



DOGMAN



A Brotherhood of All Combat Veteran Dog Handlers

VIETNAM DOG HANDLER ASSOCIATION

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VDHA Website Being Re-Designed



By Steve Lemish
Dogman Editor

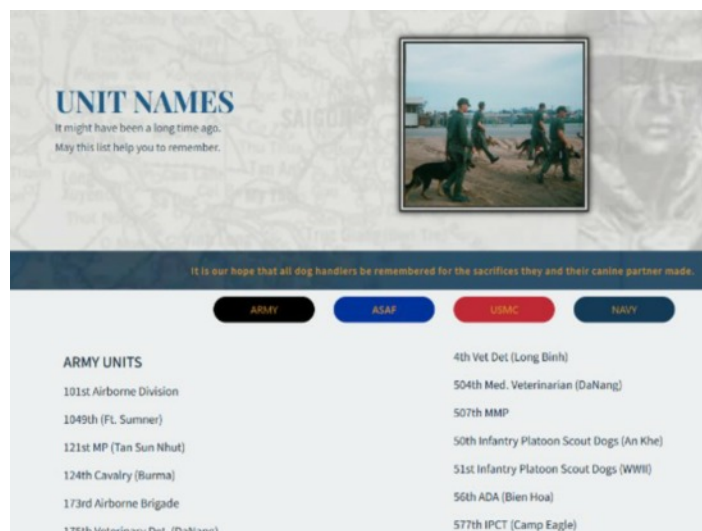
VDHA will have a newly redesigned and updated website in the near future. The old website could no longer be used as the company supporting the software (or hosting the website) no longer provides such support. The old website was also out-of-date, contained antiquated materials and could not be adequately maintained.

The board made a decision to pay for a redesign using different software and contracted for the updated website. Our website has been down since June 1 and is currently under construction. The completion date for the website is unknown at this time, but the re-design is proceeding faster than expected. The continued patience of VDHA members during the transition is appreciated.

The website will be much better than before. It will provide more security for membership information, make it easier for members and others to use it and will provide greater flexibility in payments for dues and BX orders and purchases.

Once the new website is up and running again, only limited resources such as Our Story, Dogman Newsletter Archive, Shop BX, Memorials, Join and Donate will be available to everyone and anyone accessing the vdha.us website.

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From the President

By John Harvey
VDHA President

The end of summer is here, and I believe that everyone is looking forward to a little cooler weather. In many parts of our beautiful country we have experienced days of record setting temperatures. But the world continues to turn.

I would like to applaud the VSPA on their upcoming reunion in October 2026 to be held in Nashville. It sounds like an exciting time has been planned. That said, the association's President, Larry Fleming, in their 2026 Summer newsletter laments the same concerns that have been expressed by your board, and that is the dwindling number of attendees at our reunions.

Do we envision a point in time where our VDHA organization will just fade away? One question is, should we be doing anything special to plan for that event? Should we identify a time table as expressed by Larry of five or six years from now? What would

be the interest in announcing one last reunion? I am not advocating that we should plan such event in the near future, but I am suggesting that we should give it some thought and discussion.

In my June 2026 letter I identified the Central Time Zone as being the location for our next reunion. Possible site suggestions were Nashville, Kansas City, Indianapolis, Omaha and Memphis. I requested from our membership their ideas as to timing and location. As yet, neither myself nor any of your board members have received a response.

Bob Palochik and his wife Deb have been doing a tremendous job keeping the board and our membership apprised of the progress being made in the development of our new website. We are hoping to have the new design completed in the next several weeks.

Your leadership wishes you a happy and healthy time thru the fall and winter holidays. Welcome Home!

Website Re-Designed

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Active members will automatically be notified of their individual, new logins. Be sure to log into your profile and update your information to make sure it is correct, including your current address, phone number, email address, listed unit, dog's name and bio if you choose to publish one.

Only active members will be able to login and be able to search the complete database by names, branch, unit, dog's name, etc. Inactive members will have to renew their membership to receive new login credentials, and they will not be able to search or access the complete database.

The new website will make it possible for VDHA to accept dues for membership and payments for BX orders through checks, money orders, PayPal, debit and credit cards. The BX merchandise pages, the join page and the updated profile pages, along with others will all be streamlined, making it easier to view, navigate, locate, order, and pay.

Members are always encouraged to send in original articles, stories, photographs for publication on the website and in Dogman. However, we cannot publish any previously published copyrighted material without the permission of the copyright owner.

