

January 2015
Award Winning
Monthly Newsletter

Volume 7, Issue 1

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the photos, stories, news
and highlights of 2014!

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
reports stretch from
coast to coast once
again: from North Caro-
lina to Texas and on to
California. History
takes us back to Viet-
nam and our Archive
photo is from Alaska
taken in 1945.

Subscribe to see where
we connect next month!

Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

MWDTSA KENNEL TALK



Above: Jan Slotar pictures herself as a MWDTSA volunteer. Our new Treasurer has been involved in many volunteer activities, including whipping up large quantities of very cool football bandanas on her sewing machine for our Super-Bowl in a Box.

Picture Yourself as a MWDTSA Volunteer: New Year~New You

By Dixie Whitman

Volunteers are how we roll. Would you like to get involved but don't know how? Let us show you how easy it can be to become part of our MWDTSA Team and why it may be just the thing for you.

As an all volunteer organization, volunteers are the lifblood of everything we do. That means that each individual who volunteers with MWDTSA contributes to the support we provide to our military working dog teams.

Each year, we successfully ship care packages, complete base visits and recognition events, educate the general public and advocate on behalf of retired dogs.

The help you supply is vital. It is real, tangible, and relied upon to help us reach and exceed our goals. Join our dynamic national network of volunteers who donate their time and talent to MWDTSA. Most of our volunteer efforts are virtual, which means you can join

Picture Yourself continued on page 2

www.mwdtsa.org

Picture Yourself continued from page 1

us from anywhere in the country and make a real contribution toward furthering our goals. We couldn't do what we do without dedicated, hard-working, enthusiastic volunteers like you. But, what's in it for you?

It's rewarding. Find Meaning and Purpose at Any Age: Sharing what you've learned with others can be a rewarding opportunity to give back. It's a way to show the troops that you support them.

It's good for your health: mental and physical. Experience Improved Health and Well-being: Many people who volunteer say that helping others gives them a good feeling inside. There seems to be an actual physical sensation that occurs when people help others that make them experience greater energy and strength, less depression and increased feelings of self-worth.

It's fun, and makes you reinvent yourself. Make New Friends and Improve Your Mind: you'll be meeting and working with people from across the country and varied backgrounds. If you had told me before I started that I'd have learned how to write press releases, communicated with some of the individuals that I have at various levels of the government and made as many friends from all across the military, I would not have believed you. It's been a blast. Step into our world.

Current Volunteer Needs

We have a unique and varied need of volunteer work, but we are always looking for motivated volunteers filled with energy and ideas. We could use some help in the following areas:

- Solicitation of donations for care packages
- Dog Tagz Online Store Developer/Manager
- Photography/Videography
- Writer/Editor—Stories and Articles for newsletter and online
- Social Media Mogul: Facebook and Twitter
- In Kind Donation Solicitations
- Artwork/Graphic Design/T Shirt design and sales
- Fund Raising
- Volunteer Coordination and Management
- Grant writing and much, much more.

We are a small, but mighty non-profit so every ounce of energy is important; know that you can make a powerful difference. When it comes to volunteering, passion and positivity are the only requirements.

Stop by our Volunteer Central Page for more information or to send in a volunteer application:

<http://www.mwdtsa.org/volunteer.html>

Thanks and we look forward to welcoming you to the MWD TSA Volunteer Family.



Top: SeDonna completes customs paperwork in order to get the boxes shipped.

Above: Long time MWD TSA volunteer, Jerry, watches a presentation during a kennel visit.

Below: Julie Phye, owner of Leash on Life, in Iowa City poses with Rita Richardson and the donations collected during the KONGs for K9s event.



Picture Yourself continued on page 3

Picture Yourself continued from page 2



Left: Help coordinate and attend events. Be our face.

Right: Isaac, Rachael and Carla help pack summer boxes.



Left: Dick Baumer tests products on his pal, Brutus. Dick does a brilliant job of solicitation of items for our care packages.



Above: Right: Creating, managing a fundraiser like this Poinsettia fundraiser by Allison.

Above: Courtney has designed, modeled and folded t-shirts for many years.

Right: Courtney also helps pack at one of the care packs.

Left: Nikki shows the banner she uses at public education events. She also manages our Twitter account.



Meeting “Miss Lucca”

By Jan Slotar



Above (Left to Right): GYSGT Willingham and Lucca K458, LCPL Goddard, LCPL Partida, CPL Clemans, SGT Johnson, CPL Kosiara, LCPL Fuerteluna, LCPL Rea, CPL Gardea.

