



NATIONAL MUSEUM
OF THE UNITED STATES AIR FORCE®
Wings & Things Guest Lecture Series

America's Canine Heroes

Dogster.com editor/writer Maria Goodavage discusses the four-legged heroes who serve our country, what they bring to the fight, how they do it and the deep bonds they form with those who work with them.

Okay. Great. Well, it's a real honor and pleasure to be here. I've had so much fun during my visit today and tomorrow ... can you hear me all right, all right. I am probably ... I'm going to have the honor of getting to go to the Wright-Patterson Air Force Base kennel. These are the people of the kennel, the four-legged and two-legged personnel there, and I was actually in touch with one of the handlers there a few months ago about my book and I, when I found out that I was coming here, I wrote, actually wrote just a couple of weeks ago, and he, I guess, he let other folks know and you guys are coming and I have a huge pleasure and it's a huge treat for me because we have two handlers and the kennel master. We have Tech Sgt. George Freeze, who is the kennel master there – he's here with us tonight. And we have Staff Sgt. Joshua Mason and military working dog Ruth in here, and down at the end here we have Staff Sgt. Karen Gibson and military working dog Duco. I'm going to ask Sgts. Gibson and Ruth, if you think she's okay with it to come up on the stage, to be she, oh yeah, there you go ... just to sit here and so you could have a real, it's really exciting for me to actually to have a real live military working dog on the stage with me and so you can see what these dogs do and know that she is sniffing for bombs right now probably. These guys are deploying soon actually together. They are heading out next week for training and so there are facing a lot, wish you the best of luck. And if it's too much she can ... if she's good here if he needs to take her for a walk but I thought it would be fun, and if you have questions that these guys maybe able to address better than I can, please feel free to write them down.

They say never share a stage with an animal ... anyway, I'm really happy to be here and this is my book "Soldier Dogs." I feel like being here, I should be calling it airman dogs, but it's these are, this is the dog in goggles is an Air Force dog actually, and I got interested in the subject when I was a kid. My dad was a young soldier in World War II and he was sort of home sick and everyday there was a dog ... he said the dogs would save lives during the day and at night they would save souls, by just being there to hug at the end of the day and it was really great for him and I grew up with that through military dog mythology and I became, I was telling these guys today, a bit of a military dog geek growing up I would get any history books that had anything about them.

And I figured everybody knew that there were dogs in the military, but I was wrong because when the Bin Laden raid happened last year, media went crazy. You read stories about these dogs, and they didn't get a lot of information correct. The dog that was part of that mission ... there was a dog on that mission and his name was Cairo and he's Belgian Malinois, that much we know, they don't know a whole lot of about him, but he was portrayed as this dog who jumps out

of all kinds of aircraft or maybe hangs ... did you see the dog up there? That's a Navy Seals operation ... he's a Navy Seals dog obviously. This kind of stuff was portrayed. They said that the vets had pulled his teeth and replaced them with titanium teeth, yeah, no self-respecting dog or vet is going to let that happen, and so he apparently had all his real teeth.

These dogs are really important, the ones you see in these slides; they are special operations/special forces Navy Seals dogs, and they do a lot of these incredible missions, but the dogs with their paws on the ground, they are really they are the ones doing the everyday work that's so important right now in Afghanistan where bombs, IEDs, are the number one killer. Their noses ... this dog's nose is better than any technology out there, so Ruth is probably going to save some people; she's going to walking point, I imagine, and out there sniffing so that she will alert to an IED before anyone else can step on it, hopefully. And these dogs also work on the bases. You have some dogs here working the bases as well, dogs, about 2,700 of them around the world, and they are doing all kinds of live saving missions all the time

They do it with special equipment. Cairo the dog was said to be wearing all kinds of crazy stuff, including the little doggles with night vision, well dogs can see pretty well at night and what good would that do anyway so it wasn't true, but I want to bring your attention to the kind of dog this is, this is a Belgian Malinois which is what the dog Cairo was, and they are very important now in the fight. They are kind of like German shepherds, a little more lean, a little more lithe, and a little just go, go, go, and they don't ... I don't know, correct me if I'm wrong, they don't seem to think as much. The German shepherds will often think and maybe not quite believe that it's going to be safer or something and the Malinois just go in there and work and work and work so we are using them a lot.

