without fear of biting someone.

Until next time, Aim High Air Force!

**K9 Leads the Way!**

*Scott Daubert*

## Project Top Dog—The Sentry Dog Experiment in Vietnam

Story and photos by Vance McCrumb

Greetings, fellow handlers! Albert asked me to bang on my keyboard to write about Project Top Dog XLV. For those who are not aware, Project Top Dog was the operation that sent over forty Air Force Sentry Dog handlers and their dogs to Vietnam in July 1965. We were the first American handlers from any military branch to use dogs in Vietnam. The Army and Marines quickly trained Scout Dog and Combat Tracker handlers, deploying them in late 1965 or early 1966. The Navy also had Sentry Dog handlers at Da Nang by late 1965.

My late brother-in-law, Larry Snitgen, served as an Army Combat Tracker alongside a yellow Labrador named Goldie. Larry completed two and a half tours in Vietnam. Bob Konarske, a member of my local Vietnam Veterans of America (VVA) chapter, was also an Army Combat Tracker in Vietnam. We often had friendly discussions about whose dog was the best in Vietnam, each claiming the title, as would every handler. The argument continues...

After graduating from Sentry Dog School, I was assigned to the 11th Combat Defense Squadron, Air Police K9 Section at Altus AFB (SAC) in the early summer of 1963. In the summer of 1965, while transitioning between a swing and midnight shift at the kennels, I found myself short on gas money—

actually, it was more like beer money—so I didn't leave the base. With no other handlers around, the only people present were the Kennel Master, TSgt. Collier, and our trainer, A1C Schuler. I told them I would let Dutch off-leash for a while, flipped down the "WARNING - OFF LEASH" signs, and set Dutch free to explore the training area. He took his time wandering around, which included peeing on various obstacles in the obstacle course, sniffing around, and enjoying some leisure time. It was a well-deserved break for him.

### A New Direction

TSgt. Collier interrupted our break and informed me that the first sergeant wanted all handlers at the kennels to return to the barracks. I kenned Dutch and headed back, curious about what was so important that we needed to muster up in the barracks.

MSgt. Hutchinson gathered most of the handlers in the dayroom to inform us that Uncle Sam was seeking volunteers to go to Vietnam. During the summer of 1965, many of us, myself included, were unfamiliar with Vietnam's location or significance, as it was just starting to appear in the news. Instead of watching the evening news, I spent my off-duty hours in bars, drinking beer and chasing women. I was quite skilled at drinking beer.



**Above: The Project Top Dog departure from Lackland was historic and documented by cameras rolling as teams and supplies were on loaded, heading for Vietnam.**

Photo courtesy: Vance McCrumb

My buddy Mike and I were the only two to raise our hands. Raising our hands started the process rolling, and the Air Force issued our TDY orders on 6 July 1965. This TDY also canceled my scheduled leave.

Our orders sent our backsides to Lackland for handler and sentry dog evaluations, followed by our deployment. We received word that our dogs would not be returning with us to our home bases after our TDY tour ended.

The kennel master and I didn't see eye-to-eye. We were issued mild tranquilizers for our dogs to keep them calm on the flight to

Vietnam. I silently refused to drug Dutch.

During the transport, the shipping crates, which later became temporary dog houses at Da Nang, were secured to the center of the C-130. The Sgt would walk up and down the checking on things, and Dutch would give him a low growl, which caused him to ask me if I drugged Dutch. I lied.

The loadmaster reminded us to remove all our personal belongings, stating that whatever was left behind once the plane departed would belong to him. Unfortunately, I unintentionally left my small zippered carry-on, and it seems I gifted



him my Pentax camera and lens.

### Tan Son Nhut Air Base

Coming from a Strategic Air Command (SAC) base, the loud noises of B-52s and KC-135s during their landings and takeoffs roared routinely. However, there were moments when the flight line settled into a quiet. That was not the case at Tan Son Nhut. The temperature and humidity suffocated me; the noise, combined with the smell of JP-4 fuel, overwhelmed my senses as I deplaned. Welcome to Vietnam!

