

November 2014  
Award Winning  
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 6, Issue 11

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MWDTSA touches the  
lives of dogs and people  
near and far. This  
month, our Kennel Talk  
reports stretch from  
coast to coast ponce  
again: from Virginia to  
Kentucky to Georgia  
and on to California.  
We also present a love  
story that starts in Italy  
and ends in California.  
Our Archive photo is  
from Europe, take dur-  
ing World War I.

Subscribe to see where  
we connect next month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

## MWDTSA KENNEL TALK

***PFC Jared Bridges, a military working dog handler, calms Arno, a military working dog, during a retirement assessment, Sept. 4, 2014, at Fort Campbell, Ky. Arno is retiring from military service due to lymphoma cancer after more than six years of service. (U.S. Army photos by SGT Leejay Lockhart, 101st Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs)***



## Soldiers Help Out Teammate With Retirement

Story by SGT Leejay Lockhart,  
101st Sustainment Brigade Public Affairs

FORT CAMPBELL, Ky. - Like most weekdays, loud voices and shouting rang through the early morning air at Fort Campbell, Kentucky. However, this morning was different. It wasn't just the incredibly thick gray fog clinging to the dewy grass that made it different. Nor was it the unusually large numbers of Soldiers conducting conditioning foot marches on A

Shau Valley Road that made it unusual.

What made this morning different was that much of the noise was coming from two Soldiers wearing civilian attire, loudly arguing over a dog.

The argument continued to grow louder then

the aggressor started getting physical by pushing and shoving the Soldier holding the leash. Close by, two members of the 510th Military Police Detachment, 716th Military Police Battalion, supported by the 101st Sustainment Brigade, 101st Airborne Division, watched intently and one even made a video of the entire altercation.

While the shoving and shouting continued, Arno, the veteran military working dog, tried to insert himself between his handler and the female aggressor, with no result. Then with a word, Staff SGT Jonathan Rose, the kennel master for the 510th MP Det., ended the fracas. Rose then checked to ensure SGT Michael Holmes, a dog handler also with the 510th MP Det., had properly documented both the verbal altercation and the shoving episode.

"Today we're doing a disposition video for MWD [military working dog] Arno, who has lymphoma cancer, so he's on his way out the door to retirement," said Rose, a native of Massena, New York. "Once we've done this video, we'll turn it over to the vet, and he'll do an assessment on the video plus the rest of the documents in the packet."

"The packet includes recommendations from the kennel master and the commander in charge of the military working dog detachment along with the video and reports from the dog's veterinarian, which go to the vet's supervisor who determines if Arno is a candidate for adoption or not," said Rose.

"When a dog retires many of the Soldiers who work with them find it touches them on a personal level," said Rose.

"They're more than just dogs. They are also other Soldiers and also military policemen as we look at them," said Rose. "So we don't look at them as just a piece of equipment. They are a living, breathing thing. Plus, you get bonded with these dogs. Even for me in my position, I don't get to train with the dogs every day, but I'm still around them every day. So it's like seeing a Soldier retire or ETS [expiration of time in service]. You don't want to see that Soldier go."

Though these canine Soldiers aren't treated like equipment, they perform like fine-tuned machines in a job where even machines fall short.

"Arno was a great dog," said Rose. "From my time here for the past two years, he had approximately six or seven finds of illegal narcotics between spice and marijuana. It helped really curb the amount of illegal drugs coming onto this post."

Rose described the dog handler and his dog as a potent force on both the battlefield and in garrison.

"We are an enabler," said Rose. "So we provide a searching asset that once again cannot be replicated by man nor machine."

The quarrel's instigator, SPC Samantha Ramirez, had walked across the misty field, while the person holding Arno's leash, PFC Jared Bridges, both dog handlers with the 510th MP Det., calmed Arno. Although the dispute seemed heated, it was actually a carefully planned portion of the video.

"It's kind of hard to come up on the spot with what to say," said Bridges, a native of Manassas, Virginia, about the argument. "So usually we just



**Top: SPC Samantha Ramirez, a military working dog handler with the 510th Military Police Detachment, braces as Arno lunges at her during a retirement assessment .**  
**Middle: Arno, and SPC Samantha Ramirez (left) and PFC Jared Bridges (right) perform a scenario to determine his aggressiveness. Several scenarios were recorded for the veterinarian who would make an assessment of Arno's suitability for adoption after he retires.**  
**Bottom: SPC Samantha Ramirez and PFC Jared Bridges simulate having an argument to determine if Arno, a military working dog, would show aggressiveness during the altercation.**

MWDTSA Retirement continued from page 2

say your dog pooped on my yard and we just go back and forth from there."