This is one of my favorite Malinois. This is Lex, he looks so regal, he is just the most amazing dog. I have him in a few stories in my book, and my favorite is when he and his handler were deployed and they had to sleep in fox holes for a month in the rainy season and in Afghanistan, and it was brutal but the first night that they did this, they pulled the tarp up and they shared this fox hole, and half way through the night, the handler, a Marine handler got up. The dog wasn't there, and it was a really brutal area. He looked, couldn't find the dog, looked on this side of the tarp. The dog was standing there just like this; he was standing there guarding over him in the pouring rain, in the freezing cold, standing over his man and he couldn't believe it. He got him back in, two hours later he woke up, same thing, and it happened for a month every night. He just said, "When do you sleep, dog?" and he never knew. But in return, he also put his life on the line, one time enemy opened fire on him, without even thinking ... their fox hole was half dug ... he just threw the dog down and covered him with his body, you just don't think. There's that bond that's just is so incredibly deep.

Not all military working dogs are really noble warriors like this though. We have ... this is Lars, little Lars thinks he's a big dog. He's an explosives-only dog, he's not patrol, means he doesn't necessarily go after the bad guy. He could. He has a Napoleon complex. He's obviously a Navy dog. I saw him when in Virginia. He was being lowered into ... this is him ... they often use shepherds, big dogs, for inspecting submarines for things like narcotics or explosives, but this a lot easier right, and it's not really that dignified to have to be lifted to what you're sniffing, but he did it. He found ... this was an exercise obviously ... he found the explosive, but it took him a

while and he had to be just lifted from bunk to bunk so that's an unusual ... it's a Jack Russell terrier obviously ... and he just has a huge attitude.

Another unusual dog you may not think of as a military dog, that's a pit bull. It's used ... these are sometimes used by the Army's TED program. It's the Tactical Explosions Detection dog, and this guy was actually taken from a shelter. His life was saved by that program. It's an Army program. It's a short term program. It's not how the typical Department of Defense military working dog program goes ... this was a great exception. His name is Howard, by the way.

This is Sgt. Stubby, another great pit bull in military history. He was a big military hero in World War I before we even had military dogs officially, before we had a dog program, and he is now in Smithsonian, American History Museum. You can go see him 80 something years after he took his last breath. He has been preserved there, and he did a lot of really heroic things. He saved people from gas attacks, he got a German infiltrator, he was heavily decorated and he was a huge hero when he came home.

In World War II they did get the program going, and it was huge and wonderful and people donated their pet dogs. That's how the U.S. got most of the dogs, as donations of their dogs, as probably a lot of you know, and unfortunately, in Vietnam ... those dogs came back, they all came back, and the dogs who survived came back and became pets again. In Vietnam, it was not the case, where most of the dogs, about 4,000 went over and maybe 200 came back and not because they were killed in action, but we just left the dogs behind, and fortunately, we have learned from that. That can happen again. These dogs save lives over there. They said that the dogs were too vicious, the way they were trained. Those were sentry dogs, but they are also scout dogs, that weren't too vicious. And then they said there were tropical diseases or, you know, if they could have had a quarantine so a lot of the handlers I talked to from Vietnam said they think about their dog everyday, everyday and they just, you know, they have shadow boxes devoted to their dog, they have the leash. They just they don't know what happened ... some do but it's really tragic and I'm glad we learned because we have a great adoption program now. The dogs now have really great life after they serve, and after Ruth serves maybe you'll end up with her, maybe someone here, because you can adopt these dogs now, and it's great, and the handlers are usually the ones who fight for the dogs if they have served overseas with them. We'll talk a little bit more about that.

Most of our dogs these days are procured from Europe. We have buy teams, the DOD has buy teams, that go over a few times a year, and they get about 60 dogs at a time, and there are all kind of breeds but it's mostly places like the Netherlands, Germany, Slovakia, the Czech Republic, and they have been breeding these dogs for a long time. They are from police dog sports like KNPV or Schutzhund, if you've heard of those, and there are really, they are really, very well bred there, and so we go and get these dogs and one thing they look forward is which I find fascinating is they will look at the breed and how they act, but they also look at how much a dog wants a ball. I bet Ruth likes the ball? Yeah. [Laughter] Oh no, sorry, shouldn't have said the word the b word. So let's say she's ... they are about two years old when they military procures some, kind of old for that, but they'll give them a ball and if that dog does not covet that ball with everything, if that dog does not guard that ball and want that ball and live for that ball,

they'll pass him by because that ball is the pay check, that ball is almost everything to that dog. They train on it, that's their reward so if they don't want it, they don't get recruited.

