



DOGMAN



A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers

VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

VOLUME 27 - NUMBER 4 - DECEMBER 2020

Virtual Honors for War Dogs on Veteran's Day

By Bob Dunn

Unit Director, 212th MP Co.

Sentry Dogs

As a volunteer at the Vietnam Veterans Memorial, the Wall, Veterans Day has always been something special to me. It is a big day at the Wall, with the wreath layings by various groups and special guests giving speeches. Thousands of people show up for this event yearly. But this year, with the pandemic, there were no visitors to the Wall, and no guests honoring our veterans. Instead the event was held virtually online.

The thanks goes out to the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund, in particular, to Jim Knotts, our president and CEO. As part of their Veterans Day ceremony, they included a video entitled "Dogs of War," honoring the brave dogs that served in Vietnam. This video included interviews of three dog handlers that served in Vietnam, conducted by Michael Croan of the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Fund.

I was honored to be one of those interviewed, talking about my time with the 212th Military Police Company in Vietnam with my Sentry Dog Duke. Terry Kehoe, an Army Scout Dog handler, discussed his experiences with his dog Prince, while assigned to the 39th Infantry Platoon. Mark Smoot, who was assigned to the 56th Security Police Squadron, relayed his memories with his Sentry Dog Jake.



Ed Reeves and Tom King at the Vietnam War Dog Team Memorial.

The film covered all of the different types of working dogs, from Sentry to Scout to Trackers. It was very well done, and did justice to keeping the legacy of these brave animals preserved. The video covered the duties the dogs performed, as well as the bond created between dog and handler. These heroic dogs should never be forgotten.

As a volunteer at the Wall, I try to do my part to keep the legacy going. While assisting those who visit the Wall, to find loved ones, or to just reflect, I pass my experiences on to them and what it was like to be a dog handler in Vietnam. It surprised me to learn how few people knew that dogs were used in Vietnam. As a result, I had, for a lack of a better term, "baseball cards"

designed with Duke's picture on one side, and a brief description of his duties on the other. I got the idea from seeing many local police departments handing them out to children. Needless to say, it has been well received in educating people of the importance of what these four legged partners of ours did to protect our troops under adverse conditions. It is estimated that, because of the dogs, ten thousand fewer names appear on the Wall.

Please, if you haven't seen the tribute yet, please do so. Go to <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bmX2rNlrx5k>. I would also like to give a shout out to the Motts Military Museum which was mentioned at the end of the video. Last year they dedicated the Vietnam War Dog Team

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FROM THE PRESIDENT

By John R. Harvey
VDHA President

We have survived the milestones of life or at least those of 2020. We began the year with the hope of a growing economy, and the celebration of the 20th rededication of the memorial in Riverside California. Then, as if out of a science fiction movie, we were subjected to the virus from China. We learned to deal with the ever-changing rules of statewide shut downs. Our never-ending search for toilet paper began along with the storms and tornadoes.

We were forced to cancel our bi-annual reunion in Washington, DC. We had the most active hurricane season in history with 30 named storms; 13 developing into hurricanes. We learned things about what our computers and cell phones could do that we never imagined. Zoom and FaceTime became part of our new language. Living in seclusion, we learned new things about those with whom we were living. We learned the good, the bad and the ugly.

We spent much less on gasoline for our cars than we had in years. We eliminated flying from our choice of transportation. Our choice of wardrobe became t-shirts, shorts, and sandals. We lived with the emotional turmoil of a presidential election regardless of which candidate we supported.

We expanded our cable to include all the movie channels. Prime Video, Netflix and HBO became staples of our entertainment selections. Gone were the concerts at theaters, arenas, and performing arts centers. Happy hours at the bars and restaurants became faded memories.

We were now required to go into a bank wearing a baseball cap and mask. Who would have ever thought? Concealed carry is optional. We were admonished to take a pass on this year's holiday celebrations.

My partner and I haven't decided how we are going to celebrate Christmas this year. But let me tell you about my wonderful Thanksgiving. Several weeks ago, an adult son of my significant other sent out an invitation to Thanksgiving dinner to sixteen parents, brothers, aunts, uncles, and cousins. The only stipulation was that each person in attendance had to have written proof of a negative Covid 19 test 72 hours before coming.

