
December 2014
Award Winning
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 6, Issue 12

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Kennel Talk is an award
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MWDTSa touches the
lives of dogs and people
near and far. This
month, our Kennel Talk
articles reach from
Georgia to Michigan,
with a stop in Kansas,
and include photos from
Afghanistan.

Subscribe to see where
we connect next month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

MWDTSa KENNEL TALK



In an order photo, U.S. Air Force Staff Sgt Francis, stationed at Offutt Air Force Base, Neb., and his military working dog, "Z", search through abandoned lots in Bacharia, Iraq. Photo taken by SrA Daniel Owen.

2014 Year-end Plea

Dear MWDTSa Supporters,

We're in the midst of the holiday season, having just completed the 4th quarter care packages, three in-person base visits, a Virtual Visit to Italy and already we are planning for next year; but I'm sitting down for the moment – just a moment – to tell you about some of the successes that our volunteers' hard work, creativity and drive made possible in 2014. With over 10,000 volunteer hours under our belt, it's my hope that our 2014 victories will inspire you to make a year-end donation to help us grow in 2015.

Where to begin? In the eighth year of our non-profit status, MWDTSa has continued to

grow, inspire and support. There isn't space in this letter to list all of our accomplishments, but here is a sampling of our successes that your donations at the end of last year – and the continued support you've shown throughout 2014 – helped make possible:

- More than 500 care packages of care and comfort mailed to deployed dog teams, with each package valued between \$100 and \$200.
- More than a dozen events were coordinated by volunteers, including visits to active duty kennels, virtual visits to kennels outside the United States and support of a Vietnam Combat Tracker Reunion in West Virginia.

Bringing Up Iras

Story and photos by Airman 1st Class Tara Fadenrecht

MCCONNELL AIR FORCE BASE, Kan. - Not every dog is cut out to be a Military Working Dog. So far, Iras, a 2-year old Belgian Malinois and McConnell Air Force Base's newest MWD, has proven that he has the right temperament and work ethic to continue his training.

Like most MWDs, Iras' career began at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Texas. It is here that potential MWDs are either born or purchased from different contractors and vendors.

At about six-months old, they are introduced to basic tests, such as the ability to tolerate minimal gunfire, that help determine each dog's potential for success in the career field, said Tech. Sgt. Max Soto, 22nd Security Forces Squadron kennel master.

These tests only proved that Iras was ready to enter into the MWD program and begin training.

"He was a candidate to be operational," said Soto. "He's a prime case of a dog that went through, made it, had no issues, and then got sent to us."

After a year and a half of training at Joint Base San Antonio-Lackland, Iras was assigned to McConnell Air Force Base and is now in the beginning stages of becoming dual certified in the areas of attack and narcotic detection.

Iras will undergo some basic training exercises to introduce him to his new job.

"Iras still really doesn't understand his purpose," added Soto.

"We're trying to get him into a routine. It takes a little bit of time but he's already pretty ahead of the game."

Iras tagged along with an older dog during a recent training scenario.

"We actually just took him out a couple days ago and ran a detection problem along with one of our more experienced dogs just to kind of see where he's at and let him run the same exact training problem," said Staff Sgt. Michael Urquhart, 22nd SFS military working dog trainer. "It went really well."

Phase-one training will begin once a handler is assigned to Iras and the two will spend the first two weeks bonding and building rapport and loyalty, said Soto.

The training that Iras and his handler will partake in throughout the first phase will include narcotic detection exercises. The goal is to find at least 90 percent of training aids of any weight that are hidden anywhere, at any height, and packaged in any way, said Urquhart.

Along with detection training, Iras will also undergo patrol training.

Iras will be able to carry out specific commands, such as "sit," "down" and "stay," without any verbal commands. Instead, his handler will use hand and arm signals to give orders.

Patrol training also includes what is known as "bite work." During this portion of training, Iras will learn to track down and bite an individual who may be



Above and Below: Tech. Sgt. Max Soto, 22nd Security Forces Squadron kennel master and Iras, Military Working Dog, work together to find drugs that were placed on a KC-135R Stratotanker as part of a training exercise, Nov. 7, at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan. Iras is in the beginning stages of his training and will use these scenarios to learn and perfect his search technique.