These are U.S. puppies. We have a great breeding program at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, and if any of you have friends or relatives within two hours of San Antonio, they can foster one of these dogs. They are so great, but they are also known as maligators and especially when they are puppies, they are all mals so you really have to, you have to watch them ... I want ... see the legs of that person, I want that job ... that's like ... and they're just, they are so cute. This is about the age these guys are ready to go and be fostered, and you keep them to about 7 months. They are so cute. This is our Air Force Tech Sgt. Joe Null, and he's in charge of adoptions down there. This is a dog that he had fostered from that age that you saw in the pervious photo and they really bonded; he trained that dog so well. You don't have to be a trainer, you just have to be someone who can take care of a dog, but he really trained this dog up really well, and I love that they look so much alike in this.

Clearly this dog is Malinois, right, this is not a shepherd, but the way the dogs are bred ... there's a lot of interbreeding over in Europe. They want to have certain characteristics with the various breeds so if they want say a Malinois who might have a little more sturdiness of temperament or something, they may breed a Malinois with a shepherd, and then you get dogs who look like Ruth. This is Ruth actually and she's at the penthouse of her travel crate or something. She seems to be a real combination, she is apparently listed as a shepherd right? She's officially called a shepherd, but she really looks like a combination, and I like that they do get creative like that and again she would probably do anything for a K-O-N-G ... she doesn't know the word Kong does she? Be really careful here. These days training is really great; it's very much carrot not stick; it's really changed. The Kong is king. That is a Kong, for those you who don't have dogs, who don't know, the hard rubber ball that's kind of like a snowman, and they can use it as a ball as well, but Kongs are fun because they don't bounce true, they bounce like rabbit might or something so that's what it's all about for them. It's their pay check and you'll see it everywhere. This dog this in Yuma, Arizona ... they have a great pre-deployment training there. It's really intense, but the dogs ... that's just what they are working for. Here we are with the Navy, and what's really interesting about the Kong is it's not just, it's not just what their reward is, it's what they get trained on. So let's say when Ruth was two years old, she's at Lackland ... all the dogs that the DOD procures for the main military working dog program go through Lackland Air Force Base, and similarly all the handlers do as well. So she'd be in dog training school, and they would get her playing with the ball, and they would have a little bit of a scent like ammonium nitrate or some kind of explosive scent, there. She would just take ... she'd be going after that ball but she'd take a little sniff of that as she's running around, and just when she does that little change of behavior, the trainer will throw the Kong right on the scent and so it's looks to the dog like, oh I smelled that scent and a Kong came out of it, and so that's the idea. They match the Kong with the scent, and so the dogs think that magically, wow, I smell a scent and the Kong comes up. Eventually they extinguish that connection, but they always have the connection of Kong and the scent, and reward and scent, but you're obviously not going to be throwing your Kong on an explosive over in Afghanistan, so they do train them out of that. But it's a great initial training so you can see the importance of that.

And the other part of the pay check is the handler praise, the handler reward, the rapport they develop and being told, "Good dog," and they don't just do it. You don't want to do your praise voice, do you? [Laughter] Okay, I'm not going to do it either, but I'd say you'd probably go up a good octave or two and you are so happy that that dog is so good and so smart and you hear these guys with deep voices and suddenly they sound like a girls, and the dog is so happy and between that and getting a Kong, this dog is in heaven, this dog has pay checks extraordinaire, and that rapport and that bond is something that they work on at Lackland right from the beginning. The handlers don't actually get matched up with their dogs at Lackland ... this is training. This is a green handler. He's new, he's in handler school. This dog has been around the block. This dog has had a few handlers he's helped train. He's called the training aid. He didn't make it as a war dog and so he's helping train him. Some of these ... I saw some of this happening, you can actually see the dog almost thinking, okay, give me my – I'll help you find the bomb, you give me my Kong or square, I'll train you, you'll be fine, and you can see this going on in their heads. They do, and they and really bond with the dog that trains them or that they helped with training, and it's hard for them to say goodbye at the end of that part of the training, and I like that they really try to establish that.

