

Bill Caughey

Redlands, California

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John,

I spent three and a half years in the Air Force as a sentry dog handler between 1967 and 1971. During those years I spent twenty-seven months in Korea and the Philippines. In 1968 I was "graduated" three weeks early from a mobile Dog School out of Japan on the night the North Koreans seized the Pueblo. The next morning six of us and our dogs flew back to Osan Air Base from the school at Kunsan, and we worked sun down to sun rise till more Security Police and handlers were sent to Korea from the world.

The Security Police Squadron at Osan at least doubled in size in the months after the Pueblo. "Better" yet a battalion (that may be too many - I don't know anything about anyone's Army - but it was a lot) of ROC Army troops patrolled outside our perimeter to provide ground security, and some ancient tracked anti-aircraft weapons sat just outside the fence. How a twenty year old gun armed by kids was gonna shoot down a MIG-21 I'll never know, but it sure looked good. In time the ROC Army became far more of a problem than they were ever a help. A great way to get some days off was to wait for a ROC Army troop to come through the fence and either "catch" or apprehend him. Suprisingly even after they knew we'd find them, they still came through the fence all the time. Either they were stupid, were looking for something to steal, or just curious, but we caught 'em night after night after night. After awhile we didn't get any time off for turning them in, it was too easy. However, everyone still took it seriously because North Korean commandos were said to wear stolen ROC Army uniforms.

Once all the necessary equipment arrived from the world we were required to wear flack vests, and carry regular M-16s and .38s with extra mags and rounds. Machine gun bunkers were built on some of our posts, and we were all happy when they weren't manned because we sometimes found ourselves walking in front of some real "shaky" green peas. We were supposed to take cover in the bunkers if we were "hit," and I don't know about anyone else, but I always wondered what the machine gun crews were gonna do when Brandy and I jumped in with them. But I was even more curious about what they'd do if a Korean jumped in with them. See, an interesting thing about Osan was that we had Korean Army veterans working

with us as dog handlers too. I don't remember how many we had, but they were good men who wore and carried the same gear we did. The only problems I ever saw was their collective "sweet tooth," they always used up all the sugar for our "warm up" coffee the first time the truck came around, and none of them would ever work Brandy.

An aside: Brandy was the ultimate "old school" sentry dog, he never met a man or dog, including me a couple times, he didn't hate on sight. In fact I spent a week in the hospital getting twenty-one penicillin shots as the result of breaking up one of his dog fights while ON POST! Its a great dog war story, but far too long to tell here.

Anyway, carrying all this equipment through the summer was one thing, but the winter was a trip! One night I used the scale at the kennels and weighed my weapons, vest, ammo, radio and my cold weather outer gear, and found that it all weighed seventy pounds. I've been fat all my life, but I lost weight that last winter in Korea, even though I was eating four big meals a day.

I don't recall exactly how cold it got that last winter, but I do remember that we didn't post our dogs a couple times because the wind chill factor was sixty below zero. We of course had to work, so they posted us along the taxi way, which was okay because unlike the perimeter it had places to shelter you from the "hawk." On those nights when the perimeter was without security no one seemed to worry, I guess we all agreed with the Air Force, that not even the most die hard North Koreans would try to take a base when it was that cold.

Last and not least, I tell you all this because the last time I paid dues to the VDHA I was listed as an "associate" because I hadn't served in Vietnam. I wasn't bothered about that at the time, and wouldn't be bothered now, except for what I believe is a newer membership policy based on these lines on the application:

...open to veterans of all military eras
(including active duty personnel) who
have served or are serving in a combat
zone as War Dog Handlers, <snip> or
anyone who served in any capacity with
a K9 unit in combat.

Those of us who served in Korea from '67 and into the 70's went to work assuming that that night could in fact be the night the North Koreans were coming. North Korean commando teams were all over South Korea all the time, and the U.S. Air Bases were obvious targets. I sincerely believe a big reason that we were only probed once (yet another long story) was the quality of security that K-9 provided. We sometimes worked two shifts in weather that was as hot and humid as S.E. Asia in

the summer, and as cold as North Dakota in the winter. I believe it was the “real deal” and yet we couldn’t even get the K-9 standard short barrel AR-15’s (?) because they were all being used in Vietnam. That meant we carried those long M-16s and prayed we’d never have to figure out how to fire one while controlling our dogs. I can only thank God we never had to find out...

John, the VDHA is a wonderful organization, I enjoy it when I receive a copy of the newsletter, and I feel a lot of pride every time I drive by March Field and see the memorial. However, if my service, and the service of my brothers who served with me in Korea doesn’t qualify us for full voting membership, then you are welcome to keep the enclosed \$20.00 as a donation, but please don’t enroll me as an associate member again. I’m not being cranky, <SMILE> okay maybe a wee bit, but I’ve decided that if my time in Korea isn’t enough to “really” join the VDHA, then I don’t want to be a member of any organization where I don’t have the option of trying to serve as an officer.

In any case, thanks for reading this long thing, “Welcome Home,” and all of God’s blessings to you and yours...

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Bill".

USAF – Security Police – K-9

July 1967 – January 1971

"Brandy" – Osan AB, Korea

"Wolf" – Clark AB, Philippines

"Cuddles" (yes Cuddles) – Ellsworth AFB, South Dakota