Bringing Up Iras continued from page 2

fleeing from authorities. He will also learn to respond to commands to stop biting and guard the individual when necessary, said Urquhart.

"We'll progress all of his training until we have absolute control so that he and his handler, with a minimum amount of communication, can navigate through a scenario," he said.

Iras and his handler must then pass the approval of Col. Michael Mendoza, 22nd Mission Support Group commander after meeting all of the requirements.

Once Mendoza has given his approval and signed off on the Belgian Malinois, Iras will officially be operational. Although he will continue to train and practice throughout the remainder of his career, Iras will be allowed to go out on real-world missions, said Soto.

He will be on the road a lot performing random anti-terrorist measures which include both foot and presence patrols, he said.

The life of a MWD team consists of long days, hard work, hours of training exercises and real life missions for both the dog and the handler.

Soto said Iras is only in the beginning stages of his career but his role is still very important. Soon he will be out in the field acting as a psychological deterrent toward potential adversaries, performing regular foot patrols and maintaining the security of McConnell.



Above: Tech. Sgt. Max Soto instructs Iras, the wing's youngest military working dog, to jump through a window and attack an adversary. Two-year old Iras recently completed "basic training" at Joint Base San Antonio and is now stationed at McConnell where he will complete his upgrade training.

Year-end Plea continued from page 1

- We have participated in public education events across the country and online to educate Americans as to the history and heroism of America's dog teams.

- Our newsletter, Kennel Talk, has been recognized as a superb publication and leading voice in disseminating military working dog information and we've just been awarded our second special German Shepherd Dog Club Newsletter Award.

- Through our weekly job postings, we are supporting retiring dog handlers as they transition into civilian life.

- Our support for the healing of veteran dog handlers has lead us to support military working dog memorials in South Carolina and Alaska.

- And these are just the highlights of a full year of achievements for MWD TSA and the dog teams that we serve that makes me so positive about where the organization has come from and where we are going. I hope it impresses and inspires you to support us.

A gift of \$200 will help with the mailing of approximately a dozen care packages. A gift of \$100 will help us fill twenty care packages with a T shirt or other comfort items that we are unable to get donated. Of course, whatever you can give will be greatly appreciated and allow us to improve our programs.

We count on your year-end donations to provide a sound financial basis for all of our work throughout the year. Of course we receive grants and gifts that make spe-

cial projects possible, but your annual giving along with the proceeds we earn from sales from T shirts and calendars, directly affects the success of MWD TSA.

Thanks again for helping to keep our mission on course. We appreciate whatever support you can provide.

Warm Regards,

Dixie Whitman
President, MWD TSA

P.S. Feel free to email me at president@mwdtsa.org or call me at 404-451-2539 with any questions you may have about Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

MWDTSA Visits Fort Stewart Military Working Dog Detachment

by Ken Besecker

October 29, 2014, saw MWDTSA representatives visit the FT Stewart, GA, Military Police (MP), 93rd Military Working Dog (MWD) Detachment. The visit proved educational for both the MPs and MWDTSA.

The MPs demonstrated both their MWD teams' capabilities in a formal presentation and also later conducted routine training and allowed us to watch and ask our frequent and many questions.

The formal demonstration included, in part, basic obedience, obstacle work, pris-

oner apprehension and search techniques, and drug and explosive detection. One very impressive team was SPC Montoya and MWD Atos, a combat veteran, who although muzzled showed he was fully capable of chasing a suspect, bringing that suspect to the ground and holding that suspect until his handler instructed Atos to release the suspect. Atos must be a military science buff as he definitely demonstrated the offensive engagement military principle of utilizing swift overwhelming power to engage his "enemy." We were all convinced we would not run from Atos.

Another impressive part of the formal demonstration was the performance by MWD Meky who along with his handler, SPC Martinez, executed the obstacle course. This was not the ordinary obstacle course performance. Meky and his handler demonstrated an amazing gunfire reaction capability. Throughout the obstacle course, sometimes on obstacles, Meky held fast and steady although his handler fired numerous rounds of blank ammunition at their fleeing suspect. Meky truly showed his combat worthiness as regards to being unflinching to gunfire.