Here though ... this is also at Lackland, does this look like a dog to you? No, this is an ammo can. They call it bucket, and this is called bucket training. Before they will let ... do you remember this? Before they'll let a handler take on a dog, they take on an ammo bucket for maybe few days a week, and they have to do all kinds of things just getting to work around the bucket because they don't want to take a chance with the dog. They have to do all kinds of the leashing techniques and everything that you would do with the dog, you do with the bucket, including praise, and that's one of the most embarrassing parts is really praising your bucket, and so the best praise though I've heard ... this is at Lackland, you probably recognize this ... is these are trainers, these are full-time dog trainers at Lackland, they train all the dogs who come through there at air force base, and this guy particularly was amazing. I have a video of it, but it won't play on this right now, but he found the bad guy behind ... he kept finding bad guys behind doors and they'd bring different guys in and they were all, woohoo, touchdown and all this great stuff, and the dogs will learn there, they learn right there, that that is part of what they work for is that praise and that high pitch. This is also like the biggest bone in the world, this is what the dog got after he found the bad guy in the room, and that's his bite sleeve. So he'd bite them and then they'd give him the sleeve, and that's a big reward, anything in the mouth.

This is cool. I'm just showing this because there are military dogs all over the world used by all kinds of militaries. I don't know where this is, I've tried to find out, but this is an amazing feat, and this is definitely at least a part Mal dog, they seem to thrive on ladders. High five. I saw this ... I went to the military working dog competition this spring after my book came out, at Lackland. I love this dog, actually she's in my book, her name is Davy. There are girl dogs with boy names and boy dogs with girl names. They name them overseas. Some handlers think it's a joke that they are calling ... there's one handler, a real tough guy, he had a dog named Freda and he began to call Freda and he said it was just wrong, but the dog knows his name or her name so they do that. They may look like ... she's a sweetheart actually ... they may look like gentle teddy bears. I saw some great bite work at Lackland. I've seen some great bite work all around, and they can be little teddy bears but not if you're the bad guy on the other end of this. That's a flying Malinois!

This is right here, military working dog Arco from these kennels, Wright-Patt kennels, yeah I'm actually ... when I drive up there tomorrow, I'm thinking should I roll up the windows on my rental car? Is Arco still around? Oh, he's deployed, okay, wow, I'm sure he's doing a good job. Yeah, they should show those guys who are going to, people who are going to go on the wrong side of the law, you know they should show this. You don't mess with someone with a police dog or military working dog because it's going to hurt, and thank goodness for bite suits, but sometimes, sometimes it's just ... this is a faulty decoy. This was the decoy's fault; he did not do things well, and yeah, this should not have been an option for this dog to do this, but it's great that he had the jacket, but he wished he wore the pants. You're going to be ... as we were just talking outside if you're going to be a military working dog handler, you're going to get hurt, and people have bites all over. You know, the older the handler, the more the bites and everybody has a story, and this guy just fresh bit right when I was there at Lackland for this big competition. And I wasn't really quite as aware of this when I was at Lackland last year for my research and someone asked me if I wanted to catch a dog. That's me and that's the dog I caught, and I thought ... and I write about it in the book, I won't tell you what happens, but as you see she has a leash so they didn't let her run at me, and she actually ... I would later come to find out that one, okay, after my book came out, I got an email from people saying we have the dog who bit you, who was biting you and I said, wow, why? Well, she was old, and I said oh, really, I mean she was up there but she was really old and she was, she has a steel rod in her leg, and she has really bad arthritis, so okay they didn't sic the toughest dog in the world, but I still really felt it. This is her now; she's a couch potato, very well deserved. She never slept in a bed in her life. She has really lumpy joints, and she's really, really happy now. She's living with another Malinois ... great family in Texas, great couple, and having the time of her life, so yeah.

And that's brings up military working dog health concerns and issues. This is ... I just threw this side because well, I love this dog. This is Rex. He is one of the Vietnam dogs who did come in, he came home. He went after the Viet Cong as he was ... as everyone was getting hurt and he was a really hero. He almost lost his own life, and there was a lot of outcry, and that brought him back home and that, what you see on his neck is actually a note from a little girl to him. He got so much fan mail and so I thought this would be a good introduction to just a little bit about the health things. The dogs do get injured. They do get killed in action, about 50 dogs have died since in the last 10 years, but some of that has been heat related. They really have ... the heat is tough out there, they're wearing fur coats. I'll get into that in a minute.

