



Dog School

(USAF Sentry & Patrol Dog Training)



June 6, 2006

Thanks to everyone who has been involved in the production of Dog School we are able to continue to tell our history. This third edition of "DOG SCHOOL" hopefully will continue to tell our story of dog handlers past, present, and future. This edition will focus on the experiences of our group that were instructors and students of the Dog Schools at Lackland, PACAF, and Germany.

We have so much to tell each other and hopefully this edition will encourage you to get in line to submit your stories to share with our handlers. Good ole days – you betcha! Sit back, look over this issue and enjoy. These were great days for all of us – were those dogs just wonderful and didn't they make us look good?

My Best Assignments Were Always With Military Working Dogs (Lt Col John W. Probst)

I had just finished watching a dog demo, walked by "Nemo's" run and sat back down on the bleachers. It could have been the warm San Antonio afternoon that made me loose my bearings but in reality it was the stunning speed and power of the dogs hitting the wrap and the sight of a true Vietnam War hero that probably did it. Suddenly the SSgt yelled, "Hey Airman, put your arm down, get down here and sign this roster now." What arm ... what roster and two months later I was starting training as a military working dog handler. Whew ... and life has never been the same ... and I damned proud of it too! Hundreds of names and memories come flooding back in no specific order as I reflect on the past 30 plus years.

I must say up front that I believe dog handlers are a unique breed. We tend to quickly bond with other handlers and take up their causes. The little things in life seem to be more meaningful to us since often that was all we got. Few in the supervisory chain knew much about us or how we worked and they really didn't want to know much more anyway ... kind of scary for them. And the funny part was we liked it that way. We enjoyed being a little on the outside and treated differently ... but we always had each other and that meant more than those on the outside will ever know. A dog handler always knew who their true friends were by walking by a group of folks after a rainy night on post. Only another dog handler or real comrade would stand next to our stinking body! Unlike others, we felt like the ugly son or daughter since we took our remote posts after dark and came in just before light ... nobody really got a good look at us.

Some of the best and most important lessons in life I learned from my assigned dogs. They taught me the value loyalty, the strength in focusing on a target, what you could accomplish with hard work, to be humble, the power of pride, when and how to relax, and maybe most importantly ... to just be yourself and nothing more. They each derived a simple joy and happiness from being with us ... they were our best friend and most loyal protector. Each of them was so unique and so memorable: Diablo #79M8, who decided after six months, yeah I'm going to bite this handler just because I can; Thunder #999A, God Bless him would fall asleep if we stood still for more than five minutes; Baron #886X, with broken canines who loved to carry his water bucket around; Sultan #S246, who would have made a better house pet but he at least tried; Victor #013A, who was handsome and forever energetic; Shep #80M3, who hated everyone equally and had no favorites; Rebel #8M12, always wanted to please his handler no matter the chore; Jalk #Z012, who was an "Aberdeen super-dog" and had only one speed ... extremely fast; and, last, Bushka #C249, who got a bad reputation but just needed a chance to prove himself and enjoy someone as goofy as he was. What a wonderful group of characters and friends ... they made my first ten years rich and full and I can never forget any one of them.

Bases like Goose Bay AB, Newfoundland, Canada; Fairchild AFB, Spokane, Washington; Clark AB, Philippines; Kadena AB, Okinawa, Japan; Don Muang Airport, Thailand; and Lackland AFB, San Antonio, Texas gave this dog handler plenty of opportunities to learn, grow and meet and work with outstanding trainers and mentors. I cannot think of a more boring post than walking a static aircraft boundary at Goose Bay AB, Newfoundland nor one more exciting than Mabalakat Washout on Clark AB, Philippines. But it was a combination of all those posts and bases that really taught you to appreciate the times, your friends and those spectacular canines.

And just when you thought you had seen it all a young Airman or old and crafty Sentry Dog would prove you hadn't! Like the time when SSgt Wilbur Morrow told me. "Yep, we are going to teach that dog of yours how to stand-off today Airman Probst." Well I believed him and believed that the two 360's he was holding that were snapped on to "Diablo" choke chain would do the trick. The "Out, No out" was perfectly timed as "Diablo" hit the end of the 360's. But I think the fatal flaw in our well laid plans was we forgot to brief "Diablo"! Both 360's tore apart at the buckle stitching at the same time with one of the leashes flying back so fast it knocked SSgt Morrow's sunglasses off before he knew what happened! I quickly learned to stand back when another dog handler or trainer proudly said, "Hey watch this. This is so cool." Actually the best place to be at these times was up in a nearby tree!