Once the video starts, they cannot quit until they have reached the allotted time without pausing or stopping the video. Otherwise, they have to start over and do the segment again.

Moments later, after Ramirez, a native of Fort Knox, Kentucky, donned a large padded arm protector called an aggression sleeve; the team started making their next portion of the video. Bridges released Arno, and directed him to attack the sleeve. It took only seconds for the muscular dog to cover the distance between the two Soldiers and for Arno to forcefully leap and attack the sleeve on Ramirez's arm. Though, for everyone's safety, Arno wore a muzzle throughout the assessment. Until Bridges ordered Arno back to his side, the dog showed no mercy. Then the dog, which had spent most of his life training, quickly obeyed.

"Once they do start training at 6 months old, they have 120 days to certify them as a dual purpose dog," said Rose. "That is the patrol requirement, which is to bite and hold, and also the detection whether it be narcotics or explosives. Once they certify from that then they get shipped out to us."

"They have tons of capabilities," said Bridges. Just having a dog on the

scene of a crime causes people to comply.

"If I show up on the scene of a domestic [disturbance report] or anything like that, usually some people just stop and say 'arrest me. I didn't do it,' or 'I did it. I give up.'"

The final scene for the video was of Arno being ordered to attack the aggression sleeve, which was now on the ground a few feet from Ramirez. According to the handlers, occasionally an aggressive dog would still lunge at the handler and not the equipment. Arno bolted for the sleeve and showed no aggression to Ramirez.

Arno did well during the scenario because he wasn't aggressive toward people; he was aggressive toward the equipment, said Rose.

"He was more going towards the wrap as we call it; the aggression sleeve," said Rose. "Also when it was just the two arguing, he wasn't trying to bite at the decoy; he was more trying to put himself between the two and say 'I'm not liking this arguing. ... I'm not going to bite you, but hey stop it.'"

After years of hard work and service, the Army is losing a valuable member of its team in Arno. However, Bridges is hopeful that Arno will get the life he deserves, and he was glad to participate in Arno's retirement process.



**Above: SPC Samantha Ramirez shoves PFC Jared Bridges during a simulated quarrel to determine if Arno, a military working dog, would attempt to bite at the attacker. Arno helped reduce the illegal drugs coming onto Fort Campbell after making several finds of spice and marijuana.**

**Below: SSGT Jonathan Rose, the kennel master, gives instruction to PFC Jared Bridges, handling Arno. Arno has served for more than six years, and brings and brings a search asset to the military that cannot be replicated by man nor machine.**



## 2015 MWDTSA Calendars Still Available

Our 2015 calendar is still available in limited quantities. The calendars make great holiday gifts.

This is the third calendar produced as an educational fundraiser for our organization. While the photos illustrating each month are of the highest quality, we are also proud of the connections that allowed us to include personal, candid photos of some of our retired military working dogs at home with their handlers and best friends. We think you will truly enjoy this calendar.

There are three photos each of Army, Navy, Air Force and Marine K-9s.

Don't miss out, visit our website at [www.mwdtsa.org](http://www.mwdtsa.org) and place your order.





## Howl-O-Ween - 4th Quarter Care Packages

By Nikki Rohrig

I have been a volunteer with MWDTSA for almost 2 years now, so I guess it is time for me to pack a set of quarterly care packages on my own, right? Challenge accepted!

The Howl-O-Ween theme is a great one and our team of volunteers really came through to make this set of care packages awesome. This was such a fun box to put together.

Fall and Halloween items are out on the shelves in full force and it was hard to narrow it down to the items that we chose to include. Our donors sent in some really neat items! I do have a few personal favorites that I would like to share with you.

My current town of Abingdon, VA has its own coffee shop, Zazzy'Z. The owner was pleased to donate their newest product, The Reveille Blend. This is perfect to round up the troops in the morning and you

can purchase your own bag of this full bodied rich blend at [www.zazzyz.com](http://www.zazzyz.com). I have a feeling that this product may become a favorite item and will be requested from time to time. Thanks, Ollie!