But dogs, they come here from overseas. This is part of their induction. It's a little different than what the humans get in their induction, every dog is anesthetized and they have a tattoo in their ear ... sure, she has a nice tattoo. All female dogs are spayed, all dogs over 35 pounds get a surgery called a gastropexy, which I find fascinating. Do you know what bloat is? It can be deadly, and the stomach will fill with gas, and if it twists, if there's torsion, then the dog can die and often does die and 9% of military working dog losses before were from complications of bloat, and now none because they all get this. I was having lunch during this time, so I was watching these surgeries over lunch and I just found it fascinating. You don't even see much, it's just all very good. This guy, Dr. Ronnie Nye, he's done about 400 of these operations. They just churn them out and this is so life-saving. This is the dog afterwards. This is the military version

of Elizabethan collar, I guess, and they keep them in that so they don't bite their stitches out and they are in that for a good seven days after their surgery.

I was talking about the heat. This is Gunnery Sgt. Chris Knight, and he's in my book, he figures very prominently in my book. He's a great character. The biggest, one of the biggest and deadliest parts of being over there is wearing fur coat over in 110-120 degree weather. It's really tough. And this is the Yuma Proving Ground, Yuma, Arizona. They call it Afghanistan USA because they have, they do mock buildings, they do as you see all that they have billboards, they have it so much like it, and they have got the heat and so you really feel like you're there. You're in this pre-deployment, I think, Tech. Sgt. Freeze, you were there before. It's really amazing, amazing training, and we'll ... here's gunny night, he's doing his own, heat distress treatment here, but they learn, the handlers really learn how their dogs handle the heat and what to watch out for and they get a lot first aid. This was really interesting. I was at Yuma and it was 110 degrees and I was watching this ... he's an Air Force handler actually and his dog Tina do their thing and suddenly one of the instructors said, "You're dog's been shot, your dog's down," and it happened so fast, and he just you know immediately scooped up his dog, put him on his shoulder, watching out for the enemy as he's trying to find shelter, and it was so realistic. I talked to him later and he said it was just like he was in Afghanistan. He said that he knew he wasn't going to be killed but the blood was flowing and the adrenaline was going, and he felt like Tina was in danger, so when I reached them, when I caught up with them, they were in this little ... they have to go to little shelter area. You know, I was a little alarmed when I first walked in because the dog was over there and her leg is over there, I thought my God, what happened? Something weird! So then I noticed that the dog had all four of her legs, and this was just, this was part of the training. They learn how to do the IVs, they give them IV fluids, whatever they need. They have to. They are medics. They are the ones out there when they're on missions; there's often no one else so they have to learn what to do.

But on a less serious note, even at war, it's important for dogs, dogs get their teeth brushed, and they brush when possible on deployment and this is really a cute dog. He's in my book too. This A Jack. A Jack brushed his teeth every few days, well, his handler brushed his teeth.

This is a dog, this a great dog. She is also in my book, Sengi. I'm not going to tell you what happened with her. She's there beginning, middle and end. She's okay, but she came back, and she has an eye condition called pannus, and she has to wear doggles and she hates them. She really hates them. She was rubbing up against her handler ... I didn't know, I just thought she was really affectionate, but she was just rubbing and trying get them off. So a lot of military dogs you will see with doggles, not a lot, but there are a number, and they protect their eyes and sometimes they're sunglasses, sometimes they are just going to protect them from the sand and wind.

And just back on a medical note, this state-of-the-art equipment is available to these dogs now. If a dog at your base, wherever you are, can't handle, if your vet can't handle whatever is going on, they'll sent them to Lackland Air Force Base, and they've got incredible ... the Daniel Holland Military Working Dog Hospital. It's got state-of-the-art everything. Here's a CT scanner this dog was going in because he had a foot problem, and here I was going in this hospital, I was going around, oh, that's really neat, they do humans surgery's here too, but this is a dog with an ankle

issue and they were taking care of that. Actually when you go to adopt a dog, the dog will be treated as well as possible, if the dog has an ankle problem ... this dog was actually going to be adopted out and they wanted to fix the dog as well as possible before they sent him out so they were doing surgery on this dog they weren't even going to keep any more which is great.