On Oct. 29, 2014, Dick Baumer and I, as representatives of Military Working Dog Team Support Association, visited the Military Working Dog Kennels at Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, located in Southern California, near Oceanside. At approximately 125,000 acres, Camp Pendleton is the largest Marine Corps training facility on the west coast.

We were headed to Camp Pendleton to visit the kennels and meet the Marine MWD teams stationed there, but especially to visit with retired MWD Lucca K458, who was adopted by Gunnery Sergeant Chris Willingham, her first handler in the Corps. GYSGT Willingham was recently assigned as the I Marine Expeditionary Force K-9 Kennel Master for the second time in his career.

Lucca, a Shepherd/Belgian Malinois mix and former SSD (Specialized Search Dog), was trained to find explosives off leash by walking point for supported units. The

MWD TSA supported her during her deployments in Iraq in 2007 and 2008/09, and also in Afghanistan in 2012. Lucca led over 400 combat patrols.

The story of her career on active duty, her wounding in Afghanistan, and eventual retirement and adoption in 2012, is the subject of a new book just published in hard cover by Dutton. *Top Dog: The Story of Marine Hero Lucca* by Maria Goodavage. The book chronicles her 6 years as a Marine and the hundreds of lives she saved due to her skill and training. It also reveals the close bonds forged by these MWDs and their handlers, between handlers, and even the soldiers of the units they supported. Depending upon your disposition, you may need several tissues, but it's worth every one.

When we arrived at the kennels, we were met by “Gunny” Willingham, Lucca and the handlers. After introductions, our first order of business was lunch, which we deliv-

ered to the handlers. We brought Kong toys and footballs for all of the dogs, bags of Natural Balance dog treats, and TurboPup K-9 Meal Bars. For the handlers, we passed out MWD TSA t-shirts, as well as Halloween treat bags—no “pogey bait”, just wholesome energy bars.

Lucca was there to greet us, showing off her diplomatic and hosting skills by trying to greet everyone at once. She is simply a sweetheart of a girl, friendly, outgoing and very interested in everything that we were doing in the kennel office, but especially interested in the pizzas on the table.

She was also trying out her skills of persuasion, by trying to get one of the handlers, LCPL Goddard, to share the dog toy in her pocket. By persuasion, I mean bumping the pocket with her nose, trying to get the toy out of the pocket herself, and when that didn't work, sitting down and looking up at L.Cpl. Goddard with a very sad and mournful expression. She

Meeting Miss Lucca continued from page 4

had this "look" on her face that started at her quivering nose, and extended up to her puppy-dog eyes and eyebrows. Isn't it amazing what the combination of sad but hopeful eyes and strategically moving eyebrows can do to you? With that face she was eventually rewarded with a new Kong toy, which she proudly displayed to everyone.

After meeting Lucca, MWD TSA 2nd VP Dick Baumer, (a retired U.S. Army Colonel and Combat Tracker Team Vietnam veteran) had the honor of presenting Lucca with a numbered MWD TSA Challenge Coin and Certificate of Appreciation for her outstanding and devoted service to our country.

We were then treated to demos by some of the teams who weren't out in the field training that day. PEDD (Patrol Explosives Detector Dog), Denny, a Belgian Malinois, and his handler LCPL Goddard, demonstrated

some pretty amazing bite work on decoy CPL Clemans, who was wearing a padded sleeve. Next up was SSD (Specialized Search Dog) Gus, a Black Labrador, and his handler CPL Gardea, who demonstrated off leash obedience, off leash detection for a previously planted, simulated explosive device, and then a circuit on the agility equipment. The dogs were absolutely amazing, and we were clearly able to see the bond between the dogs and handlers. The pride of the handlers with their dogs work was obvious and gratifying.

We had a great time meeting everyone and sharing dog stories. We would like to thank Marine Corps Base Camp Pendleton, Miss Lucca, GYSGT Willingham, and all of the handlers and dogs for their very kind hospitality, and their service to our country. You are all very much appreciated.



Above: Dick Baumer presented GYSGT Willingham with the numbered MWD TSA Challenge Coin and Certificate of Appreciation awarded to Lucca K458.



The first part of the demonstration was bite work.

Above: Denny 'finds' decoy CPL Clemans.

Left: Denny's handler, LCPL Goddard, releases the MWD.



