



DOGMAN

A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers



VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

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May 17 Set for R.I. War Dog Memorial

By Steve Lemish

Dogman Editor

VDHA dog handlers are encouraged to attend the dedication of the newest war dog memorial at the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Exeter, Rhode Island on Armed Forces Day, May 17 at noon. The third and last casting of the war dog memorial sculpted by world-renowned artist A. Thomas Schomberg will be dedicated on the site and Mr. Schomberg and his wife Cynthia will be in attendance.

Establishing a war dog memorial in Exeter was the long-time dream of Scott and Ruth Gordon. They worked tirelessly to make it happen. In 2005 they contacted Thomas and Cynthia Schomberg and twenty years later it will be dedicated. Sadly, Mr. Gordon passed away in May 2020, but Mrs. Gordon will be there at the dedication. In August 2020, the Exeter Town Council commemorated the life of Scott A. Gordon, who left a lasting impact on the town. Gordon and Ruth owned and operated Delmyra Boarding and Training Kennel, which originally served as the town's animal shelter.

There were three castings of the war dog memorial by Mr. Schomberg. They feature the relief of a soldier and his dog, meant to show the bond between humans and canines. The first was placed and previously dedicated at March Air Force Museum in Riverside, California. The second was dedicated at Sacrifice Field at Fort Benning, Georgia. Many VDHA members attended those dedications and their re-dedications.

The memorials stand to recognize and honor all military working dogs that served in battle and to commemorate the courageous acts of these dogs and recognize that their acts saved countless lives.

The RI Office of Veterans Services maintains the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery. The grounds include 41 monuments dedicated to veterans of specific wars and conflicts. Exeter is a town of about 6,500 people and is about 25 miles southwest of Providence. Newport, RI may be a good place to stay. Newport is a city set on Aquidneck Island. Its yacht-filled harbor hosted the America's Cup for many years. Newport is also known for the Gilded Age mansions.



From the President

By John R. Harvey
VDHA President

As all of you know by now, the 25th anniversary dedication of the war dog memorial at March Field Museum in Riverside California scheduled for February had to be postponed. The museum has scheduled major renovations to the landscape which would have presented many obstacles to the program.

Jeffery Bennett, the original sponsor of the memorial, performed a heroic effort in attempting to get it scheduled, but unfortunately hit multiple stone walls with the management of the museum. The VDHA family is forever indebted to Mr. Bennett for his long-term commitment to the VDHA and the history of our K-9 soldiers.

Mr. Bennett has indicated in conversation that the 25th anniversary dedication, whenever it is held, may be the last. Your board will try to keep you informed as to any future developments. The original sculpture was designed by renowned artist A. Thomas Schomberg. He cast three monuments. The first was placed

at March Field Museum, the second is installed at Sacrifice Field, Fort Benning, Georgia. The third has been installed at Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery, 301 South Country Trail, Exeter, Rhode Island. The dedication for the memorial in Rhode Island is scheduled for May 17, 2025. The VDHA family is encouraged to attend.

Your board determined that our next reunion would be held in April or May 2026. There are multiple discussions under way as to where it will be held. As information becomes available we will keep you informed. In the interim, stay healthy and happy. The two go together.

I received a request from Chloe Sapp a journalism student at Webster University in Missouri. Her group would like to interview any Vietnam dog handler for a planned documentary on K-9 units in Vietnam. If you are interested in participating, she can be reached at chloesapp411@gmail.com.

March 13 Designated as National K9 Veterans Day

March 13th is National K9 Veterans Day. It honors the dedicated K9 units who served in the U.S. Armed Forces since World War II.

A lot of things changed after the bombing of Pearl Harbor in 1941. We rationed oil, leather, and rubber. The military drafted men into service. Women rolled up their sleeves and built war supplies. And dogs were called to duty.

During the first world war, the United States took notice of the European use of canines as sentries, message carriers, and several other functions.

A private citizen, Mrs. Alene Erlanger, initiated a program called Dogs for Defense. Along with the American Kennel Club and a handful of breeders, the group aimed to train dogs for military use.

By November of 1942, the military prepared the first Dogs for Defense for duty in North Africa. While they were gun shy at first, they proved to be well trained. As the war progressed, Dogs for Defense was unable to keep up with the demand, and the Remount Branch, Service Installations Division took over the training of the dogs.

Over the years the military has developed a variety of missions and training methods for K9 units. Their

training is tailored to meet the demands of the job, and each animal and handler carry out his or her duties to the fullest.

