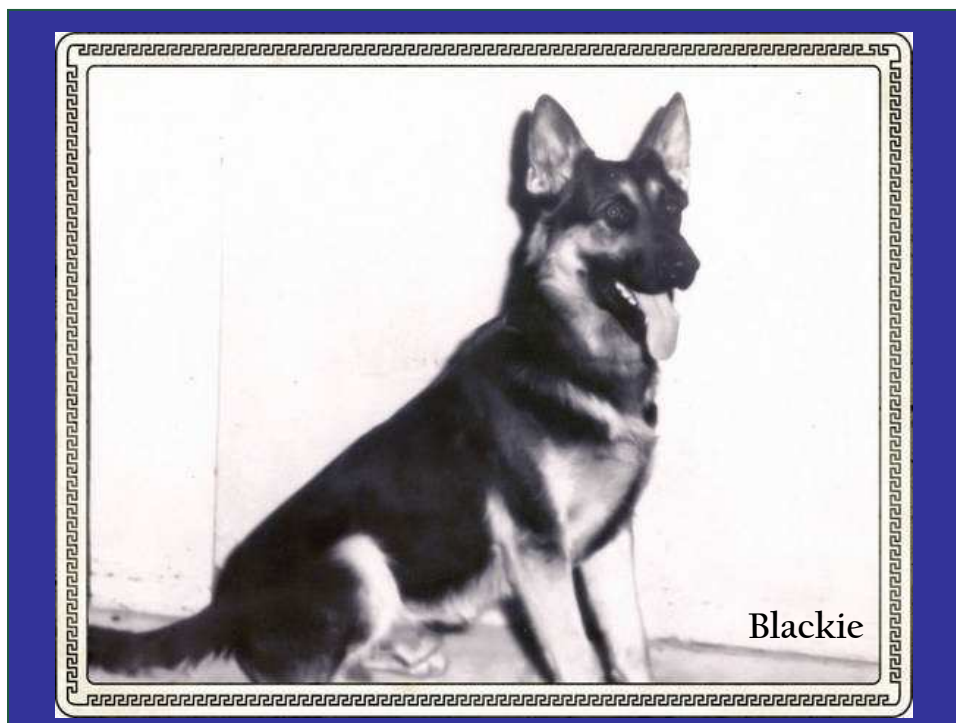




## *Gifts Beyond All Measure*



Support MWD TSA now and you won't miss any of the photos, stories, news and highlights of 2012!

Kennel Talk is now an award winning MWD publication!

Inside this **EXPANDED** Issue:

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Photo Page 10



Super Bowl XLVI will take place February 5th in Indianapolis, Indiana. MWD TSA will be sending "Super Bowl In A Box" care packages to newly deployed handlers. Join the fun! Donate a KONG air football or funds for Super Bowl snacks.



## *Nam Dogs: A Remembrance*

By Sondra Abarr

When Dixie asked me to write about my experiences and recollections of donating my dogs for the military in Viet Nam my mind immediately flashed back to terrible, guilty feelings that apparently have resided in my heart and soul all these years. Suddenly, I felt a surge of angry and painful emotions that had been buried for what seems a lifetime. I felt ashamed after the war ended because I knew I had willingly, although unknowingly, sent my dogs to their certain deaths. I felt ANGRY because my government killed my dogs (those that managed to

survive, if any). How Dare They Kill My Dogs???? The military let my, OUR, HEROES die. Euthanizing our heroes because it was too much trouble or expense to bring them home is simply unforgivable! This is how they repaid those magnificent dogs for their valiant and honorable service to their country? This is how they repaid me, a patriot willing to give her children (they were my children to me) to the service of my country because I, myself, could not serve? I felt utterly betrayed then and I still do now. I had

expected my dogs that survived the brutality of war would come home to a rewarding life spent with a loving family. The tears still flow quite freely.

Wow, all these negative emotions are all stirred up again. If I still feel this strongly, is it any wonder that our Viet Nam veterans have, and are, still having such a struggle to build a life after Viet Nam? I wasn't anxious to fulfill Dixie's request because I have spent a life time, it seems, trying to bury all the emotions surrounding these events, as have many others.

