



DOGMAN

A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers



VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 33 - NUMBER 1 - MARCH 2026

Come to the Reunion May 28-30

*By Ernie Ayala,
VDHA Vice President*

We are quickly approaching our next reunion in New Bern, North Carolina this May 28-30. It is a great venue. Perhaps you are not sure of where it is or why New Bern was picked? I'm sure some have never heard of it. I can assure you New Bern is a beautiful location and totally worth the trip.

Let's go back several years to the founding of the VDHA, actually 1994 when John Langley, our founder, served as our first president. The locations selected then were secondary to the business that had to be discussed. We had officers meetings, unit directors meetings, wives' tea parties and general meetings to discuss the future of this grandfather of all military dog handlers organizations. Also, there were discussions of positions to be filled and who will eventually become our next president.

The year now is 2026, thirty-two years after its founding. A year John Langley thought he would never see. We have been brought here by a man who never thought he would be president, who was brought in to fill the vice president seat which was left vacant and he wanted to help the group that had brought him many years of memories with other guys who walked the real brains in Vietnam.

John Harvey filled that seat as a favor to his good friend president Perry Money. Then in 2017, the unthinkable happened. Perry Money suddenly passed away in North Carolina. An emergency meeting was held in Houston, Texas by the Board of Directors to mourn the loss of our leader and swear in our new president, John Harvey as the ninth president. He has led us and now is going into his ninth year at the helm, almost double the time any of the previous presidents held. He has earned the respect of all the membership and plans to stick around as long as he can. He's not going anywhere.

So, when you think you can wait another year to go to a reunion, think of this. Our group is thinning down. We are to the point that we can't wait for a reunion two years away. The object of starting the VDHA was to get Vietnam Dog Handlers together to share common experiences. We are brothers, not just because we didn't run when our country needed us, not just because we served in Vietnam but because we chose to walk the dog into the unknown and became the elite forces of the war.

Now our forces are fewer. This is the time to say hello or goodbye to a guy that mirrored what you did. It doesn't matter whether he was Army, Navy, Air Force or Marine. Get a phone number, learn his family's name. Remember that once we stop meeting at reunions, it may be the end of this great organization forever. So let's all have fun in New Bern and hold our glasses up high in a big celebration to us and our brothers.

Winning Pin Entry

The winner of the pin contest for the upcoming reunion is Ernie Ayala. He submitted two entries and the one pictured below was chosen as the winner. It is green and in the shape of the state of North Carolina with the VDHA emblem and it names the city of New Bern.

Congratulations Ernie!





When reporting a death, please include as much information as you can, including the Dog Handler's name, his date of death, the unit served with in Vietnam, his dog's name (if known), the dates he served and who is reporting the information. You can also include an obituary listing or link that can be posted to the member's profile.

All Vietnam Dog Handlers who have passed can and will be added to TAPS posthumously, including those who are not a VDHA member.

The purpose is to honor our lost Dog Handlers. It is our obligation, and we are honored to make sure that

these Dog Handlers, and their dogs (if known) are listed with their Units.

However, please note that to report a deceased Dog Handler who served in Vietnam, and who is not in our system as a current or past member, you must provide the Dog Handler's name, date of death, the unit he served with in Vietnam, his dog's name (if known), the dates he served and who is reporting the information.

Once the information is verified, they will be added under TAPS. Without this information we cannot add the Dog Handler. Please report deaths to deaths@vdha.us or bobpalochik@vdha.us.

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2023

Baker, David	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	03/02/23
Beaver, Mike	42nd Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Phan Rang & Camp Eagle)	03/17/23
Begley, Joe	12th SPS (Cam Ranh Bay & Phu Cat)	02/07/23
Borowicz, Larry	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	04/25/23
Bradley, Richard	595th MP (Da Nang)	12/14/23
Dupla, John	1st Cavalry Division (AM)	11/25/23
Francke, David	37th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Phouc Vinh & Bien Hoa)	07/06/23
Gearhart, Harold	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	02/26/23
Huffman, Aaron	366th SPS (DaNang & Phan Rang)	05/06/23
James, Marlon	595th MP (Da Nang)	08/15/23
Justice, Ralph	Marine Sentry Dog	09/02/23