We spent a few days in orientation, which included vaccinations and instructions on the dos and don'ts of our assignment: **Don't leave the air base! Stay away from the off-limits areas!** However, some of us, with the independent streak of a K9 handler, took this as an invitation to explore and decided to visit Saigon.

### Flying North

Airmen assigned to the Da Nang air base boarded a C-47 and flew north. We left late in the afternoon and landed in Da Nang around dark. Before landing, the loadmaster informed us that our landing would be a "hot" one, so we needed to ensure we were strapped in and ready for a rough touchdown. The landing itself was uneventful but undoubtedly steep.

The sergeant got back at me by assigning me Charge of Quarters (CQ) duty after we

arrived in Da Nang and secured our dogs in the temporary kennel area. We were on the opposite side of the airbase's single runway. I had never experienced darkness like I did that first night; it redefined what "dark-thirty" meant! The only lights I could see were on the other side of the runway, which felt miles away from where I was standing. By the way, we were issued AR-15s (which would soon be called M-16s) at Lackland, but we didn't receive any ammunition.

The rest of the handlers were bussed to tent city to secure their quarters, and I, along with my AR-15, no ammo, and my helmet liner, was left in a large tent with one light bulb, wood pallet floor, and a cot. I had to tell myself to stop bitching; you volunteered for this \$hit.

### A Visitor

A Marine sergeant visited me shortly after they left to see how this non-combat-trained Air Force dog handler was doing. Little did I know, but many of *The Few*, *The Proud*, and *The Brave* were bivouacked about a hundred yards from our kennels. He asked if I had ammo for my weapon and seemed relieved when I replied, "No." He warned me that they were expecting trouble, pointed to somewhere in the darkness where the bunker was, and warned, "Don't go to sleep."

I did go to sleep. A large BOOM followed by similar sounds abruptly woke my



Above: A top dog from Project Top Dog, K9 Dutch E955 'smiles' at the handler next to me, asserting his claim to territory. I had to use Dutch's collar and stake out chain to secure his kennel. These kennels originally housed South Vietnamese Sentry dogs. We did disinfect the kennels before we allowed our dogs to occupy them.

~ Vance McCrumb

Photo courtesy: Vance McCrumb

backside up. I grabbed my weapon, which unfortunately still had no ammo, and headed in the direction I thought the bunker sat. I quickly realized that the booms I heard were outgoing artillery. No debris was falling, so I returned to the tent, only to discover the Marine sergeant sitting on my bunk grinning widely. He knew he had an FNG by the short hairs!

Dog teams worked from dusk until dawn, maybe getting one night off each month. Early on, there weren't enough teams to split the duties between swing and midnight shifts.

When we patrolled our K9 post in the States, we were the only ones there. In Da Nang, however, numerous foxholes dug nearby were always filled with Army and Marine troops. Gunfire was a tough adjustment for our dogs as well. Early sentry dog handlers trained our dogs to agitate—bark—at the sound of gunfire. We worked hard to acclimate them to the noise so they wouldn't react that way. It took some time, but eventually, the dogs and we adjusted.

For the most part, my tour was uneventful, except for the firefights the Army and

Marines manning the air-base's perimeter had. We patrolled just inside the perimeter between the Marines and Army manning their foxholes and the air-base.

That was quite an adjustment for our dogs, who wanted to alert on the Army and Marine infantry troops in their foxholes. Throw in the mix a Duty Officer (DO) moving between foxholes and checking the troops. In 1965, the DO also checked

to ensure their weapon's chambers were empty! As the war stance changed, so did that directive.

Dutch E955 was the best dog in Vietnam! The argument continues...