You can observe National K9 Veterans Day by recognizing K9 veterans; learning more about their service, history, and training; and by attending a ceremony honoring the working dogs of military units and working dogs across the country.

Courtesy of National Day Calendar and NationalDayCalendar.com.

SPECIAL NOTICE

VDHA OFFICERS DO NOT GIVE OUT MEMBER INFORMATION.

We have had requests for contact information, i.e., phone numbers, email address, etc., from other members trying to get in contact with a specific member.

Each members information that they themselves have requested to be 'PUBLIC' is on their profile page.

If you are looking for another member, sign into the website and click on 'WAR DOG UNITS' tab and search from there.

Program for Improved Healthspan

By Dr. Robert Stockman
Lifetime VDHA Member

In a previous article in *Dogman*, VDHA President John Harvey outlined a program I developed which is intended to help address lifespan and healthspan challenges encountered primarily by those of us who are entering advanced age. Lifespan has to do with living longer and healthspan is the quality of one's health as we age. In his article, John focused on the "movement" part of my four pillared "Program for Improved Healthspan," i.e., Psychology, Movement, Nutrition, and Sleep. In this article, I will expand on the overall program goals of addressing and improving the challenges of advanced aging, and as Vietnam Dog Handlers, we certainly all qualify.

But before I begin, I will take this opportunity to share with you a little about John that you may not know. John and I began our lifetime friendship in 1969 when as the two senior Marines, (me a newly appointed Sergeant and he a "salty" Corporal), took a class of young Marines freshly out of boot camp through the Scout Dog Handlers course at Fort Benning Georgia and then on to Vietnam. Long story short, we all were fortunate to survive that year owing much to John's leadership credit.

John and I, both on our second tours in Vietnam, further solidified our friendship. As a notable aside and as an example of the kind of Marine and friend John was and is, after losing his dog tragically in a fire fight and at great risk to his own life, he began volunteering to walk "shotgun" for me on many combat patrols, including the one that occurred on January 14, 1970, he

mentioned in his previous *Dogman* article.

Here is how to extend lifespan and improve the quality of one's life specifically during this challenging period of advancing aging. Some 20 years after my 23-year career in the Marine Corps, I began a career as a psychologist spending the first five years dedicated to working in the VA's Vet Centers with combat veterans and their families who were primarily suffering from PTSD. I continue to be a practicing psychologist and as I look back over my career I came to an important realization. Many of those I have worked with over the years made significant progress while in therapy but would plateau at some point leaving more work to be done in order to live more satisfying lives. Statistically, psychotherapy or talk therapy, as it is known, has an 80% effectiveness rate. But then I began questioning why only 80%?

The answer I found is threefold and is applicable to everyone whether in therapy or not. First, the quality of our life experience is dependent upon the four pillars: Psychological Health, Nutritional Health, Physical Fitness, and Sleep Quality. No big surprise. Next, and as a result of further study and research, I discovered addressing only one of the four pillars, in my case the psychological, without considering the impact of the others is not only insufficient but also limiting in terms of being able to thrive to the best of our ability as we age. Finally, what I found the most surprising, is how equally connected and influential each of the four pillars were on each other. I uncovered that rarely, if ever, did a person have only one of these areas from which they

were suffering. They are all extremely inter-connected. There are many examples but just to name a few of the obvious: (1) stress disrupts sleep, (2) poor sleep disrupts physical, mental, and emotional recovery, (3) we are what we eat, and we feel what we eat, (4) poor nutrition damages not only our physical health but our emotional well-being, and (5) the science of movement or physical fitness, to include strength exercises or the lack thereof, disrupts our sleep, and the cycle of the four pillars continues.

Besides emphasizing the importance of the four pillars in helping extend our lifespan and improving healthspan as we continue to age, let me conclude with the following. Space does not allow me to lay out the entire Program I am proposing. However, the good news is those who are in the most challenging conditions, i.e., medically, physically, emotionally, mentally, and psychologically, can benefit the most and the quickest by addressing the four pillars I outlined here into their lives. The better news is that 80% of the benefits of the program can be realized with only 20% of the effort, as John mentioned in his previous *Dogman* article, by making very small incremental changes in all four pillars of their lives. VERY SMALL! This time in our lives can be much more rewarding and satisfying regardless of circumstances!

Hopefully, this very brief introduction to a better aging process is helpful. If any of the VDHA members would like more information or resources please email me at psychcounsel@yahoo.com.