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2023

Leach, Dennis	212th MP (Long Binh)	10/18/23
Loffer, Alvin	212th MP (Long Binh)	06/23/23
Massey, David	Navy Sentry Dogs	01/25/23
Nelson, Peter	25th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bien Hoa) (An Khe)	06/05/23
Parks, Halmond	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	03/03/23
Rominger III, William	12th SPS (Cam Ranh Bay & Phu Cat)	08/15/23
Sandlin, Jackie	212th MP (Long Binh)	09/20/23
Sawyer, William	41st Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Lai Khe & Phu Loi)	12/24/23
Sciascia, John	Marine Sentry Dog	10/01/23
Tacey, Ronald	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	07/15/23
Taylor, William	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	08/20/23
Williams, Rhaunal	212th MP (Long Binh)	11/29/23

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2024

Badman, Carl	34th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bien Hoa) (An Khe)	06/24/24
Baronowski, Thomas	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	12/08/24
Benoit, James	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	11/08/24
Botsko, Stephen	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	05/09/24
Byrd, Dan (Lauchlin)	212th MP (Long Binh)	01/20/24
Cox, Robert	USMC Mine & Boobytrap Detection	03/13/24
Dennis, Lewis	212th MP (Long Binh)	08/23/24

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2024

Desmarais, Richard	37th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Phouc Vinh & Bien H)	10/25/24
Gaines, John	49th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Long Binh)	03/09/24
Geist, William	212th MP (Long Binh)	07/01/24
Gosnell, Clifton	212th MP (Long Binh)	09/10/24
Haney, Dexter	595th MP (Da Nang)	11/09/24
Harding, John	212th MP (Long Binh)	09/01/24
Johnson, Neil	212th MP (Long Binh)	10/14/24
Keife, Stephen	483rd SPS (Cam Ranh Bay)	10/24/24
Kinney, James	355th SPS (Takhli) Thailand	11/03/24
Kuhns, Maynard	212th MP (Long Binh)	01/01/24
Lindsey, Terry	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	09/13/24
Lovelace, Joe	50th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (An Khe)	07/27/24
Norris, King	212th MP (Long Binh)	04/16/24
Olsen, Dale	595th MP (Da Nang)	04/04/24
Patterson, Rodney	14th SPS (Nha Trang)	08/17/24
Reynerson, Craig	212th MP (Long Binh)	07/07/24
Rodocker, Robert	377th SPS (Tan Son Nhut)	03/23/24
Rooker, Larry	212th MP (Long Binh)	09/02/24

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2024

Schrank, Sylvan	212th MP (Long Binh)	02/19/24
Sprowls, Keith	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	01/27/24
Stoffel, Gregory	388th SPS (Korat) Thailand	06/26/24
Swindall, Jackie	212th MP (Long Binh)	05/05/24
Thornberry, James	3rd SPS (Bien Hoa)	03/10/24
Tidquist, Gary	212th MP (Long Binh)	12/04/24
Ustad Milton	212th MP (Long Binh)	07/13/24

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2025

Bagnall, Phillip	Marine Sentry Dog	10/12/25
Broeker, Dave	635th SPS (U-Tapao) Thailand	05/05/25
Brown, William	Marine Scout Dog	08/24/25
Chilcoat, Larry	12th SPS (Cam Ranh Bay & Phu Cat)	11/17/25
Dornberg, Donald	212th MP (Long Binh)	05/12/25
Eckard, Wiliam	35th SPS (Phan Rang)	03/13/25
Eddy, James	212th MP (Long Binh)	04/12/25
Gerberich, Larry	981st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	01/23/25
Helmick, Aaron	212th MP (Long Binh)	05/11/25

