

War Dogs! Memorial:
Feelings and Thoughts
I was at the War Dogs Memorial...

For the next issue of DogMan we want to include a variety of thoughts and feelings from those who were able to attend the War Dog Memorial dedication. When you have a moment, send us an e-mail describing the dedication and how you felt so the rest of the membership can get a feel for what happened. Thank you so much for everything. It was a great success. I am pretty drained right now, so until later....

Tom Mitchell

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I touched Buddy, once again by **John Stark** I want to thank everyone for all of the hard work making the memorial a reality. I also want to thank all of the members of the VFW who made us feel so welcome and comfortable. While standing and waiting for the memorial to be unveiled and watching the honor guards from other agencies march in, the long forgotten came back. As one of the dog teams passed I turned to my wife and said, "That dog looks like Buddy." I walked over to the handler and introduced myself telling him his dog looks just like my service dog. The handler said, "You can pet him if you like." I gave the dog a pat or three and thanked him for being there. Then came the unveiling and the handlers were asked to come forward and place a rose on the memorial. With rose in hand waiting to move forward memories of the last two hours I spent with Buddy came back. *I remembered sitting next to him in his kennel telling him he would be getting another handler, for him to take care of, that would love him as I did. I could feel his fur as I groomed him for the last time. The final hugs, his lick on my cheek along with his cold wet nose.* Waiting still to move forward, the vision of Buddy sitting there watching me walk away for the last time. These memories all came back, stronger than ever. Finally I moved forward and placed the rose and touched the cold wet nose of Buddy once again. Buddy you are not forgotten, you have now come home. Welcome. John Stark, Phan Rang, 1965-1966

A Tribute To The War Dogs by **James W. Click** Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2000 There are so many feelings and thoughts, more than I could ever put to pen and paper. I knew it would be an emotional time, especially after reading about Don's visit to the memorial on Valentine's Day. I sat there in front of my computer and wept. Everything that had been buried inside me for these 32 years since I left Vietnam came flowing out. I have never felt so proud of what we tried to accomplish while serving our country. Being there at the dedication was an honor and an awesome experience. It brought all the handlers together for one purpose. Whether they were Army, Navy, Air Force or Marines they were there to remember and honor their K9 partner. Remembering my partner, Rinny A116, and all those long nights on post together. I depended on his eyes and ears and experience. He could hear the sound of the incoming rockets before me, and when he jumped into our bunker I was right behind him, no questions asked. THANK YOU! Tom Mitchell for all your long hours bringing this all together; Mr. Tom Schomberg for creating a truly masterful work of art; Mr. Jeff Bennett and all the people at Natures Reciepe; and last but not least, all the skirts that put in so many hours. A TRIBUTE TO THE WAR DOGS by James W. Click © , 2000 YOU GOT YOUR ORDERS TO GO. TO DO WHAT YOU WERE TRAINED TO DO. PROTECT THE PERIMETER OF A SPRAWLING BASE OR WALK THE POINT OF A PATROL. WITH EYES AND NOSE AND EVEN YOUR EARS YOU DID YOUR DUTY WITH LITTLE OR NO FEAR. TO DETECT AND WARN OF IMMINENT DANGER TO ATTACK AND HOLD. WITH NO HESITATION AND A FERVENT DESIRE, TO DO THE JOB EVEN UNDER HEAVY ENEMY FIRE. YOU WERE A FRIEND AND A COMPANION EVEN A CONFIDANT. WE WALKED THE WALK TOGETHER BUT TODAY I MUST TALK THE TALK ALONE. HOW TRUSTING AND LOYAL YOU WERE BUT THEY SAID YOU COULDN'T ALL COME HOME. BUT GOD'S WORD PROCLAIMS "LET EVERYTHING THAT HAS BREATH PRAISE THE LORD" YOUR TOUR OF DUTY IS LONG OVER, YOU WORKED SO VERY HARD MAYBE IN THAT HOUSE OF MANY MANSIONS YOU ARE STILL STANDING GUARD. James W. Click, SGT. 366th SPS DaNang, Sentry Dog Section

I was moved to tears by **Joan Elder** Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2000 The first time I heard about the Vietnam Dog Handlers Association was in 1997. Norm Ream took me to meet Tom Mitchell to begin planning the 1998 San Diego reunion. As our planning sessions progressed it became very clear to me that this is a very special group of people who are focused on remembering their dogs. I immediately became a committed supporter of VDHA. The gathering in San Diego was special as it reunited VDHA members for three days of sharing experiences and memories of Vietnam and the dogs that meant so much. I was privileged to sit at the check-in table and

watch as many of you eagerly awaited the arrival of the friends you had not seen for so long. I was moved to tears as I witnessed the emotion of your reunions. The War Dogs Memorial dedication was a very moving and long awaited moment I will never forget. Just as the "War Dogs" movie was a tribute to the dogs and their handlers, the Memorial displays strength and integrity to all who visit. I join all of you in offering my thanks to Jeff Bennett and Tom Mitchell and all who made the memorial a reality. I look forward to seeing you in Washington, D.C. for the reunion on October, 2000. Joan Elder, Miramar Travel