While the feel of the leather leash, the complete uncertainty of what each night on post would bring, and the satisfaction of a good chase, sometimes a bite or good find and bust all made working a dog fun I thought my time teaching at the dog school was the most satisfying. Although I have never yelled loose dog so much in all my life it was watching the light-bulb come on for our students that was so great. But even more exhilarating was seeing the students graduate and the simple thanks they uttered as they left. And when a student would later call back or send a short note ... I used to call those my "third paydays of the month." You felt you were making a difference for the future of the Air Force and our country and that meant something.

Following a 4-year break in service for school I was fortunate enough to return to the Security Police career field. While I had a lot of common ground to share with the dog handlers at the installations and often volunteered to wear the wrap, which they thought was pretty cool, the highlight of my career was the opportunity to return to the dog school, then called the 341st Technical Training Squadron, as the commander. The Assumption of Command Ceremony had all four services, 20 plus dogs in formation and MSgt John Pearce handing me a dog on leash as I took command ... my heart was in my throat and racing with pride. How lucky could one guy get?

The first thing I needed was education! My expertise was a little stale to say the least. It is still hard to describe the excitement I felt everyday going to work ... working to help better the school where I was a student and an instructor. It was times like this when those, "... well if I were in charge of this outfit I would ..." come back to haunt you. But I was blessed with an outstanding staff and cadre of instructors who were patient and understanding when an older-than-normal Major and later Lt Colonel came around asking questions. They brought me up to speed and they produced. I was absolutely amazed at what they were able accomplish in explosive detection dog production immediately following 9-11. They were an outstanding group of professionals and I was proud to be on their team.

Well, my best assignments were with military working dogs and as two handlers I think the world of told me as I departed the dog school for the last time, "Once canine ... always canine."

(Photos are of A1C John W. Probst and "Diablo" at Goose Bay AB, Newfoundland, Canada 1971-1972)



**United States Air Force Europe Sentry Dog School,
Wiesbaden, West Germany
(Kelly Bateman – Ubon 1970-71)**

In the summer of 1968 I received orders for my first duty assignment after completing U.S.A.F basic training at Amarillo, A.F.B, Amarillo, Texas and Security Police Tech School at Lackland A.F.B. San Antonio, Texas. My assignment was Tuslog Detachment 193 at Incirlik A.F.B., Adana, Turkey as an AFSC 81130 Security Policeman.

Upon arrival at Incirlik our group climbed on an old school bus and was treated to a window down, dust flying tour of the base. It was summer on the Anatolian Plain of Turkey about an hour's drive from Turkey's southern Mediterranean coast. Those of you who have enjoyed Houston, Texas during any of the summer months can relate. HOT and HUMID!

The alert aircraft area was our first stop. Inside the highly secured area the temperature was 120 degrees on the tarmac. The 4 cocked F-4 aircraft were sheltered by steel hanger buildings, open at both ends, which shaded them from the hot sun. The security troops were "humping" the complete perimeter of each hanger. Our bus driver pointed out that the SP's had to be changed every 30-45 minutes during the summer due to heat stress. From where we sat in the hot-dusty bus, it looked like a long 18-month tour and plenty of salt tablets. After several stops at the other base facilities we arrived at our last stop, the K9 Kennels. I had wanted to be a dog handler since watching them at Lackland during S.P. Tech School, but being a young troop, had no idea how to make it happen.

Arriving at the kennels, we met the NCOIC, TSgt. Tilton and several Incirlik Sentry Dog Handlers. We were given a tour of the kennel area and were then treated to a Sentry Dog Demonstration. After the demonstration, TSgt. Tilton asked the group if anyone wanted to volunteer to become a OJT Sentry Dog Handler. He said there were 6 openings in the K-9 Section and asked if anyone would be interested. After several long nanoseconds, I raised my hand along with 5 other lucky airmen. TSgt. Tilton told us 6 to stay at the kennel and not get back on the bus. That day 6 of us became JOT Sentry Dog Handlers. My dream had come true.

