

April 2015
Award Winning
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 7, Issue 4

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the photos, stories, news
and highlights of 2015!

Kennel Talk is an award
winning MWD publication!

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MWDTSA touches the lives
of dogs and people near
and far. This month, our
Kennel Talk articles once
again reach from coast to
coast and across the
world; from Afghanistan to
Oman and Vietnam, and
from Massachusetts,
through Georgia, Alabama,
Texas and California to
Oregon.

Subscribe to see where we
connect next month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

MWDTSA KENNEL TALK

***Joe Quirarte and Cajun
during training at the
canine explosive detec-
tion training course in
the mid-80's.***



CAJUN (Tattoo #001J)

by Joe Quirarte

This is the first of a two part article which will be concluded in the May Kennel Talk.

Cajun was a MWD in the Explosive Detection Training program that showed great promise, but he had severe behavioral issues. The author saw Cajun's potential and could not accept his fate.

Nearly 35 years ago, I shared an experience with a dog that still surprises me. It continues to surprise me because its sentimental effect has lost none of its impact. It is the best kind of memory, a memory shared by both the mind and the heart. I am sincerely grateful to be bound so significantly to that memory. The memory of participating in a profound moment of grace, mercy, and redemption is a gift that continues to fill me with appreciation.

After successfully completing the Air Force police academy, followed by the basic six-week patrol dog course, I moved on to the canine explosive detection training course with great excitement. My military working dog for the six-week patrol dog class was named, "Orc". Orc proved to be a very obedient dark-sable German Shepherd that would respond with precision to just about any command given to him, by just about any handler. I didn't really believe I'd find such a pushbutton

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Cajun continued from page 1

dog again, but I hoped I was able enough as a handler to advance with my next dog effectively, no matter what that dog's disposition might be.

The day had come when we were to be assigned our personal military working dog for the twelve-week explosive detection course. These were not dogs to be left behind for others to use after we graduated and moved on, such as Orc was for the preceding patrol dog course. Rather, these dogs, if successful, were to be assigned to their responsible handler and sent with us to our first duty station to work as our patrol partner at the assigned base.

There was a small group of us on the team who were selected to be handlers for several dogs that were products of the Green Dog Program (an expedited training process, sometimes just several days long). Struggling to remember, I can recall that there were at least three "green" dogs.

Two other handlers and I were asked by our team's trainer, Sergeant Evans, to approach the kennel and select one of the three designated dogs as our own. We were told they were crash-course trained in the Green Dog Program, but other than that, we weren't told much else about them.

As we approached the long, chain link facility filled with a mob of excited, barking dogs, the handler on one side of me, a stout marine, moved directly and, almost affectionately, toward a copper colored Belgian Malinois named Rex. He didn't claim him yet, but it was obvious that he was interested. A fellow airman, the handler on my other side, seemed infatuated with the hulking head of a big, lumbering Rottweiler named, Boy.

Ignored, and probably for good reason, was a raging pillar of fire sandwiched between Rex and Boy, a third green dog named Cajun. He was an angry, bouncing blur. He was obviously possessed by some kind of savage spirit. He continuously jumped, up and down to the top of the fence, over and over, snapping at the chain link along the way. On occasion, during these airborne antics, he would

hang from the top of the fence, suspending himself by his wolf-like canines. He was a disturbing sight as he jumped up and down, contorting his body in mid-air, showering me with saliva.

Suddenly, as he was hanging in the throes of one of his suspended tantrums, his eyes rolled to their corners, and locked on me. I decided then that he would be my dog and that I would fight to have him. Not surprisingly, however, there was no such fight to be had. The marine chose Rex, the airman chose Boy, and I was free to start a new career as Cajun's chew toy.