On Tuesday morning my partner and I got up and raced to the testing site. Three and a half hours later we had the results of our rapid (negative YEA) test. Wednesday, we packed up the car for the three-hour ride to her son's house. Yes, we wore masks the entire

weekend. And I used a rubber glove when putting gas in the car.

Out of 16 invitations, only four bothered to get the test and attend. After enjoying several bottles of wine, attempting to consume more food than we should ever eat in a weekend, and sipping numerous martinis, we concluded that we had a wonderful time. My partner and I missed those who did not attend, but at our age we were glad to be able to get out and feel safe having taken all of the precautions we could. As always, the rest is in God's hands.

The VDHA family wishes you and your families a wonderful and safe holiday. Be smart in your travels. I believe that the year 2021 is going to present new challenges. But as my father used to say, "With each new challenge is a new opportunity." Your board of directors is still hoping to put together our next reunion for October 2021. Maybe we should take a lesson from my partner's son and have attendees provide proof of the vaccine or a recent negative test. I only say that to give it some thought.

Whatever decision is made, please know that we all love you and miss you. Welcome Home Brothers. Wishing you a Happy and Healthy Holiday and New Year!

TAPS: 3RD SPS MIKE JONES

By Kathleen Jones

It is with great sorrow that I must let you know of the death of my husband 3RD SPS Mike Jones, VDHA member number 0493. Mike served in Vietnam from 1970-71. He was a Ranger with the 101st Airborne and was a paratrooper. He was the handler of two dogs; one being lost to the war. Mike never tired of re-telling of his and his dogs' adventures. He often told how they shared his meal with the dog and how at times they would be covered in agent orange. (That is what took Mike).

Mike was a quiet, wonderful soul with a heart of gold. His children and grandchildren held him in high esteem like I have never seen before anywhere. His sons were taught many skills from their dad. Mike was a proud warrior. Even I was caught up in the spirit and would relay stories he had told.

Now the sweat shirt I wear saying "Wife of a Vietnam Veteran. Freedom Isn't Free. My Husband Paid for It." Now it really means it more than ever.

Waiting for the Dogs - Three Perspectives

By Dave Broeker

This is the first of a three-part story which is a real-life accounting of how "waiting for the dogs" to arrive touched our three lives while we were stationed at U-Tapao Royal Thai Air Base. We were all assigned to the 635th SPS at U-Tapao and all three of our real-life stories touched each other's.

First Part

by Ben Cox

On August 6, 1967, I was re-assigned from Ton Son Nhut AB, (RVN) to U-Tapao, (Royal Thai Air Base) in Thailand for the task of assisting in the construction of a temporary K-9 kennel. Upon my arrival at U-Tapao Air Base (635th SPS), I was advised that the kennel project was on hold until further notice. It was strange, arriving at U-Tapao and thinking, "where's the dogs?" I know this is history and I do not blame the 635th commander, but I think it was like this all over South East Asia according to the K-9 handlers I have talked to from the Air Force, Army, & Marines.

Because of this, I was assigned to flight line duties during the interim, for approximately four months until I had to take an emergency leave to go home because my wife had become ill and had been hospitalized. Sometime during that 4 months, I was also assisting a MSgt in writing SOP's (Standard Operating Procedures) for Expanded Security.

In January of 1968, I was returning to South East Asia and the aircraft I was on landed at Ton Son Nhut with in-coming troops. At Ton Son Nhut, a Security Policeman boarded the aircraft and instructed all Security Police personnel to depart the aircraft. After four days at Ton Son Nhut, I got everything straightened out and I was placed on another aircraft and sent to U-Tapao. Upon my return to U-Tapao, I served a few more weeks on the flight line and then was instructed by the Operations Sergeant to report to the Civil Engineer Officer, pertaining to the construction of the temporary kennel. The sergeant further stated that the K-9 Group, handlers, and dogs would be arriving in just 30 days. I still cannot figure out why it took the Air Force eight months to form a K-9 Section to be sent to U-Tapao. I almost gave up on ever seeing a kennel constructed at U-Tapao, and then all of a sudden we have to go like hell to put up a temporary kennel.

On March 24, 1968, TSgt. Tom Swartz, 15 handlers and 20 dogs arrived at U-Tapao at approximately 2300 hours. At this time I became the 635th SPS K-9 Training

NCO and remained so until I rotated home in May of 1968 for retirement. The 635th SPS K-9 Section was my last K-9 unit in the Air Force.