Left: The second part of the demonstration was obedience, detection and agility. CPL Gardea took Gus through the agility course.



Left (Left to Right): Dick Baumer, CPL Gardea and MWD Gus.

Right: LCPL Goddard and MWD Denny.



Visual Tracker Team Memories

By Bob Hughes



During the Vietnam War, The US found itself in a type of warfare that hadn't been used in combat since the Indian wars and our revolutionary war for independence. It was during these conflicts that we first became familiar with hit and run tactics. In Vietnam, our enemy was on his home ground and used these same elusive guerilla tactics to combat our better-armed and equipped forces. To help combat these jungle maneuvers, the Army deployed a new type of team. This was the Combat Tracker Team. The following comments reflect on a trackers first meeting of his team's dog and handler.

When I think back to my days as a member of a visual tracker team, one of the things that stands out immediately is our tracker dog. When I arrived at our unit in Vietnam, one of the first things to happen was to go down and meet all the dogs in the unit. During this initial meeting, I was introduced to a Black Lab named "Ince" and his handler. Together they would be

making our teams K9 component.

Our unit (platoon) consisted of Mine dog teams, Tunnel dog teams, Scout dog teams, and Tracker teams, which included a tracker dog and handler. Our team's dog was a 12 year old black lab. He had been trained at the BJWS (British Jungle Warfare School) and when I arrived, he had already been in country a long time. He never got R&R or leave time. Once his handler finished his tour he was assigned a new handler and continued his work. Of all the dogs in our kennel, Ince was by far the skinniest, the oldest, and the only dog lounging around. All the other dogs seemed more than alert, while Ince didn't seem to have a care in the world.

Our team began to immediately question the handler, as we were all concerned about Ince's ability and willingness to handle his portion of our team assignment. We were assured by the handler that we were in good hands. At which

point it was time for the dogs to begin their daily training, which included the confidence course. While the other dog handlers shuffled around the course encouraging their dogs to perform the task required to successfully complete each obstacle, it was with much apprehension that we looked on when it was Ince's turn. Our handler simply unleashed him, gave one simple command and we all watched in awe as he completed each obstacle with record- breaking speed and agility. Once done with his exercise his handler simply released him and returned him to his kennel. He immediately settled down for a snooze. Needless to say, we were more than impressed after that initial meeting of our team's tracker dog and handler. We had a totally new understanding that we had the best and smartest tracker dog possible. That understanding was proven to be correct over and over during our tour. We truly were the luckiest team to have Ince.

Fairchild AFB War Dog Memorial

By Sara Matlack

Fairchild Air Force Base is located about 12 miles from Spokane, Washington. It was established in 1942 as Spokane Air Depot, and named after a World War One aviator, General Muir S. Fairchild.

The host unit at Fairchild AFB is the 92nd Air Refueling Wing, assigned to the Air Mobility Command Eighteenth Air Force. Among other missions, the 92 AFW is responsible for providing air refueling, passenger and air cargo airlift, and aero-medical evacuation missions. There are a number of other units on Fairchild AFB including Washington Air National Guard units.

Dedicated by TSgt Brey and SSgt Strickland in 1984, the Military Working Dog Memorial located on the Fairchild AFB Kennel Facility stands as a reminder for those Military Working Dogs who lost their lives while protecting soldiers at duty stations all over the world. This memorial statue portrays one of the most well-known Military Working Dogs: Nemo.

Nemo was a Military Working Dog assigned to Fairchild AFB in the 1960's. His handler and he were transferred to Vietnam in 1966.

The Viet Cong attacked where they were stationed later that same year. During the aftermath of the initial attack Nemo alerted his handler to other Viet Cong's that were still in hiding and was released to attack. He and his handler were both injured, Nemo losing an eye.

Regarded as a hero for having saved his handler's life and preventing further injuries to other soldiers he was "the first sentry dog officially retired from active service" ("Sentry Dog Nemo") in June of 1967. He had permanent residence at the Department of Defense Dog Center and was taken on tours to gather other commendable dogs for military service until his death, from natural causes, in 1973.

This memorial stands in honor of Nemo and Military Working Dogs who made the ultimate sacrifice. It is because of this honor that, throughout the years, rumors have come to exist that ashes from deceased Military Working Dogs have been spread around the memorial.



Right: MWD Leona (Ret.) poses next to the Fairchild AFB War Dog Memorial. Leona looks like she could have been a model for the statue on top of the monument. The statue is a tribute to Sentry Dog Nemo, a Vietnam War hero, and the first sentry dog to be officially retired from active service.