Sgt. Evans had us start our rapport building as we stepped forward to the kennel; talking, cooing, doing whatever it took to introduce ourselves to our new partners. I loved Cajun's appearance. He was black, tan, and white with touches of gray; a German Shepherd mix who was probably seasoned with a little collie or husky, the staff there had guessed. The top of his left ear tipped forward, despite his otherwise intimidating presentation. His eyes were large, shiny, and dark brown. His teeth were long and white. The dark hair between his shoulders was bristling as he crouched purposefully, ready to pounce. With his head hanging low and with his nostrils flaring and aiming laser-straight at me, he growled and snapped, giving no indication that he would concede any opportunity for me to build a rapport.

Sgt. Evans asked us to stand up from our stooped positions where we had been doing our best to communicate with our future partners. He told us to walk around to the main entrance of the facility, at one end of the structure, and to proceed down the long center aisle until we reached the gates that led to each of our dog's individual kennels. The goal, as I understood it, was to enter into each kennel so that the handlers may continue the rapport building



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process with their dogs. I also understood, mistakenly, that we were to enter immediately upon reaching our dog's kennel.

I stepped into Cajun's kennel, like I thought I was supposed to, and stood there awkwardly. I remember hearing Sgt. Evans from a distance saying, "Oh no! Don't move!" It was then that I realized my other team members were still standing safely, outside of the closed gates leading to their dog's kennels. This time I followed Sgt. Evans' orders precisely and didn't move an inch. Looking at Cajun, I had the feeling that I had just made his day.

Sgt. Evans arrived and said, "You weren't supposed to go in yet." I said nothing, as

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Cajun continued from page 2

nothing seemed best. He slowly handed me a ball through a small opening and assumed the role of an air traffic controller, talking me through this crash landing scenario. "Move slowly," he said, "roll the ball to him and let him take it." I rolled the blue, rubber ball slowly toward the space between Cajun's two front paws. It was like trying to distract a billionaire with a role of pennies. The ball rolled on ineffectually, a crude avatar of hope, through all four of Cajun's spring loaded legs. Instead of moving backward with the ball, Cajun moved forward, toward me, one small step, convincing me of his intention to eviscerate me. I heard Sgt. Evans release what remained of his hope with one last exhale.

Then, miraculously, Cajun suddenly began to show interest in the ball. I could see he was discerning the possibilities. He took a quick peek at the ball behind him, and then a sudden return to the business at hand. Then back to the ball, and then back to me; over and over. Finally, with a quick Jackie Chan-like snatch, the ball was in his mouth. Just as quickly, his attention returned to me. With his fangs clamped tightly over the ball, Cajun continued drooling and growling. Sgt. Evans saw this moment as an opportunity, as Cajun seemed to be temporarily muzzled, and suggested a slow but immediate retreat.

But unexpectedly, before I could step backward, Cajun chose to step forward again, to a point where his head was angrily at rest against my left leg. I wasn't sure where things were going as he pressed his head firmly against my thigh, but I sensed retreating now might be a serious regression. As I looked down, his eyes were looking up at me; they narrowed a bit, and his growl grew more guttural, loud and long. His lip curled, but I reached down and gently patted his head anyway.

After a few minutes of cautious petting, Sgt. Evans suggested I slowly place the collar around Cajun's neck. After I slipped his collar on his neck, I was surprised that the whole thing went as smoothly as it did. At this point I knew I had a chance and my confidence grew. I now had Cajun's head secured at one end of the leash, with my

hands tightly holding the other. At Sgt. Evans' command, we made our way out of the kennel, following the other dog teams, with Cajun reluctantly walking at my side, growling loudly in spite of the ball he was carrying in his mouth.

Once we arrived outside, Cajun did the inevitable. He came up the leash at me. The ball, which had previously served as a type of muzzle, was gone. Luckily, I managed to dodge the bullet by regaining control of Cajun quickly and convincing him to take back his pacifier.

And so we carried-on, that day and the next, trying to bond and establish a working relationship together. Unfortunately, though he had stopped his dangerous antics with me, his aggression toward others was becoming a problem. This was unfortunate because brass was taking notice.