The K-9 handlers were outstanding troops along with their first Kennel Master, TSgt. Tom Swartz. I also worked with A1C Dave Broeker who served as TSgt. Swartz's Kennel Clerk and Dave's assistants, A1C Jim Dorris and A1C Recenes. When I first worked on the flight line with Dave and Jim, I did not realize that they were dog handlers waiting for the kennels to be built, just as I was, until later on. On the other hand, they probably did not know immediately that I was going to be the K-9 Training NCOIC either.

The Troops of the 635th Security Police K-9 Section were always top notch! They worked hard to live up to the reputation they so surely deserved.



Tech Sergeants Tom Swartz and Ben Cox, March 1968.

Second Part

by Dave Broeker

I was 19 years old when I arrived at U-Tapao, and only 4 days later I turned 20. It was a long tour, which was strung out even longer by the waiting and the anticipation of the day. I would eventually be united with my K-9 Group. Unlike many of the other dog handlers, who arrived in teams, I arrived by myself. I expected to be met on the tarmac by the Kennel Master, holding my newly assigned four-legged companion by the leash in the left hand and pointing the direction to the kennels with his right.

Instead, I arrived at U-Tapao and was told that there were no K-9 facilities, handlers, or dogs because construction on the K-9 facility had not even begun. My orders stated I was to report immediately to the K-9 section at U-Tapao and be assigned a sentry dog. I had my heart set on quickly adapting to a new four-legged

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Waiting for the Dogs

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friend and I was ready, willing, and able! But this was not to be....at least not yet!

The nine months to follow were pure hell; waiting, and waiting, and waiting for the inevitable to happen. I got sick of writing in my daily diary "K-9 teams and dogs have still not arrived," Meanwhile, I would have to be content to bide my time. But I wasn't content!

I hated the whole stinkin' idea of being sent over to 'God Knows Where,' and then having to wait for 'God Knows How Long,' to connect up with my K-9 Unit. I had been so excited to be a part of it. I was assigned flight line duties for the first few months and eventually progressed to work at Central Security Control, Alternate Central Security Control and a few other pretty decent posts while waiting for the dogs to arrive.

TSgt. Benjamin Cox was one of my very best friends and the one which I could always confide. Ben always treated me with such respect. He always coaxed me to better myself and made me feel proud of my accomplishments, no matter how small they were. I always felt comfortable working with him and spending off-duty time with him.

Ben knew my circumstances and that I had also been a dog handler at Westover AFB, Massachusetts. I found out that he was also waiting for the dogs to arrive and that he was supposed to be setting up the kennels. I think there were some politics going on because he was also getting tired of waiting for permission to get started.

Finally, on March 24, 1968, 'our unit' arrived, touching down on Thai soil at 2300 hours. I finally was able to make the diary entry that I had been waiting to enter. March 25: "Today we processed in 15 troops who had arrived at 2300 hours on March 24."

I had been transferred from flight line duties to K-9 and then, on March 26, it all came together for me. TSgt. Tom Swartz, the Kennel Master who had arrived with the 'First Wave' of dog handlers, assigned ARA (9M72) to me and I felt complete again.

Ara was one of the five female dogs that had been sent over to U-Tapao for the U.S. Government to eventually give to the King of Thailand. She was a playful dog and was quick to obey hand and verbal signals. She knew the difference between training and playtime and it was always a pleasure to play with her because this was a time when I could actually forget about the stress, the tremendous heat and the loneliness for my family.



I knew that Ara was not completely trained as a 'sentry dog' because she was breeding stock that the United States Air Force would eventually give to Thailand to start their K-9 kennels. I also knew that I was getting 'short' with less than 90 days to complete my tour in Thailand. I was more than content to work with the dogs and be the Kennel Clerk because I could choose where I wanted to work on a daily basis.

I was assigned my own deuce-and-a-half and given plenty of rope to hang myself if I made the wrong decisions, But I was lucky and had been taught good values and tried to be a model dog handler to my two assistants and buddies Jim Dorris and Robert Recenes.

