



DOGMAN

A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers



VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 32 - NUMBER 2 - JUNE 2025

Dave Broecker; a Quiet Hero is Gone

by Ernie Ayala

For as long as I can remember, going back to our St. Louis Reunion, Dave Broecker was the webmaster of our website and a fixture at every reunion along with his wife Pat. They worked the front check-in desk and managed the BX after unloading tons of inventory to the hotels. He missed out on so many fun outings with the rest of the guys because he worked right through so the other officers and directors could enjoy the reunion. Never a complaint or an excuse, he soldiered on even working the evening events like dinners and entertainment, making seating arrangements and escorting people to their tables.

Dave joined the VDHA in 2001 and for 24 years did not stop working. He was our webmaster from 2002 through 2023 when he trained Jim Stiles to take over. Jim took over and became a great webmaster thanks to a greater master. In 2010 he became our BX manager and in 2023 he trained Mike Hurder to take his place and Mike did a great job with it.

In 2013, Dave was one of the VDHA's first recipients of the Warriors Medal of Valor presented by the Native American Tribes of the United States. By 2020, Dave finally got a seat on the Board of Directors as Vice President of Thailand Units, a position he held for three years before having to give it up due to poor health. Dave served as counsel to the board and the rest of the organization to the very end of his life. He was able to work on the March issue of the Dogman, a task he loved. Always at his side was his dear wife, Patricia, whom he married in 1990. They had 35 wonderful years together. She cared for him to the very end.

He was remembered this month with military honors by friends and family in Pekin, IL where he lived. Friends spoke of his service to the community and to the VDHA. A plaque from the VDHA and Thailand Dog Handlers was presented to his family. His many duties and accomplishments at the VDHA were noted.



In addition to running the BX and our website, Dave volunteered and took it upon himself to carry out other important VDHA duties. For example, he meticulously kept track of our members as their passings were reported. In prior years, these death lists were published annually in the Dogman so we would know. Dave also helped to proof and edit each issue of Dogman, providing not only his skill in details, but also contributing a vast knowledge of military and organizational history. He was "the guy that got things done."

Fellow members expressed their sadness and memories at Dave's passing. Here are some of the comments:

Dave was a dear friend, he was totally devoted to the VDHA and it will be hard to find a man so

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From the President

By John R. Harvey
VDHA President

It is with continuing sorrow that I must report to the VDHA family the passing of our former Web Master and BX manager Dave Broeker. After a long and courageous battle, Dave left this world behind and I am sure is reunited with his faithful K-9 companions. Our sympathy and prayers go out to his wife Patricia and family. Words alone cannot describe the contribution that he made to our organization throughout the past 20 years. His wisdom and counsel will be missed by all.

As we experience this year's Memorial Day, please take a moment and remember all those who gave the ultimate sacrifice on the battlefields of Vietnam. Also remember those who came home and for years fought the good fight to make America the land of opportunity before succumbing to the scars they brought home.

Travel, the U.S. military coined the phrase "Join and see the world." Well in 1966 when I joined the Marine Corps they did live up to the promise. My first experience was a Caribbean cruise aboard the USS Guam, an LPH otherwise known as a landing platform for helicopters. We trained throughout the Caribbean, including the lovely island of Vieques. The hot and humid weather was great training for my next experience in a place called Vietnam.

Early on we were introduced to a culinary delight known as C-Rations a/k/a "Meal Combat Individual." There were twelve basic meals of canned meat, fruit or cake, and crackers. Included was an accessory packet

with coffee, cream substitute, sugar, gum, matches, cigarettes and the infamous toilet paper.

If you remember the toilet paper consisted of 10-12 three-inch squares wrapped in a brown paper covering. The term "paper thin" I believe originated from the description of the paper wrapped in those brown little packages. To say that you could see thru it was an understatement. The joke was to make sure that the user kept a tiny little piece aside to clean out from under their finger nails when finished. Actually, the term toilet paper was an oxymoron, unless of course you wanted to call the small hole you had just dug on the side of a trail with your e-tool, a toilet.

At this point you are asking why are we discussing toilet paper. This week is one of remembrance, the good, the tragic and the funny. I recently returned home from a month traveling around parts of Europe. I found that the toilet paper in Europe was not all that different than the paper we found in our C-Rations.