Nobody, regardless of rank and stature, could walk within a fifty foot radius around me without Cajun lunging and snapping, scaring the heck out of them. I was quickly learning to counter these behaviors appropriately, but it seemed like a new, unexpected trait would emerge as soon as the other was coming under control.

Cajun seemed to develop a new phobia for just about every object we would encounter. Searching for explosive odors in barracks could easily become a nightmare. Proving detection was not a problem for him (he could smell an odor a mile away), Cajun, in Quixote-like fashion, found rivals in the most ordinary of objects. I knew it wasn't unusual for a dog to respond excitedly when encountering a spinning ceiling fan, or to take extreme exception to their own image in a mirror (both of which Cajun would do). However, Cajun would also snap, or sometimes even cower, when he came across water fountains, pool tables, soda machines, nightstands, potted plants, and lamps (these objects are very difficult to explain in regards to their potential lethality).

In fairness, unlike his aggression toward people, the reaction Cajun had with these random objects may have had their roots in fear, not viciousness. Another contributing factor could have also been unfamiliar-

ity. I would later learn a few facts about Cajun's past that would indicate that he may have never been exposed to some of the objects that bothered him so badly.

Nevertheless, Cajun's reactions varied from aggression to fear, and they were often strangely unpredictable. For example, he would collapse, prone on his belly, with all fours radiating outward and with his tail tucked under him, whenever he walked on hardwood flooring. I don't even want to get into the problem he had with traffic cones. Though Cajun could easily detect every odor thrown at him with ease, it appeared that we had a major behavioral problem on our hands. This problem compromised Cajun's appeal as a product of the Green Dog Program and as a potential Military Working Dog out in the field.

Just a couple of weeks into the explosive detection course, I was pulled aside by Sgt. Evans. I was totally caught off guard by what he had to tell me. Sgt. Evans, dutifully fulfilling the role of messenger, told me that, due to Cajun's behavior, it was determined that he would be euthanized. People say their hearts sink when they hear bad news. My heart panics and my head swims. Hearing news like this as a dog lover, and as a K9 handler, makes you realize, suddenly and terrifyingly, that your military working dog is not yours, and certainly not your pet.

It was time to accept the judgment, or challenge it. I naturally chose to challenge it any way I could. And so, for an airman in my position, this meant pleading. I believed this probably wasn't Sgt. Evans' decision to make. I could only assume the order had to be made somewhere up the chain, though I may never know for sure. Either way, I viewed Sgt. Evans as a fair and just man, maybe even kind.

[Editor's note: Cajun's story continues in the May issue of this newsletter. Next month, learn more about the author's efforts to prove Cajun is worth saving and their experiences training and working together.]

1st LE Bn. Conducts Training During MEFEX 15

Story and photos by Cpl. Owen Kimbrel

MARINE CORPS BASE CAMP PENDLETON, Calif. – With long days and continuous hours, the Marines with 1st Law Enforcement Battalion conducted various training exercises around the clock during the I Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise 2015 aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 17.

Marines with 1st LE Bn. conducted the training to become more comfortable manning entry control points and successfully work with their military working dogs in the field.

MEFEX 15 is designed to allow I Marine Expeditionary Force command element staff and I Marine Headquarters Group to rehearse and execute the transporting, establishing, sustaining, disestablishing and retrograding the I MEF main command post.

"This training is important because it allows us to exercise our operating procedures and really gives us a chance to employ our dogs in a field environment," said Lance Cpl. David Wadleigh, a military working dog handler with 1st LE Bn.

The Marines checked incoming and out-going vehicles from the MEFEX 15 compound the same as they would at an actual forward operating base. They kept track of vehicles and the number of persons occupying the vehicle. While military working dog handlers and their K9s patrolled the area, they also conducted aggression training and threat detection techniques.