Not all wounds are visible on the outside. This is Buck. I met him while I was at Lackland Air Force Base adoption kennels, and he was curled up in a ball just staring out into nothingness. All the other dogs – the Malinois and the shepherds and the labs – were barking and twirling and doing all these things they normally do in kennels, but Buck was just really, he wasn't there. His body was there, but that was it, and I said what's going on, and he said, he's got PTSD. The military just recognized PTSD for the first time last year, last January, in dogs I should say, and said this is something that we really need to watch so K9 PTSD has been recognized. It is being researched, treated. About 50% of the dogs who are diagnosed with it will be retired, will be adopted out because they can't be fixed. The other 50%, there are drug therapies, there's behavioral therapy. They try, they are really trying, and some can go back and serve, but Buck, I was happy to find out the next day, was going to be adopted by this very wonderful couple and when I went back to Lackland earlier this year, because they are in San Antonio, I visited him, and he has a very happy ending. He's got a great life now and they bought him ... he wasn't coming out of his shock, he was really scared, so they bought him a pup ... they didn't buy him, they adopted him a puppy, and that really helped bring out the puppy in him. He had never really had a puppyhood. He still has fear, he was just very cautious, and that's not very lab and so when I first met him, he was very standoffish, and then, I wish could show you this video, he's gleefully running around, he's so happy now, and I'm really glad to that military has recognized K9 PTSD and what that's all about. It came to him they are not exactly sure how he got it.

There a lot of dogs, war dogs out there, and they have different jobs. This is not one of them usually, but the handlers have to have some fun sometimes so usually they are going to be out there sniffing out bombs and get ... there's no ... this guy, his dog was definitely going to sniff out something before his equipment was, he's a submarine handler and you know, besides the dog is a lot more comforting at the end of the day than a mine sweeper. The dogs, together with the handlers, are on deployment almost 24x7, sometimes 24x7, and they say they stay by your side in firefights. There's a dog that I write about, Patrick, who is so calm during firefights that he will just lie there eating grass while there's this craziness going on, and sadly Patrick, he saved lives, but he didn't make it home because of his final life-saving mission, but I won't talk about that now.

Another ... this is Lex, the iconic dog, the just, the dog I will probably keep coming back to ... fox hole dog and he's just again sitting here. There's a lot of stuff is going on, and he's sitting there with crossed paws, but they're together all the time. They're at your side. The bonds are huge. It's like, you've deployed with a dog before. What I've heard is that there's nothing like the bond between a dog and a handler. There's ... you can think of it, I love my dog. I feel like I'm incredibly bonded with him, but when you're there, in war, 24x7, your life depends on your dog and so do so many other lives, and your dog depends on you. There's just something that happens. This dog, on the left is the EOD tech, the explosive ordnance disposal tech, and he's in my book for one of the stories, and he got really attached to a couple of dogs, so it's not just handler/dog but it's other people who are out there who feel a real bond with the handler.

The dogs go on missions everywhere. This is a huge shepherd. This is military working dog Bleck. He is, or he was, an Air Force dog. He's now retired and living with his handler Brent Olson. They were both injured in Afghanistan, and Brent Olson got a Purple Heart and Bleck got nothing because the military still officially looks at the dogs as equipment, and so we can talk ... there's a bill that passed through Congress and it's called the K9 Members of the Armed Forces Act and I'm happy to report they passed it and it's in the Senate now. Wait, strike that, reverse that, it's in Congress now, and it's been a while. We're still waiting to find out what happens, and then someone has to sign it into law, but one of the things that it will do is give official recognition. When you hear about a dog getting a Purple Heart or Silver Star, it's because someone, just a CO, decided, oh, this dog, this will be a nice thing to do, but it's not officially sanctioned by the Department of Defense. There is nothing official. And you know Ruth ... oh, look at her crossed paws ... Ruth does not care about this piece of paper, but it's just, it feels so good to the handler to know that their dog got recognized, and it's good for the kennel and it jumps down the leash back to the dog and it's definitely something important, and it's good PR as well of course. This is them when they were on the mission, and this is something else, this is after they were injured, I believe this was in Germany, the hospital, so Bleck visited his handler there. There's a lot of talk about dogs are left behind, so you know, we just leave the dogs behind were ever we go. No, dogs come back, dogs come back. If the handler is injured, the dog will sometimes go with the handler, and eventually end up at the same place, or the dog will come home to the home base while handler comes home. Same if the ... this is military working dog Vika. I just had her on my Facebook page last week. She got shot up by the bad guys. She lost. During this terrorism attack, this terrorist attack, she was just was biting off the enemy and just getting shot and she kept going, and so her handler would not just stay there and wait to get a mail order of another dog. He came back and he will be with her. Now she's ready to be adopted out; she's at Lackland Air Force Base, and I don't know if it's happened yet, but her handler's special forces and he was waiting to, he was going to come and adopt her. But meanwhile while she was there – I love this – the guys there including Tech. Sgt. Null, who's in charge of adoption, came up with I think the closest officially that it's gotten for an award for a dog, and I love this, and they are hoping that this may become a prototype if this legislation is passed or even if it's not, I think they are going to keep doing things like this because they know how important it is. I like that they really specialized, they really tailored it to what that dog did. So I'm hoping that there will be more of that in the future.