TAPS: Our Brothers Who Died in 2025

Johnson, Mark	212th MP (Long Binh)	07/28/25
Lister, Michael	25th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bien Hoa) (An Khe)	10/10/25
McIntyre, Jackie	42nd Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Phan Rang & Camp Eagle)	01/18/25
Medina, Ernest	56th SPS (Nakhon Phanom) Thailand	08/07/25
Odell, Frankie	212th MP (Long Binh)	02/05/25
Peters, Clinton	212th MP (Long Binh)	03/18/25
Plummer, Jim	25th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bien Hoa) (An Khe)	02/16/25
Severni, Frederick	41st Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Lai Khe & Phu Loi)	04/04/25
Stoltzfus, Reuben	81st MP (Cam Ranh Bay)	01/06/25
Surette, Ronald	12th SPS (Cam Ranh Bay & Phu Cat)	06/02/25
Volker, Jeff	212th MP (Long Binh)	06/30/25
Zamora, Manuel	212th MP (Long Binh)	10/25/25

History of Taps

"Taps" is played at military funerals to honor the memory of service members and to signify the end of their earthly duty. It's a solemn bugle call, deeply rooted in military tradition, that expresses gratitude and respect for the deceased.

The 24-note melody first came about during the American Civil War. In 1862, General Daniel Butterfield wanted a new call to signal "lights out." Working with his brigade's bugler, Oliver W. Norton, the call was revised into the more melodic and haunting sequence known today.

The call quickly spread throughout the Union and Confederate Armies. It was first played at a military funeral when it was ordered to be used instead of the traditional three-volley rifle salute to avoid alerting enemy pickets.

Although its original name was "Extinguish Lights," the call was renamed "Taps" in 1891 and soon became a formal part of American military funerals.

Today, its slow, mournful notes remain one of the most iconic and moving pieces of American military tradition. *Source: Jari Villanueva, Taps Historian*

Welcome New BX Manager

Invite: K9 Veterans Day in Texas

Sadly, Mike Hurder, our former BX Manager has been having serious health problems and he has decided to step down from his post. Mike did a fantastic job, taking over for Dave Broeker as Dave's health declined. VDHA owes a large debt of gratitude to Mike for all his hard work in keeping the BX going and operating as service to our members.

The organization is both lucky and honored that we have another of our members to step up and volunteer to take over the duties as our BX Manager. That person is Frank Wehner. Frank lives in Norco, CA which is located in Southern California. Frank was an Air Force Patrol Dog handler in Vietnam, among other duties, and he is a lifetime VDHA Member.

The BX is temporarily closed for orders while everything gets shipped to Frank's house. The BX should be up and running soon. Once the BX is open, you can email Frank at bxmgr@vdha.us.

The officers and members wish to thank both Mike Hurder for his tireless work and Frank Wehner for volunteering to manage our BX.



Frank Wehner, VDHA's new BX manager.

On behalf of Mrs. Lauren Dollar and the National Museum of the Pacific War in Fredericksburg, Vietnam Dog Handlers Association members are invited to attend and participate in the 2nd Annual K9 Veterans Day celebration and America 250 event on March 21, 2026. The event also features live war dog demonstrations showcasing real military working dogs, a dog obstacle course, a costume contest and activity stations designed for all ages. Guests can enjoy a keynote speaker presentation, a live choir performance, and a projection-mapping program in the Historic Nimitz Ballroom featuring historical imagery that surrounds the space.

The event spans the Museum campus, with guests encouraged to begin their visit in the Hobby Courtyard (508 E Austin St, Fredericksburg) to pick up event information and start exploring. Throughout the day, several scheduled highlights will take place, including the 10:00 am opening ceremony. Visitors can also attend active-duty military working dog demonstrations in the Hobby Courtyard at 10:30 am and noon, watch flamethrower demonstrations at the Pacific Combat Zone every hour from 11:30 am to 3:30 pm, and enjoy a 1:00 pm choir performance in the Admiral Nimitz Ballroom.

We will have a recognized K9 warrior as keynote speaker. Please let us know if you have any questions. We look forward to seeing you there.

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.

