

# Marine War Dogs

Story by Cyril J. O'Brien • Photos courtesy of the author



Boy, a doberman pinscher, and his Marine handler, Cpl Harold N. Flagg of Fairfield, Maine, displayed a Japanese banner they captured on Okinawa. Boy had been wounded in the leg after spotting a Japanese ambush.

## Part II (conclusion)

### SAIPAN

**T**here were no dogs in the Saipan landing, but in November 1944, 30 men and 15 dogs of the 2d Platoon under Lieutenant Robert N. Dowell and Platoon Sergeant Raymond C. Barnowsky were spun off Guam for mopping up on the sister Mariana island. It was a tedious and dangerous job. The Second Marine Division and the Army had certainly not accounted for all the enemy. Corporal Marvin M. Corff recalled the patrols, particularly one with Private First Class Grover C. Dixon and dog Rusty. The two pairs parted at a forked road. In minutes there was a shot, and Dixon was dead from a sniper too far away and too high for a dog to detect.

On the same day, Sergeant James Brooker, Raleigh, N.C., who developed

Prince into "sterner stuff," got eight Japanese on top of Mount Tapotchau, Saipan. "We're going to grow old together," he had said. And they did.

Once a patrol came on a host of Japanese "well armed and well fed," and 13 of them surrendered, although a few die-hards were killed. The records won't forget Mitzi von Zeleny of Kenneth Malone, Keyser, W.Va., who pointed out nine Japanese on Saipan. That is after she had nailed 27 of them on Guam. Three handlers, Sgt Vincent Dentino and PFCs Rudolph R. Truppi and Lewellyn R. Smart, were also killed on Saipan as they tried to rescue a pilot from his crashed aircraft which exploded.

PFC Guy Mason Wachtstetter, now a real estate broker in Davie, Fla., lost his heroic Tubby, a German police dog (shared with PFC Vincent W. Salvaggio,

Philadelphia), "shot through the heart." Wachtstetter recalled the small team (including PFC Robert W. Johnson, Carrollton, Ohio) that was sent to clean out an islet adjacent to Saipan. Authorities didn't explain that it was the bomb dump for returning B-29s. Wachtstetter and his team came up on a submarine just in time for a bomb drop which the more experienced Japanese eluded.

The Guam dog contingent made a visit to Rota under Lt William T. Taylor (after the war) to pick up the grateful and living Japanese. And because dogs did everything, the Saipan dog team meandered out to an isolated rock pinnacle on a waterless, shadeless, city block's worth of barren coral. The lonely, skinny, little Japanese made no attempt to kill himself, but eagerly grasped an enemy hand to be pulled aboard.

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## PELELIU

PFC Thomas B. Price buried Chips, his doberman, 47 years ago in a dry sandy grave at Chance, a little Maryland outpost. He still visits, tidies up the brush, even passes a familiar word. Their partnership never ended, especially after how close they were on Peleliu.

They were hardly ashore just before noon under the usual hail of small arms, but at early evening a particularly heavy cascade of mortar rounds came in. Price got behind a coconut log and pulled the 67-pound doberman to him, but steel splinters spiked Chips' back. Chips got over that to endure much of the campaign. In a hodgepodge terrain with jungle, sheer coral cliffs, open land and swamp water to Price's waist, his dog swam beside him. Chips never barked, just a low rumble in his throat. Price was wounded twice.

The 4th Plt was under First Lieutenant Allen Crankshaw with Staff Sergeant Willard Layton, and the 5th Plt was under 1st Lt Edward N. Morgan with PltSgt Warren H. Pruitt. Each had some 55 men and 35 dogs. Their target was a little fly speck of an atoll on the southern tip of the 45-mile-long Palau archipelago. Danger was everywhere, but PFC Price thought Chips helped diminish it by smelling out two successive ambushes. Price got a letter of commendation out of it.

Cpl Harold N. Flagg, Fairfield, Maine, 5th Plt, was taking a break with a patrol when the ears of his doberman named Boy stiffened. Flagg and his dog moved ahead to expose a waiting ambush position. It was a big one with machine guns and other automatic weapons. Cpl Flagg couldn't afford to wait for the patrol to move up, and he opened fire. He drew a lot of Japanese fire which wounded Boy. The patrol arrived and disposed of the ambush. The dog recovered and was commended, and Flagg was awarded the Bronze Star.

Patrols were the order of the day every day for the 5th Plt under Lt Morgan. The platoon arrived on D-Day and was on patrol the next morning (Sept. 17). Sniper fire was intense, and the dogs were sent to root it out. They found pillboxes and once nosed out "several," destroying the strong points without loss of a single Marine, impossible without the senses of the dogs.