Dog costumes are always popular. If you want to dress your pet up without a costume, DawgTies are perfect. These are ties and bows that slip right onto your dog's collar and they are handmade with lots of love. You can purchase one of these for your own pooch at [www.dawgties.com](http://www.dawgties.com). These would make great gifts and I can't wait to see what patterns are in store for Christmas.

Natural Dog Company was happy to donate trial sizes of their famous PawTector. Made with an all natural blend of wax, PawTector is made to protect your dog's paw pads from heat, cold, sand, salt and snow. It



**MWDTSA relies on the generosity of our donors, without whom we would be unable to make the care packages to the MWDs and their handlers happen. We would like to take this opportunity to thank the following companies and individuals who gave recent donations:**

**Cindie McDuffee & the "Queens of Cards"**, Newbury Park, Calif.

**Lisa Alesci**

**Animal Hospital of Thousand Oaks**, Thousand Oaks, Calif.

**Bannix Horse and Pet Care**

**Dr. Elizabeth Barr**

**Dick Baumer**

**Ken Besecker**

**Suzanne Bischoff**

**Rocky and Brook Ellen Blevins**

**Dawg Ties.com**, Huntington Woods, Mich.

**Grace Avenue Church, Kids Ministry**, San Antonio, TX

**Grandma Lucy's Pet Food**, Rancho Santa Margarita, Calif.

**Ingrid Holzwarth**

**Julie Keaton**

**Richard Kenny**

**Mid-America Pet Food**, Mt. Pleasant, TX

**Nashville Wraps**, Nashville, Tenn.

**Natural Pet Company**, Spicewood, TX

**Laurie Newton**

**Penguin Random House**, NYC, N.Y.

**Pyranha Inc.**, Houston, TX

**Stephen Redden**

**River City Pet Products, LLC**, St. Paul, Minn.

**Rocco & Roxie Supply Co.**, Provo, UT

**Nikki Rohrig**

**Lawrence and Betsy Rotters**

**Kristen San Antonio**

**Deborah St. John**

**Jan Slotar**

**Tech Mix Global**, Scottsdale, Ariz.

**Wet-Noses Pet Treats**, Monroe, Wash.

**Lori White**

**Dixie Whitman**

**Kathie Woodring**

4th QTR Care Packages continued from page 4

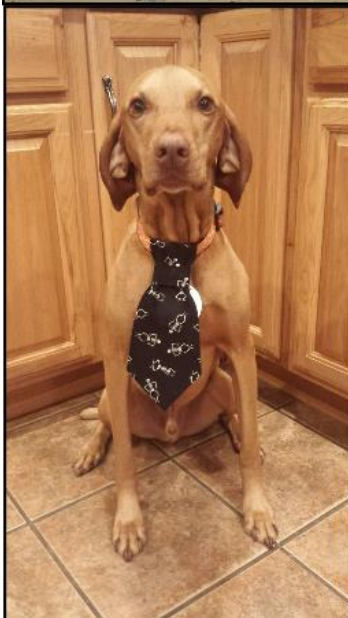
acts as a nourishing barrier against the elements to keep your dogs paws in tip top shape all year round. You can visit [www.NaturalDogCompany.com](http://www.NaturalDogCompany.com) to purchase this product, as well as a few other all natural products.

Now, let's get to the serious part...the candy. We are bringing Trick-Or-Treat to the handlers by including two bags of assorted candy because that's what Halloween is all about, right? Spiced Apple Cider mix and candy corn round out the fall flavored items. MWD TSA always tries to include a t-shirt so we had a little bit of fun turning a German Shepherd Dog into a pirate. You should beware; if you take a MWD's

KONG, you may be walking the plank!

The dogs will be pleased to sniff out cinnamon and pumpkin flavored dog treats. They will also get orange and black rope bones and a black KONG bone to tie in the Halloween theme for the dogs.

The amount of people that offered to donate items, write cards, pay for postage and prepare boxes is very humbling and makes me happy to be part of such a great organization. I hope that these boxes are well received and I can't wait to see pics of the MWDs and their handlers enjoying all their Howl-O-Ween goodies!