2026 VDHA Reunion

New Bern, NC

INFORMATION



AIRPORTS: New Bern NC airport code is EWN / approximately 4 miles to New Bern
 Wilmington NC airport code is ILM / approximately 98 miles to New Bern
 Raleigh NC airport code is RDU / approximately 129 miles to New Bern
 Charlotte NC airport code is CLT / approximately 221 miles from New Bern
 (There are Ubers and taxis available from New Bern Airport-approximately \$10-\$15 one way)

Reunion is scheduled
Thursday, May 28th through Saturday May 30th, 2026
CUT OFF DATE FOR REUNION REGISTRATION WITH PAYMENT

MAY 1, 2026

As with previous reunions, there are a limited number of blocked rooms
 90-minute trolley tour Friday May 29th
 Buffet dinner on Saturday evening May 30th

HOTEL INFORMATION

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON, NEW BERN NC - RIVERFRONT

100 Middle St., New Bern NC 28560
 1-252-658-9000

Rate \$202-night (inclusive) Tuesday May 26th, Wednesday May 27th, and Thursday May 28th
 Rate \$213-night (inclusive) Friday May 29th, Saturday May 30th, and Sunday May 31st

INCLUDES CONTINENTAL BREAKFAST @ CONFLUENCE RESTAURANT (2 per room max)

<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/ewnmsdt-doubletree-new-bern-riverfront/>

Each guest is required to provide a credit card guarantee to make reservation(s)

PLEASE NOTE: Hotel reservation "Cut-Off Date" is **MARCH 31, 2026**

Rates WILL NOT be honored after **MARCH 31, 2026**

Tues	5/26/26	\$202.00
Wed	5/27/26	\$202.00
Thurs	5/28/26	\$202.00
Fri	5/29/26	\$213.00
Sat	5/30/26	\$213.00
Sun	5/31/26	\$213.00

ALL INCLUSIVE

Call **1-252-658-9000** for reservation(s)

When calling to make reservation(s) you **must reference**

GROUP CODE 90T (nine zero T) and
VIETNAM DOG HANDLER REUNION 2026

OR

ONLINE

<http://www.hilton.com/en/attend-my-event/ewnmsdt-90t-2e749d2f-5b4d-492a-9623-2ac73fbcd0f3/>

HOSPITALITY ROOM

(Hawks Room First Floor)

Registration

Thursday May 28th 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

Friday May 29th 9:00 am – 4:00 pm

(closed for lunch 12:00 pm – 1:00 pm)

REGISTRATION PACKAGE WILL INCLUDE NAME BADGE(s) * REUNION PIN(s) * HOSPITALITY ROOM ACCESS * AGENDA

Hospitality room will be open Thursday, May 28th, 9:00 am–10:00 pm

Friday, May 29th, from 10:00 am–10:00 pm

(after general membership meeting @ 9:00 am)

Saturday, May 30th, 8:00 pm–**2:00 pm**

Open again after dinner until 10:00pm

\$70/pp

VDHA BX

BX Manager, Mike Hurder, will not be attending the reunion due to health issues.

BX merchandise will still be available to purchase. There will be a binder in the hospitality room with photos of merchandise to view along with order forms including VDHA Logo hoodies.

*Payment can be made by **cash** or **check** only*

Orders will then be forwarded to Mike for fulfillment in a timely manner.

POSTAGE WILL BE WAIVED FOR PURCHASES MADE AT THE REUNION

OFFICER'S MEETING

Thursday, May 28th, 2026, 3:00PM

Officers will be notified of location

GENERAL MEMBERSHIP MEETING

(Hospitality Room-Hawks Room First Floor)

Active VDHA Members Only

Friday, May 29th,

9:00 am – 10:00 am

TROLLEY TOUR

90 Minute New Bern Trolley Tour

(Time to be determined)

Sign up on registration form

\$35/pp

LIMITED SEATING

BUFFET DINNER

\$65.00/pp

(Grand Ballroom-First Floor)

Saturday, May 30th, 6:00 pm – 10:00 pm

Open cash bar 6:00 pm – 7:00 pm



LOW COUNTRY BOIL

Seasoned Local Shrimp

Seasoned Crab

Smoked Sausage

Sweet Corn

Red Potatoes

Corn Bread Muffins

Caesar Salad

Seasonal Vegetable Medley

Roasted Turkey Carving Station

(with mushroom sauce)

Prime Rib Carving Station

(with au jus – horseradish cream)

Classic Cheesecake

Please join us!