"I think it's great. This is something special and it's great for me and my dog," said Cpl. Ashley Hutchins, a military working dog handler with 1st LE Bn. "It really gives us a chance to bond and become more compatible as a team in the event of an emergency."

1st LE Bn. will continue to conduct the training in order to remain operationally ready in the event of a real-life scenario.



Above: Ossy, a military working dog with 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, stands with Cpl. Ashley Hutchins, a 1st LE Bn. Military Working Dog handler, before responding to commands during the I Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise 2015 aboard Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Calif., Feb. 17.

Below: Lance Cpl. Ramos Valencia, a military working dog handler with 1st Law Enforcement Battalion, gives various commands to his military working dog, Sedane. The training allowed 1st LE Bn. to train in a different environment and prepare them for real-life scenarios.



Training during MEFEX 15 continued on page 5

Training during MEFEX 15 continued from page 4



Above: Lance Cpl. Ramos Valencia pulls against his military working dog, Sedane, during the I Marine Expeditionary Force Exercise 2015. The exercise allowed 1st LE Bn. to conduct patrols and work with their dogs.



Right: Corporal Ashley Hutchins works with her dog, Ossy. 1st LE Bn. conducted patrols and manned entry control points for the extent of the exercise.

MWDTSA Thanks Donors

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:

Suzanne Bischoff

Stanton Bost

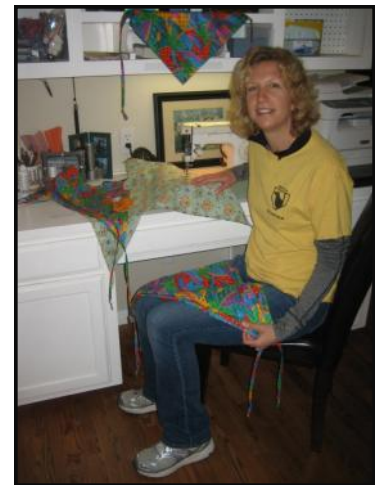
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Above: MWDTSA Volunteer Holly, crafts bandanas for our next round of care packages.

Ist Quarter Care Packages Received



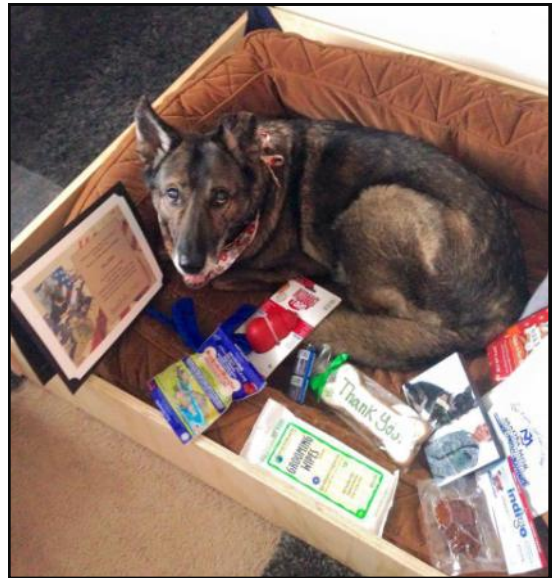
After the quarterly care packages are sent out, MWD TSA receives a flurry of photos and notes from the recipients around the world. Some of the photos are carefully posed, and some are more casual; each and every one of them make it all worthwhile.



Honor 13

In honor of K9 Veterans Day, MWD TSA volunteer Allison Merrill organized a special event, sending Honor 13 care boxes to 13 retired MWD. The 13 dogs were selected at random from a larger group of MWDs and handlers that MWD TSA has previously supported. Here are some of the photos and notes received in reply.

Right: Gloria Greenidge: I want to thank the Military Working Dog Team Support Association from the Bottom of my Heart.. You have supported my K9 Deployments. America needs to know NON PROFIT Organizations such as yours exists, supporting the needs of MWDS and Handlers in the most remote parts of the world! All in the name of FREEDOM! Your wonderful group never forgot about the ones Retired from duty or Resting and watching from Above... Ret. MWD Max F466 and I, sincerely Want to Thank Everyone Involved in MWD TSA with much love and respect!!!