**Lola the Pug (Above Left) and Rusty the Vizsla (Left) model some of the care package products.**

**Right: The care packages contained an array of treats, and toys for the MWDs and their handlers. The boxes were packed by 7 volunteers. It took 5 USPS workers 90 minutes to process all the boxes at the post office.**

4th QTR Care Packages continued on page 6



4th QTR Care Packages continued from page 5



#### **4th Quarter Care Packages by the numbers:**

- 3 - Trips to the post office**
- \$1303.80 - Money spent on postage**
- 7 - Number of volunteers that packed boxes**
- 5 - Number of postal employees that helped to scan boxes in and attach forms**
- 4 - Number of hours it took to pack and tape the boxes shut**
- 68 - Number of boxes broken down after we were done packing**
- 90 - Minutes spent at the post office mailing the care packages out**
- 8 - Rolls of tape used**
- 48 - Number of times I asked my Pug, Lola, not to 'mark' the boxes**



**Far Left: Some of the pile of boxes packed and shipped.**

**Other photos this page: A sampling of the many items included in the 4th quarter Howl-O-Ween Care Packages.**

## **More Kongs for K9s Locations Join in the K9 Toy Drive**

For our Southern California friends, these four new KONGs for K9s locations will be collecting KONG toys through the remainder of October and into November.

Pet Suites  
19 Journey  
Aliso Viejo, CA 92656  
Tel: (949) 425-0700

Three locations of The Animal Keeper:

The Animal Keeper  
155 Saxony Road  
Encinitas, CA  
Tel: (760) 753-9366

The Animal Keeper  
3532 College Blvd.  
Oceanside, CA 92056  
Tel: (760) 941-3221

The Animal Keeper  
12280 Oak Knoll Road  
Poway, CA 92064  
Tel: (858) 748-9676

Any of our fine partners would love to have you stop by to visit.

## 3rd Annual Bark in the Park

By Jan Slotar

MWDTSA was at Bark in the Park in Thousand Oaks, Calif., on Saturday, October 11, 2014, with a public education booth. We were on hand at this free event to help dog lovers learn about Military Working Dogs with photos, a sample care package, MWDTSA brochures, and copies of our Kennel Talk newsletters. The Visitors and Attendees were also able to participate in a fun raffle, buy t-shirts, and check out the new 2015 calendar, which was available for purchase.

Most of the visitors that stopped by with their dogs, knew nothing about Military Working Dogs, and we were able to give them an idea of what they did. I was pleasantly surprised to find out that a few of our visitors had heard of Military Working Dogs, and also knew about the Military Working Dog kennel aboard Naval Base Ventura County.

This was a fun filled day for dog lovers and their dogs, with many activities, such as a dog Halloween costume

contest, dog races, sniffer challenge, and a dog agility course. Natural Balance Pet Foods was there, along with pet adoptions, vendors with dog jewelry, dog equipment, dog toys, and grooming supplies.

A popular location for the dogs and their people was an area with kid's pools, a great way to keep cool on a warm day. Even better was dock diving with Splash Dogs, where in between the diving competitions, dog owners were able to introduce their dogs to this sport.

I would like to thank our volunteers for helping out at various times during the day - Elena Ortega & niece Breana; from Santa Rosa Valley 4-H, Edith & Anna Sorensen, Monika & Scarlett James, Makena Lawson, Grace Van Splinter, Karen, Kristen, Robert & Garrett McEachron, Cade & Shane Morony, Marta, Rayce & Brianna Purmer, Liz, Grace & Jessica Nichol, and Maddie Roberts.



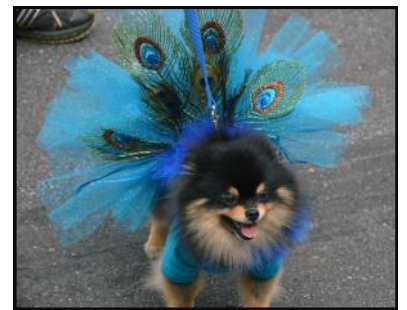


## Top Dogs' Paw Festival

On September 29th, three volunteers from Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. participated with an educational booth at Paw Festival, the annual fall extravaganza at Top Dogs Pet Boutique in Kennesaw, Georgia. The event is both a fundraiser for local non-profits related to dogs and an opportunity to share the story of Military Working Dogs with the general public.