Dogs spotted the enemy 75, even 100, yards out front. Coral tore up their feet. Blitz, Buddy, Dutch and Satan, badly cuffed by mortar barrages, were diagnosed as shellshocked. Others were down with deafness and concussion. That even got to hardy PFC Charles F. Shanks, taken out with the same concussion and exhaustion.

A random combat report by Lt Crankshaw stated: "28 September...9 dogs sent to 1st Battalion. Many attempts



**PFC Peter F. Louquet and his German shepherd scout dog, Christy, were photographed on Feb. 23, 1945, during the Battle of Iwo Jima.**

made to infiltrate through the lines; all unsuccessful. A great many Japs found in morning (dead)."

The 4th and 5th Platoons lost PFCs Donald R. Knutson, Norman F. "Penrod" Schofield, Henry Weston Doffins and John Henry "Red" Dyer. Dogs lost were Butch, Duke, Hanz and Blitz.

## IWO JIMA

Four and a half miles long, shaped like a porkchop, 660 miles from Japan, Iwo was critical to the Allies and Japanese alike. It was tight, rocky and sandy, and much of the fighting was at small-arms and grenade range. It was not dog country.

Still, the dogs were heavily involved. Two died along with 12 handlers. There was no need to smell out the enemy. They were all around you. Lt Taylor,

who took the 3d Plt ashore with the Third Marine Division, said that as the battle commenced they sheltered dogs by day, and then they watched for the men at night. Later, there were patrols, ambushes and caves. Yet even the caves were not the same. Unlike Guam, Peleliu and Saipan where caves were holes in the ground, scoops in the turf, explained Lt Taylor, on Iwo, caves were subterranean caverns, hundreds of feet down, some three stories with multiple outlets.

Dogs still smelled them out, even if they didn't enter. On one dog-nose-intelligence strike, an aircraft homed in and blew away the side of a hill. Demolition experts, engineers and flame throwers followed the dogs.

Iwo was where PFC Walter Josefiak, 19, of Detroit and his doberman, Rusty, were killed. Bill Ross tells of them in his book "Iwo Jima." PFC Patrick Dale of Marion, Ohio, was there with his doberman and tells how Josefiak killed three of the enemy at a cave mouth, but was mortally wounded by a mortar round. Rusty ran to protect his wounded master from further harm, but was killed as well when a grenade fell beside them both. Iwo was the worst of campaigns, and Lt Taylor recalled how his platoon also lost Corporals Frederick E. Cato, William M. Edwards, Stanley Terrell and PFCs Henry R. Doutre, William B. North and Donald L. Rydgie.

Sgt Dale Quillen, now an attorney in Nashville, Tenn., who helped Lt William W. Putney manage Guam's Third Division

dogs, explained that on Iwo many handlers became infantrymen. In fact, without a dog, he volunteered in place of a family man and wound up in Cushman's Pocket, one of the highest casualty zones of the whole war.

PFC Pete Louquet of Chincoteague, Va., with a doberman named Christy went ashore with the 55 men and 36 dogs of the 7th Plt. He was assigned to the 25th Marines, 4thMarDiv.

A Philadelphian, Lt John Murphy, 7th Plt leader, got things organized, then was wounded, and PltSgt Michael Nuzolla took over. Searching caves and crannies on Iwo became a dangerous routine, Louquet recalled, and there were often surprises such as when Japanese pelted a cave mouth from above with grenades. The 7th Plt lost Sgt Howard B. Inman, Private Edwin D.

Maddox and Pvt Leo O. Strickland.

The 6th Plt under Lt Robert Worth came ashore with about the same number of dogs and men. It lost Pvt James E. Wallace, killed by a mortar round on a security post. His dog Fritz was wounded. Jummy, a German shepherd, set up three infiltrators for Pvt W. T. Davis to dispatch with a hand grenade, an incident repeated often. The 6th Plt's late-April combat report also made clear how "unfavorable" Iwo was for organized patrols. That wasn't a concern for Cpl Virgil W. Burgess with courier dog Prince, who'd dart from a sandbagged foxhole to deliver to a corpsman or wounded Marine the lifesaving bandage strapped to his back.

But Iwo wasn't all bad, if you liked crabmeat. There was never crabmeat like the Japanese canned it, reminisced PFC Russell L. Schomp, Belleville, N.J., 6th Plt, Fifth Marine Division. "Russ" knew of a whole slew of it at the base of Suribachi, where his 26th Marines controlled. Guys of the 28th heard, and they all formed a little requisition party. Mark, the doberman, led, but when the scrounging party neared the crab treasure trove the doberman froze and raised his hackles. "What? Japs in the crabmeat?" Yes, but he was a lone, skinny little Japanese soldier without a rifle. The Marines took him prisoner and gave him some crabmeat.