The Tip of the Spear; A War Dog Story

Editor's Note: This is the 15th installment of this multi-part story. It details his journey from college to Vietnam and working with his scout dog Skipper (X268). The last episode detailed a mission where a young village girl was made a casualty of war.

By Vernon J. Roman

Scout Dog Handler

That type of event never leaves you. The values of the Vietnamese were not like ours. If you kill a water buffalo, they wanted to be compensated with \$100. If you happen to kill a person, the price was only \$50. Daryl replaced me the following day and he was there when the Army came out and investigated the event. It was declared accidental and the family, in this case, was paid \$200 dollars.

I feel so very fortunate that I never had to experience a major assault and be in an all-out fire fight. The horrors those soldiers experienced will always be with them, and their experiences were much worse than anything I encountered.

It is not that the Army did not try to give me that opportunity. According to my earned medals, I participated in four campaigns. The one time that I was sure that it was going to be full blown major combat, Skipper and I were with a Mech unit. I believe we ended up situated for the evening on the crest of a hill overlooking the A Shau Valley. Down below, in that valley, was another Mech Unit. That evening, a big firefight occurred with the unit in the valley. We, on the other hand, sat there on our hilltop and watched the exchange of fire for most of the night.

However, on day two, it was our turn to replace the first unit. We moved right into the place they had just occupied. It was our turn to engage the enemy.

This was the most interesting night I spent in Vietnam. Since it is dangerous to be with an excited dog, Skipper and I had our own fox hole. I set up my M-16 on a small portable stand that snapped onto the barrel, allowing me to stand the M-16 like a machine gun and operate it like that. I was very happy that I carried as much ammunition as I did. So, we were as ready as you could be.

I was amazed at the type of equipment we had. We went beyond the normal claymore mines, trip wires, and flares....we had ground radar and infrared. From where I was located, I could hear them reading the radar signals. They were even able to tell that we had wild pigs out on our perimeter and that there were no intruders. Lots of technology was in play that evening. Thank you Lord. The enemy elected to let us be; no fire fight. Our only visitors that evening were the wild pigs.

You get to be very self-sufficient as a dog handler. You take everything in stride and just deal with it. I liked our clothes because the material would dry out quickly. Even our underwear was made of that material. Our boots were designed to drain water. It probably was not of much use, but it gave me a little feeling of security that we had a metal insert in our boots that might slow down a bungee stake going into your foot.

Where I was in Vietnam, it got so hot that the dirt turned into powder. It was like walking in your mom's face powder.

Continued on Page 7.

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So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

Editor's Note: This is the second installment of Rick's multi-part adventure as an Air Force dog handler. He ends his assignment in Korea and heads to Castle AFB and then Lackland and beyond.

By Rick Marty

USAF, 1964-1968

There was not really much to do there when off-duty. You could get a pass to town and visit the bars and bar girls or stay on base and visit the Airman's Club. So, I and other handlers spent a lot of our off-duty time at the kennels working with our dogs and pitching in on self-help projects to improve the facilities.

An interesting thing about this K-9 section was that we had Korean civilians working as dog handlers. Each squad would have 3-4 airmen and 6-8 Korean National handlers working posts. The situation led me to develop strong friendships with some of the Korean handlers.

Whiskey and I had many adventures as I served out the rest of my tour in Korea. We apprehended several "Slickie Boys," Korean Nationals sneaking on base to steal anything they could, and one new Security Tech Sergeant that snuck into the bomb dump one night planning on catching a K-9 troop screwing off. Luckily, his blousing ring saved him from losing his leg when Whiskey took exception to his presence.

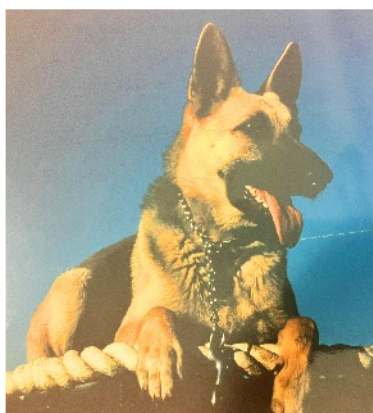
The time came when I was relieved from duty and had my new assignment orders, you know, FIGMO. I was happy and excited to be leaving this hell hole of a place, but I spent all my last days at the kennels with Whiskey wishing I could stay. When I boarded that flight back to the world, I had dog hair all over my Class A Blues.