War may be hell, but it can be pretty nice for the dogs too because instead of being at the kennel most of the time on your base, they are with their handler. They are sharing bunks. This dog, this is a great dog. This is Rex, and he's a, yeah, he's just amazing. He was a real softy, and his handler actually got him a giraffe shaped bed once she was in Iraq and she ordered it mail order and it came in and so he had that. This, you help them, they help you. Has anyone heard of the American Humane Association Hero Dog Awards? That's coming up. If you can go look up hero dog awards and vote for this dog, he represents the military working dog category. We'd love to see a military dog win the Hero Dog Awards this year. It's a pretty big deal. This is Chuck Shuck, his handler and he would give Gabe – this is Gabe, the dog you want to vote for – a hug before every mission because he never knew if it was going to be their last mission for one or the other, and it just goes to that bond that they are not machines, they are not equipment, they are best friends over there, K9 members of the Armed Forces, and we hope that will pass.

There comes a time when separation has to happen, a bond has to be broken sometimes, sometimes by switching handlers. Unfortunately, sometimes the handlers don't make it. This handler was killed while he was helping load someone who was injured into a helicopter, and he was shot in the back of the head. And so he has a little 1-1/2-year-old girl who will be missing her dad, and this dog also I've heard is missing, or was at that time, missing the handler, and this is the dog Stu. I love this picture and how tough. I've talked to handlers who give up their dogs, and they still get misty a couple of years later thinking about that one super special dog, but it's a logistical thing where sometimes the dogs have to go when the handlers can't so they can't be matched up all the time. Another thing, the parting. When their time comes, when the dog dies, it doesn't, the dog doesn't have to die in action but the ceremonies to memorialize them are really incredibly touching. The military working dog ashes here were buried under an oak tree with other military working dogs. They were playing "Taps." There was a gun salute and inside afterward "Amazing Grace" was played on a bagpipe, and the handler rang the bell three times, and there was a sight which was extremely heart breaking. I watched the video, and I think you had a similar ceremony here earlier who was the dog who... Nisan, right, right and you have, there's a video that I'd love to, I'll try to get that on my website of Nisan's memorial. It's really heart breaking. They leave the kennel door open to signify the dog won't need the kennel anymore. They put up the leash and halter harness. They can overturn or put up the water bowls; the dog won't be needing them anymore.

They deserve every honor that they can get. They are incredible dogs. The teams, the military working dog teams, the human part and the dog part. There are people, there are some really good groups out, there's a memorial, a national memorial that we're really hoping comes through. There's one that's going to be at Lackland Air Force Base. It will be nice to have one closer to Washington, D.C. where it's open to the public. They have been working on that for long time, but it's hard to get a monument in Washington, D.C., but there are a lot of smaller memorials. This one is in Riverside, California. There's some good support groups out there, and this is my dog Jake, and earlier this year we got together a little care package, this is stuff that they recommended from the, it was U.S. War Dogs Association, and we sent over a care package and among that was the "Soldier Dogs," my book, and I was happy to hear that the handler got a hold of the book before his dog did because it's a really strange thing going on with my book where dogs seem really attracted to it and this, see this is a library book, not good. I like to think that the dogs are saying that "Soldier Dogs" is a very meaty book that you can sink your teeth into. I don't know what's going on out there, and it's not the only book out there. Mike Lemish, if you're interested in military working dog history, he's done some great books on these dogs, and Nicole Arbelo has a lovely book called "K9 Heroes" and she has a great website if you go to Facebook, actually page, if you go to her Facebook and look up "K9 Heroes," she's got some really great pictures all time. If you would like to like my page, Facebook page, "Soldier Dogs," I'm updating it as well all the time. I'm really honored to be able to tell about these dogs and handlers and help spread the word about the two-legged and four-legged heroes.