PFC Raymond N. Moquin recalled



PFC Francis M. "Frank" Hall and his dog took a short break to be photographed on Iwo during the battle.

dark-to-dawn Iwo watches. Early one morning, Carl, a doberman, started "snorting and grabbing at the breeze with his nose." Moquin alerted the sergeant by tugging on a string. "There was nothing...nothing, so we tried to calm Carl down! Still, even at that, it was better Carl was so alert. Then 30 minutes later the ground erupted with screaming, sword-wielding Japanese, in a great *ban-zai*. It seemed to last for the longest time, but it didn't," said Moquin. "Thanks

to Carl, the men were up and waiting. The Japanese really fell."

Pharmacist's Mate Robert R. Steele recalled how Rex, a German shepherd, was buried at sea off Iwo Jima. Ironically, after he saved many Marines by rushing blood plasma to the front so they could hang on, the doctors couldn't save him from a sniper's wound.

## OKINAWA

With wooded razorback ridges armed as fortresses, open ground to target a dog a quarter mile away, cities and people, Okinawa gave dog platoons a fit and laid out the kind of battlefield they'd never hazarded before. Even the approach was dramatic as a *kamikaze* aircraft blasted a sampling of dogs and men off an LST into the water. All were rescued, no casualties.

First Lieutenant Robert W. Killoran brought the 1st Plt ashore with 50 men and 34 dogs with the Sixth Marine Division. With him were the, by now, seasoned veterans Gunnery Sergeant Leo Crismore and Bob Forsyth, who'd be a second lieutenant when this battlefield was put to rest. It was the 4th Plt under Lt Crankshaw that went ashore this time, including elements of the 5th Plt which were combined into it to make a unit landing strength of 70 men and 37 dogs. They faced a grueling future on the steep hill masses the 1stMarDiv would assault.

Sgt Orlando Guy Mariorana, with assistance from Sgt Angelo Defuso, came ashore with a small team of 13 dogs and 14 men of the 2d War Dog Plt. They had been with the 2dMarDiv, which executed a diversionary feint. Its Eighth Regiment, however, did later go ashore to support the advance south, and the 2d Plt went with them.

Ashore and distributed to companies in unfamiliar land, command presented problems. Caves, crannies and other hideaways were commonplace, yet PFC John V. Rich of Washington, D.C., and his doberman, Fritz, nailed nearly 50 Japanese, using old routines.

In his 4th Plt campaign report, Lt Crankshaw told of new incidents like snakebite, women and children in the field and some Japanese who would surrender. Nero, with Cpl McBane, was killed by a trip-wired grenade on the trail. Yet, Nero spared the lives of several Marines behind him. PFC Robert Targett's dog, Comet, forced out one enemy soldier who went back to get six others. Cpl Joseph Kervitsky had Arno with a nose so sensitive the Marines around him could sleep until the cows came home.

On one afternoon patrol Cpl Charles



Two more dog handlers and their dobermans on Iwo Jima



Members of a Marine war dog platoon moved up to the front lines on Iwo. The dogs were a great asset with their ability to ferret out enemy snipers and with their speed as messengers.

W. McElroy's Butch didn't take the break when the platoon took its usual five minutes. That was good because the Japanese were sneaking up on the patrol. Butch stopped that. One Japanese was killed; three fled. Rex, with PFC Edward S. Klujnsza, found a wounded Marine in the brush. Cpl Stephen G. Salata's Goodie uncovered an ambush so strong the patrol had to withdraw for reinforcements.

But sometimes the dragon wins. A Japanese soldier bopped Samson (Cpl James A. Chesson's dog) on the head and got away. Marines caught him later. The same formidable Samson faced a squad of grenade-wielding, sword-swinging Japanese before the Marines came up to hasten their demise. Rex was bitten by the viper; he could have died, but didn't.

Killed in the 1st Plt was Cpl Laurence Stevenson. Cpl William C. Vaughn and PFC Joseph C. Kranick were lost in the 4th along with dogs Baron, Eric and Nero.

## TOO MANY PEOPLE

Sgt Mariorano, 2d Plt, said dogs could be overwhelmed by the numbers of people who would press against American lines. The dogs counted every one, though. Marines were eager to protect civilians, but were cautious lest women and children be used as buffers in a Japanese attack. General Charles Davis, Savannah, Ga., 77th Army, recalled the Japanese doing just that in his sector.

