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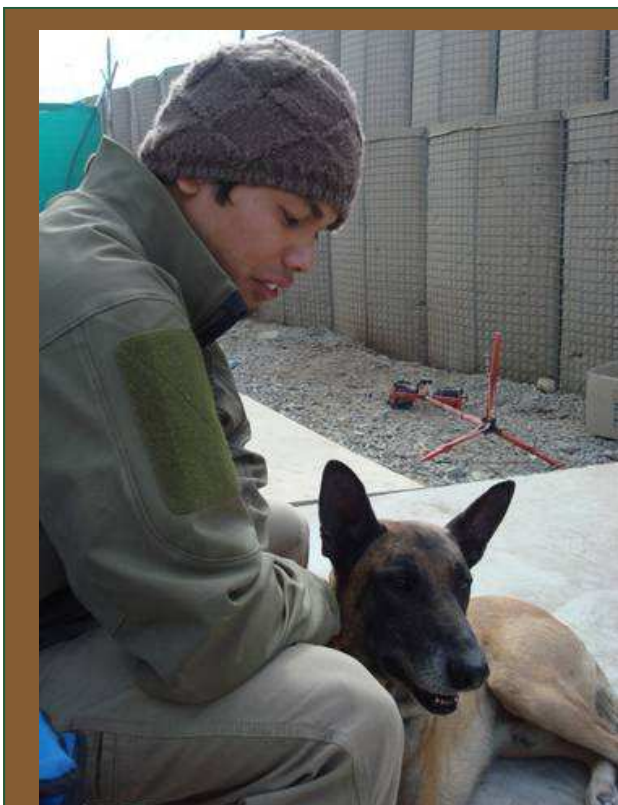
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## Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc.

### MWDTSA KENNEL TALK



*John Douangdara, a  
26 year old Lao  
American, was the  
K9 handler killed  
with members of  
SEAL Team Six in  
August when their  
Chinook helicopter  
was shot down in  
Afghanistan after a  
mission to assist a  
Special Forces team  
that had come un-  
der siege.*

*Rest in peace, Sailor.*

## John Douangdara: American Hero

By Dixie Whitman

Petty Officer 1st Class John Douangdara, the 26 year old son of Laotian immigrants, was among the 30 Americans killed on August 6, 2011. The Chinook helicopter on which he and his dog rode was shot down by a rocket propelled grenade in Wardak Province, Afghanistan.

Described by his siblings as both "geeky" and "quiet", John's love of the military pushed him to graduate a semester early from his South Sioux City, Nebraska high school and head to Illinois for Navy's basic training.

His drive and determination resulted in an assignment to the Naval Special Warfare unit where he served as a dog handler in support of Navy SEAL Team Six.

Dog handling was not his first goal, though. Originally, John intended to work on a nuclear submarine, but that objective was passed by when a passion for dogs interceded.

Petty Officer 1st Class Douangdara's decorations include The Purple Heart, The Defense Meritorious Service

Medal, The Bronze Star with "V" Device, The Joint Service Commendation Medal with "V" Device, Army Commendation Medal, Presidential Unit Citation (2), Good Conduct Medal (2), National Defense Service Medal, Afghanistan Campaign Medal (3), Iraq Campaign Medal, Global War on Terrorism Medal, Sea Service Deployment Ribbon (3), Overseas Service Deployment Ribbon (3) Rifle Marksmanship Medal and Pistol Marksmanship Medal.

John Douangdara, is buried in Arlington National Cemetery.

# John Douangdara: My Brother, My Friend, My Hero

By Chan Follen



*Johnny with Toby, in the mountains.*

*The only time Johnny ever called home in tears was regarding Toby's death. Toby was Killed In Action. The action remains classified, but we do know that Toby and Johnny saved six lives that day.*

My name is Chan Follen; I am the sister of the late John Douangdara, the lead dog handler for the Elite Seal Team 6. John and his Military Working Dog, Bart, were both on the Chinook helicopter that was shot down on August 6, 2011. I want to share with you a more personal side of John that you probably have not heard or read about.

My parents fled Laos, a small land-locked country situated in Indochina, back in 1980, with just me in tow. Born December 29, 1984 in Sioux City Iowa, John was the third child of five siblings. Our family actually grew up on the Nebraska side of the Missouri River in South Sioux City. For my family, Nebraska was a vast change from communist Laos and our Buddhist foundation; but America was an opportunity we always respected.

As a child, Johnny, our family's

nickname, was the typical boy. As he matured into a teenager, so did his leadership; he did not blindly follow others. While countless local kids were often pulled into gangs and drugs or the lesser evil of skipping school, Johnny remained steadfast; he was simply not susceptible to peer pressure.