A Bitter-Sweet Flashback by **Seth Hart** Sent: Sunday, February 27, 2000 To Everyone: Talk about a bitter sweet flashback. The last 30 years have flown by like a dream. I felt honored to be in the presence of so many wonderful people at the dedication. Heroes all in my opinion. Charlie and I along with his son had breakfast at IHOP in Riverside the morning of the ceremony and discussed old memories. How to start to say thank you to all who had a part in putting this together would take more pages than our paper DOGMAN could handle in the next few years so I'll try to summarize. To Mr. Bennet and CO--a big Thank You for your involvement--and I know Tom went the extra mile in all the things involved in putting this together. The VFW in my opinion deserves a big Thank You for making us feel like special people. The police departments in my opinion did great in their show of support. Those guys have on their team real winners! After all, who can lose with all those fine animals. In something of the magnitude of what climaxed on Monday the 21st there are always people that worked quietly behind the scenes that made sacrifices that would be hard to say thank you to enough. To those people I would say God Bless You real big because of your labor--you made it a great day for this Dog Handler. I also would say I sensed a *mystical side* to the occasion. I imagined all the dogs that had ever served showing up in the spirit and saying *thanks guys* for finally remembering and showing us honor. I want to say also Thank You to my Creator for guiding my steps in the direction of the dog program at Ft. Benning. It was almost accidental, or coincidental, that I became involved in the Scout Dog program. To God I say Thank You and I am eternally grateful for allowing me to serve with such a fine group of men and dogs. On a final note I would challenge every Dog Handler to ask yourself the question, "Why did I make It back and how can I make it up"? I'm here in one piece so how can I serve my fellow man and my God? God gave us a great gift when he gave us our dogs but he gave us a greater gift when he gave his own Son to die in our place. If you were to pass from this life today, where would you spend eternity? Thanks again to everyone that had anything to do with putting the dedication together, and God Bless You real good. It was a day I will long remember. Yours Truly, Seth D. Hart, 57th IPSD, 48th IPSD

My Wonderful Friend, King by **Dewayne Lynde** Sent: Friday, February 25, 2000 7:22 PM I'm just now starting to get over the cold from Monday; yet it is a day I will remember the rest of my life. I have only been aware of the War Dog Memorial since September 1999, when one night I couldn't sleep and was watching Discovery Channel. Two days later, my wife saw an article in the Family Circle Magazine. I have only been a member since October 1999. Yet an organization that I belong to has been very supportive of the Memorial. I have had many chats with Mo in the last four months. The dedication... was very moving, as I sat there listening and watching the police officers with their dogs, and seeing in their eyes how they loved and respected their animals... I was thankful; they were there. It gave me a sense that someone else knew what it was like, or would be like, to leave your best friend behind. I sat thinking, and thanking Dr. Kent for saving King when he had heart-worm, and supporting me the many nights King's kennel was my bed. As I walked down to touch the Memorial, and place my Rose, I just wanted time to stand still, for just a little while. I know that King (A150) had many handlers, and I know that he took good care of us all... but I know that I have to go back and spend some more time just to say *thank you, my wonderful friend, for in you I found what hard work, loyalty, and trust were really all about.* Thank you, Tom Mitchell and Jeff Bennett, and the skirts, for all the time and effort you put in to making the dedication a very meaningful event. The rain... the earthquake... just added memories of the day. And yes... a very grateful THANK YOU VFW 9223... Thank You! Duane Lynde, 366th SPS, 66-67

There is a great peace now for me by **Steve Janke**, VSPA Chaplain Subject: War Dog Memorial(Chaplain's Corner) On President's Day I was one of the guest speakers for the dedication of this beautiful statue. There were dog handlers there from every branch of the service that served in Vietnam and Thailand. Among them were of course our own Air Force sentry and patrol dog handlers, many of whom I met for the first time. I met some from my old base at Phu Cat and we served in different years but much of our recollections were the same. I can't explain the pride I felt to be there and to pay honor to those four footed canine heroes. There is a great peace now for me in being able to have a part in that. We left behind our best friend to an unknown future. That has been righted with the help of American citizens who responded to the war dog video and helped pay for the statue. They are not forgotten any more. It was good to see other VSPA members there to support us. Thank you, and guys if you can ever get away to visit the memorial it will be a blessing to you. Peace, over and out for now. Steve Janke/Chaplain