The canefields were another thing again, recalled Cpl Bruce S. Wellington, Camarillo, Calif. They could rattle like castinets. Once an enemy ambush coiled under the cane ground cuttings, but doberman Prince raised his hackles, and the Marines dug up the earth with automatic-weapons fire.

Cpl Raymond L. "Banjo" Tomaszewski, a veteran from the beginning at Hadnot Point at Camp Lejeune, N.C., was part of a half-dozen dog-man contingent sent to clean out Ie Shima where

Ernie Pyle was killed while accompanying the 77th Division. And, yes, there was always time for love. Mitzi von Zeleny (Kenneth M. Malone, Keyser, W.Va.) bore six puppies on the way to Guam. It didn't slow her pace to leave them, for she racked up a discovery record of 29 no-surrender Japanese.

Cpl John C. Lyon now from Anacortes, Wash., was living in New Mexico in 1957 when his doberman, Duke, died. He buried Duke far out and deep in the desert under a great big sky. Duke had spotted a dozen potential ambushes on Guam and Okinawa.

## THINKING LIKE A DOG

PFC Johnson felt Little Pal, a doberman, was the most sensitive dog in the world and saved lives to prove it. But, said the "old sarge," it was risky to think like a dog. They have their own values.

"Take being sleepy! You can't impress him with a state of emergency. If he's tired, he goes to sleep," said GySgt Crismore.



Pvt Rez P. Hester, 7th War Dog Plt, 25th Marines, 4thMarDiv on Iwo took a nap while his doberman stood guard.

This unhinged some Marines until they saw dogs come vigilantly to life when a twig snapped out front.

But they didn't have to be purebreds. Dusty of Pat Dale was part shepherd and something else, but he had the smarts of a Philadelphia lawyer. Before the Guam campaign, Dale, who grew up with Carolina farm animals, beagles, coons and coon dogs, gave Dusty persona: night drills on Guadalcanal. It acquainted the precocious cross-breed with the "sounds of everything." About the Japanese he'd learn later. The extra exposure paid off handsomely on Guam where Dale killed two infiltrators without leaving his fox-hole and stopped an attack that left 14 Japanese dead within grenade range. It was the same on Iwo, and Dale and Dusty got by with only lacerations from a Japanese hand grenade.

### EVALUATING

Dr. Putney said many graybeards spoiling grandchildren today might never have returned were it not for some brave dog.

There were minuses, like a few eager

officers and NCOs right out of the States who failed to heed the wisdom and experience of battle-honed combat veterans and got themselves or others killed. The 3dMarDiv eventually banned inexperienced officers and NCOs from leading patrols. Colonel Alan Shapley, formerly head of the Second Raiders, didn't trust such newly arrived personnel after his association with the dogs on Bougainville, Guam and Okinawa. He once sent a Stateside commando packing lest he interfere with the dogs.

PFC Edmund Adamski, Calumet City, Ill., said there was precious little rest for the dog handlers until the war was over. By day they patrolled and at night they watched their dogs for signs they might give. Otherwise, who would pass the word when the dogs were alerted?

Marine archives also have the record of Duke, a German shepherd, and Army Sgt Arthur N. Tyler, Livingston Manor, N.Y. Duke served with the Army and Australians in New Guinea and made the landing with the 1stMarDiv at Cape Gloucester, New Britain.

The combat phase for dogs was

closed in November 1945 when 232 dogs and 270 enlisted men under Captain Louis W. Davis left Guam's final and only remaining Pacific dog encampment on board USS *Merrick* for the United States. Capt Davis, who had been Hadnot Point's first training officer and was then CO of war dogs, had gone to Guam to return the platoons.

In all, 1,047 dogs served in the Marine Corps in World War II, and 327 were still on duty in the Pacific when the war ended; 465 served overseas; 29 were killed in action, 25 on Guam where dogs served on 500 patrols. Five were missing, and 19 died in the field of various causes.

It took a year back at Camp Lejeune where it all started to detrain 491 old canine war vets (from overseas and Stateside). All were returned to safe and comfortable firesides with original owners or wartime handlers by 1946. Putney executed that effort under Major Harold Gors, executive officer and veterinarian for the center. Maj Jackson Boyd had relinquished his post that July. Now 1stLt Raymond Barnowsky came back

to help detain and close shop as did 1stSgt David J. Satanowski. Col Lewis B. "Chesty" Puller, then at Camp Lejeune, was "gung ho" on the dogs. It was his urging that kept Dr. Putney on an extra year into 1946 to put the successful program to bed.

There was not a single case of bite or injury caused by war dogs who returned home.