While others boys were romancing girls, Johnny was working on computers at home. He was pretty much a computer geek. — a well loved computer geek. He thrived on school activities and enjoyed the challenges of debate team, an activity that bolstered his skills in research, public speaking, persuasion, teamwork and finding opponents weaknesses.

He had tons of friends and avoided conflict during the normal tumultuous teenage years. He was an individual

who could be counted on, and that trait stayed with him throughout his life. When his military friends were deployed, he would step in. One of his friend's daughters was distraught that her father was unable to attend a father-daughter school function, but was ecstatic when Johnny stood in for her dad. He sometimes also babysat for his Seal Team friends so they could make the most of their time at home, taking their wives out on "date night".

From as far back as I can remember, my father was always trying to get one of his kids in the military. My mother's father was a Captain in the Laotian Army. My father knew that the military would add discipline and structure to our lives so we always stopped at the recruiter's office every time we went to the mall. We even had an Army bumper sticker on our front door that reminded us that it

would make him proud if one of us would join. "Army—Be All You Can Be" is what we saw everyday when we walked out of our home.

Towards the end of Johnny's junior year in high school he began weighing future options. He visited recruiters and by the beginning of his senior year he had made up his mind to enlist in the Navy. He specifically wanted to work in the Navy's nuclear program. In fact, his blueprint was to graduate from high school a semester early (December) and head to boot camp in January.

My brother, Pan, and I questioned Johnny to find out if the Navy was what he really wanted to do. Personally, I could not see my geeky little brother succeeding in the military. He was small - 5'5" and maybe 115 pounds - and would probably have to prove himself over and over. We offered to pay for his college, even if that meant taking out personal loans



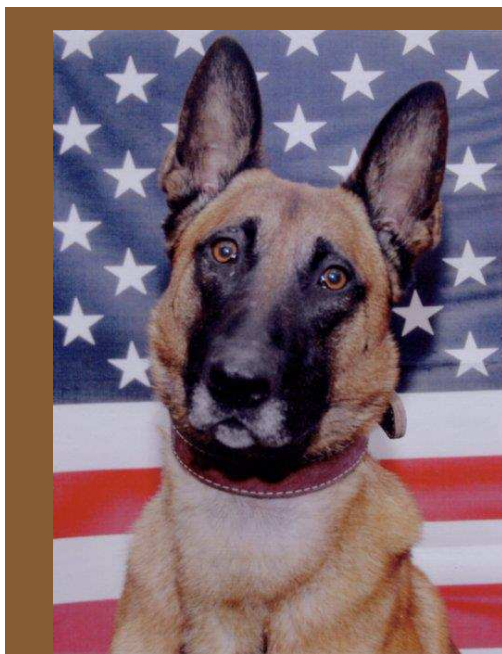
for him. But, Johnny was adamant about going into the military and that was that. Debate over. Johnny graduated mid-terms in 2002 and headed to Great Lakes, IL for Navy boot camp in January of 2003.

Johnny went in as a Master at Arms (security and force protection) and after completing his school, he headed to Sicily, Italy. In his calls and letters, we could tell he was homesick and it broke my heart hearing my baby brother so unhappy. It appeared it was going to be a long three year tour for all of us.

A few weeks passed and I noticed his mood had changed. Johnny would call me, but instead of hearing muted voices, the background noises were now barking dogs. I asked what he was doing at the kennels and he told me he was watching the dogs that were retired, but unadoptable. They would stay in the Navy until their last breath. I asked him if that was a hard thing to do, and he told me he spent time giving great care to these K9s before they had to go. You could tell in his voice that he loved being around these dogs.

Then, a wonderful surprise: Johnny called me to tell me that he would be in San Antonio, Texas for canine school. I was ecstatic since I lived in Dallas and was going to see my baby brother more often now.

It was not until after Johnny had passed and I met Billy, a Kennel Master for the Navy,



*Johnny's last partner, Bart, (shown at left) lost his life on the Chinook with the other 30 Americans.*

*I am now taking my brother, Johnny's, passion and his legacy and making it my passion.*

*MWD TSA's missions include supporting, recognizing and honoring dog teams.*

that I learned the full story of Johnny being drawn into the kennel. Billy shared with me that, indeed, Johnny was miserable in Sicily. Billy felt badly for him so he invited Johnny to stop by the kennels and hang out with him. Billy felt like he needed to take this young kid under his wings and make his stay a little easier by befriending him. That is when Billy discovered that Johnny loved being in the kennels and being with dogs. Johnny would work 10-12 hour shifts at the security gate and then would go to the kennels and volunteer his time at the kennel for a couple of hours. Once Billy realized that Johnny loved being with the dogs, and that he had this natural understanding of them, Billy put in a word for Johnny to head to canine school in San Antonio.