I was asked what did I enjoy the most and my immediate response was the wine and thin crust pizza in Rome. The second question was, what was the thing that I missed most about home. My immediate answer was "Charmin, extra wide, ultra soft, smooth tear." I never did quite understand how to use the faucet on the bidet. Anyway, I am finally home where I can wipe without the paper falling apart, and I no longer have to save that tiny piece to clean out from under my nails.

Semper Fi and God Bless America

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 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.

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.

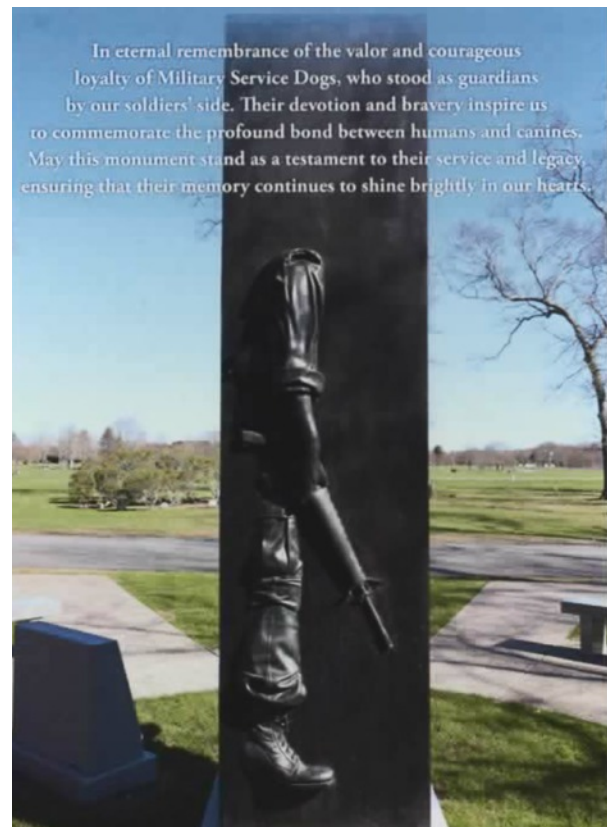
Rhode Island War Dog Memorial Dedicated

by Steve Lemish

The third and last War Dog Memorial designed by sculptor A. Thomas Schomberg was officially dedicated at the Rhode Island Veterans Memorial Cemetery in Exeter on May 17. The memorial was sponsored by Scott and Ruth Gordon of Exeter and Ruth was one of the speakers.

The event was well attended even though there were threats of storms. According to those in attendance, both the ceremony and the speakers were very moving. There were also a few Vietnam veteran dog handler speakers and attendees.

One of the Vietnam sentry dog handlers attending was Ron Swanson (212th MP) who lives in Rhode Island. He was especially proud to have the massive memorial dedicated in his home state. He described the dedication as a wonderful experience as it was so moving and brought back many memories. He was struck by the expression on the dog, saying it was very intense, and like the dogs in Vietnam, "nothing could stop them."



*Vietnam sentry
dog handler Ron
Swanson at the
memorial
dedication.*

The Tip of the Spear; A War Dog Story

Editor's Note: This is the 16th installment of this multi-part story. It details his journey from college to Vietnam and working with his scout dog Skipper (X268). This episode details their final mission.

By Vernon J. Roman

Scout Dog Handler

Everyone has a last mission. We have short-timer sticks and do count-downs. Everyone knows the number of days until they get out of the field and get ready to go home. However, some of us are the recipients of events that alter our plans. I was definitely not thinking "last mission" when it occurred. I was with a mech unit and leading a routine patrol not all that far from where we had set up. The mech unit was in plain sight for most of our patrol.

I had a brand-new officer on this patrol, and he did not have an appreciation for the dog team. We had followed an open ridge line, always moving toward an area of trees that were kind of like their own little island. It was a sizeable amount of trees and jungle, but it was all surrounded by open fields. It was logical that you would not expect to encounter the enemy here, but a patrol was sent out. If nothing else, it was good practice.

We hit the front edge of the trees/jungle and continued to follow the outside of the tree line. We probably went about 100 yards, and the terrain curved. We were now out of sight of our base camp. I led the group along the side of the tree line. We were following a fairly worn path that had experienced recent traffic for some reason. As we moved further along this path,

we came to an area where the path now moved down and into the trees. We would now be moving into the interior of the jungle. As Skipper and I hit that point where the path entered and dipped down into the jungle, Skipper gave me a very strong alert. It was an alert that clearly said, "Do not go any further! Enemy ahead!"