Continued on page 4

# Walking Where the Dog Walks

*A book by Toni Gardner*



**Larry Proper and Fellow OK88 pose for a photo taken in the Ashau Valley in Vietnam during his tour 1968-1969. Larry along with several other handlers and staff of the 47th IPSD were featured in Toni Gardner's book, Walking Where the Dog Walks.**

**Excerpts from her book are below. The space we have available is insufficient to explain the bond between a handler and his dog; a dog exactly like the dogs that Sondra Abarr donated. There are probably not enough words in a dictionary to describe the depth of that relationship.**

**If interested in purchasing Toni's book, please see her website at:**

**<http://www.deadbeecollector.com/deadbeecollector.com/WWTDW.html>**

As Toni's book begins, an Army infantry unit out on patrol in the northern quadrant of Vietnam, somewhere near the ancient capital city of Hue, suffers losses from explosions and realizes they are in imminent danger; out there somewhere are mines, mines they cannot see, but which have already caused death to their brother infantrymen.

"This unit was working north-east of Hue, along the coast in I Corps, one of the four Corps Tactical Zones that the U.S. military had decided comprised South Vietnam for purposes of planning and strategy. And now it found itself bound in by mines, held prisoner by earth-covered or brush-concealed bundles of shredded metal and slivered glass and explosives that could decimate a foot, a leg, an abdomen—for they were often aimed for the U.S.-height

groin—and annihilate a life. They had gone out there and they had found themselves in the middle of a spider's web of explosives, unable to go forward or even to retreat. Already two men were down and the lieutenant wouldn't risk another.

So they called for a dog team."

At Landing Zone Sally, home base of the 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog, Jonathan Wahl, the platoon clerk, receives a request for a dog team. Next team up on the board is Larry Proper and his Scout Dog, Fellow OK88. As they head out to the field, Toni shares a bit more background about the team itself.

"Training had been one thing. There they'd mastered the mechanics together and become a friendly team, buddies.

But once they'd arrived in-country, the bar had been raised, and suddenly there the mutual trust expanded into a palpable energy. Trust took on a surprising magnificence: the closeness they developed with their dogs affected the men; it elevated them, comforted and strengthened them. They were unto themselves, their own unit of two, always together in a place where a person could be terrifyingly alone.

From the rear, Proper and Fellow advanced together with the energy that existed between them, a confluence of skill and intelligence, energy, affection, and trust. They paced each step, deliberately and slowly, along the trail—Proper ducking the brush but not looking at it, only watching his dog; Fellow in a hyperfocus, all distractions tuned out, knowing this job must be perfectly executed, and

knowing why.

Did he do it for survival, for the game, or to please Proper? Looking at it another way, was he absorbing all he'd been taught, targeting his mind, releasing the power of his natural senses—smell, hearing, sight, and perhaps another or so that we've not yet been able to measure—did he knit all these parts of himself together and transcend being a dog to become a dog-man force, attuned to itself and to all that surrounded it, so the work of the mission was not for this person or that game but altogether the purpose of existence?

If you can believe that people give off an energy—by scent or pheromone—that can be detected by animals, and that fear is probably the easiest to detect, you can believe that the dog absorbed the fear-electricity that surrounded each man. But he was undeterred



[www.mwdtsa.org](http://www.mwdtsa.org)

"All photos were used with permission from the website of the 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog" [www.47ipsd.us](http://www.47ipsd.us)."

by it or maybe energized by it, his senses now heightened even beyond their already exquisite powers.

With his nose to the trail, he moved with slow steps, unhurried, completely in and of the moment and not projecting calling on his intellect, his instinct, his senses, his training, his bond to Proper. And sometimes the steps would ease into a lower gear, his legs stiffening ever so slightly, and the shoulders tightening as he lowered his body; then he would loosen the tenseness and move on, more smoothly now, past or around a something that seemed wrong to him.