Ara made me feel whole because she became the other half our 'team.' I think she was born with a "wooden leg" because she was always hungry and wanted to eat almost anything that sensitive nose of hers could detect. One of the funniest incidences was when she tried to eat one of the "mangdahs" (a very large flying water bug) and it grasped on to her lower lip. She fought that bug, which wasn't going to be eaten without a fight, until I could pry it loose from her mouth. Her actions were almost like when a dog tries to get peanut butter off the roof of their mouth. It was hilarious! Thinking back, I miss her so.

Later, on May 5, 1968, A1C Jim Dorris and A1C Robert Recenes joined me at the Kennels to help out. We became quite a team because we worked so well together. The 15 dogs and handlers were now being posted full time and were no longer available to help out with kennel duties.

Continued in the next issue.

VICE PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Ernie Ayala

I joined the VDHA in 2002. By 2003 I was unit director for all Army Sentry Dogs. In 2006, I became Sgt.-at-Arms then Vice President of Units, later I became Executive VP upon the untimely passing of our then president, Perry Money.

But even with all this experience, I am still a rookie on the VDHA Board of Directors sitting with the likes of Bob Palochik, John Dupla, Vernon Anderson and one superstar, Dave Broeker.

Dave has always been a fascinating person because he has been our only webmaster since the VDHA website began. Then he went on to take over the running of our Base Exchange, to the point of never experiencing our reunions without he and his wife Pat working through them.

When his health caused him challenges he asked for help with the BX and the website. He was blessed when one of our new members stepped forward and took on the BX as his apprentice. Mike Hurder and Dave have only improved the BX and look forward to showing off their shop soon on the Internet.

Dave is the liaison between the VDHA and the Thailand Dog Handlers. Additionally, he organizes numerous fundraisers with them, runs websites and serves in a leadership capacity. When his good friend, Ernie Childers recently passed away, Dave did not hesitate to volunteer to finish fulfilling Ernie's position on the board as Vice President of Thailand Units.

Dave has no idea I'm doing this, otherwise he would have stopped me dead in my tracks before I even got started. He is the epitome of "a member in good standing." More like a rock star, he is exactly the kind of member we need.

Each board of directors member must be able to do at least a couple of jobs to keep VDHA going. The fact that Dave does all these things not only shows his love for the organization, but also the fact that we just aren't getting enough involvement from the members-at-large.

Several key positions have come up on the board with announcements and opportunities but those positions come and go and the board member must continue to serve unopposed because no one was interested in running for that position. Elections come up every two years for two or three slots on the board.

If the average board member lasts ten years of service that means there is no interest in members serving the VDHA and it may not be long before we just fade away.



BX Manager/Webmaster Dave Broeker

Gentlemen, we need new blood, we need help running this organization, maybe not on the board but other capacities like various committees, social media, photographers, artists, crafters or just raising your hand and saying, "I'm here, anything I can do?"

Mike Hurder has given me hope that we will see more Mike Hurders willing to step forward and help us revitalize the first and best veteran dog handler group in the nation. Be proud and be involved.

Merry Christmas and a happy, healthy and lucky New Year. Stay safe and wear a mask.

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, 152 W. Park Avenue, Suite 150, El Cajon, CA 92020 (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.

Thailand Dog Handlers Update

*By Dave Broeker
VP-Thailand Units*

On September 19, 2019, Ernie Childers, who was the VDHA Vice President of Thailand Units, passed away. I volunteered to fill this position and VDHA President John Harvey appointed me as the new replacement for Ernie; I happily accepted. I have agreed to take the lead on our TDH situations, and I am now the liaison between the Thailand Dog Handlers and the VDHA.

The Thailand Dog Handlers are a great group of guys from seven Thailand Units who banded together to form one elite and admirable organization. Each unit has a director and all seven of us are now working together very well as one entity with the VDHA.

All is going well with the Thailand Dog Handlers and the Unit Directors have been very helpful in providing information on all their people that were stationed at each of their unit locations. Since I am also one of the Unit Directors, I only have to make requests from six others.

We can't go any longer without recognizing all seven of our Thailand Unit Directors. They are Jim Watson – 8th SPS-Ubon, Dutch VanHatten – 56th SPS-NKP, Phil Carroll – 355th SPS-Takhli, Mike Diercks – 388th SPS-Korat, Jay D. Jones – 432nd SPS-Udon, Bill Cummings – 631st SPS-Don Muang, and last but not least, me, Dave Broeker – 635th SPS-U-Tapao.