Arf,

Dutch E955

Vance L. McCrumb

USAF Sentry Dog Handler –  
1963-67



Above: Above is a group of handlers in our kennel compound which was wide open without any fencing. In the background is our kennels. The fella without a shirt is a Marine from their compound. They frequently visited us to borrow water from our water buffalo. ~ Vance McCrumb  
Photo courtesy: Vance McCrumb

## Announcing the 2025 Battle of the Beards

**Battle of  
The Beards**

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

**Visit Now**

[mwdheritagemuseum.org/2025-beard-battle/](http://mwdheritagemuseum.org/2025-beard-battle/)

Unleash your inner gentleman/mountain man/warrior and join us for the Battle of the Beards—where whiskers reign supreme and every mustache tells a story!

Support a great cause while enjoying a lively competition to determine the ultimate beard champion. Beginning September 6th, World Beard Day, our contestants will dive into a spirited showdown to crown the ultimate beard champion, all while supporting the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum.

You can support your favorite handler by donating in his honor and/or sabotage by donating to the competition. Gather your friends, flaunt your finest facial hair, and let's raise a toast to camaraderie and charity at this unforgettable event! In the end, one winning beard will be saved, the rest will be whisker-ed away.



## Zzaslow K427

On September 11, 2001, evil men put a plan into action that they thought would divide and destroy a nation and a people. However, instead of division, they created a unity not seen since December 8, 1941. In the ashes of fallen towers rose a spirit that united strangers who would have otherwise never met and created families that had never existed before.

The documentary **Zzaslow K427**, which premiered on Wednesday, May 21, 2025, at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, showcases one of these 9/11 families. US Army Veteran Combat Cameraman Robert Ham crafted this documentary.

Inspired to enlist and serve within days of the historic terrorist attack, Ham became a visual storyteller. The documentary he created tells the story of a black lab born at JBSA-Lackland as part of an experimental TSA Canine breeding program. This dog, along with many like him, was named after one of the fallen of 9-11, Ira Zaslow.

Ira's son, Adam, only learned of this honor bestowed upon his father many years after Zzaslow K427 completed his service to his country, retired, and passed away. Through divine providence, Adam learned of the existence of Zzaslow K427 after the K9's foster family, the Johnsons, came across an old obituary for Ira Zaslow and decided

to leave a memorial message. From here, Adam Zaslow reached out and began a journey that would connect him with the Johnson family. From there, he learned that Zzaslow had been accepted for service, not by the TSA, but by the US Army's Mine Detection K9 Program in Ft. Leonard Wood, MO. Specialist Juan Colon-Estrada held the end of Zaslow's lead, and together, this team served over three tours in Afghanistan and Iraq, saving an untold number of lives. In the end, Juan adopted Zzaslow in retirement and cared for him until his life was complete and he crossed the Rainbow Bridge. Years later, Juan would be contacted by Adam, providing both men an opportunity for connection and closure as they met together in Ft Leonard Wood, where Juan now works as a civilian. Later, they traveled together to close the story with a tour of the 9-11 Memorial and Museum.

Through the artful lens of a master filmmaker who had walked the warrior's path, the viewer can clearly see the silver thread weaving a diverse cast of characters into a new family. At the center of that family sits a faithful friend in ebony fur, connecting them all—a black lab born to an organization formed in response to 9/11, an experimental breeding program led by Dr. Stewart Hillyard. A furry warrior born

on soil sacred to the K9 community is the birthplace of every handler, including his future handler, Juan. A 4-legged Soldier destined to serve in the same service as the one who would later be called upon to tell his story in an unforgettable film. A puppy fostered by a family looking for their way to serve their country and its response to the attack that took the life of the namesake of this special dog. Finally, a dog whose very existence brought tears of joy to a boy who still missed his Dad and was moved beyond words to meet every person who had been a part of this special furry angel's life and make them part of his.

With all this in mind, it is no wonder why Robert Ham and HAMMR Productions chose JBSA-Lackland as the first place to show this film. Here, a select audience of K9 handlers, trainers, and staff from the TSA Canine Training Center and the 341st Training Squadron Military Working Dog School received invitations to a private screening. Following the screening, the members of this new family gathered on stage together for the very 1st time to answer questions and share a variety of stories about Zzaslow and their journey together through him.