Handlers and staff from Fort Stewart kennels pose with T Shirts, Chuck It Launchers, D.O.G. Cookies, Scott's BBQ Sauce and Sunflower Seeds. The pizzas and salads were for lunch.

Ft Stewart Visit continued from page 4



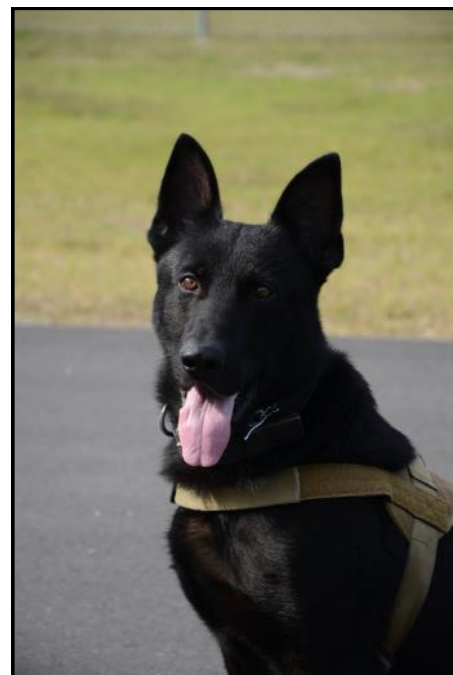
Above: MWD Wickey T202 demonstrates the obedience course above with handler, SPC Madden,

Left: MWD Wickey T202 left finds the odor he is seeking.



Left: Greg R200 and his handler, SPC Donithan demonstrated Basic Obedience with some pretty snazzy leash work.

Right: Bob R784, he and his handler, SPC Frederick, demonstrated detection in an open area.



Ft Stewart Visit continued on page 6

Ft Stewart Visit continued from page 5

Right: Dogs are rewarded with and work for many different types of toys at this kennel. Here, the MWD has extra drag on his body due to the chute deployed behind him. This helps build stamina and drive. Note the Chuck It Ball is one that MWD TSA brought with us to the event.



Left: SPC Martinez and his MWD Meksy L643 demonstrated tactical maneuvers during gunfire.



Above: PFC Roper and her MWD prove the old adage, all work and no play make this MWD a dull boy. The MWD was having a ball, literally.



Above: SPC Montoya is escorted off the field by SPC Roper and MWD Alan P827

Ft Stewart Visit continued on page 7

Ft Stewart Visit continued from page 6



Above and Right (Top and Bottom): SPC Montoya and his MWD Atos T438 are chatting with another handler when a suspect comes up behind him. The dog notices the danger and takes action to protect his handler.

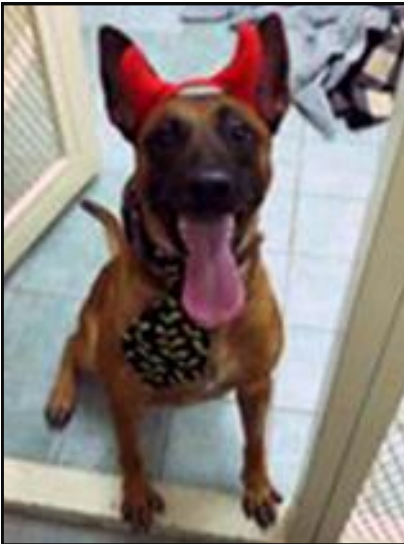
The dog is muzzled to clearly show that the dog is not attacking the "sleeve" or other equipment. The only way to keep the victim safe is to muzzle the dog.



Left: Lt. Col. Ken Besecker (RET) enjoyed the day visiting with handlers and dogs and was grateful to PFC Vinson for spending his time giving us a tour of Fort Stewart.

Howl-O-Ween

Thanks once again to MWD TSA Volunteer Nikki Rohrig for coordinating our 4th quarter care packages around the theme of Howl-O-Ween. Here are some of the happy recipients:



Left: MWD Alec with his Devil Horns and Howl-O-Ween tie from Dawg Ties.

Right: MWD Taz sports his Candy Corn Dawg Tie and an endearing head tilt.

Bottom Right: MWD Diesel poses with a lot of the items included in the care package.