Handler Search	Search by name
Nathan Aaron	39th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bian Hoa)
James Abuhl	52th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Chu Lai)
James Adams	47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (L2 Sally & Phu Bai)
Joe E. Adams	34th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Bian Hoa) (An Khe)
Ed Adamski	WWII War Dog Detachment - CBI
Jerry Adkins	212th MP (Long Binh)
Leon Adler	56th Infantry Platoon Scout Dogs (Duc Pho)

RINNY
Tattoo: A116
Unit: 35th SPS (Phan Rang)
Branch: USAF
Service Status: PD, 71
Handlers served with: James 'David' Lovett, John DeTota, Steven Luz, Ronald Briel, James Click, Stephen Williams

You will also have the opportunity to donate "In Memory Of" a dog handler or your dog or just for the general use of the VDHA. Your donations will support VDHA publications, sending mass emails and receiving information from members, producing and mailing costs for new member cards and certificates in addition to BX mailing costs, etc. Any and all donations are welcomed and appreciated in addition to being tax exempt.

Vice President's Report

By Ernie Ayala

VDHA Vice President

A couple of months ago, my wife Fran and I attended a dedication at the American Indian Veterans Memorial located at the Riverside National Cemetery. We arrived early to get a good seat and not park far away, but the cemetery provided passenger golf carts that took us from the parking area to the outdoor amphitheater, where the event took place.

I looked around to see if I knew anyone and saw many people wearing their colorful Indian dress or old cavalry hats or shirts. I did spot my friend, Jeffrey Bennett, executive producer of the War Dog movie and the War Dog Memorial across the street at the March Air Base museum. I also saw our BX manager, Frank Wehner. I was happy we had representation there. I wore my VDHA jacket and proudly displayed my Medal of Valor given to me by the National Indian Tribes of the Southwest. Only one other person was wearing that medal and that was the outstanding master of ceremonies, Dan Smith III, USMC retired.

Much of the credit for the entire production and dedication of the memorial must go to Sharron Savage, Chairperson of the American Indian Alaska Native Veterans Memorial Committee. There was a very interesting presentation by Associate Professor Robert Perez, University of California, Riverside. The subject was "The Land on which We Stand Today," about how all this area was once Indian Territory. In fact, there are many native Americans still living in Riverside. The Sherman Indian School and the Sherman Indian School Cemetery are located in Riverside and native Americans still maintains much influence around the area. Over 20 Indian tribal nations were represented at the dedication.

The program went on with traditional drumming and singing by the Dancing Cloud Singers with guests, Sherman Indian High School students. There was also a speaker, Elliott Morris, the son of World War II Code Talker Joe Morris, Sr, who is buried at this cemetery. He introduced his sister, Colleen Anderson, and she introduced the families of three other Code Talker families who came on stage holding large photos of their family heroes.

The program ended with the presentation of the Gift, the Centerpiece Monument American Indian Veterans Memorial by A. Thomas Schomberg. If the name sounds familiar, he also did the War Dogs Memorials in March

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Entrance to the Indian memorial



The unveiling of the statue.



Master of Ceremonies Dan Smith displays his Medal of Valor from Indian Nations.

So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

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

By Rick Marty

USAF, 1964-1968

My tour in Viet Nam 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 30 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 standby flights back Stateside, 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 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? Yep, opening day of the TET Offensive, just in time for more fun.

I was gone for just 30 days but the K9 section I returned to was a whole different world. A majority of the guys I had lived and worked with for the last several months had left for home or reassignment and their dogs were being handled by new people. On the positive side, Rinny was still there and super eager to see me and get back on duty. I gotta tell ya there were tears in my eyes when I entered his kennel that first morning back.

It was a strange experience for me during this time. Being a Buck Sergeant, I had a little rank, very little, but I was deferred to by many of the more senior K9 NCO's in small ways, like bothering to ask my opinion or advice on situations. Rank was really the minor thing, I was the old hand, I had been there longer than some of the younger troops had been in the service. I knew where everything was, knew how everything worked, knew who to see and where to get things done and that

was worthy of a little respect it seemed.

I spent a lot of time working days as kennel support, feeding the dogs, cleaning kennel runs and taking dogs into the vet during the day so the handlers could get some sleep. It was interesting, handling someone else's dog. It usually worked out well because I didn't try to enforce anything, just choke chain and muzzle and some extra chow after seeing the Doc. Rinny stayed assigned to me and we would pull post and work backup quite a lot. As I look back on it now, we, Rinny and I, pretty much did what we wanted, when we wanted and that seemed OK with the powers that were.

Shortly after I returned to Cam Rahn, I went to base personnel and applied for an early out to attend college. To my surprise they granted the request and I was assigned a separation date of 6 August 1968, almost three months before my enlistment would have normally ended. With this information in hand, I became even less tolerant to all the changes occurring on a daily basis around me and the duty station I remembered. Cam Rahn went from tents and pierced steel plank runways to a mega city and the major in-country staging area for troop deployment. It had become a place I no longer recognized or understood.