One by one he reached and then

moved past the men, and each time Proper signaled them to follow, reminding them, "Walk where the dog walks. Exactly in his steps and in my steps." And each man in his turn gave over his trust to the dog and the man, seeing that Proper and the dog were moving in perfect unison and in safety. One by one Proper passed them, each step in the step of the dog. One by one they fell in behind him, also in the same steps, until at last the relative safety of their destination of the rice fields appeared, not three hundred feet away. Oblivious to the heat, and with those achingly deliberate steps, the sometimes poised foot and sometimes walking

off the trail and into the stinging brush, all of them, from the rear to the front, were led out of the area without a single casualty."

Without a single casualty. Those words echo over and over again from Vietnam. It is generally recognized that approximately 10,000 American lives were saved by the use of dogs. By one account, the Vietnam Wall in Washington, D. C. would be 100 feet longer, had those un-etched names been inscribed instead on that sad granite wall.

I am also including one month's Action Reports to share some of the items found in one

month by dog teams of the 47th :

Scout Dog Sig # K036 alerted on an enemy village at 500 meters. Searches conducted 170, Ambushes 33, Recon: 64, Perimeter Patrol: 5.

Total Scout Dog Team Support Days: 211.

Weapons found: 10 SKS, 2 AK 47, 10 Rockets, 35 RPG Rounds, 2000 AK Rounds, 13 2.57 Rockets, 175 82MM Rounds, 1 1/4 Ton Trucks, 9 French MG, 1 .30 Cal MG, 2 RPG Launchers.

Scout Dog Alerts credited with 10 enemy KIA."

The legacy and work continues today.



Otis Johnson, left, with his dog, Rolf, train at Ft. Benning, GA in 1968 for their tour in Vietnam. Jimmy Powrzas, below, and his dog, Rebel, both exhausted from their work as a Scout Dog Team in the jungles of Vietnam.



For more information on the 47th Infantry Platoon Scout Dog unit, please see the link: [www.47ipsd.us](http://www.47ipsd.us)

*Way to go **McCall Primary School Pet Club!** Awesome job!*

*With sincere appreciation to the amazing folks at **Hadley Middle School.***

[www.mwdtsa.org](http://www.mwdtsa.org)*Continued from page 1*

Dixie's intent in asking me to write this article is for me to give some perspective, from a donor's point of view, to others who were so profoundly affected by this war, and to the handlers whose lives depended on these wonderful dogs. I must admit though that after peeking into the corners of my heart and soul, where I've so carefully tucked away these painful memories and emotions, I find that I'm left feeling surprised to find the caverns of my soul still holding such raw, negative anger and guilt after all these years. OK, enough venting.

In the late 1960s (1967-1969) I donated four German Shepherds for military service in Viet Nam. I can't recall now if there were standards they had to meet, other than I remember they had to be free of hip dysplasia, generally healthy, and have good, sound dispositions. It certainly made absolutely no difference what they looked like. Their photos have long since faded but their images remain quite clear and vivid in my mind's eye.

Brandy was a typical looking black and tan, male German Shepherd; small in size, but large in heart. He was a family pet and loved by us all. It was 1967 and our troops were struggling. They were dying in large numbers. Something inside of me told me that Brandy could be of some help... he was certainly smart enough. We lived in Alamogordo, NM at that time so Holloman Air Force Base was my contact. The first step was a trip to the veterinarian for an exam and hip x-rays.

Brandy passed.

Later, in 1968 I vaguely recall that it seemed like everything I read in the newspapers and saw on television indicated our

but not a pussycat, so off we went to Holloman Air Force Base to the veterinarian's office. He also passed the exam and hip x-rays.



**Brandy, the first dog donated**

troops were really "taking a beating" as the Viet Cong seemed to be attacking everywhere. So, I thought I could send another dog to maybe help them out. Blackie was a larger male German Shepherd and very nice looking. He was mostly all black with some tan on his legs, and he had the biggest ears. He was a sweetheart,

One thing you might find interesting is that we had to change the dogs' diets before they left. They were placed on a Science Diet formula of semi-moist dog food that came in special containers to prevent mold, etc. because it was not dry kibble, but actually moist. The advantage to this food was that all a dog needed for a daily

diet was about the equivalent of a couple of tablespoons, if I'm remembering that correctly. The point is that it took a very small amount of food to feed the dog thereby reducing the carry load for the dog handler.