Bottom Left: PFC Livingston and his MWD, Diesel, (L) and SGT Clark with his MWD, Airon, (R) enjoy the care packages received at their kennel down range.



Boxerstock 2014: Music and More

by Dixie Whitman

Thanks to our great partner, Invisible Fence by Peachtree, MWDTSA was represented October 19th at Boxerstock, one of the premier events benefiting Atlanta Boxer Rescue. Our good friend Jody McGlothlin included our posters with her Invisible Fence display and channeled the creation of some great "dog art" for people to take home. Attendees and their dogs create beautiful artwork for their home refrigerator and donations for the artwork are given to MWDTSA.



Above: Invisible Fence by Peachtree.

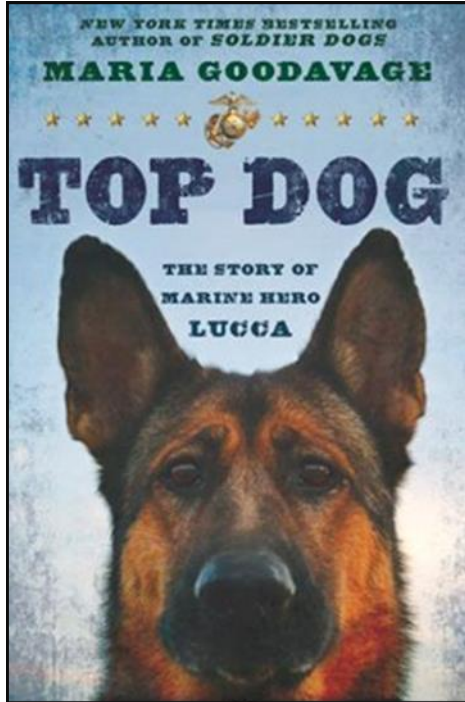
Above Left: Amani with artwork, ready for hanging on Mom's refrigerator at home.

Below, Left and Right: Jody helping the artists with their creativity .



Lucca's Story

by Dixie Whitman



Announcing a great new MWDTSA opportunity: As a special thank you to our supporters, MWDTSA will be drawing one name from all entries received by December 10th to receive one copy of Maria Goodavage's new book *Top Dog: The Story of Marine Hero Lucca*. In addition, this book has been "paw-to-graphed" by Lucca K458.

As a subscriber, all you need to do is to send an email to: TopDog@mwdtsa.org with your name and email address and we will include you in the drawing.

This contest is open to all US and US Military addresses. MWDTSA Board Members are excluded from participation.

There are several ways to enter and you may enter once via each method. Check out our Facebook page and Twitter account for more information on how to enter via social media.

Maria Goodavage's book, *Top Dog : The Story of Marine Hero Lucca*, follows her wildly successful book, *Soldier Dogs*. That book's meteoric rise to the top of the New York Times Best Sellers List will no doubt be followed with a sprint to the top for MWD Lucca K458's story. *Top Dog* weaves a rich tapestry of stories about Lucca, Rod, and Chris, and makes us believe that, just every once in a while, dreams really do come true, and fairy tale endings are indeed possible.

It is my belief that the phrase "Even though I walk through the *valley of the shadow of death*, I will fear no evil, for you are with me," is one that dog handlers understand at their core. They trust their lives and the lives of every man in the column behind them, in the talent and training of their canine partners. And so it was for Chris and Rod, each and every time they worked with Lucca on one of her more than 400 missions and three deployments.

Lucca was part of a first group of extremely talented dogs coming from Israel and being trained with new capacities as a SSD or Specialized Search Dogs. As Maria explains, "These canines have to be smart, dedicated, focused and very well trained. If standard military working dogs have bachelor's degrees, specialized search dogs have PhDs."

Goodavage's skill as a raconteuse is both vivid and heartfelt. The most important focus is on Lucca K458 and her two handlers, Rod and Chris; however, we are also introduced to a pantheon of legendary working dogs: Cooper, Posha, Bram, Darko and more. Although you may find yourself a little misty-eyed at times, you are invited to cheer for them all and recognize the devotion and love that goes both up and down the leash from dog to handler and back.

MWDTSA is in love with this book and we know that you will be, as well.