Let's make this one of the best!



NEW BERN, NC

2026 REUNION REGISTRATION FORM

Thursday, May 28th –Saturday, May 30th, 2026

DOUBLETREE BY HILTON NEW BERN - RIVERFRONT

DATE	EVENT	COST/pp	# ATTENDING	TOTAL
	Reunion Registration Fee	\$70/pp		
FRI - 05/29	90 Minute Trolley Tour * Limited Seating	\$35/pp		
SAT-05/30	Low Country Boil Buffet (6:00 pm Cash Bar/7:00 pm Dinner)	\$65/pp		
				TOTAL DUE \$
NAME (as you want it on badge)				
VDHA Member Number		UNIT	-	
SPOUSE name (If attending)				
GUEST name (if attending)				
Street Address (member)				
City		State	-	Zip
EMAIL ADDRESS (Required for Confirmation)				
MEMBER phone #		EMERGENCY phone #		
NOTE: Only ACTIVE VDHA MEMBERS will have access to the General Membership Meeting. You will be notified if your membership is NOT ACTIVE when your registration form is received.				

Print and complete registration form and mail it, along with your check/money order to:
VDHA c/o Bob Palochik, Treasurer, 10125 Skye Saddle Ave., Las Vegas NV 89166-6546

CHECK/MO MUST BE MADE PAYABLE TO VDHA
NO PAYPAL OR CREDIT CARD payments accepted for Registration

Completed registration and payment are due **ABSOLUTELY NO LATER THAN MAY 1, 2026**

Registration cancellation (with refund) will be accepted up to and including **May 06, 2026**

To add/cancel/modify your registration or have any questions, please email Bob Palochik at bobpalochik@vdha.us or call 702.557.3538 or 702.845.2944

INDIVIDUAL HOTEL RESERVATION(S) FOR DOUBLETREE BY HILTON

RESERVATION(S) CAN BE MADE BY CALLING

1-252-658-9000

Tues 5/26/26 \$202.00
 Wed 5/27/26 \$202.00
 Thurs 5/28/26 \$202.00
 Fri 5/29/26 \$213.00
 Sat 5/30/26 \$213.00
 Sun 5/31/26 \$213.00

YOU MUST REFERENCE GROUP CODE 90T(nine zero T) and**VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION REUNION****OR online - copy and paste following link****<https://www.hilton.com/en/hotels/ewnmsdt-doubletree-new-bern-riverfront/>****CUT OFF DATE FOR HOTEL RESERVATIONS IS MARCH 31, 2026 RATE WILL NOT BE AVAILABLE AFTER THIS DATE****WILL YOU BE STAYING AT THE DOUBLETREE BY HILTON WHERE THE REUNION WILL BE HELD?****YES** ☐If yes, how
many nights**NO** ☐

Zzaslow K-427 Documentary Debut

By Christopher "Preacher" Dion

Recently I had the opportunity to attend the New York premier of a very special documentary called Zzaslow K427 produced by U.S. Army veteran Robert Ham of HAMMR Productions. Now I had seen this documentary already during its very first showing at JBSA-Lackland but the location and who I was with made all the difference. You see this documentary was about a very special dog, named for a very special man who lost his life less than three miles from where this film was shown when airplanes became weapons and the war on terror began. On that day a cloudless sky became filled by a cloud of falling towers. As the towers fell, so did the tears of Adam Zaslow, whose father Ira was lost that day.

It was not until 2005 that Adam would learn of a very special honor that had been given to his father Ira. You see Ira's name had been bestowed upon one of a select number of dogs produced by the experimental TSA breeding program. This program only existed from 2002 to 2012. To show that the dog was one of these special dogs its name had a double first letter and a unique tattoo number. For Zzaslow that would be K427.

When these dogs were old enough, the breeding program sought out volunteer families to foster them until they were ready to be tested to enter training as either a TSA dog or as a Military Working Dog. For Zzaslow K427, that foster family would be Mrs. Suzanne Johnson. Suzanne learned of the origin of Zzaslow's name and left a small heartfelt message on the obituary page of Ira Zaslow on December 5th 2005 never knowing what that brief comment would lead to.