I had a thirty-day leave back home. Boy, talk about not fitting in with the old crowd of what now seemed like kids to me. Most all my buddies from school were in service somewhere and the ones still at home, well, we no longer had anything in common.

Reporting in, new duty station, 16 May 1966, Castle AFB, Atwater California; a Strategic Air Command Base for training B52 and KC135 pilots. Yeah, a SAC installation. Talk about petty BS, spit shine and petty BS; this was well beyond my limited experience. Of course, I was assigned to Security Forces, not K9 for some reason, probably because I was OJT (on the job training) trained and not Dog School trained.

After checking with the NCOIC of kennels and finding they had three open dogs and no handlers in the pipeline, I went to the squadron commander and formally requested a transfer to K9.

After many requests and some, shall we say strife, I was transferred to K9 and assigned a five-year-old Shepherd named Rock. He was affectionately called Sgt. Rock after the comic book hero.



Rock was a well-schooled and friendly-natured dog that just wanted to please but had no real

spirit for agitation and attack training. He had been kennel bound for several months so he was willing to accept me within just a few hours so he could get out and enjoy life a little. I must admit that his passive nature was a real let down after handling a dog like Whiskey but with work and enthusiasm, he began to respond and was improving rapidly.

Castle AFB's K9 section was only about a dozen men and we were pretty close, even though we were stateside and everybody was going their own way off-duty. We were a very tight unit against outsiders. One of my very best life-long friends came out of this unit and now, some sixty years later, all it takes is a phone call for anything either of us might want or need.

On-post duty at Castle was pretty ho-hum after Korea and its action, but it had its really bad down side. Those B52 and KC135 training flights would practice their touch and go landings, sometimes all night long, and as a handler you and your dog were standing at the end of the runway being drenched in noise and jet fuel exhaust for hours at a time.

Traveling Dog School, ever heard of it? No, me neither until I was in it. As most of the handlers at Castle AFB were OJT trained, Lackland Dog Training Center sent a traveling school to Castle to bring us up to par. The team consisted of a drill instructor, a dog handler and a sentry dog. The training was very thorough if abbreviated; 120 hours of classroom and field training crammed into a month-long session and this was on top of our regular duty hours, so it made for some long days and nights.

Continued on Page 6.

So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?



Graduating class from the traveling Sentry Dog School, Castle Air Base. Sgt Rock and I are fourth from the left standing.

Continued from Page 5.

Looking at the class photo now, I see that 13 dog handlers and sentry dogs graduated from that traveling school's 120-hour course in early October 1966 and we, Sgt Rock and I, were set to spend the rest of my enlistment right there. But that was not to be. In late November 1966, I received orders to report to Lackland Air Force Base Sentry Dog Training Facility, pick up a green dog, proceed through sentry dog training, scout dog training, combat preparedness training and ship to Vietnam for a one-year tour of duty.

I could have protested the orders as I had already fulfilled my overseas obligation with my tour in Korea but the more I thought about it the less inclined I was to fight against it. After all, this was a SAC base and even in K9 it was way more hassle than I wanted to deal with. Besides that, my good buddy I mentioned earlier, had also received the same orders. So, what the hell, how much worse could Vietnam be than a SAC installation?

After a short leave home, my buddy and I met at LAX (Los Angeles Airport) and caught a flight to San Antonio, Texas a few days before our report date. We rented a car and headed straight for Nuevo Laredo, Mexico and spent three days in an area they called Boys Town doing, well, you know what we were doing.

Report date to dog school 6 December 1966; there were 23 of us that reported that morning to be assigned to a sentry dog training class. Class number 07126, and a strange bunch we were; five Army troops, E2s and PFC's, all draftees and 18 Airmen mostly A2Cs with at least two years in service and all with what was known then as very bad attitudes. Unbelievable the things

we did and got away with in that dog school, the incidents could be another long story by themselves. But the training and handling of the new dogs was deadly serious to us, we all gave 100% during training but our off-duty time was all, who gives a s—t, what are you going to do for punishment if we screw up, send us to Viet Nam?

When we were assigned our green dogs I drew a Female Shepherd weighing about 60 pounds.

Continued in the next issue.

Dogman

Dogman is published quarterly by the Vietnam Dog Handler Association, Inc. Members and their families are encouraged to submit articles, letters, photos, etc.

Letters and stories are subject to editing. Email all submissions to Dogman@VDHA.us or mail to Steve Lemish, Dogman Editor, 4723 Rolando Blvd, San Diego, CA 92115 (include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want them returned).