After canine school, Johnny loved his job. He never stopped

talking about his dogs. His first deployment to Iraq scared me. He had a bomb sniffing dog and they worked the gates. I told Johnny that he needed to call or email me to let me know he was safe. We never talked about how it was over there. We both knew it was dangerous, but our phone conversations were more of getting his mind away from this dangerous place.

Never complaining, Johnny was the type of guy to make the best of things in any situation. An example of that are the pictures he would send me. He would email me pictures himself with his dogs and he always had them wearing silly accessories. He had bunny ears on one dog for Easter. He had to celebrate his 21st birthday in Iraq, but he sent me a picture of him and his dog with Hawaiians leis and a bottle of sparkling grape juice celebrat-

ing the occasion.

Going through all of Johnny's personal belongings after he passed, one could tell how much each and every dog he handled meant to him. He had all kinds of pictures of his dogs all over his house and on his cell phone.

Most especially, he had Toby's ashes in his room. Toby was a dog he had on deployment on his second tour in Iraq. Tragically, Toby was Killed in Action in 2008, the only time Johnny ever called home in tears. The action remains classified, but we do know that Toby had saved 6 Canadian lives that day and our family was gifted with a plaque from the Canadian Military to honor Johnny and Toby, after Johnny's passing.

See John- Continued bottom page 6

*Thanks Newnan Kennel Club for your continued awesomeness!*

# *PTSD: Post Traumatic Stress Disorder Affects Handlers and Their Dogs*

## *Just A Dog*

## *K9 PTSD*

For those who experience the trauma of war first hand, writing and artwork allow an exploration of life events at a personal pace: slowly and controlled. The results can be raw, but helpful and healing emotions. This poem was written by one of the many Vietnam Veteran dog handlers as part of his personal healing process.

By Dixie Whitman

As I sat on the front steps of the store I saw the old truck pull up  
A young boy got out and kicked a dog that was barely a pup  
I asked the boy why he did such a thing, he looked at me, looking real mean  
"Just Another Dog" the boy replied, with a sarcastic smile.  
I told him if he kicked it again I'd come over and he could kick on me for awhile  
Aren't you Bob Johnson's boy I asked as he entered the store?  
He said "Yes" and I said boy come here, I'll tell you about your daddy and the war  
We were about your age during our tour in Vietnam  
Your Dad was later wounded in that lousy land  
Go ask your Daddy about "Just Another Dog" and maybe he'll tell  
About how a four legged soldier saved him from dying in that living hell  
His name was Casey; there wasn't much he didn't know  
He showed your daddy where to walk, where to stay and where to go  
It was a typical day in Vietnam, rain and sunshine, both at the same time  
When Casey saw something 50 yards in front of the line.  
He alerted your daddy, the team was saved, and all got off the trail  
If it hadn't been for Casey your daddy would have died in that living hell  
Casey wasn't as lucky; he died that day saving your daddy and his friends  
There were others, soon to earn the trust and love, becoming the soldier's best friend  
They served without complaint, only to be betrayed, the ultimate sin  
Classified as equipment they were left there to die, the trust still glimmering in their eyes  
We didn't get a last chance to see them, thank them or even say good bye  
If it hadn't been for Casey, every year your Mom would go to Washington D.C.  
Find your Daddy's name, make a rubbing, and bring it home for you to see  
Now you go on home and ask your Daddy about "Just Another Dog" and how he died  
As the boy turned around I saw the tear in his eye, I'm sorry mister I heard him say, it won't happen again  
As I left the store, I turned and saw him putting in the truck, his new 4-legged friend

Reports surfaced recently regarding canine Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, PTSD. As a long time dog fancier, I am intrigued that educated people are just now realizing something that animal folks have known for years, animals have emotions and feelings.

People with PTSD can relive traumatic experiences through nightmares, flashbacks, fear, sleeping problems and more.

In dogs, the symptoms are not terribly different: hyper-vigilance, avoidance, personality changes or a complete work stoppage.

Treatments can be more difficult in dogs because we humans can only observe canine behavior, but the dogs cannot explain what is wrong in language that we can easily understand.

For some dogs, removal from the front line and down time with exercise and play corrects their problem. But more serious cases may require counter-conditioning, a form of desensitization, medications or both.