Missing from this moment was Juan Colon-Estrada, who was unable to attend due to his commitment as a

Story by Christopher Dion



civilian trainer for new Mine Detection Dog handlers in Ft Leonard Wood. His absence and the cause of his inability to attend added to the continuing story and legacy of Zzaslow as he was away beginning the training of a brand-new class of handlers. Yet, the tales of one of the longest-serving and most highly decorated K9 teams in US Army Engineer history will forge a strong foundation in these new handlers. As they go out and continue to serve, so goes the name Zzaslow with them.

In that name lies the memory of a nation rising from the ashes and of a proud father taken too soon whose sons never forgot the love and lessons left behind. This story is one-of-a-kind. It is one you will not regret seeing nor ever forget once you have. This film beats with a pure heart and doesn't rely upon the Hollywood add-ins found in other films. It stands as another story, represented by the warrior and his partners, depicted by the US MWD Teams National Monument, which guards the grounds of Lackland. 🐾



## The 10th Anniversary Rededication of the South Carolina War Dog Memorial

Led by the Military Working Dog Heritage Museum and Johnny Mayo, this event is still in the final planning stages, but we wanted to get the information dates on your radar so you can mark your calendars and begin registering.

Check out the latest and greatest on our [website](https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/events/columbia-sc-war-dog-memorial-rededication/):

<https://mwdheritagemuseum.org/events/columbia-sc-war-dog-memorial-rededication/>

Handlers are invited to ride in military vehicles during the Columbia, SC Veterans Day Parade, ending at the MWD Memorial Rededication. This is a first-come, first-served opportunity so

please register and respond as soon as possible.

As always, we ask for your support and help as we create these unique opportunities for the entire MWD community.

Please reach out to our intrepid Event Coordinator, John Homa, at [Events@mwdhm.org](mailto:Events@mwdhm.org) if you or your company would like to sponsor or donate to this event. There are numerous opportunities to be included, so reach out as soon as possible.

We'll see you in South Carolina in November. 🐾



**See you in South Carolina!**



## SMSgt. Brian Williams: The Man of Iron - Part I

by Senior Airman Katelynn Jackson

It was April 25, 2012, in Forward Operating Base Pasab, Afghanistan, and the world was an endless sea of sand.

There, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Williams and his military working dog Carly sat surrounded by the bulky, wire mesh walls of HESCO barriers that had become as much a part of the terrain as the jagged rocks and scattered rubble around them.

"I was in a remote location in the middle of nowhere," said Williams, now a senior master sergeant. "Just sitting there waiting for the arrival of the large Army unit we were tasked with."

He and his MWD had been deployed to FOB Pasab for two months and were currently tasked with waiting for their Army counterparts to arrive before beginning their sweep of an Afghan village nearby.

Having been waiting since dawn, and it was now past noon, time seemed stretched thin. Hours slipped by as if caught in a tide of restless anticipation.

Finally, at just past 3:00 p.m., the distant rumble of trucks approaching stirred the air, and they were cleared to move.

"When things started moving, Carly would have this burst of excitement," said Williams. "We both did."

As they made their way forward, a snarky remark from



**US Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Williams and his military working dog, Carly, stand for a photo during their pre-deployment training at the US Army Yuma Proving Ground, Arizona. (US Air Force courtesy photo)**

an Army specialist who was eyeing Carly's restless behavior caught William off guard.

"Your dog's going to blow us all up, huh?" said the specialist.

Williams said he felt his anger flare.

"It was the type of comment I would usually let go," said Williams. "But another MWD handler from our base had gotten injured that day, and I couldn't shake a feeling of uneasiness."

They pressed on, reaching the village, where the Army minesweepers were already at work, the mechanical hum of their equipment cutting through the heavy si-

lence. Williams and Carly moved ahead of the others, carefully step-by-step, their pace deliberate.

They arrived at a compound, and orders were given: Carly was to search it.