***Below: We often partner with Invisible Fence on fundraising events. Shown here: Jody McGlothlin, Pamela Kendrick and Jerry Whitman.***

***Right, Top and Bottom: We don't often share photos of small dogs, however the participants in the costume contest were adorable.***



## Thank You to Veteran Dog Handlers

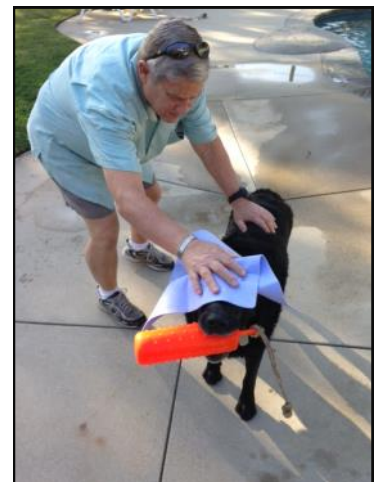
***MWD TSA would like to give a special thank you to MWD TSA's veteran dog handler/Board Members who continue to give generously of their time and talent to ensure that the current active duty handlers are supported.***

***Below***

***Left: Jonathan Wahl, Board Member and Webmaster.***

***Center: Ken Besecker, co-founder of MWD TSA, presenting a plaque to Top Dogs many years ago.***

***Right: Dick Baumer, Board Member and 2nd Vice President, testing a potential product on his dog, Brutus.***







## To My Beloved Zizi

By Cristina Collesano

Oh Mama, where do I begin? At the beginning, I suppose.

The first time I saw you, it was early 2009 in Sigonella, Sicily. Yours was the first run in the kennels, and I will never forget our first meeting. You were 20 lbs underweight and had the appearance of a spastic, emaciated deer. You flew and bounced from one wall to the other. You were a painter. You, your kennel floor, and your kennel walls were completely covered in poo. Little did I know, but I would soon be covered in your "paint" when we started working together. I distinctly remember saying, "Wow. Glad she's not my dog". I was assigned to another dog at the time, but that wouldn't last. Neither would your painting; once we started working consistently, your artwork stopped, thankfully.

A deployment came up, and we were paired soon after we first met. We had less than a month to certify before we left for pre-deployment training in Yuma, AZ. The first time I took you out into the obedience yard, you bit me in the leg. Nothing serious, and I immediately knew you had done it out of fear. The look on your face and the language of your body was one of complete apology and submission. You see, Mama, you were a very skittish little girl. You had a few handlers before me, but none for more than a month or two, and all big men. You had trust issues. So did I. I was a new handler, and you were basically a new dog. We were going to start fresh together and find our way through this new world side by side.

I never begrudged you your fear. I came to learn that you had a very sensitive and tender heart, except when it came to bite work, of course. I quickly dubbed your countenance "The Red Haze" whenever it came time for you to attack the decoy.



Your sensitivity and skittishness disappeared, replaced by an almost maniacal look in your eye, and an unbelievable drive to completely destroy the bad guy. And wow, Mama, could you run. Your 60 lb frame would fly over the ground, and you would launch from so far away, I thought for sure you'd come up short of the decoy. But you never did. You housed many a big man in your time, and I was always so proud of how proficient you were in patrol. You were the classic Maligator; no consideration for your personal safety, hit like a freight train. You made it easy on me.

Yuma proved to be our trial by fire. We had only been together a month, scarcely enough time to build a rapport. We were thrown into the Arizona desert, with temperatures climbing over 130 every day, and a lot of tough training awaiting us. The first week, every day, you would look at me as if I was nuts every time we went on a long, hot ruck march, or I had to carry you and run in full kit, or we had to clear the village with gunshots ringing and explosions going off all around us. It was a very frustrating 3 weeks, but we made it

Zizi continued on page 11



Zizi continued from page 10

through, and we were coming together as a team.

We deployed to Kuwait with the possibility of further deployment to Iraq or Afghanistan, so we trained and trained and trained during our time there. You had an amazing nose for explosives, and after a few months, you were finding explosive components 10-12 feet high or buried a foot or more deep like it was nothing. You dreaded the heat, but you could clear long stretches of roadway like a pro, even though I know you hated every minute of it. Even when you started showing signs of blindness, your nose never failed you. I'll always remember the night you found the decoy from over 200 yards away in pitch black darkness. We never did deploy to a combat zone, but our time in Kuwait bonded us in a way that would never fade and would only continue to grow in the years to come.

Immediately upon our return to Sigonella, the process for your disposition and retirement began, as your blindness was continuing to worsen, and could not be treated or cured. I told anyone and everyone that I was adopting you and threatened bodily harm to anyone who tried to take you. I could not imagine you with anyone else. You were retired young, before you turned 6, and I was looking forward to many, many years with you.