Recently our bank account reached an all time critical low and we decided we needed to have a fund raiser as soon as possible if we are to continue to survive. Yearly, we have to pay a large website

subscription renewal fee, photo album fees, domain name fees, etc. This is our history and many dog handlers, individuals and students use our website for research and study, which is just one of the many reasons to keep our website up to date.

This year, in addition to accepting donations as we have done in the past, we also offered a Special Fund Raising Thailand Dog Handler Commemorative Badge. This was very successful and long awaited, and had been an idea I had for over 10 years.

Our new TDH website is coming along pretty well, but there is still a lot of hard work to do! You can view our website at this location: <https://www.ThailandDogHandlers.com/>.

If information is missing or a button does not work, then that portion is under construction and I have more work to do on that page.

I hope to make this report a quarterly report to keep everyone up to date. Stay Tuned!

Member Notes *By John Langley*

Longtime VDHA member Jim Moore (42 IPSP) has led an interesting life. After the Army, Jim spent many years traveling. Jim's chosen method of transportation was hitchhiking. After many years of traveling, Jim has now settled down and has gotten married. He lives in Maine and is fighting health issues.

Bob Palochik is the long-term treasurer of VDHA. He is assisted by his wife Debbie in his treasurer duties. Bob served two tours with the 14th SPS at Nha Trang AB where he often worked with the Army's 101st Airborne Division. Now living in Las Vegas, Bob and Debbie were hosts for the VDHA reunion held there.

Vietnam Dog Handler Association Officers

President:	John R. Harvey	3000 Holiday Dr., Fort Lauderdale, FL 33316	860-796-7813
Executive V.P.	Ernie Ayala	13862 Mardi Gras Lane, Riverside, CA 92503	626-862-2667
V.P. Trackers	John Dupla	904 Chetwood Dr., League City, TX 77573	281-332-2163
V.P. Thailand	Dave Broeker	1712 Crescent Dr., Pekin, IL 61554-1637	309-202-5542
V.P. Units	Vacant		
Secretary	Vern Anderson	9343 Jamaica Beach, Galveston TX 77554	409-737-9085
Treasurer	Bob Palochik	8203 W. Parting Clouds, L.V.. NV 89117	702-255-6265
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
Webmaster/BX Mgr	Dave Broeker	1712 Crescent Dr., Pekin, IL 61554-1637	309-202-5542
Asst. Webm./BX Mgr	Michael Hurder	986 Coronado Way, Livermore, CA 94550	925-518-0318
Historian:	Vacant		
Dogman Editor:	Steve Lemish	152 W. Park Ave., #150, El Cajon, CA 92020	619-444-5525

DEADLINE

**ARTICLES FOR
THE MARCH
ISSUE MUST
BE SUBMITTED
BY**

FEBRUARY 23



Christmas Day in Vietnam

*By Gary Smith
981st MP Co. 71-72*

Christmas Eve 1971, I was in Tuy Hoa, scheduled to have the day off on Christmas. I was told by SSG Bridges that I was selected to go to Long Binh to see the Bob Hope Show. Tuy Hoa is on the coast in the Central Highlands. I had no dry boots or uniforms and it was also cold. On patrol, one of the other handlers told me it was colder here than in Chicago. Temperatures were in the 40's.

Christmas morning, I woke up early because I didn't want to miss my flight to Long Binh. It was sunny and warm. Sampans were out on the bay. I thought this was a Christmas miracle after more than four weeks of rain.

When I arrived at the stadium, it was wall to wall soldiers. We sat at the rear. The combat soldiers got to sit up front. Prior to the show, the roach coach was behind us selling drinks and snacks. They only sold by the case so I bought a case of coke. Other guys bought containers of snacks. Before you knew it, we were all sharing. Everything was passed around like a big family.

It was the best time I had in Vietnam. I couldn't tell you anything about the show. We were so far back we couldn't make out who was on stage. I recognized Bob Hope's voice and his style of jokes.

At the end, we went back to the airbase and got back to Tuy Hua. While waiting for our plane I ran into a guy I went through basic training with. It was nice to see someone from my past, even though it wasn't that long ago in my past. I still think of the monsoon season ending on Christmas Day as a miracle for me. Dry boots, uniforms and warmth. Simple pleasures.