Williams unclipped Carly from his leash, paws scraping softly against the dusty floor as he began to search the rooms alone. He moved with a quiet precision, a dance between dog and honed fighter. But no alert came, signaling the area was clear of explosives.

As they reached a set of ancient and withered stairs, Williams noted the design was one you would expect to find in a different era, a foreign time.

Williams sent Carly to search the second floor so the unit could proceed upstairs. He moved to the base of the steps and sniffed; again, no alert was signaled.

He climbed the stairs and entered another room at the top, but he did not return.

Usually, if Carly didn't sense an explosive or a hostile, he would have returned or sent a warning of danger, but this time, there was nothing.

Williams crept forward, listening for sounds of struggle. But there was only silence. The air was still.

"I am on the third step," Williams said, his eyes far away. "And then time just freezes for me."

There was no warning, no time to react. An improvised explosive device, hidden under the steps, ripped through the earth beneath his feet. The pain was immediate, a searing heat followed by numbing stillness.

"I felt like I was hovering," Williams said. "Like I was Iron Man, suspended in the air, weightless. I was up there forever."

Eventually, gravity returned, and he crashed back down into consciousness.

"I could see that I had a compound fracture protruding from the skin on my left wrist," said Williams. "My teeth were gone or dangling in my mouth."

His mind scrambled, agony muffling everything except for a cold, striking realization. His left foot was nowhere to be found.

"I cried," said Williams, his voice breaking. "I called for my mom."

The world around him was morphed with pain, dust, and frenzied voices. Soldiers scrambled to him, lifting him by his collar, securing tourniquets on his limbs, and strapping him to a gurney.

The helicopter ride to the medics was a haze, a blur of worried faces and fading consciousness.

"I thought about my mom, my dad, my girlfriend," said Williams. "Anything to keep me awake."



Once they landed at the hospital, surrounded by the sterile scent of antiseptic and the quiet scurrying of nurses, he was finally allowed to sleep.

When he woke up days later under a fog of painkillers, Williams had not fully met the realization that things would be forever different now.

"When I got injured, I knew everything below my ankle was gone," said Williams. "But while I was asleep, they had amputated higher."

Out of fear of infection, Williams' left leg was amputated above the knee.

In addition to losing his leg, he had suffered blown eardrums, traumatic brain injury, missing teeth, a compression fracture of the spine, and a left wrist compound fracture.

"According to the doctor, the only thing holding my hand together was my watch," said Williams. "I had only worn a watch on deployments to see what time it was back home with my family."

Throughout it all, Williams kept high spirits and felt relatively the same as he did before the injury. However, a week after his return to the U.S., his girlfriend was changing the bandage around his leg when something inside him shifted, and he broke down.

"I had promised my girlfriend that nothing would change when I came back,"



**U.S. Air Force Senior Master Sgt. Brian Williams, 56th Security Forces Squadron operations superintendent, guards the gate at Luke Air Force Base, Arizona. Williams was selected for the rank of chief master sergeant, the highest enlisted rank in the U.S. Air and Space Force. (U.S. Air Force photo by Senior Airman Katelynn Jackson)**

said Williams, his voice softening. "And I had lied in dramatic fashion."

The war had ended for him in some ways, but the battle for his military career was far from over.

"I've literally had to fight from the beginning to be in the Air Force," said Williams.

It started when Williams joined the Junior Reserve Officers' Training Corps in high school.

"I did JROTC, but not because I planned on joining the military," said Williams. "I just took it because I thought it was a class I could pass."

The commander of his school's JROTC unit, a retired Army colonel, did not want Williams included in the program. A feeling Williams said was mutual.

"I was definitely an interesting character in high school," said Williams, a sparkle dancing in his eyes. "I was constantly in the principal's office and testing authority."

For two years, his JROTC commandant attempted to get him kicked out.

"Because I continued to fulfill the bare minimum of my responsibilities," said Williams. "There was nothing he could do about it."