Top Right (3) photos: These courtesy photos are of MWDs Helena, Schark and Utah, who were all stationed at Fairchild AFB during their active duty.



Seymour Johnson AFB Visit

by Dixie Whitman



MWD TSA paid a visit to Seymour Johnson AFB and brought with us some requested toys (plus a few more things). Toys are more than just play for Military Working Dogs, they are one of the reasons military working dogs work as hard as they do. MWD Gina (above) was over-the-moon excited with all of her new toys and she wasn't about to share any of them with her handler either.

Seymour Johnson AFB, NC

MWD TSA enjoys the opportunity to visit base kennels when we can make connections with handlers in person, to share the respect and admiration that our supporters have for the job that is done and to give concrete assistance in the form of dog toys and other goodies that will both support the kennels and serve as a morale booster.

Our recent trip to Seymour Johnson (SJAFB), a small Air Force base in the eastern North Carolina city of Goldsboro, was a great opportunity to do all of that and more. The mission at Seymour Johnson is Dominant Strike Eagle Airpower...Anytime, Anyplace.

Included at SJAFB is the 4th Fighter Wing, one of the most revered fighter units in the world. Spanning more than fifty years and five wars, the 4th Fighter Wing has

the distinction of being one of only two Air Force units that can trace its history to another country. In addition, the base also serves as home to the 916th Air Refueling Wing and, most importantly, to MWD TSA, it is home to the 4th Security Forces Squadron, Military Working Dog Section.

Attending the event were three MWD TSA volunteers, two supporters and a Vietnam Combat Tracker Veteran from the 63rd Combat Tracker Team. The day was dreary outside with pouring rain and while it did put a crink in the level of demonstrations that were able to be completed, it certainly did not put a damper on the day.

The morning started with not only all around introductions, but some great reunions. Doug Harriman, one of the handlers that we first met about ten years ago at Moody AFB has now moved upward

and onward and was at the kennels to greet us, alongside the departing Kennel Master, Benjamin Seekel.

The new Kennel Master, TSgt Forrest George, gave us a tour of the kennels with a chance to learn about each of the dogs at Seymour Johnson.

We then gathered in the office space and shared some great toys with the team. The best reaction came from MWD Gina, who proves that a girl can never have too many toys. She stuffed her mouth with two toys and, although she couldn't really hold any more, it was evident she wanted to pick up the Chuck It Balls bouncing her direction. Instead, she refused to release her hold on what she already had. I suspected Gina is not one to quickly give up on anything. That was later shown to be true when she latched on to former KM, Benjamin Seekel, in a demonstration and ultimately, he gave her the sleeve so

he could keep his arm.

Following the presentation of gifts and a very cool challenge coin given to all attendees by the Kennel Master, we all went to a local restaurant for about three hours of conversation, experience sharing and camaraderie. It was a great opportunity to spend some time with old friends and meet great young handlers. Thanks, Seymour Johnson, it was a blast.

Top right and second: TSgt Seekel catches Gina after her launch and ultimately MWD Gina gets the sleeve as her prize.

Right center: Robert Hughes, 63rd Combat Trackers, with members of the Seymour Johnson kennels.

Bottom right: Kennel Master, TSgt Forrest George, spends some special time with MWD Ralph.



Above: Super Volunteer, Nikki Rohrig, enjoys meeting her first military working dog, Ralph.



Military Dog Handlers Participate in Validation Exercise

Story and photos by Sgt. Brandon Anderson

FORT HOOD, Texas - Nine military working dog handlers and their K9 companions of the 89th Military Police Brigade participated in a validation exercise to test their ability to work as a team.

The teams conduct the exercise every 90 days to ensure they can perform at the highest level, whether they are drug detection or explosive detection teams.

Staff Sgt. Joshua Miller, the senior dog trainer for the 89th Military Police Brigade, said the exercise tests the team's ability to find hidden explosives and drugs as well as revealing to the handler their strengths and weaknesses.

"Validation is required quarterly and is also required before the teams can become certified," said Miller. "This exercise is meant to mirror the certification, and includes elements of obedience, patrol, apprehension and detection."

The teams are required to identify 20 different training aids, and can only miss one to meet the standard.

For the first day's portion of the detection training the teams met at Howze Theater, they were tasked with conducting an explosives and drugs sweep. The theater replicated operations conducted by the teams during events like a dignitary visit, or a large gathering of service members.