Rinny and I spent a lot of time in the training area during those last long days before departure, not training, just being together and enjoying the time. One good thing that happened during this time, I got to pick

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Posting the K9 teams on the north perimeter at Cam Ranh. Rinny and I are the third team on the left.

So, You Want to be a Dog Handler?

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Rinny's new handler, a hard thing to see happen but I knew it had to be, the word "bittersweet" comes to mind. It was amazing, it was as if Rinny knew I had to go and he had to stay and break in another new guy. He allowed the new handler in on him with very little trouble even though I was present, just not like his usual/normal aggressive self. I noticed that during his work with the new handler, Rinny kept checking with me by eye contact to see if it was really OK. God, that was hard.

The day came, flying back to the world, discharge and the rest of my life, now that I had a chance to live one. Oh my God, leaving Rinny behind was one of the hardest things I have ever had to do in my nearly 80 years of life. I, like all you other handlers, have to say, not a day goes by that I don't stop and spend a few minutes thinking about those astounding companions we had to leave behind.

Many, many years have passed since those terrible but wonderful days and I have had the pleasure of several K9 friends during that time, but never a German Shepherd. I just couldn't do it. That is until my wife encouraged me to take the plunge. In June 2010, we adopted a rescue Shepherd about a year old, history unknown. Britta was a beautiful girl, weighed about 80 pounds and was very sweet natured; loving but not demonstrative.

The first day home after picking her up, I was out in the back pasture walking her around on leash just trying to get acquainted, when I heard a sound that nearly stopped my heart, choppers!

We lived on some acreage about three miles from the airport for nearly 20 years and never had we ever seen choppers of this type come cruising in like this. Chinooks, four of them, Air National Guard, tree top plus a hundred feet, right over our place. Bad, really bad. It took a while to get through that, and poor Britta had no idea why I was freaking out. We lost that beautiful girl in 2022 and, hell I can't even go there!

Dogman

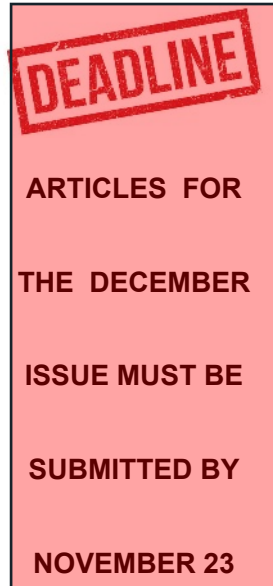
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Letters and stories are subject to editing. Email all submissions to Dogman@VDHA.us or mail to Steve Lemish, Dogman Editor, 4723 Rolando Blvd, San Diego, CA 92115 (include a self-addressed, stamped envelope if you want them returned).

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Treasurer's Report

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Seeking USMC Handlers

Chris Kuhns is a Marine Corps veteran and the director of the Pennsylvania Military Museum which is located close to Penn State University. He is seeking Marine Corps dog handlers who are willing to share their stories and photos of their experiences in Nam.

He recently published an article in Leatherneck Magazine about Marine war dogs in WWII (link:www.mca-marines.org/leatherneck/the-dogs-of-war/). He has now been asked to write a follow-up article about Marine dogs and handlers in Vietnam.

Mr. Kuhns is also an historian and dog lover. While on active duty in 2013, he worked along side a dog team which started his passion for researching about Marine war dogs.

After writing the next article for Leatherneck, he plans to write a scholarly article to submit to Marine Corps University's *Marine Corps History* Journal. His ultimate goal is to write an academic book detailing the beginning of the Marine Corps in WWII and continuing to Vietnam. But he says that is years down the road.

If you are a Marine Corps dog handler veteran, and willing to share your story, please contact him. He indicates he is very passionate about the topic and would love to do the handlers and their dogs justice through his article. You can contact Christopher Kuhns at chriskuhns93@gmail.com, or call him at (484) 252-6331.

Vice President's Report

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Air Base, Riverside, CA., Fort Benning, Georgia and Exeter Park, Rhode Island as well as the Rocky Statue in Philadelphia, PA. for the movie.

On the monument are inscribed these words: American Indian Veterans Memorial. In every foreign war, including the present conflicts that face our nation today, Native Americans have enlisted in larger numbers than any other group. Currently, studies show that one out of every four American Indian adult males have served or are serving in the U.S. military. To honor the sacrifice these men gave to this country the American Indian Veterans Memorial will honor their service and sacrifices.

The American Indian Veterans Memorial Monument will be the first national memorial to specifically honor the American Indian and Alaska Native veterans at any of the Veterans Administration/National Cemetery Administration's 155 cemeteries.



Families of four World War II code talkers.