His senior year, after successfully completing four years in JROTC, the retired colonel refused to grant him the certificate verifying completion that members can take to enlist in the military for an automatic promotion.

His father, who retired in the Army, drove to the school to advocate for him.

"He told my father I did not deserve the joy of service to my country," said Williams, shifting in his seat. "He wasn't the first or last person to count me out."

After graduating high school, Williams worked a number of minimum-wage jobs before deciding he wanted something more for his life.

"I was working at Walmart, and I literally quit in the middle of the day," said Williams. "I went on a restroom break, and I never came back."

While he drove to the recruiter's office, he said he told himself that he would try the Air Force first, and if they didn't have a plan to get him ready to enlist that day, he would keep trying every branch until one did.

"In 48 hours after approaching my recruiter, I flew to the Military Entrance Processing Station, and I picked security forces as my job," said Williams. "Then they asked me if I wanted to fly out the next day or December."

That next day, Williams flew back home, packed his bags in three hours, and only told his mother he joined the Air Force on the first phone call at Basic Military Training.

His first duty station after graduating BMT and the Air Force Security Forces Academy was Luke Air Force Base, Arizona, where he served the first eight years of his career.

"Luke AFB taught me a lot as my first assignment," said Williams. "It shaped who I am and my foundations as an Airman."

Some of the lessons Williams learned were done the hard way.

"My first re-enlistment was met with some slight hesitation," said Williams. "I received an Article 15 during my first four years."

While serving his second deployment for the 376th Expeditionary Security Forces Squadron in Manas Air Base in Kyrgyzstan as a fire team member, Williams lis-

tened to a conference call where a debate was had if Williams would be allowed to remain in the Air Force.

With his leadership advocating for him, he was approved for re-enlistment.

Williams continued to serve and after returning home from his fourth deployment, a supervisor pulled him aside and suggested that Williams volunteer to be a MWD handler and serve in the K-9 units.

"They were mandating people to work with K-9s at that time," said Williams. "He suggested I do it on my own accord instead of being forced to."

Williams' first deployment as a working dog handler was in 2010 with the 455th SFS at Bagram AB, Afghanistan.

"My dog was a drug dog," said Williams. "I was unable to complete my deployment because my dog got a tumor the size of a softball, and we both had to leave early."

Before he was tasked with his sixth and final deployment, he was assigned Carly in 2011.

"Every relationship with a dog is different," said Williams. "Prior to the injury in 2012, Carly didn't want anything to do with me. That changed after."

Williams was allowed to adopt Carly, who survived the IED with no injuries in 2013.

While having Carly with him contributed to his healing process, being an above-the-knee amputee meant a more complicated prosthetic process than those with below-the-knee cuts.

"I make it look doable, but I am a relatively high amputee," said Williams. "To this day, it is a continuous process of working and updating what kind of prosthetic offers me a higher quality of life."

Throughout Williams's recovery process, despite the mental and agonizing physical challenges of attempting to learn to walk on a prosthetic, he always avoided dwelling on the negatives of his new reality.

"Whenever I was feeling down about my situation," said Williams. "I would look around in physical therapy at those who lost two or four limbs and suddenly feel less sorry for myself."

While Williams did not yet understand the graveness of the extent of his injuries and the difficulties returning to active-duty service would present, he did know he wanted to continue serving.

"A lot of things in the 10 years of service I had given at that point should have already pushed me to get out," said Williams. "And it hadn't."

Williams said one of the most frustrating parts of his injury is that he would never be able to put a face or name to the person who

placed the IED that took his leg.

"I wasn't going to let that nameless person take my military service too," said Williams. "Not when I had already fought so hard for it since the beginning."

Williams was offered severance pay to start the beginning of a medical retirement from the Air Force, but he didn't want to do that.

"The question I always get is 'why did I stay?'" said Williams. "The real question is, why not?"

While speaking with his care coordinator, a retired Air

Force chief master sergeant, Williams was advised that he had almost made the ultimate sacrifice and that he shouldn't feel the need to give even more to the service.