From here Adam gained a connection and awareness that his father's legacy of love would continue. He learned that this dog, bearing his father's name, would be part of America's response to that tragic day and to bringing to justice the terrorist forces who had taken not only his father's life, but the lives of 2,977 other Americans as well. He would also learn that this furry warrior, along with a young Army soldier from Puerto Rico named Juan Colon-Estrada who had been destined to be the sole handler for this dog, would save the lives of countless fellow warriors over their three combat tours and 10 years of service together.

Once Adam learned about the service and heroism of Zzaslow, he sought to make a connection with

Zzaslow's handler Juan in order to learn more about their life together. Adam discovered that Juan was Zzaslow's only handler and that Zzaslow was one of only 2 dogs Juan had handled during his active-duty career. He learned that when Zzaslow retired, and that Juan adopted him and cared for him right up to his last day ensuring Zzaslow did not cross that rainbow bridge alone. Adam also learned that Juan, like him, also carried scars connected to 9-11. Adam's came from the falling of the towers and Juan's came from America's response to those who took them down.

Through the film the audience is taken on a journey of tragedy and triumph. It is shown the journey of pain, loss, challenge, sacrifice, redemption and healing. Through this film the watcher, unaware, is shown God's hand as a singular thread is spun that joins strangers from across the country with diverse backgrounds and stories into a new family whose bonds have become stronger than blood.

Continued on Page 5.



Zzaslow K-427 Documentary Debut

Continued from Page 4.

A single name that had fallen and whom the enemy considered destroyed was resurrected and given new life and new power. That power culminates in this story as you see Adam and Juan meet for the first time in Ft Leonard Wood, MO and then together meet again in NY at the 9-11 Memorial and Museum that the Lord had arranged for them to experience alone without any other visitors.

Words cannot express the feelings I had in that Regal Theater at 850 Broadway in New York City on Sunday 18 January 2026 as this film was shown for the first time in NY as part of Dances with Films, film festival. Early on in the creation of the documentary, I had been given the opportunity to become a part of this story.

While filming at JBSA-Lackland in San Antonio, Robert Ham contacted me, in a round-about way to provide him a black lab to use as a stand in for Zzaslow for training sequences in his film. Turns out I just happened to have an obedient lab at home ready to serve. I gladly obliged as I have a passion for history and sharing stories of the career field I served in for nearly 15 years. As I learned more about this project and the story behind it, I became more committed to seeing it succeed.

Once the film was complete I connected with the key players involved and arranged for them to come out to JBSA-Lackland for a tour of TSA's Canine Training Center and the DoD's Dog School at the 341st Training

Squadron. Following the tour, I arranged to have the film shown here for the first time where Zzaslow K427 was born. After this I committed to Adam and Rob to come out to New York whenever they were able to have it shown there. This gave me the opportunity to take my 11-year-old son to ground zero the day before the event and connect him as directly as I could with that tragic day so he would never forget the truth, as many seem to. I wanted 9-11 to mean more to him than just a date on a calendar as it did to all of us who lived through it.

Enabling our family to experience the memorial together and then see Adam's story on the big screen impacted us as never before. Doing this beside Adam's family as well as Suzzane's family and Robert's family was a memory I will treasure forever.

With that said I invite you to visit HAMMR Productions at <https://www.hammrproductions.com/feature-documentaries/zzaslowk-427> to learn more about this one of a kind feature documentary. The team is presently looking for distribution to share this masterpiece of film and emotion with as many as possible. Maybe you can help and ensure America never forgets the lessons of 9-11 and those we lost.