Show us the Way Home by **Larry M. Gandy** "Ducknose" Subject: War Dog Dedication The ceremony and memorial have taken my breath away. I have cried off and on for several days. I left not one but two dogs when I left viet nam. I have never really gotten over the fact that I never said good bye. I was laughing and having a good time, but when the memorial was unveiled, the dog could... have been either Bing or Rocky... looked right through me and I fell apart. They were our freinds, our protectors, and our children. They literally lived and died for us. I'm so proud to say that I have been a dog handler and associated with such a fine group of men. It's an absolute that dog handlers or a breed among themselves, and we will be brothers through eternity. We were something else: brave and not afraid of any thing -- let alone death -- but will cry our eyes out when we think of the wonderful freinds and partners we had in our K-9s. The memorial will always be sacred ground for me, and I plan on returning from time to time when I need to feel the spirit of Bing and Rocky. I've already ordered my tiles and feel good knowing that I have the chance to honor them both at the memorial. I personally would like to thank Tom Mitchell for all the work he's put in to the organization and memorial. I was very touched by his devotion and memories of Buck. I can still see Buck running to the end of his leash and being yanked off his feet while Tom was leaving. Life can be sad, but much richer for our experiences with these magnificent animals. It seems that time is flying by and we're probably all on the down hill pull, hopefully a just god will reunite us with our dogs in heaven, to help show us the way home. It was great being around all of you at the memorial, and I will never forget this rich and wonderful experience. Your Freind; Larry M. Gandy, (USAF) AF18677588

A Dream Come True by **Larry M. Gandy** dream come true by **Charlie Cargo** I want to thank Jeff Bennett for all the time, effort and hard work he has done to have the War Dog memorial completed. We now have a place to visit and muse about our time with our dogs. It is more stunning than I ever imagined. Laura and Mo, you did a terrific job of getting the many things done so it would be such a success. To Tom Mitchell for the entire long days and nights you spent working out the many details for this monument and dedication. The monument has a power and depth that I could never dreamed of. When I checked into the motel in Riverside I ran into Laura Bengel. She asked if I had seen it yet and I told her no. She said, "Charlie, don't go until tomorrow. You just need to wait until it's unveiled to get the full impact." On her advice I did just that. I visited with some other handlers in my room, and you could hear the rain as we talked about our wonderful dogs in Vietnam. My son Chris was getting a real education listening to us talk while he took some pictures of us. Later that night, I walked out into the motel parking lot in the rain and remembered how wet Wolf and I always were in the Nam. Wolf seemed to work harder in the pounding rain trying to distinguish the sounds of the enemy from the rain hitting the jungle foliage, it was so noisy. I thought to myself, *I hope it pours tomorrow at the dedication.* What better way to honor and say good bye to Wolf than in the conditions he and I worked so well together in as a team? During that sleepless night I thought about how patient Wolf had been with me when I was his new handler. I was the *new guy* and he was the seasoned Veteran in that forgotten land. Wolf worked so hard to teach me what he was trained to do. I stumbled along trying not to let him down. But when I screwed up and missed an alert, he would show me again until I caught on. Monday morning my son Chris, my friend Seth Hart whom I haven't seen for 30 years, and myself went to IHOP for breakfast. I felt numb. Knowing in a few hours I would see the final resting-place for Wolf. He had been my best friend, brother, teacher and my lifesaving companion in Vietnam. He was the reason so many others, and especially myself, were alive today. At the dedication I tried to hold back the tears as I could tell many others were also trying to do. *Forget the Macho stuff*--my heart just cried out for all of our lost dogs, as only dog handlers would truly understand and feel the terrible loss. As I approached the memorial and laid the rose on the handler's arm, I ran my hand across the face and nose of the dog. It felt so real to the touch. I reached up a little more and petted under the ears of the dog, just like Wolf had liked. I swear he winked at me just like Wolf used to do when he was telling me that everything was OK. It was like Wolf was saying *Thank You for remembering me.* No way to stop the tears... and I didn't even try. Every person I looked at was in tears and felt the same way. A stinking war 30 years ago had brought us all together, in a land 10,000 miles away, and now the same war had us all together in our free country of America to honor our dogs. A very special thanks to all the people involved with the memorial for making a dream come true. All of you have done a terrific job with your efforts in this. Thanks to my good friend Jim Ower. Jim has felt the pain and kept it all inside of him up until last year when he saw the War Dogs movie on TV. We got together soon after that and have spent time trying to make each other feel better. Now we can feel a sense of ease, having a memorial we can go and pay our respects to in honor of "Wolf" and "Sam". A extra special thanks to all the Law Enforcement agencies that came from different states to make our day a great one, and to say the "Welcome Home" to us vets, because we never got that welcome when we came home. These men and women didn't have to take their time to do this--it was all for free--and they all did it to help us get through this tough time. My good friend Eric Rimat, of the Santa Ana K-9 Police Department, is the person who put this together? He spent endless hours, days and weeks away from his family getting every last detail in place for this event. Eric knows the pain of loosing his K-9 partner. In the past Eric was shot while on the job, as was his dog "Indy". Eric almost died from his wounds and took quite a long time to recover. "Indy" didn't recover; he died two weeks later. Thank you, Eric. Charlie Cargo & "Wolf" 48th Scout Dog Platoon Vietnam 1970-1971.

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