I called the alert that we had "enemy ahead." The new officer said something like "bullshit! Not possible." I looked that officer straight in the eyes and said, "no one is going a step further." He again said bullshit and that we were moving forward. At that point, I told the men they were not to listen to this officer. "Stay put, sit down, but under no circumstances, are any of you following his orders."

As I have previously stated, I made no friends or associates with anyone. However, Skipper and I had a very good reputation, and there were soldiers who wanted to be my body guard and watch us work. The body guard, who I do not know his name to this day, or what he even looked like, was a regular at being our body guard on patrol. I regret that I do not know who he was and cannot pay him proper respect. At that time, I was doing everything I could to insulate the baggage that was going into my head.

The officer, in his fury, grabbed the bodyguard and said, "you're coming with me." They took only a few steps down that path and triggered an ambush that could not exist, per this officer.

He came up that path dragging the dead bodyguard.

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So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

Editor's Note: This is the third installment of Rick's multi-part adventure as an Air Force dog handler. In this episode, he begins Sentry Dog Training at Lackland.

*By Rick Marty
USAF, 1964-1968*

When we were assigned our green dogs I drew a female Shepherd weighing about 60 pounds and thought what the hell. But soon I learned that she was one of the best and brightest dogs I have ever had the privilege of knowing. Heidi was exceptional in all areas including obedience training, attack training, and scouting. She excelled in all of these and in doing so made me look really good.

Just a couple of examples: the first time through the Obstacle Course I led her on leash, the second time I stepped through the gate unhooked her leash and said go, she ran the course by herself and never missed an obstacle. Her first attack on the suit she went for the "fed" arm and did some decent bite work but after taking her out of the attack I could tell she wanted something more. Her second attack on the suit she ducked under the "fed" arm and went straight for the crotch of the suit where there is very little padding. She got a good bite but thankfully the agitator wasn't hurt.

OK, just one more because I do like to brag. Her first scouting problem: we were called up and had the course explained to us but Heidi was already trying to alert off to the side. The instructor jumped on me and told me to correct my dog as she was messing up. No Sergeant, she is not. She is on alert and I am following it up. I worked her down the field following her nose and we

jumped the decoy that had not returned to his stake out position in the field. The instructors bought the beer that night and praised that little Shepherd thoroughly.

Our orders read "Upon completion of training, Sentry Dog teams will proceed to Vietnam for assignment to duty stations," or something along those lines. Basically, Heidi was going to Vietnam with me and I was jazzed about that because she was something special and I knew it. But it wasn't to be.



Rick Marty and Heidi on the left.

After two and a half months of intensive training with this beautiful little girl we received orders the night before completion that we were to leave the trained dogs and proceed to Viet Nam and be assigned dogs already in country. I never even had the chance to say goodbye, I was just shipped out, sent on my way for a short leave and a plane ride to the Nam.

I always wondered what became of Heidi, did she get a good handler, did she have a long career, did she go to Vietnam? I didn't remember her serial number so had no chance of finding out anything about her career after I left.

I arrived in country, Tan Son Nhut Air Force Base, South Viet Nam, the last week of February 1967. I was assigned to the transit barracks awaiting transport up country to Cam Ranh Bay Air Force Base.

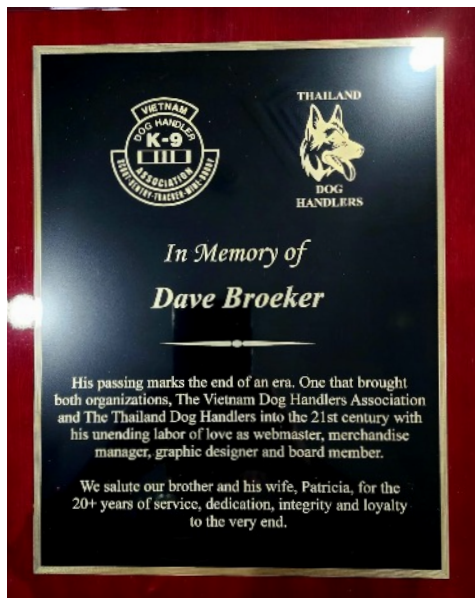
I was in my Class A Blues, had no real option for a uniform change and it was hot and humid. I finally found a chow hall, ate something and found my way back to the transit barracks. Barracks, hah, it was barely a tent over a wood floor and a sandbag bunker outside.