When it was time for the dogs to leave, they were shipped to Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX for their training. At that time, transportation for these dogs was by rail, not air. They traveled from Alamogordo, NM to San Antonio, TX in a kennel crate in a rail car with enough food taped on top for 2-3 days. A leash was, also, taped on top so they could be taken out and exercised along the way. As you can imagine, the goodbyes were really tough. I said my goodbyes to them in private... just me and my dog. I don't remember that I ever received any further word about these dogs. I don't even remember anyone contacting me to say they had been received in good condition. That would certainly have been appreciated, and I think I would remember that happening if it had, despite all my efforts to forget everything about this.

Of course, at this time there were many anti-war protests and demonstrations happening in this country. Those demonstrations just seemed to ignite my patriotism though and made me feel even stronger that I must do whatever I could to help our troops. Even so, I didn't broadcast my actions to the world, or even to my family, that I had volunteered my dogs to this cause. I was a single mother and didn't want to invite any trouble into my life.



## *Thank you, Dr. Bercier & South Alabama friends!*

My memory is dimmed by time, but images now are flashing in and out of my mind. Images of our troops (I guess from the news) deep in a jungle terrain totally oblivious of what might be just on the other side of the trees and vines. It was apparent to me then, and it is now, that our troops needed these dogs to help them survive. They needed the eyes, ears, nose, courage, strength, love and comfort of these creatures of God that would lay down their lives to help them rid the world of their enemies.

So in 1969 when it didn't seem that things were much better over there, I decided to send two more dogs, but these would be the last. It just took too much strength to send any more into harm's way. Heike was a substantial girl that seemed to me to have the talents required for this mission. Brinka was smaller, a dark sable girl with a lot of drive and stamina. Both, like the males before them, were purebred German Shepherd Dogs. Both passed their physical exams and hip x-rays at Holloman AFB, and were sent on their way. After



**The author, Sondra Abarr, working her Search and Rescue dog, Suwanee, a few years ago.**

some time I did hear back from Lackland AFB that Heike did not seem to be assertive enough for the job, but that they had a long list of people wanting to adopt these dogs. So Heike did not go to Viet Nam and hopefully lived a long, happy life in someone's home. Brinka was sent on to Viet Nam as I was certain she would be; that girl had a fire in her belly.

At the German Shepherd Dog Club of America National show in Utah in 2010, Dixie introduced me to a dog handler from Viet Nam. It put my mind somewhat at ease to hear the things he told me about how precious these animals were to the handlers and the troops. After all, I loved these dogs with all my heart just as I do my country. My hope has always been that they served our troops well, perhaps

brought some light and happiness to such a dark time in those men's lives and that they were loved fiercely in return by those same men.

May we never forget our abandoned heroes... Brandy, Blackie and Brinka, and all the others that served alongside our human heroes.

## *The Fire of Your Heart*

*by Dixie Whitman*

"What ignites your heart?" In reading inspirational thoughts for the day from a book called *Grace for the Moment*, I was reminded of why I want to work with military working dogs and handlers. It's because I am heeding the fire within.

My passions in life have always included animals. It was natural to

be drawn to German shepherd dogs in my young years when my wonderful and supportive husband and I began working in obedience and tracking. I loved watching a dog work, especially using his nose. But it wasn't until my love of German shepherd dogs ran into a photo of one of the dog handlers

from Vietnam that my passion took root. I could not ignore what was in my heart. Both handler and dog are weary and worn. Both are in Vietnam, a place I'm sure they would have been glad to have left at that very moment. But, this team, and thousands more like them, served out of a sense of duty.

That sense of duty and responsibility continues today. If supporting dogs and their handlers ignites your heart - MWD TSA would like to talk with you. We have many opportunities to volunteer or donate. Please email us for more information at [info@mwdtsa.org](mailto:info@mwdtsa.org).