VDHA is a nonprofit corporation exempt from federal income tax under section 501(c)(19). Contributions are tax deductible. IRS tax ID number #33-0690480.

The Tip of the Spear

Continued from Page 4.

I do not know about the rest of the country, but where we were, the soil was red, and it got deep into your pores. When I was back home, it was months before I stopped seeing red residue in the shower. When it rained, it turned the land into mud. You felt like you were in a big pot of chili. Just a big, big gooey mess. It also got cold.

Skipper and I were with infantry units doing our normal long sweeps. One particularly rough day, it was raining cats and dogs and never would let up until the next day. We were in the jungle in the hill area, working our way around, up, and over a mini mountain. This particular mini mountain was very steep. All day in mud and rain, Skipper was picking up nothing. As nightfall was descending on us, we hit the top of this hill/mini mountain where we would settle in for the night. The problem was that we were facing a similar hill across the way which was not very far from us.

We would all be sleeping at a 30 degree plus angle staring across the little valley to a sister hill right in front of us. If the enemy knew that we were here, and they were on the hill opposite us, we would be sitting ducks. We had zero cover except for the pouring down rain and the darkness. This was home for the night. The hill was coughing up a consistent deluge of mud and water. So, we were lying in running rainwater and mud.

If only the Boy Scouts could see me now. This definitely would get you a Camping Merit Badge. I inflated the air bag which gets you above the water. I pulled out my stakes and used the poncho to create a makeshift lean-to tent. Crawling under and using the poncho liner as a blanket, I was surprised at how comfortable we got. Skipper got extra close and took some of the air mattress for himself. We knew the enemy was on the hill we could not see.

SPECIAL NOTICE:

Members are responsible for updating their profile information to keep it up to date by logging into their account on the website with their login (member number) and password (known to you). You can change/correct information such as address / email address / phone number, etc. Once you enter your new information you will need to scroll down to the bottom and SAVE it.

IF you have a problem, contact Bob Palochik at bobpalochik@vdha.us, or if no computer, call him at 702-557-3538 for help.

The Wall That Heals

The Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund (VVMF) has announced The Wall That Heals national tour schedule for 2025. The exhibit includes a three-quarter scale replica of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial along with a mobile Education Center.

The 30th season of The Wall That Heals will visit 31 communities during the year. The traveling exhibit honors the more than three million Americans who served in the U.S. Armed Forces in the Vietnam War. It bears the names of the 58,281 men and women who made the ultimate sacrifice in Vietnam.

Host City	Opening	Closing
Kissimmee, FL	3/13/25	3/16/25
Baton Rouge, LA	3/20/25	3/23/25
Corpus Christi, TX	3/27/25	3/30/25
Laredo, TX	4/3/25	4/6/25
D'Iberville, MS	4/10/25	4/13/25
Whiteville, NC	4/24/25	4/27/25
Roxboro, NC	5/1/25	5/4/25
Johnson City, TN	5/8/25	5/11/25
Liberty, SC	5/15/25	5/18/25
Shaler Township, PA	5/23/25	5/26/25
Warren, OH	5/29/25	6/1/25
Troy, NY	6/5/25	6/8/25
Claremont, NH	6/26/25	6/29/25
Farmington, ME	7/3/25	7/6/25
Antioch, IL	7/17/25	7/20/25
St. Louis County, MO	7/24/25	7/27/25
Buckner, MO	7/31/25	8/3/25
Nevada, IA	8/7/25	8/10/25

Treasurer's Report

CHECKING \$39,096.51
 SAVINGS 5,075.50
 TOTAL \$44,172.01

REMINDERS and INFORMATION:

Checks are always to be made payable to VDHA no matter if the funds are for dues or merchandise. Our bank will not accept third party checks.

PayPal payments for dues and/or merchandise purchases must be made from your personal PayPal account.

Dues: PayPal payments are to be sent to vdhapaypal@vdha.us. Please include member name and/or member number in NOTE area in PayPal.

Merchandise: PayPal payments are to be sent to merchandisepaypal@vdha.us.

Remember, if you pay for merchandise through your personal PayPal account, your completed order form must be emailed to our BX Manager, Mike Hurder, at bxmgr@vdha.us for completion.

March Field Memorial

The 25th anniversary celebration of the War Dog Memorial at March Field near Riverside, CA is being postponed again due to the Air Museum's plan to re-design and landscape the area. Watch for the next edition of *Dogman* and the VDHA website for updated information.

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