Above: Lucy and her Honor 13 package.

Right: Isaac Lee Trevino: Uno and I would like to thank everyone involved for sending this package! Thanks for thinking of him and honoring his service. It means so much to me and he is really enjoying all the great gifts.



Left: Jalk figured out his new toys in no time.

‘Top Dog’ Donations

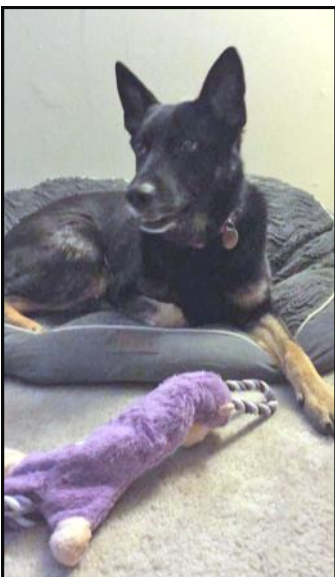
“Top Dog: The Story of Marine Hero Lucca”, written by New York Times bestselling author Maria Goodavage, tells the story of Lucca, a German Shepherd whose career as a MWD lasted through 400 missions in Iraq and Afghanistan. Lucca received a purple heart after being severely injured by an improvised explosive device. MWDTSA donated copies of the book to public libraries in communities represented by our volunteers.



Left: The branch manager of the Hickory Flat, GA Library, Rhonda Broome, accepts a copy of "Top Dog" from Linda Standard on March 9, 2015.



Right: Carol Forsberg (Centre) made a donation of 'Top Dog' on behalf of MWDTSA to a library in Dallas, Oregon. SSD handler Kory Wiens', who was a very close friend of Chris Willingham, Lucca's handler, had family living in the area. Kory and his forever partner, Cooper, were KIA together. Kory's father, Kevin Wiens (Right) attended the donation wearing Kory's K9 cap.



Left: Zita also appreciated one of the new toys.

Below: Grek posed for a portrait with contents from the Honor 13 care package.



Honor 13 continued from page 7

Alabama War Dog Memorial

By Sara Matlack

On Veteran's day, November of 2008 over a hundred people, alongside a dozen Handler Veterans and two current Military Working Dog teams from the Pensacola Naval Air Station attended a ceremony at the USS Alabama Battleship Memorial Park, Mobile, Alabama, for the dedication and unveiling of the Alabama War Dog Memorial, which was designed as a tribute to all war dogs past and present, and their handlers.

The main part of the monument is comprised of a four-ton granite slab surmounted by statues representing a war dog team including MWD, Little Joe, his handler, Charles Wade Franks, and other combat patrol riflemen. The scene is titled "The Alert" and represents a war dog team on point; the depicted dog is catching scent, the dog-handler is behind the dog watching for the alert, followed by a kneeling man whose job it is to protect the dog-team and to pass the word along to the troops behind.

At the dedication ceremony, Charles Wade Franks spoke of Little Joe, and how he gave his life protecting soldiers in Vietnam in February of 1970.

In the front of the monument is another black marble stone bearing two sets of prints. One set is a pair of boot prints from the Vietnam era boots belonging to John Burnam, President of the National War Dog Memorial Organization. The other set of prints are paw prints representing the Military Working Dog. This part of the memorial is entitled 'On Point' and is designed to allow the visitor to stand 'on point' in the boot prints.

The main tribute, donor list, and war dog and handlers plaques finish off the memorial.

On the sides of the monument, there are two engraved black marble stones. One lists the names of AWDM Board Members and Advisors, in honor of the people who made the memorial possible. On the back is a stone panel that honors the names of Alabamian Handlers and Working Dogs who saved countless lives.