## Photos



Thank you, thank you, thank you to Conrad Munro for this awesome photo of his dog, Odeta, and the Army MP Brassard that he had specially made to send to us. The Arabic says "military police". It is just the coolest photo and a most amazing thank you. Love it!



Our newsletter, Kennel Talk, was presented a special rosette by the German Shepherd Dog Club of America at their national show in Topeka, Kansas. We are mighty proud of this honor in the newsletter competition, even though we are MWD and not GSD, and appreciative of all the kind words sent our way.

## *Packing and Shipping Days or Was that "Daze"?*

Priority boxes filled with a variety of KONG toys, dog treats, grooming supplies, handler treats, coffees, pickles, T-shirts, magazines, socks and holiday items were packed and readied for shipment to handlers serving in Afghanistan and environs.

Jerry Whitman, Ann

Wilkerson and Dixie Whitman spent time preparing the gifts to be shipped to deployed teams.

Included with the gifts are well wishes, cards and notes from folks across the country. The adorable cards and letters created by school children are showcased on page 9. The handlers will love them!



*Special thanks to Bethany United Methodist Church!*

*With deep gratitude to the [Cooper Family](#) for your amazing support !*



## *Holiday Packages Shipped, Received and Enjoyed!*



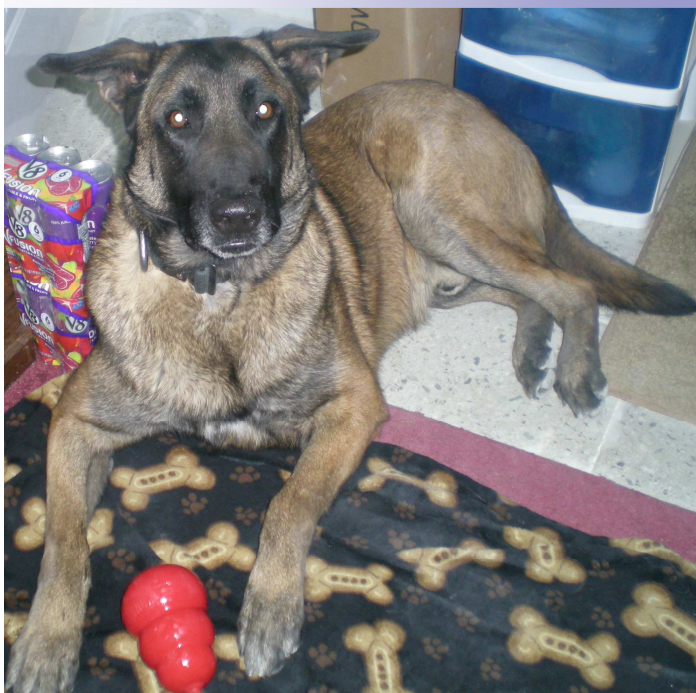
Booger and his Extreme KONG toy (on left). Booger says: "Don't even think about looking at my KONG toy, because it is, after all, MY KONG."

Such a fun photo: A handler and her reluctant reindog, Tomy (Below)



Bruno and his Classic KONG toy—it's shiny, so it has been used. :) Can you say, 'Happy Camper?'" Thanks to Bruno and his wonderful handler for their service.

Meet Santa Ajax. Ho! Ho! Ho! Or Woof! Woof! Woof! We were able to meet this team very briefly before they left on deployment. Thanks for such a great photo. Stay safe.





## *Thanks to everyone for the cards and donations.*



### *Kudos to our wonderful Southern KONG folks!*

With two locations in Georgia, **Top Dogs Pet Boutique** was instrumental in getting critical supplies and financial donations in place for MWDTSA to make the holiday boxes happen. One of their customers came in and spent her birthday money shopping for Military Working Dogs, what a great and unselfish gift! Thanks **Betty Lou** and **Suzette** and your great staff for all of your hard work.

In Canton, our thanks go to **T C Country Store**, **Sabine** and **Fabio** for your steadfast support.