On 19 February 1969 the TDY orders for Basic Sentry Dog Handler Course 69-2 came through for several of the OJT handlers. We were to report to the 7100 Air Police Squadron, Building #1, Hindenberg Kaserne, Wiesbaden- Biebrich, Germany for class starting 25 February 1969. As we flew on a C-141 non stop from Incirlik to Rein-Main Air Base, I had mixed feelings about leaving my Sentry Dog Angus 037H behind. He was over 10 years old and I was afraid that they would put him down while I was at school. Our veterinarian had assured me that this would not happen. When we landed at Rein-Main AFB it was snowing hard. There were 10" of snow already on the ground. As we drove from Rein-Main through the streets of Wiesbaden, Germany, I thought to myself that we surely would not start dog school in this weather.

The next morning at 0800 hours our class was issued our dog gear and we were standing in the kennel training area with snow up to the top of our boots. We were introduced to obedience training with your typical water bucket on the end of your leash. Heel, sit and stay in 10" of snow! The weather soon improved and we graduated to training real dogs. My dog's name was Jalk, a black and tan, one year old German Shepherd. It was his first time through class and we were to learn much together.

Our barracks and the dog school itself were located on several acres in the heart of the city of Wiesbaden. It was a huge 4 story stone building built to house and train German troops during WWI and WW II. It was constructed of granite and had wooden floors with a huge gym and a large chow hall in the basement. There was even a small club in a small stone building near the front gate. You could get a good German beer, bratwurst and several other types of sausage after a hard day of training. The Sentry Dog School was located next to our barracks. Our class, 69-2, consisted of about 18 handlers, 2 Army, 2 Canadian Air Force and the rest USAF.

There were classrooms, a large training area with obstacle course and of course the dog runs. All of our field training exercises were done at Rein-Main Air Base. After breakfast we would load up on the duce and a half for the ride to Rhein-Main. I can not remember how long it took us to get there, but it seems like the trip was 30-45 minutes. We did our training on the far side of the base across the taxiways near an old abandoned German WWII airfield complete with control tower, overgrown runways and aircraft hangers. These old hangers came in handy when we had to take shelter from the weather during a spring rainstorm.

Our 2 US Army handlers had volunteered for K-9 Sentry Dogs from Vietnam half way through their tour. They both were helicopter door gunners and had put in for K-9 to get out of that MOS (ARMY MOS=USAF AFC). The only condition was that they would have to do another full tour in Vietnam as Sentry Dog Handlers. On the way back to our barracks one evening after a full day of training at Rein-Main, our duce and a half encountered a road construction zone while driving through the city of Wiesbaden. The canvas cover was on the duce and we could not see out around us.

Suddenly a loud air jackhammer went off just as we passed the construction site. Bam! Bam! Bam! Both Army Handlers immediately took cover on the floor of the duce. With puzzled looks and not having yet been stationed in SEA, the other handlers remained seated with our dogs. The rest of us soon realized what had happened! As the two K-9's regained their seats, no words were spoken, none were needed. That evening we all shared drinks at the club when we arrived back at our barracks. We were all closer after that day, for we all now understood how serious our job was.