Today there's a cemetery on Guam for the 25 war dogs who died on that island. It's a little green square, bordered by palms and bougainvillea, bound by the circular concrete track of a Japanese antiaircraft emplacement.

The dogs were buried in honor after World War II, but their resting place became a remote jungle site hidden by waist-high grass and undergrowth. Dr. Putney made a mission to visit the site and vowed to change all that. He promised, "They're going to have a place of honor before I crawl into my hole." He had the early help of Navy nurse Lieutenant Susan Carmack, who personally cleared the site. With help of the government of Guam and the U.S. Navy the war dog cemetery was moved to the bright green sward on the naval station where it will always be readily accessible and have perpetual care.

The dogs are memorialized at the entrance of the cemetery by a lifesize bronze image titled "Always Faithful." Its model was Kurt, the doberman who died of wounds in Dr. Putney's arms. The sculpture is the work of Susan Bahary



War dogs at a ceremony while they were being discharged. It took a year to demilitarize them.

Wahy Wilner, Sausalito, Calif., a breeder of Afghan hounds. It was commissioned by the United Doberman Club, and funds for it were donated by doberman admirers. The granite pedestal contributed by Dr. Putney contains the names of Kurt, Skipper, Nig, Missy, Blitz, Bursch, Yonnie, Poncho, Prince, Cappy, Arno, Pepper, Koko, Tubby, Fritz, Duke, Silver, Ludwig, Bunkie, Hobo, Emmy, Max, Brockie, Rickey and Tam (buried at sea). The graves are marked with small, white headstones.

Attending the ceremonies were handlers Earl Wright, Mason Wachtstetter, Harry Brown, Dale Quillen, Raymond Tomaszewski and Thurman Clark.

The cemetery was dedicated on July 21, 1994, on the 50th anniversary to the day of the beginning of Guam's liberation.

A native of Farmville, Va., and graduate of Auburn University, Capt Putney, commander of 3d Dog Plt and veterinarian of the 2d and 3d Platoons, was the last chief veterinarian of the War Dog Training School. Before he secured the center in September 1946 he was its last commander.

"I can tell you these are some of the greatest warriors the Marine Corps ever fielded," said Dr. Putney, in a sudden driving tropical rain so typical of the days recalled. "I was proud to have led them in battle 50 years ago, and I am just as proud of them today. I can go to my own grave satisfied."

Then Commandant of the Marine Corps, Gen Carl E. Mundy, paid the final tribute to the dogs. He called them all Marines.

*Editor's note: Cy O'Brien served as an infantryman in a rifle company in the 3d Marines on Bougainville. He was later a combat correspondent on Guam and Iwo Jima. Following World War II he spent 12 years in the Marine Corps Reserve, retiring as a captain.*

*The dog bronze (opposite) is available in two sizes from the sculptress. See ad on page 69.*



Former members of war dog platoons posed with sculptress Susan Bahary Wilner at the dedication of the war dog memorial on Guam July 21, 1994, during the 50th anniversary of the battle.



# 20th Marine Corps Marathon

Story by Tom Bartlett

No one seemed surprised when a General won the annual marathon held in Washington, D.C. Many military officers participate in the run. After all, it is the Marine Corps Marathon.

Least surprised was the man himself, Darrell General. He not only predicted victory, but prophesied he'd win in record time.

At the finish line, as runners passed the 25th- and 26th-mile markers, the announcer stated, "General is out front by a commanding lead. Lance Corporal Sean Birren is in second place."

Marines within earshot were grinning; a General was in front, and a Marine lance corporal was in second.

But it was not to be.

General's 2:16.34 was short of the record by Jeff Scuffins (2:14.01) set in 1987, and the Marine lance corporal did not finish among the top 10 male runners.

Still, most of the 16,200 runners who began the 20th Marine Corps Marathon seemed pleased with the run, the weather and the hospitality extended by the Marines along the route. Twenty years of marathons! Hard to believe...

Back in 1975, 1,175 runners competed in the *first* Marine Corps Reserve Marathon. Obviously the Marines did something right. Word spread. Runners responded. The marathon grew...and grew.

Kenneth Moore won that first one (2:21.14) with West Point Cadet Sam Maizel second (2:25.02) and Marine Corporal Fredrico Buitron of G/2/5, Camp Pendleton, Calif., third (2:26.32). All three had qualifying times for the Boston Marathon in 1976.

Marine participants Thomas R. Siggins of Little Creek, Va.; William Eiler of Camp Pendleton; Richard May of Quantico, Va.; and Derek Williamson of



Sgt Michael McLean