If dogs are not able to recover from their stress disorder, they may become eligible for retirement and adoption. For more information on adoption with forms and facts:

<http://www.lackland.af.mil/units/341stnwd/index.asp>



## Super Bowl in a Box



Super Bowl Sunday was the theme for our recent care packages. What comes to mind when you think of Super Bowl games? Football, snacks, half-time performances and commercials? It is the biggest yearly celebration for American sporting enthusiasts and our deployed handlers love watching it!

Chan, our amazing care package coordinator, planned something football-y for the Military Working Dogs (MWDs) so we added an awesome Air KONG or Squeekee KONG football, a Super Bowl dog snack and created this great K9 Super Bowl bandana, in lieu of jerseys, to honor the K9 contingent.

Super Bowl in a Box care packages shipped to handlers January 13th. A peek inside our boxes shows a Kong football, an MWD TSA Super Bowl doggy bandana, Queso Blanco, jalapenos, crackers, popcorn, Bacon Salt and a doggy treat.

Right on time, Community Coffee provided us with another shipment of French roast and coffee mugs which were shipped out the very next day and were a huge hit, once again. The few scattered open spaces remaining in the boxes, were filled with additional dog toys, and doggy snacks. We received a big thumbs up from handlers on these boxes. (Doggies don't have opposable thumbs, but we are sure they would give us a thumbs up, too, if they could.)

The bandana, which the MWDs can sport during their down time, proudly proclaims that "MWDs are MVPs", a sentiment to which all dog handlers can relate.

Thanks to our ever amazing print shop, Christian Print Shop, and the superman printing talents of Issac, we included a freshly printed bandana in every "Super Bowl in a Box" package that shipped. Issac ever amazes as he consistently engineers answers to seemingly impossible requests.

If you need imprinted apparel, promotional items or, bandanas, please stop by Christian Print Shop in Alpharetta, GA or visit them online at: <http://www.cpsscreenprint.com/>

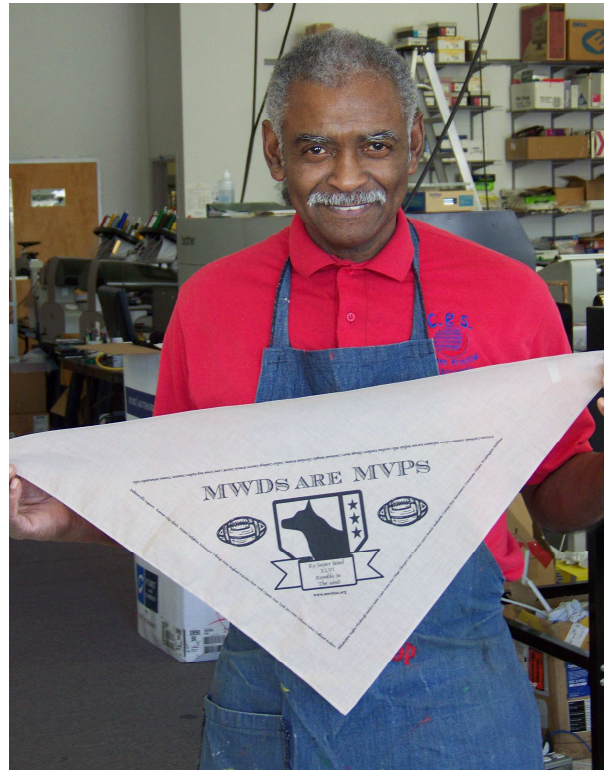
Another round of packages planned for handlers with the theme of "Fun in the Sun" is scheduled for May. We can use your help to prepare.

We will be posting more information on our website "Wish List" with updated details on the items that we are actively soliciting: collapsible water bowls, Doggles, KONG flyers, cooling collars, doggy shampoo, doggy wipes, sun tan lotion, foot care, current books and more. Check out the complete updated listing at:

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

Please contact us at: [info@mwdtsa.org](mailto:info@mwdtsa.org) to find out how you or your organization can help!

And, remember, "Fun in the Sun" is an upbeat way to say that the deployments in Afghanistan are hot and miserable during the summer. You can help us send a reminder of exactly how strongly Americans support their military dogs and handlers by supporting our efforts to get needed cooling and personal care items into the care packages of our dog teams.



*Shown above: Isaac McGuire, owner/printer at Christian Print Shop, our printing partner.*

*Shown below: The first Super Bowl in a Box to roll off of our "assembly line" filled with all of the fun and treats we could fit inside, just in time for Super Bowl Sunday.*



## New Members of MWD TSA's Speakers' Bureau

If you are interested in having a member of our Speaker's Bureau make a presentation on behalf of MWD TSA, please contact us at [info@mwdtsa.org](mailto:info@mwdtsa.org) and we will check on availability.