Later that night, when the alert sounded and there were incoming mortar rounds, that bunker looked damn good. Even after the all clear sounded I decided that bunker was a pretty good place to stay. Did I mention that it was hot?

Next morning I was notified to report to Base Ops for a flight up country at 1400 hours. Arriving with my duffle bag in tow, I was shown aboard a C-130 cargo plane fully loaded, with a few jump seats along the walls.

The cargo master informed us that we would be flying at treetop level and may receive small arms fire so be careful. Whoa, wait a minute, how are we supposed to be careful? If it's a problem, fly higher where they can't hit us. His response was flying higher allows the big bad projectiles to get us. Well hell, do what you think best.

Continued in the next issue.



Dave Broeker; a Quiet Hero is Gone

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dedicated... Dave was the top person... He was always a joy to speak with... I miss my dear and loyal friend... Anytime with Dave was great time. He also created and maintained the Thailand Dog Handler site... Pat, thank you for sharing your husband with all of us. We miss him already. We love you both so very much... Dave was a kind and gentle man... Dave always had time for everyone and he never met a stranger. We will forever miss our wonderful friend and a great man. His accomplishments and willingness to serve will always be remembered. Dave was, in my opinion, one of the greatest officers that ever served the VDHA.

Oh, somewhere above, among the fluffy clouds there is a good-looking young airman back walking patrol with his military working dog, Ara (9M72), protecting the world from intruders knowing he did his job, and now all is well. Welcome home, Dave.

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).

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A young, good-looking Dave Broeker with that winning smile.

The Tip of the Spear

Continued from Page 4.

Due to God and providence, we happened to be standing by a bomb crater which we all promptly dived into. I had my back to the woods and looked out over an open field. On my left was Skipper. On my right was the the bodyguard's dead body, then the Officer. The rest of the unit took up position around the rim of the crater. Skipper and I just laid there taking it all in. Our job, for the time being, was done.

Truthfully, I believe that if we really wanted to, we could have easily gotten up, back tracked, and walked away from that ambush. However, the officer radioed that our unit was pinned down and needed to be rescued. So we laid in this bomb crater for a few hours in the very, very hot sun.

Then it was Hollywood and an unbelievable rescue. I starred across the empty field to see long tank barrels pop out of the tree line. There were at least three, maybe four tanks there. They pulled all the way out and opened fire. At the same time, up out of that tree line, rose four helicopter gunships. The tanks opened fire and the helicopters came flying across the field, laying down all kinds of fire power. You could not have scripted a movie any better. What an experience.

We then got up out of the crater and walked back to our base camp. When we arrived in camp, the officer who was in charge of our patrol, got down on his knees, hugged skipper and said that he was as great as JC himself. Thanks for saving everyone's lives.

It did not end there. The commander of the mech unit asked me if I would be able to guide a different patrol back to the ambush site. I said sure, no problem. In a few minutes, Skipper and I tried to lead this second patrol. I say tried to lead. The officer in charge did not want to go to the site, he went every which direction but the correct one and refused to go where I was trying to get them to go. As I said in the beginning of this narrative ... "Nobody wants to die..." I finally got so frustrated with the officer and his stalling that I just up and walked off the patrol back to the base unit. I told the Commander that the leader of that patrol was refusing to go to the ambush site and nothing I did could make him do it.

The Commander got on the radio and that patrol did go to the site, but now without a dog team. There were three dead NVA and a cache of various weapons. Not a big score, especially not for the cost of one of our soldiers' lives...he did not have to die.

Skipper and I then caught a helicopter. Our week was over, and home we went.

Continued in the next issue.

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
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
Emporia, KS	8/14/25	8/17/25
Spokane, WA	8/28/25	8/31/25
Ellensburg, WA	9/4/25	9/7/25
Port Townsend, WA	9/11/25	9/14/25
Independence, OR	9/18/25	9/21/25
Orange, CA	10/2/25	10/5/25
Clovis, CA	10/9/25	10/12/25
American Canyon, CA	10/16/25	10/19/25
Wylie, TX	10/30/25	11/2/25
Athens, AL	11/6/25	11/9/25
Crystal Springs, MS	11/13/25	11/16/25

Treasurer's Report

CHECKING \$41,780.86
 SAVINGS 5,074.00
 TOTAL \$46,854.86

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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