Special thanks also to the network of stores in and around the Tampa, Florida area. Most especially, thanks to **Anna Cooke** and **Patt Glenn**, two great supporters in the greater Tampa area. With everyone's help, we had enough KONGs donated to send one toy to each dog team in their Christmas packages. Additionally, the KONG Company has matched each KONG toy donated with a free one!

### *Applause for our Midwesterners & Westerners!*

I love these good folks! Their hearts are so big. I was so excited when I found two great partners, **Leash On Life** in Iowa City, Iowa. and **Ma and Paw's Bakery** in Salt Lake City Utah. **Julie Phye** (shown at right), **Diane Sanders** and their crews rounded up bunches and bunches of KONG toys that the KONG Company matched on a one for one basis. Thanks to folks sending supplies through these two stores in America, on Christmas morning in some remote location in Afghanistan a dog handler will smile as his dog gets a new KONG reward.

And, that is not a cliché. Keeping their dogs happy, healthy and working are primary goals of handlers. When they make requests, by in large, they ask for things for their dogs. Knowing that a deployed dog is wagging his tail a little faster after the handler shows him a peek at a new KONG toy and then plays that keep away game brings a smile to my heart, as I know it does yours.

Julie, and Diane, we all appreciate what you, your staffs and customers were able to do for us.



### *Much appreciation to everyone involved!*

Thanks to our wonderful Product In Kind donors for this year: **Green Mountain Coffee**, **Rogers Family Gourmet Coffee and Tea**, **Community Coffee**, **gimme! Coffee**, **Raven's Brew**, **FURminators**, **Mt. Olive Pickle** and the amazing **KONG Company**.

With your help, along with donations of funding, other items from supporters and cards from students filled to overflowing with love and well-wishes, our handlers will open some overstuffed boxes this holiday season.

And, lastly, thanks to each and every person who made a donation of any amount this year, from \$3 to \$1000. We could not have achieved all that we achieved without your support. Every check, every purchase, every gift moves us further.

Thanks to all and our sincere appreciation for a successful 2011.



## *Huge thanks to VSPA & VDHA guys for your event!*

*And, a special note of appreciation to **John Homa** for all of your hard work!*



## *All of YOU Made these Holiday Boxes Possible!*



Please enjoy three of the great holiday cards and letters sent to our dog handlers from the Pet Club at McCall Primary School in Acworth, GA. and students at Hadley Middle School' Family Reading Night, Homer Glen, IL. We know the handlers will love these!



## *Boxers' Artwork Fundraises for Military Dogs*



### *Boxersox Art Work*

Thanks to sweet boxers like Frenchie, on left, proceeds from art projects they created at Boxersox were funneled to our great Military Working Dogs! Jody McGlothlin assisted the owners and attendees with their creative images like this "blue period" piece created by Mick, the boxer, below.



*Thank you, Jodi McGlothlin & Invisible Fence!*



Military Working Dog Team  
Support Association, Inc.

## Sit. Stay. Support.

MWD TSA  
P. O. Box 5864  
Canton, GA 30114  
Editor: Dixie Whitman  
Phone: 404-451-2539  
E-mail: [info@mwdtsa.org](mailto:info@mwdtsa.org)



We are on the web! See our Blog!  
[www.mwdtsa.org](http://www.mwdtsa.org)

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

PLEASE RECYCLE BY SENDING TO A FRIEND



Per the Kennel Master, this is MWD Artus' second holiday in a war zone. He seemed to enjoy spreading cheer a bit with his holiday antlers, just one gift from a "filled to the brim" care package for this team.

*The photo below shows why we send KONG toys. The Military Working Dogs ask for them!*



U.S. Army Spc. Joseph Lopez, right, a military working dog handler assigned to Combined Team Zabul, prepares to throw a toy to his patrol explosive detection dog, Coley, as a reward for identifying explosive devices during an explosive device detection training session at Forward Operating Base (FOB) Laghman in Zabul province, Afghanistan, Feb. 18, 2011. The team included Air Force, Army and Navy Service members and dogs that provided support to the units at FOB Laghman during patrols and other missions. (U.S. Air Force photo by Master Sgt. Adrian Cadiz/Released)