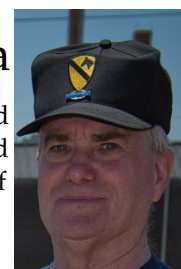


### Dr. Danielle Bercier—Southern Alabama-Mobile Bay

Danielle Bercier is an equine veterinarian with special emphasis in sports medicine and reproduction. She currently owns a practice in lower Alabama where she is also active in training and showing her German Shepherds in Schutzhund and AKC tracking and obedience events. She has a strong interest in furthering public awareness of the unique talents of working/service dogs and encourages dog owners to teach their own animals the manners they need to be loved by all.

### Ken Besecker—UGA Territory— Georgia

Ken Besecker is a Vietnam Veteran who served with the 62nd Combat Tracker Team as the commanding officer and continued his love of dogs by spearheading the formation of both the Augusta German Shepherd Dog Club and Military Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. One of his driving goals is to never have another generation of America's troops return home from war not knowing they are appreciated.



### Brandon Gilbert— Northeastern Utah

Brandon Gilbert, 15, has a keen interest in animals. Showing a steer at this year's Cache County Fair, Brandon also spends free time with Maddi his gorgeous Golden Retriever. His next big goal is to earn his Eagle Scout Award and as part of his project, Brandon is required to plan, develop, and give leadership to others in a service project. He chose to hone his art of public speaking in an effort to shine a beam of light on the needs of military working dogs and the missions of MWD TSA.

John Douanglara Continued from page 3

*Below: A favorite photo of the author, Chan, with her little brother, Johnny.*



So many fellow handlers recounted stories of how great a handler Johnny was: from taking the most difficult dogs and being able to work with them to how he would baby his dogs by carrying them around the kennel over his shoulders.

I can honestly say that these dogs were his passion. So dying beside his dog and his fellow comrades, those in whom Johnny trusted his life, would have been, to Johnny, an honorable way to leave this earthly life. It has however, left a hole in our lives. We love him; we miss him.

Knowing that my brother's passion was to work protecting this great country side by

side with his military working dog, it seemed natural for me to carry on his legacy and ensure that handlers and their dogs are well supplied and taken care of.

For this reason, I have joined the Board of Directors of Military

Working Dog Team Support Association, Inc. (MWD TSA). I am now taking my brother, Johnny's, passion and his legacy and making it my passion.

*Johnny, like most handlers, loved to accessorize his dogs. Here seen celebrating his 21st birthday in Iraq.*





## *Super Bowl Boxes: Bounty Enjoyed in Afghanistan*



Thanks to everyone who supported this box. What a great way to turn a handler into a Super Hero. Who else but a Super Hero could pull dog toys and treats out of the air in Afghanistan.



A variety of Military Working Dogs show off the bounty of their "Super Bowl in a Box" packages. Best items found in the boxes?

The dogs vote: football toys & doggy snacks.  
Handlers vote: dog bandanas.



*Thanks from our deployed dogs to all their supporters!*

## *Sweet Support from Hawaii Pacific University*

Need another reason to head over to the beautiful state of Hawaii? Here is it, a sweet, sweet table filled with bakery treats. All proceeds from this bake sale were sent to MWD TSA to support our missions; they were channeled into care packages for our deployed dog teams.

Many thanks once again to Emily Diedrich and her friends

at Hawaii Pacific University for their hard work on behalf of Military Working Dog Teams.

This is the second event spearheaded by Emily in support of military dogs. We are appreciative of all of the hard work, and dedication that it took to put on this event. We love the yummy results!

"Mahalo" Emily, to you and your friends. We appreciate you!





Military Working Dog Team  
Support Association, Inc.

## Sit. Stay. Support.

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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



Navy Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Matthew DuPont trains with his military working dog during an exercise at Naval Air Station Key West, Fla., June 25, 2010. (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Michael McNabb/Released)



U.S. Marine Corps Lance Cpl. Wayne Snelling (left) watches as Lance Cpl. Taylor Slay shares a piece of his steak with Mac, a military working dog, at Camp Leatherneck in Afghanistan's Helmand province on April 17, 2011. Steak Team Mission, a nonprofit organization from Texas, served 2nd Marine Division's Marines and sailors steak dinners in seven locations within a five-day period. DoD photo by Sgt. Earnest J. Barnes, U.S. Marine Corps. (Released)

*Giant thanks to Top Dogs Pet Boutique & Customers !!!*