Invitation: Share Your Memories

By Steve Lemish

So many of us have stories; stories of our time in the Nam. Perhaps we have hundreds of them. On one mission or assignment, we could have a few which might include the valor or expertise of our dogs, a heart-warming encounter with grunts or other handlers, tales of leadership or even problems with those in command. You have a community of members here who would love to hear from you and we want to publish your story in *Dogman*.

Perhaps your memory will touch on some memories of another member. Perhaps it will cause one of our own to write a story that touches you or your memories. We are all healing over time. Perhaps writing about our memories can also have a therapeutic result for ourselves or for others.

Are you not a writer? Have you never written anything, ever, for publication? No worries. We can take your rough-sounding or misshapen sentences and edit them for you. We only need an idea of what you want to say. An excellent editor will take your words and, without changing the flavor or meaning, ensure your words are both coherent and easy to read. We may not always use correct grammar, but we'll get your message across.

If you have photos, please, by all means, include them with captions that identify the subject of the photo, names (if you recall them) and the approximate date and location. That way, other members, who do not have photos of their service, might recognize or remember the place or one of the dogs or people in the picture.

Dogman needs more contributions from more members. Perhaps it's just a blurb, perhaps a multi-part series (we have somewhat limited room in each issue). So, take some time, sit down at your computer or with a pen. Jot down a subject or two you would like to share. Do us all a favor, think back and let the memories loose.

TREASURER'S REPORT

Checking: \$33,059.64

Savings: 5,079.23

Total: \$38,138.87

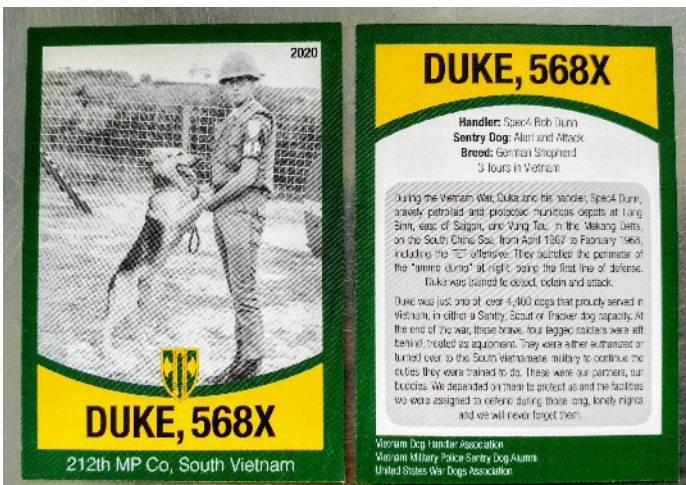
Virtual Honors for War Dogs

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Memorial, which is a wall listing the names and serial numbers of all the dogs that served in Vietnam. It should also be noted that the granite used for the memorial came from the same quarry as the panels used on the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, D.C.

The picture showing the memorial (on page one) shows Ed Reeves on the left, an Army Scout Dog handler who served with his four-legged partner Prince. On the right is Tom King, an Air Force Sentry Dog handler who patrolled with his dog Fritz.

We were a part of something special. Being a dog handler in the military is something few have had the honor to do. Be proud. Spread the word of these brave animals. They should never be forgotten and it is up to us to keep their legacy going.



Baseball card created by Bob Dunn.



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Update: Our BX of the Future

By Dave Broeker

Our dreams and plans to “invent a better mousetrap” are happening right in front of our eyes! We found the software that does exactly what we want and has fantastic customer support!

Assistant BX Manager Mike Hurder and I have tried our best to put in the hours it takes to create “Our BX of the Future” but we are a bit slower to proceed than expected. My illnesses have slowed down the amount of time I have been able to dedicate towards this project, while at the same time, Mike is recovering from major surgery and seems to be in such better shape than I am.

Mike pushes me and for that I am forever grateful! We have had several two to three hour training sessions and I asked Mike if we could put them off until after the holidays. He agreed, but meanwhile, we both will no doubt be peeking into the new software to try and understand it better.

There will be no interruption in BX sales as the old BX will close moments after the new BX is made available.

We will have unlimited room to display more items, as well as new specialty items that are in the making. Mike and I invite you to follow our progress as we create “Our BX of the Future.” It’s going to be worth the Wait!

**Visit our BX Site
For Christmas Gifts**

<http://www.vdha.us/merchandise/>