Product Details

- ISBN-13: 9780525954361
- Publisher: Penguin Group (USA)
- Publication date: 10/23/2014
- Pages: 320

Michigan War Dog Memorial

By Avril Roy-Smith, photos by Allison Merrill



The city of South Lyon, Michigan, population around 12,000, is located in Lyon Township, Oakland County, approximately 19 miles north of Ann Arbor, 45 miles west of Detroit and 58 miles east of Lansing. Its big festival, Pumpkinfest, is held on the last weekend in September. A search on the internet, however, reveals something of interest and relevance to Kennel Talk readers: a War Dog Memorial established after World War II, eventually forgotten, and 'found' in 2010.

Originally established as a pet cemetery in 1932, the people of South Lyon were inspired by the heroism of WWII War Dogs to erect a War Dog Monument on April 6th, 1946. It was dedicated to the memory of The War Dog for services in both World War I and World War II. SGT Sparks, a War Dog who fought with the Marines in Guadalcanal in 1943, was buried there. Over time and generations, the Memorial was forgotten by the locals, and became overgrown, disappearing into the woods.

In 2010, a US Army veteran, Phil Weitlauf, went looking for the monument that he had heard was buried somewhere in the woods off Milford Road. When he found it, it was in terrible shape. With the help of other military veterans, dog club members and local townspeople, the War Dog Memorial monument and surrounding grounds were restored. A rededication was held on November 19, 2011.

A visit to the restored Memorial shows both a memorial and a cemetery for K-9s who have faithfully served this country. The Michigan War Memorial, Inc., was established with its mission to continue the restoration, and to maintain the setting for the purpose of allowing internment of retired Military Working Dogs and retired Service Dogs; to provide internment with full honors at no cost to the handler or owner; and to provide research for military or service records.

For more information about the memorial: www.mwdm.org



Farewell To Our Hero

by Maureen Tolley

I'm sitting here, on a quiet and cool Saturday morning, just staring at a blank screen. I'm not quite sure how to start this, I'd give anything to not be sitting here, thinking of what to write. But I am, and I will write something; he deserves every word, every moment, every tear, that goes into this process.

Fons. H358. YOU were a GREAT dog. I remember when you were an insane (to say the least) two year old dog, fresh out of training and eager to work. James would come home telling me stories of this psycho "green" dog that hated to out his toy, hated gun fire, and always seemed that he would use that bathroom at the most inappropriate times (such as inside a chapel, on the altar no less, while doing some detection training). I used to fear that dog, I thought he would bite my whole arm off if I went to go pet him. But boy did I love to watch them work together. James and Fons developed a very unique bond. They really only seemed to understand each other, and because of that, they excelled at their jobs.

They had only been working together a few months when James came down on orders for a tour in Iraq. We also came down on orders that we would become parents for the first time. I put an immense amount of trust in Fons that he would keep James safe and let him come home from war, so that he could be promoted to 'Dad', first with Cailin and a second time with Aiden. I would never be able to thank Fons enough for always staying one step ahead of James, and clearing the way of any danger, so that James could walk on safe grounds. For that alone, Fons, you will forever be my hero.

Although that was their only deployment together, they went on many Secret Service missions to countries all around Europe and Africa. I think Fons really loved these bonding trips, because rather than staying in a kennel, he got to enjoy the hotel room and its amenities. I remember



James telling me that on more than one occasion, he would wake up to find Fons just staring at him which sometimes freaked James out. I always loved knowing how well Fons was watching over him.

Slowly but surely the intense, physical job of being a working dog started to take toll on Fons. He couldn't jump like he used to, his running slowed, he was becoming an old man. After a few visits with the vet, the big 'R' word started to get thrown around; retirement. It wasn't time yet, but when time came, we knew Fons didn't belong anywhere else, except with us.

James was on his third deployment when we learned that after attempts to put Fons through physical therapy, it was determined that he was FINALLY ready for retirement. When James returned home from a deployment in Afghanistan, the big reunion happened. Partners back together at last, our family felt whole again. A retirement ceremony was held at Fort Benning in Fons' honor, and he walked out of a military working dog kennel for the last time.