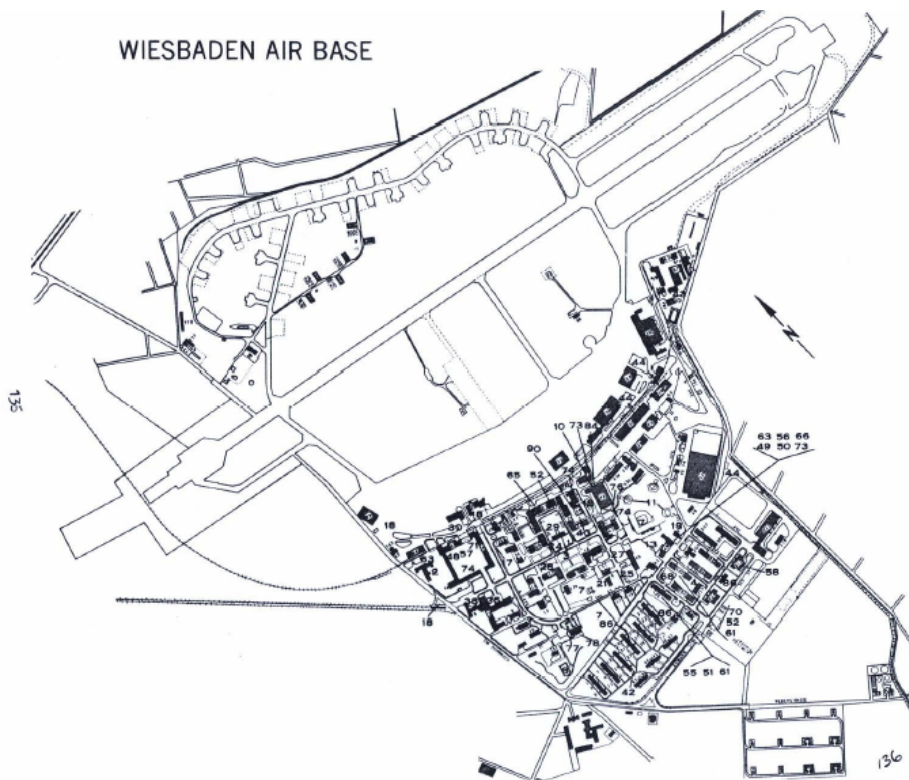
Six weeks seemed to fly by and before I realized, it was Friday, graduation day. We stood with our Dogs by our side and received our diplomas. It was a proud day in the life of all the Handlers of Class 69-2. We were now officially USAF Sentry Dog Handlers. No more OJT, but of course lots of follow up

training to come at our home bases. The dogs were as excited as we were. Many of these dogs would now travel with their handlers to their first duty assignment and a new life as an USAF Sentry Dog.

We boarded another C-141 and flew to Torrejon Air Base in Madrid, Spain. We were returning to Incirlik and Jalk was going with me. The last line of my TDY orders read "Excess baggage is authorized by Director of Transportation, HQ USAFE, not to exceed the weight of USAF Sentry Dog and crate". Several of us were taking our 69-2 dogs back to Incirlik. Landing at the base on the next Monday, we proceeded to our kennels to put up our new dogs. Upon arriving at the kennels I found my dog Angus 037H had been put down along with several other older Sentry Dogs.

Our Turkish kennel worker had already made concrete gravestones for all these dogs with their name and tattoo number. After placing Jalk in Angus's old run, I walked to the K-9 cemetery behind our kennels. I guess I had been naive to think they would not put my dog down while I was gone. Jalk was now my Sentry Dog. We were partners until I had to leave them both behind in Turkey. After these 36 years I miss them terribly. They were a wonderful part of my life.

The United States Air Force opened a second dog school, attached to the 17th AF, United States Air Forces Europe (USAFE) in 1953, at Wiesbaden, West Germany, at the site of a former German officer's school, in Hindenburg Kaseme, a suburb of Biebrich, Germany.



1970

United States Air Force – Patrol Dog School

(Morris Berkowitz 1967-1971)

By 1967, the USAF approved the new dogs and the Patrol Dog program was initiated at the new Security Police Dog Training School, at Lackland, as the new standard AF military working dog.

My story starts back in 1967 when I first enlisted into the Air force. I had aspirations of being an air traffic controller and guess what? I ended up as a Security Police Officer. As it turned out, this was the first best thing that ever happened to me.

After basic training, I went to the other side of the base and attended the security police school at Lackland AFB. After graduation, my first assignment was Davis Mountain AFB, Tucson, Arizona. As the plane was circling to land at Tucson airport it went over the graveyard of planes, not knowing it was a graveyard and being naïve, I said to myself wow; I'm going to be doing a lot of walking around aircraft at this base.

When I reported to duty on the first day, I was assigned to security police operations, which were missile duty, bomb dump and flight line patrol. Based on the schedule you could be assigned to any one of these areas. The missiles were Titan II and were located in silos throughout the countryside. Some were more than 70 miles away from the base. During my tenure as a security policeman I performed all the duties and patrols in all the areas. After awhile, as I needed a change, I volunteered for Base Police.

Base police was pretty good because you felt like a real police officer. We did patrol work around the base, responded to alarms, fights, and traffic accidents and wrote tickets. We also had to go to town nightly and pick up the airmen who got drunk and were tossed in jail. The bad part of base police was working the gates and saluting every officer that entered the base. If you inadvertently forgot to salute an officer, well you know what happened next. After awhile, as I needed another change, my story continues below.