From the day you came home to the day you left the Earth, you brought love and light wherever you went. I have long since stopped counting how many times complete strangers would stop, stare, and ask me "what you were". I would say you were a Belgian Malinois, to which the reply was always some form of "She's so beautiful/gorgeous/pretty!" And you were, babe. You were the most beautiful dog I've ever seen, inside and out.

The best example of who you were was shown the day Grandma died. We had been living with her for several months,

caring for her, along with my parents, in the final stages of Alzheimer's. Grandma passed away in the morning, surrounded by her entire family. Afterward, while we all sat in a circle in the living room sharing memories, stories, and prayer, you went up to each and every person, each one of us, and laid your head in a lap for a few moments. You looked in our eyes and stood still while we pet you, whispered a few words, or just cried. Then you moved to the next family member and did the same, for over 20 people. You knew what we all needed on that grief-filled day, and you gave it gladly. My heart was so full watching you give yours, and I've never been so proud of or grateful for anything as I was for you on that day.

Before Grandma died, a small lump had appeared on your shoulder. A subsequent vet visit resulted in a diagnosis of severe arthritis coupled with a muscle injury. Medication helped your limp, and the lump shrank some. I left to re-enlist in the Navy soon after, and we came to California together. The lump remained and had grown. I took you to the vet on base, and the diagnosis I feared, cancer, returned after a biopsy. Fear, sadness, and anger at the unfairness of it all came over me. You were only 9. We were supposed to have a few more years at least! The cancer was already in your bone, and due to your arthritis, you weren't a candidate for amputation. Radiation would serve for a time, but ultimately would hurt you and wouldn't make a difference in the end. We agreed on pain management and making you comfortable, a bitter compromise.

I've dreaded this day for a long time, Zizi. Watching you fade over the past months has been agonizing, how much cancer changed you and hurt you, but the thought of saying goodbye to you couldn't even enter my mind without tears coming to my eyes. A few weeks ago, when we found it had metastasized in your lungs, I felt the bottom drop out. Maybe it was denial, but I couldn't accept that you

would be gone soon. You were Zizi! You used to be so fast and agile, so spunky and goofy, always ready to play, wrestle, or cuddle. The loss of all of those traits was jarring and drastic.

At the same time, I couldn't let you suffer. You deserved every good thing, and that included a dignified end to your amazing life. So I spoiled you, snuggled you, loved you, and told you how much you meant to me every day and night for the past three weeks. This past weekend, when you wouldn't eat, could barely walk, and struggled to breathe, I knew it was time. I still held out hope that there was something that could be done, but when we went to the vet today, I knew there was nothing more. I struggled with it, fought it even, but when you looked at me in that office, when I saw what was in your eyes, I couldn't let you go on, no matter how much I selfishly wanted you with me. And so I let you go peacefully, in my arms, covered in love. It was by far the hardest thing I have ever had to do, and the pain I feel is indescribable.

You were never just a dog to me or anyone who met you. You were never a tool or military property. I've always said I love you more than I love most people, and it's true. You have shown and taught me so much in our time together, and I will always wish we had more time. Our 5 years together went by way too fast, as time tends to do, and I will cherish every memory of you.

Run fast and hit hard, Mama. Know that I love you dearly and will miss you every day. Wait for me at the Bridge; I expect a big hug. I'll see you soon.

MWD Zizi (L401)  
U.S. Navy, retired  
April 4, 2005 to September 23, 2014

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## Sit. Stay. Support.

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## From the Archives

***Red Cross dogs, who were also known as Ambulance or Mercy dogs, were employed in World War I by the British, French, Russian and German armies. Injured troops often crawled into bushes and other concealment, making it hard for the medics to find them. The ambulance dogs were able to find the wounded soldiers due to their keen senses of smell and hearing. Since rescuing the wounded was often only possible during the night, in the dark, the dogs were very effective.***

***The Allies' dogs were often trained to bring a part of the injured soldier's uniform, or his helmet, back to their handler. German dogs were trained to carry their leash in their mouth if they found wounded, or let the leash hang if they didn't. A French Mercy Dog, Prusco, was reported to have saved the lives of over 100 men in a single day, even pulling some of them back to the trenches.***

***An estimated 10,000 Red Cross/Ambulance dogs were employed by the end of the war.***



***This image is in the public domain because it was published in the United States before 1923.***