Celebrate K9 Veterans Day
March 13, 2026

Vietnam Dog Handler Association Officers

President:	John R. Harvey	3000 Holiday Dr., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316	860-796-7813
Executive V.P.	Ernie Ayala	4000 Pierce Street #143, Riverside, Ca. 92505	626-862-2667
V.P. Trackers	Vacant		
V.P. Thailand	John Homa	7157 Potomac River Dr., Hixson, TN 37343	423-368-4493
V.P. Units	Vacant		
Secretary	Billy Barnes	P.O. Box 1061, Hayfork, CA 96041	530-945-2832
Treasurer	Bob Palochik	10125 Skye Saddle Ave., L.V., NV 89166	702-557-3538
Assoc. Director	Dennis Lewis	PO Box 699, Pikeville, NC 27863-0699	919-242-9620
Sgt. at Arms	Michael Duran	124 Smotherman Ct., Murfreesboro, TN 37129	615-907-9084
Chaplain	Steve Janke	413 First Street., Carlstadt, NJ 07072	201-334-7676
Membership	Randy Kimler	2225 Merriman St., Port Neches, TX 77651	409-722-0889
BX Manager	Frank Wehner	P.O. Box 473, Norco, CA 92860-0473	509-850-5296
Webmaster	Jim Stiles	7413 Jacksonville Cutoff Road, Lot B, Jacksonville, AR 72076	501-952-5904
Dogman Editor	Steve Lemish	4723 Rolando Blvd, San Diego, CA 92101	619-417-0954

DEADLINE

ARTICLES FOR

THE JUNE

ISSUE MUST BE

SUBMITTED BY

May 23

So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

Editor's Note: This is the fifth installment of Rick's multi-part adventure as an Air Force dog handler. In this episode, he details some stories about his time in Nam with his sentry dog Rinny.

*By Rick Marty
USAF, 1964-1968*

Some of these adventures [with Rinny] were funny at the time and funny now, some of them not so much at the time and remembered with a what if it had been a little different thought.

Damn snakes! Alerts on animals were common and the animal alerts could scare the crap out of you until you learned to read your dog's alert signals and understand what he was telling you; not a human, just another wild pig, or cat or some other local wildlife. The snakes were scary as hell, at least a half dozen different poisonous vipers were known to frequent the area but the most troublesome were the pythons.

Snake stories abound but here are two or three that I was involved in. The night we ran over a 14-foot Python with a deuce-and-a-half truck in the new Bomb Dump almost wrecked the truck, it was like running over a log. The snake crawled off and had to be shot to kill it. We hauled it to the kennels where someone skinned and cured the hide and it was on display there for a long time.

There was also the morning Rinny and I came down off the Sand Saddle post to meet the pick up truck, walked in under the trees and all hell broke loose. Rinny started growling, snapping and thrashing around and it was pitch black and I couldn't see a thing. Hand over hand down the leash, I found a snake and dog in a tangled mess. Rinny had jumped a python, about six feet long or maybe he had been jumped, either way it took some doing to sort that out.

Our first encounter with a Cobra was scary as hell. Walking through the bush on that damn white sand and the full moon made it like daylight. As we started to go between two large chunks of brush, Rinny stopped and sort of alerted, I couldn't figure out what he was telling me. We moved forward and I could tell Rinny was nervous, as I came between the bushes I heard that terrible growling sound of an agitated Cobra. Apparently, I jumped straight backwards and in the process pulled that 90-pound Shepherd with me because the next thing I knew Rinny was standing where I had been and I was an arm and leash length farther back. We took a big detour around that area and never went back that night.

And then there was the snake hunter. One morning the 3-4 handlers on the pipe line posts met at the pickup point to wait for the relief truck. One handler started talking about catching poisonous snakes and turning them in for a reward. I had never heard of this and kinda had my doubts, but he was insistent.

He finally gave his muzzled dog a sit-stay command and crawled off into the brush on hands and knees with his flashlight looking for snakes. His dog soon got up and followed. Shortly after we heard a scream from the brush and a lot of crashing and cussing. Apparently, while he was concentrating on snakes his dog walked up behind him and nosed him in the butt. We never heard any more snake-hunting stories from him.

Continued on Page 15.



Rinny's standard greeting of strangers: keep your distance.

So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

Continued from Page 14.

Other things happened that were either more dangerous or miserable. The day before Christmas 1967, President Lyndon Johnson arrived at Cam Ranh Bay for glad-handing and photo ops. The dog teams spent 19 straight hours on post. Two boxes of C-Rats and a couple of cups of lukewarm coffee were brought around by the Strike Team, and it rained the whole damn time.