One day while walking past the CQ office I noticed a notice posted, it read in part "looking for volunteers to become canine handlers to handle a new kind of dog (patrol dog). This was my opportunity to get out of saluting officers and patrol. The funny thing is that I never even owned a dog during my childhood except for 1 day and then my mother said the dog goes, or else. I had no idea what I was getting myself into but at the time I didn't care. As it turned out this was the second best day of my life, when I saw the notice about volunteering for canine, as you will read later on.

I volunteered to attend the 99-day training at Lackland AFB. As luck had it, I was selected for this training. Three bases were selected for this assignment: Davis Mountain, Vandenberg, and Castle.

The training was extremely difficult especially for someone like me who never even had a dog. The instructors would have us do obedience for many hours and of course my dog hated to go into the down position unless forced to. The attack part of the training was awesome. These dogs had incredible power in their jaws. Every handler had to be a decoy for the dogs and the only protection you had on was just a canvas sleeve wrapped around your forearm. You had to feed your arm to the dog as he was about to jump up on you, remember these are patrol dogs now, no more sentry dogs, when you could wear an attack suit. Once the dog hit the wrap you had to move your arm up and down and sideways so the dog couldn't get a solid grip with his teeth on the wrap. If you froze and didn't move the wrap you would be in some serious pain and would be bruised real bad.

This was a totally new concept for the Military, since all these dogs were sentry dogs and once they attacked their subject they had to be choked to get them to release the bite. The patrol dog would release his/ her bite on command. The Patrol dog was a command dog and only responded to the commands of his/her handler. This dog could be re-called off the attack and would come back to the handler without biting the individual. This dog also would watch a suspect while the handler completed a search of the subject without breaking position unless told to do so. The patrol dog was taught to track humans. The instructors would set up 1-mile track problems and when the dog would find the person he/she would be allowed to bite the subject as his/her reward for doing a good job.

Upon graduation, all the handlers returned to their assigned bases with their canines. Upon my return to Davis Mountain, I was assigned to security, missile and base patrol with my canine. We worked all the areas and patrols that you would normally work without a dog. The top brass wanted to see how much of an impact the new patrol dogs would have in these areas. For the next 6 months these dogs were put through all types of exercises, tests, surprise visits and field inspections.

My canine was named "Buck" and he was a great dog. He was great on the attack, recall but obedience was not his specialty. I still have a few scars to prove that!

I can recall one scenario with my canine that really solidified the success of the patrol dog program. I was on missile patrol with my canine and another security police officer. We received a radio call that one of the missile complexes had a security breach. We responded to the complex and an unknown individual was hiding on site (inspection team) in a restricted area. I deployed with my patrol dog, he located the individual in minutes and we brought the situation under control. The team was extremely impressed with the ability of the dog to find the hidden individual and how I had the individual spread eagle and the dog was watching him while I conducted the search of the subject. It is amazing how people listen to commands when you have a dog as your partner.

I also worked base patrol with my patrol dog. It was amazing how much more respect you receive when your partner is a canine. I continued my tour of duty at Davis Mountain with my patrol dog until 1969, when I received my orders for overseas duty.

I was sent to Clark Air Base in the Philippines as a patrol dog handler. When I arrived, I was the only patrol dog handler in the section of over 100 handlers and dogs. Needless to say, the first dog I got was the meanest sentry dog in the section. It took me over 3 days just to get a collar on the dog and that was with the help of a Philippine kennel attendant. "Eric" was the dogs name and what a dog he was. The meanest dog I ever did see or handle. The first couple of days on walking post, I had to keep him muzzled. When I would stop walking he would try and clean my clock. After a week we became good friends and no one ever messed with me on post. After awhile we started to try and convert some of the sentry dogs over to patrol dogs, some with success others with no success. My tour in the Philippines was great and being a handler there was great duty.

My whole tenure with dogs was a great learning experience for me. The best thing that ever happened to me was canine. I met many awesome people and the many friendships that I have made will last a lifetime. I have been in canine, between the Military and Customs, for over 39 years.

My experiences with canines in the service lead to my employment with the Customs Bureau in 1971 as a dog handler. I'm still in Customs & Border Protection and stationed at the Canine Enforcement Training Center, Front Royal Virginia.