"In the case of the president of the United States or any other high ranking individual coming to interact with the Soldiers, we would conduct a sweep of the venue to ensure there isn't anything that can harm that individual," said Miller.

Emphasizing the importance of the exercise, Miller said teams that cannot pass validation will not be allowed to become certified, and will have to undergo additional training until they can meet the standard.

One team participating in the exercise, Staff Sgt. Richard Morrison and his partner Amy, have recently redeployed from a mission to Afghanistan, and witnessed the benefits of this training.

"On our deployment we were responsible for route clearing, the clearing of buildings and checking all vehicles coming on and going off of our installation," said Morrison. During one of these route-clearing missions Amy was able to identify an improvised explosive device which allowed it to be disposed of before anyone could get injured."

Morrison said the biggest benefit of this exercise is it allows the handler to assess their team's ability to work together.

"In this theater we have to sort through a large space filled with seats and possible hiding places for explosives to be planted, and if the handler and the dog can't work well together then there's a

huge chance something could be missed," said Morrison.

Morrison said understanding the cues the dog gives is what makes or breaks a team.

"Every good handler knows what his dog is trying to tell him or her," said Morrison. "It's being in synch with your dog that determines the success of this training."

As the senior trainer, Miller said he believes the training the teams are receiving will set them up for success for the upcoming certification or whatever the teams may encounter in the future.

"I have full faith and confidence in the abilities of our teams to handle this or any exercise they're faced with," said Miller.

The exercise will continue throughout the week, and will be followed by a certification conducted by the FORSCOM Military Working Dog Program Manager later this year.



Above: Rex, the K9 partner of Spc. John Lawrence, receives his favorite toy as a reward. Below: During the obedience portion of the exercise, Rex and John show their coordination on the obstacle course.



MWD TSA Thanks Our Recent Donors

MWD TSA 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:

Allison Merrill

Animal Hospital of Thousand Oaks, Thousand Oaks, CA

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Assaria Lions Club, Assaria, KS

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Jody Ayers

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Victor Dog Food, Mt. Pleasant, TX

Wayne and Terry Carter in Memory of Anna R. Elliott

Wet Noses, Monroe, WA

Zazzy Z's, Abingdon, VA

MWD TSA Welcomes New Board Member

Military Working Dog Team Support Assoc. is happy to welcome Jan Slotar to the MWD TSA Board of Directors. She will be filling the position of Treasurer. Jan is a long time, and very active MWD TSA volunteer.



My name is Jan Slotar and I live in Camarillo, Calif., along with my husband, 2 Siberians, a Malamute, and my Paint mare. I am a volunteer with CERT Camarillo, the American Red Cross, and a volunteer photographer with the National Disaster Search Dog Foundation. I am also a 4-H Leader, and I lead projects in Dog Knowledge, Jewelry, Honey Bees, and Photography.

I have been a volunteer with MWD TSA for about 1-1/2 years, and I decided to volunteer for a variety of reasons. First of all, my love of dogs, further reinforced when I watched Lucca K458, GySgt Chris Willingham, and Cpl Juan Rodriguez, riding on the War Dogs Memorial Float in the 2013 Pasadena Rose Parade. What really "pushed" me to volunteer, were the documentaries, War Dogs America's Forgotten Heroes, War Dogs of the Pacific, and Glory Hounds. I'm happy to help out in any way I can, whether it's manning a booth for public education and awareness, helping out with requests for donated items, packing care packages, or making bandanas for the dogs.

Sit. Stay. Support.

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From the Archives

A team of military working dogs rests outside a Douglas C-47 Skytrain circa 1945 at Ladd Field, Fairbanks, Alaska. (Photo courtesy of University of Alaska, Fairbanks, archives via Eielson AFB Public Affairs) .

"In the not-so-distant past, Alaska boasted the only military working dogs in the whole of the U.S. military. In his book "War Dogs," author Michael Lemish shares that at the beginning of World War II, there were only about 50 military working dogs and they were all sled dogs in Alaska.

The use of dogs in Alaska is not a new concept. Author David Anderson said, "In interior Alaska, the history of dog team use ... can be traced to the contact period 150 years ago and before." He goes on to say dogs were used for a multitude of activities, including military applications such as exploration, accomplished primarily by the Army."

Jack Waid
354th Fighter Wing Historian via Eielson AFB Public Affairs