Then there was the night the Strike Team attacked the Monastery. I think anybody that walked dogs at Cam Ranh Bay remembers the Monastery posts; 4-5 Sentry Dog posts scattered along the wire between the base perimeter road and the Buddhist Monastery and village grounds. On this particular night, about half way through our shift, one of the handlers radioed in that his dog was on a strong human alert toward the wire and the no man's land between the fences.

As I was on the next post North, Rinny and I started working our way in that direction. The handler then radioed in that he had released his dog on attack, was following up and to "get a strike team here quick." The next radio message was, "found my dog, down and injured, where the hell is the strike team, Charlie's running across the fields toward the Monastery."

About that time two strike teams arrived on scene. The one from security immediately secured the area around their Jeep and the road. The other one from K-9, led by Sgt. Kenny, went down to the wire and assisted the dog team. Sgt Kenny called in and said that they were pursuing the people that had attacked our dog team and led the strike team through the wire, across the no man's land and onto the Monastery grounds. Watching all this from the high ground on the end of my post, I was amazed to see the strike team follow those suspected Cong right into the buildings and up the stairs.

All of a sudden the whole area turned bright as a slap flare was fired along the outside veranda lighting up a crazy scene. Four or five Vietnamese were running down the veranda with the strike team in hot pursuit. Shots were exchanged and the Vietnamese disappeared through interior doors. About that time a Security Officer arrived on scene, up on the road by the Jeep, and ordered the strike team to return immediately.

That was mostly the end of the story but not quite;

there was debriefing. The K9 strike force was censured for it's over zealous defense and support of the K9 team but not severely. A whole lot closer attention was paid by K9 to the Monastery and village area after that night and eventually the area was cleaned out.

At a reunion, some thirty years later, I was sitting in a hotel room with this handler and both our wives, reminiscing about this night when he said "look here" and pulled a pencil box out of his suitcase and showed me the dart that had injured his dog that night. The "dart" was an Asian Porcupine quill about 8-9 inches long and the diameter of a pencil. The dart had entered his dogs face beside the nose and traveled along the bone and poked out below his left ear. The official report indicated an animal encounter.

I have seen a lot of dogs "Porcupined" over the years, before then and since, and have never seen a dog get just one quill. Granted my experience is limited to American porcupines, not Asian, but all of us that were around that night have no doubts that the quill was not placed in that dog's face by an animal.

My tour in Vietnam was winding down and I was due to rotate out but I still had eight months left on my enlistment. Six months or less meant home for discharge but eight months meant reassignment back Stateside, with my luck probably to another SAC base. With only eight months left to serve there would be zero chance of getting assigned to a K9 unit so that meant base security and all its associated BS.

That left me with only one option, I extended my duty tour in Vietnam by six months. The duty was familiar and I could stand it for that length of time. Besides, that meant that I had Rinny's companionship for another six months. I signed the papers and was granted a thirty day leave. Big deal, what was I supposed to do with a thirty day leave in Cam Ranh Bay? Well I was able to get orders for stand by flights back Stateside and return and that trip was another whole story of its own.

Home on leave was even worse this time than the last. I couldn't find any of my old buddies around and got word of a few friends that had lost their life in the Nam. When I returned to Cam Ranh, guess what was about to happen? Opening day of the TET Offensive, yeah, just in time for more fun.

Continued in the next issue.

Treasurer's Report

CHECKING \$43,355.42
 SAVINGS 5,074.00
 TOTAL \$48,429.42

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, Frank Wehner, 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 still being postponed due to the Air Museum's re-design and landscaping in the area.

We will publish an announcement in *Dogman* when more information becomes available. Also watch our VDHA website for updates.

Vietnam Dog Handler Assoc.
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Member Information 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 member's 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.

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 or correct the information such as your address, email address and 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.

March Field Memorial BX Re-Opening Update

The VDHA BX merchandise is in the process of being transported to its new home. Expectations are that the BX will be ready for business April 1, 2026, if not sooner.

An email will go out to members as soon as it is up and running and accepting orders. Also, look to our website for further notices.