His first few days at home were interesting. Travis, one of our dogs, and Fons played together like long time pals, but Buster, our Boston Terrier, did not like having Fons around. In fact, on the first night, Fons went up to Buster to give him a little sniff and Buster snapped and bit him in the nose. After that Fons realized that although Buster was a fraction of his size, Buster was in charge. It really didn't take long for Fons to adjust, and besides a few stolen and consumed socks, he did better than expected. He loved not having to work and earn his KONG toy, he could have it 24/7. Part of me thinks he did miss working, though. A few times I would catch him perking up when James would put on his uniform and boots. To help Fons with that, we used to take a box of bullets and hide it so he could search. Even after not training for so long, his nose still had it.

We started to notice Fons losing some weight. It wasn't anything major, but when things didn't improve, we took Fons to the vet. They wanted to run some



Farewell To Our Hero continued from page 12



tests. Fons hadn't been away from my side in two years, since his retirement. It broke my heart to walk away and leave him at the clinic.

A few hours later I received a call from the vet. Fons' red blood cells were low and his body wasn't making new ones, all signs pointed to cancer. I hated calling James and relaying the message to him.

James wanted to be the one to tell Cailin what was going on, so at dinner on Wednesday night he broke the news. She

immediately began to cry. She kept saying she didn't want Fons to die; she asked if he would become an angel, and asked if she would see him again when she died. She fed Fons a Big Mac and fries that night. For once we didn't have to force him to eat!

We made a cement stone with all our dogs paw prints. James made sure to grab a few hairs from Fons and added that to the stone as well. We let him have all his favorite

toys, and we hugged and kissed him until we finally had to go to bed.

On Thursday morning we walked down the stairs, Fons was in his usual spot to greet us. As time went on and we had to start getting ready to leave, James grabbed his collar, and with the sound of his tags jingling, Fons perked up and went to James. This was the straw that broke the camel's back. James started to break down. He told Fons not to be so excited to be getting ready to leave. With everything ready to go, we made our 20 minute drive to the clinic. I don't think 20 minutes have ever gone by so fast.

When we arrived at the clinic, we took Fons into an exam room, which had already been prepped for him. Fons laid down on a blanket so we could gather around him. Tears started to roll down James' face. We watched Fons take his last breath, we sat with him a few more minutes, gently touching his nose, his ears and his paws. I leaned over and gave him one last kiss and said goodbye.

When we got out to the car to go home, it happened. James couldn't hold it back any longer. There were no longer just tears rolling down his cheeks; he bowed his head down and sobbed. He cried like I've never seen. He lost more than a dog, he lost his battle buddy, his best friend. When we got home it felt incredibly empty. No Fons to greet us as we walked



through the door, no Fons to follow us around, no Fons. I washed Fons' dinner bowl, I cried, I hung up his collar, I cried, I went to sit in the backyard, and I cried. I couldn't escape him. Everywhere I looked he was there. Everything I did, he was missing. The next morning was worse. James woke up before I did. I woke to the sound of him softly crying. He said, "how am I supposed to get up and walk downstairs and not see him? I would give anything to have just one more day with him. I love that dog. I miss him so bad." The pain was suffocating. It hurt more than I ever thought it would. I couldn't eat, I was sick to my stomach. I couldn't go more than a few minutes without crying.

I'm sitting here today, with tears rolling down my face, missing my Fons. I wish I could tell the world what an amazing dog Fons H358 was. I wish the world could understand that we didn't lose "just a dog", we lost an Army Veteran, a Soldier, a best friend and a beloved family member. Rest easy, H358.



Sit. Stay. Support.

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Kennel Talk is the proud recipient of a GSDCA Special
Newsletter Award!

Kennel Talk Wins Award



The editorial staff of Kennel Talk is honored to announce that our newsletter was recognized for its excellence at the 101st German Shepherd Dog Club of America (GSDCA) National that took place at Purina Farms in October. What makes this more impressive is that we are neither a German Shepherd Dog Club nor do we submit our newsletters for consideration for an award. The GSDCA newsletter chairperson absolutely loves Kennel Talk and honored us with a Special Award complete with a rosette.

Left: The Special Award rosette.

Right: Editorial Assistant Bix, the Kennel Talk editor's Catahoula Leopard Dog, graciously consented to pose with the award rosette.

