

A friend recalls fateful night when Bob Hartsock earned Medal of Honor

(The February issue of DOGMAN reported on Robert W. Hartsock, a dog handler with the 44th IPSD who was awarded the Medal of Honor posthumously for his heroic actions 30 years ago. His friend, Mike Landers, gives us more details of that night.)

by MICHAEL P. LANDERS
VDHA member

I spent that whole day (Feb. 23, 1969) with Bob Hartsock and Sgt. Rodgers.

My Tracker Team was on a rotation to the Dau Tieng area. We sent a Tracker team to the 3rd Brigade every week.

Bob Hartsock was an average good guy. He laughed a lot and we discussed ironies of life, the things we were going to do when we got out of the Army, and of course things back home in the real World.

The 44th Scout Dog Platoon had to man two bunkers on the base. At about 8:00, Bob Hartsock, Sgt. Rodgers and I went to the bunker line to make sure everything was all right.

It was just a routine day and evening. They were checking machine guns ammo, etc.

At dusk Charlie started lobbing



Robert W. Hartsock, above, and at breakfast the day he earned the Medal of Honor.



mortars into the base. After about 10 minutes, the 44th Scout Dog Platoon leader showed up at the bunkers to let Sgt. Hartsock and Sgt. Rodgers know he had all the other men at their positions, and to let me know my men were taken care of.

He said he needed Bob or Sgt. Rodgers to go back with him and again check on the men. Since he had secured my team, I told him I'd stay on the bunker line with one of the bunkers and Sgt. Rodgers said he'd take care of the other one. So Bob said he'd go with the LT.

This was all about 9 or 9:30 that night. Sgt. Rodgers and I stayed with the bunkers throughout the night, and returned to the platoon area about daylight. That's when the LT told us Bob had saved his life and probably many others as well in the Brigade Headquarters.

It didn't surprise me that Bob would jump on a satchel charge to save a friend. He was that type of guy—good, decent, friendly, easy going.

If you met him you'd walk away saying "damned nice guy, really personable."

KENNEL TALK

*Bennett donates
\$300,000 to fund*

by TOM MITCHELL
VDHA Chairman

We did it! The War Dogs film was an overwhelming success. Our goal of educating the public has finally been realized. In just a few short minutes, countless Americans watched and learned how our dogs protected and loved us. And how in turn we loved them. It was in fact a love story we were finally able to tell.

A BIG thank you to everyone involved, but especially to the VDHA members who bared their souls in front of the cameras.

A special thanks goes to VDHA member George Hock, GRB producers John Drimmer and Tim Prokop, and to Jeff Bennett and Laura Benge of Nature's Recipe Pet Foods.

In the days following the airing of War Dogs on Feb. 15, over 1,000 people sent e-mails to VDHA President Randy Kimler and VDHA Secretary Craig Lord. They both did an unbelievable job in responding to each one and answering questions. As Randy told me, "It is fun!" Ninety-nine percent of them

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Platoon member remembers night Hartsock earned Medal of Honor

by LAMAR SMITH

"Smitty" at the 44th IPSD

I was the vet tech at the 44th IPSD from July 1968 to June of 1969 and served with Bob Hartsock and his best friend Roger Forbes, also from Maryland.

I was not aware that Bob had won The Congressional Medal of Honor until I read "Medal of Honor" from the VDHA web page. I had heard that he was to be nominated for the honor and have wondered for the past 32 years what honor he had been given based on actions that fateful night.

I was one of the guys who was manning one of three perimeter bunkers that the 44th had each night in Dau Tieng. The article in the April 1999 issue of DOGMAN was correct in saying that Bob had come to our bunker on that night and of course he was with Roger. I note that the gentleman who wrote the article, a man I am not familiar with, identified Roger as Sgt. Rodgers. That is a picture of Roger that is in the newsletter. If corrections can be made, his identity is Sgt. Roger Forbes.

I do have a couple of pictures of Bob. I also have a couple of pictures of Roger Forbes. I keep mentioning Roger because the two of them were inseparable.

I do have first hand knowledge of Feb. 23, 1969. Our base camp was overrun that night. It was not a mortar and rocket attack as I have seen written. The NVA had planned the attack for a very long time. They had tunneled from outside the wire to near the center of base camp, close to Battalion Headquarters.

They popped up out of that hole, and set up a machine gun nest. They blew up a bunker two bunkers down from mine and entered the base camp there. They blew up the bunker at the base of the airport runway and entered there.

The sapper squad that Bob encountered came from the bunker near me or from the tunnel near headquarters, I don't know which.

(Hartsock opened fire on the sapper team and, though seriously wounded by a thrown satchel charge, he continued firing at the enemy and holding them off until other Americans could make it to his bunker and repel the attack. He was posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor for his courageous actions that night.)

Events of that night have run through my mind a million times. I do know that Bob Hartsock is a true American hero and I am glad that tribute is being paid to him.