Williams said that so many people in his life were trying to segue him into the Air Force Medical Evaluation Board process to separate him from active duty and into medical retirement.



This article is continued to the October issue of *The Paw Print*.



**U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt. Brian Williams, takes his first steps on a prothesis in 2012 at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center, Bethesda, Maryland. (U.S. Air Force courtesy photo)**



## Meet Us In Tennessee



The Military Working Dog Heritage Museum team has been invited to attend a premier dog event in eastern Tennessee—the Great Smoky Mountain Cluster held by the Tennessee Valley Kennel Club and the Oak Ridge Kennel Club.

This year, the event will be held at the Chilhowee Park and Exposition Center, 3301 E. Magnolia Ave, Knoxville, TN.

In addition to the breed conformation shows, the event will include the National Owner-Handled Series, Rally, Obedience, Fast CAT, and, of course, puppies and dogs of every type. Opportunities for canine eye and cardiac health screenings exist.

If interested in attending, please see the website for more details and updates:

<http://www.tvkc.org/shows-trials.html>

The museum staff has attended this show for a few years now and enjoys the opportunity to showcase some of America's military working dog history.

Our team will be working hard throughout the entire show, and we look forward to spreading the word about America's K9 history and how a strong connection with the AKC has influenced it.

We hope to see you there!

## Meet Us In Indiana

Rebranded as the All-Veterans reunion, the Howard County Vietnam Veterans reunion is now inclusive of all eras. While always welcoming of other veterans, the name now reflects that vision as a younger generation takes the reins.

This year, several MWDHM volunteers plan to attend, featuring fundraising opportunities, raffles, and educational displays showcasing a sampling of our growing archive of military K9 treasures. We will offer new historic K9 coloring pages, especially for the many children who attend this event with their families.

The 37-acre healing field allows veterans an opportunity for reconnection, reflection, healing, and hope.

Many activities take place at this event, and visitors will want to take in as many as possible. Check out the website [here](https://hcvvo.net/) or visit <https://hcvvo.net/>.

Whether this is your first time or your 20th, this is a special place with a fabulous history and camaraderie for dog handlers.

Be sure to stop by, chat, and pick up some swag while you're there!





*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](mailto:info@mwdhm.org)

**Military Working Dog Heritage:  
Always on Point**

We're on the Web: [mwdhm.org](http://mwdhm.org)

We're on Facebook:  
Military Working Dog Heritage Museum

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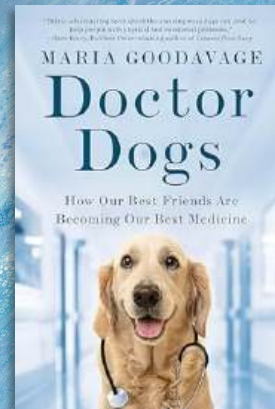
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**Share your vision.**

**Share your voice.**

**Share your copy of  
our newsletter.**

## Book of the Month



### Doctor Dogs: How Our Best Friends Are Becoming Our Best Medicine

Maria Goodavage takes readers on a fascinating journey into the world of "doctor dogs"—canines trained to assist humans with various medical conditions. The book explores how we train dogs to detect diseases like cancer and Parkinson's, alert individuals to seizures or diabetic episodes, and even provide emotional support for mental health conditions such as PTSD and autism.

Review by Greg Dunlap.

## Submitted Photo of the Month



A photo from the article on Zzaslow, a film by Robert Ham for Hammr Productions.

Left to right: An interpreter featured in previous work by Robert Ham, our volunteer, Christopher Dion, Jamie Kvotkin, Mrs. Ham next to Robert Ham, Adam Zaslow holding the movie poster, and three members of the Johnson family who fostered Zaslow K427. Dr. Stewart Hilliard of the 341st TRS Puppy Program, and finally, the brother of the first interpreter, who also served as an interpreter.

Photo courtesy Christopher Dion