On the front of the monument, there is an inscription to 'An Unheralded Breed of Soldier' that reads:
"LET ALL WHO READ THESE WORDS OF GRATITUDE AND PRAISE KNOW THAT TENS OF THOUSANDS OF AMERICA'S FIGHTING MEN AND WOMEN OWE THEIR LIVES TO THE DEEDS AND COURAGE OF WAR DOGS AND THEIR HANDLERS, FURTHER, LET IT BE KNOWN THAT MANY BREEDS OF DOGS, LARGE AND SMALL, SERVED OUR NATION IN TIMES OF WAR, ALL GOING



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Alabama War Dog Memorial continued from page 9

INTO HARM'S WAY WITH DISTINCTION AND VALOR – UNHESITATING.

LET US NOT FORGET THESE UNSUNG HEROES ARE SOLDIERS, TOO! THESE VALIANT DOGS PROTECT OUR MILITARY MEN AND WOMEN THROUGH COUNTLESS PERILS, GIVE COMFORT IN UNCERTAINTY, AND SHARE THE SUFFERING AND THE RISKS IN THE TIME OF WAR. OVER THE DECADES, MANY OF THESE DOGS HAVE MADE THE SUPREME SACRIFICE, GIVING THEIR OWN LIVES TO SHIELD OUR ARMED FORCES AND MILITARY ASSETS FROM HOSTILE ACTS. CANINES IN THE ARMED FORCES CONTINUE THAT NOBLE TRADITION AROUND THE WORLD TODAY.

THIS MONUMENT IS DEDICATED BY THE PATRIOTIC PEOPLE OF ALABAMA FOR ALL TO BEAR WITNESS IN REMEMBRANCE TO THESE FAITHFUL WAR DOGS AND THEIR ALABAMA HANDLERS. THOSE WHO LEAVE THIS PLACE SHOULD REMEMBER THE DEEDS AND SACRIFICES OF THESE FOUR-LEGGED SOLDIERS. FURTHERMORE, SEE IN EVERY DOG, THE UNCONDITIONAL LOYALTY INHERENT IN WAR DOGS AND GLIMPSE A REFLECTION OF THEIR SOLDIER-BROTHERS HEROIC ACTIONS. THESE TEAMS UNHESITATINGLY FIGHT FOR RIGHT AND FOR OUR NATION'S FREEDOMS. LEST WE FORGET, WE SHOULD HOLD THEM DEAR IN OUR HEARTS AND HONOR THEIR COURAGE."

This memorial serves to honor and recognize the "dogs and their handlers who have faithfully served and continue to protect the men and women in our nation's armed forces."

For more information:

<http://366thspk-9.com/Alabama%20War%20Dogs/AWD.htm>



Tried Anyway

by Michael Hurder

"Michael's writing is vivid and visceral. With it, MWDTSA would like to give recognition to the Vietnam veteran dog handlers, many who still hurt from the war itself, but also from inexcusable treatment they received from some of their fellow citizens on their return home.

As our co-founder, a Vietnam era commander, stated: "Never again..." This is why we exist. Please enjoy Michael's work.

It took the rest of the day to get to Boston and it was nearly 7pm when I found myself standing outside of South Station wondering what the hell I was going to do then. I thought of going to Chelsea Naval Hospital and begging for a room. I thought of finding a cheap hotel. I thought I might just stay there at the station and see what happened. I almost got back on the bus and headed back to Ft Devens when a wild idea crossed my mind.

I decided to go home. Mom and Dad had to take me in didn't they? They wouldn't actually turn me away would they? I didn't know, but I slung my duffle over my shoulder and found my way to the local train that would bring me close enough to catch a bus the rest of the way.

The bus stop is less than a block from my house. I could see it. It looked so small. And it looked so terrifying. It took me almost an hour to work up the courage to just move from the bus stop. I just sat on the curb shaking and scared to death of what would happen to me next. After the 3rd bus stopped to pick me up because I was sitting at the bus stop, I finally got up and moved down the street towards home. I got to the front steps and froze. The woman who lived upstairs came out just then and was spooked until she recognized me.

"Oh. Hi Myko. I thought you wouldn't be...oh, never mind. It's so nice to see you again." Then she was off like a racehorse down the steps, out the gate and near flying down the sidewalk. WTF, over?

She had distracted me enough so that I instinctively reached for the door handle and turned it. It was locked, of course. No one leaves their door open in this town anymore. Feeling very strange having to knock on my own front door, I did anyway and waited for what seemed a lifetime for someone to answer. That someone was my dad.

At first he just stared. He commented, "Well, you couldn't do that right either could you?"

"What?" I asked. "Do what right?"

Then he hesitantly asked if I was expecting to come in. I looked plaintively at him and said, "Dad, I have nowhere else to go right now."

"What about your wife? What about the Army?"

"She's gone and I'm on leave until I get discharged next month"

"Don't think you can get away with anything here boy. I'll kill you myself before you harm your mother. Do you hear me?"

I said, "What are you talking about? Why would I hurt mom? Jesus, dad, you can't really believe the lies they are saying about us do you?"

"I'm tellin' ya. Don't mess with me boy."

I opened my duffle, grabbed some cigarettes, my K-bar, a change of underwear and socks and started to walk away when he said, "What do you want me to do with this junk?"

I turned back to him and approached him with rage in my heart but instead of lashing out I reached into the duffle once more, pulled out my discharge and medals, shoved them into his hands and said, "Here. I earned these for you since you couldn't do it yourself. You can shove these and the duffle up your ignorant drunken ass old man."

I left with tears in my eyes. About a block away I heard my mom shouting my name and cussing my father out like I've never heard her do before. I wanted to turn around and run back to her arms, but I

didn't. I just kept walking. I walked for hours through the worst parts of the city without a care. I ended up back downtown; a good 10 miles from my house. I couldn't think and I couldn't bring myself to face people so I found an isolated part of the Boston Commons and claimed a bench for my own. I eventually fell asleep and woke up to a cop telling me I had to move on the next morning. I had blissfully, on a hard slatted park bench, slept through the night.

I wandered the city aimlessly and found myself back at the same bench later that night. The routine was the same every day for a week. I ate sparingly but really had no appetite. Thankfully it was still autumn so the nights were warm. I knew I couldn't do this forever, so I made my way to the bus terminal and back out to Ft Devens, where I begged for a place to stay. They put me up in a holding company and since my arm was still in a sling they left me alone with no duties. This only served to speed up the discharge process. The Army, it seemed, couldn't wait to be rid of me either.

Surprisingly, they gave me an honorable discharge and directed me to the Jamaica Plain VA hospital for follow up treatments, whatever that meant.

The short conversation with my Dad ended with the most horrible thing I could possibly have done to my father. I can only imagine the pain my statement caused. I did get to say I was sorry a few months later after he and my brother came with the VA ambulance to rescue me from the Boston Commons and the winter's cold. I don't think it made him feel any better though. I was turning into the bitter asshole he had been for all those years.

Sit. Stay. Support.

MWDTSA
P. O. Box 5864
Canton, GA 30114
Editor: Avril Roy-Smith

Phone: 404-451-2539
Email: info@mwdtسا.org



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From the Archives

Scout Dogs: Some MWD are trained to locate booby traps and concealed enemies such as snipers. The best scout dogs are described having a temperament somewhere between tracking dogs and attack dogs.

Scout dogs were used in World War II, Korea, and Vietnam by the United States to detect ambushes, weapon caches, or enemy fighters in hiding. The US operated a number of scout dog platoons who were assigned on a handler and MWD team to individual patrols.

Right: SP4 Bealock and scout dog Chief, a German Shepherd, on patrol in Vietnam

Photo courtesy of the US Army.

(Source: RG123S, Vietnam Photos Miscellaneous Collection).

