



Dusty # 770E

From New Mexico to Vietnam

Who Was Dusty and How Did He Get to Vietnam?

By Frank R. Carrillo, Airman 1st Class (E4)
Bien Hoa Air Base, October 1965-October 1966



Photo Above: Dusty in the original kennels at Bien Hoa; Courtesy of Frank Carrillo

In the summer of 1964 I had the incredible good fortune to go to the Dog Handler School at Lackland AFB in San Antonio Texas from the 832nd Air Police Squadron at Cannon AFB, New Mexico. I was only 18 but had been chosen to train to do the best job an Air Policeman could have—that of a dog handler.

I forget if the training at Lackland was 10 or 12 weeks—I think it was 10. Anyhow, because I was on the small side, they assigned me a small dog named Fritz (maybe weighed in at 70 pounds if you soaked him down real good). Since this story is not about Fritz, and for other reasons, I will tell you only that in our 7th week of training Fritz had to be put down. I was assigned to kennel duty for a couple of days while the training staff took time to decide what to do with me—either send me home to Cannon AFB empty-handed or get me another dog! Another dog with only a bit under three weeks to go in training?

I spent two days doing kennel duty. That first day I was cleaning dog pens (the kind that were dog houses on a post with the dog secured by a ring around the post and a chain) and feeding dogs. I wasn't paying much attention to what I was doing and I wandered to close to the house of this one dog. The next thing I know, he's lunging at me—not barking but trying his best to bite me with his snapping jaws (I remember the sound of that...the click, click of the teeth coming together as he almost got

me). I had a water bucket in my hand and I instinctively threw it at the damn dog out of anger and to defend myself. I realized later that I had surprised him as much as he had surprised me.

The next day, my training Sergeant came to me and said, "Carrillo, we decided to give you another dog, get your gear and let's go meet him". So I followed the Sergeant to the kennel area and we walked straight to the house of the meeling-mouthed, mean-spirited animal that tried to eat me the day before. "This is Dusty," the sergeant said, "a good retrain dog that's come to us from the Army. We are giving him to you because there isn't time for you to train a new dog, and this dog can train you!"

I was dumbstruck, but finally I said, "Uh, Sarge, how much time do I have to get acquainted with this dog...you know, two or three days?" The Sergeant looked at me with a serious look in his eye and said, "Son, the truck is leaving in 15 minutes to take us out into the field, you get acquainted real good with that dog by then and be on that truck!" Then he left me alone with the dog.

I stood there for a minute, looking at the dog, and him looking back at me. "Aren't you the meeling-mouth @#\$%# that tried to kill me yesterday?" I asked him. Of course he didn't answer; he just kept looking at me. I inched a bit closer and he didn't seem to mind, so I kept inching in towards him. I had my leash ready with the choke chain on it and kept moving in knowing that at any moment he was going to kill me. But he didn't. I got real close after a few minutes and then suddenly, without warning, the damn dog reared up and put both his paws on my shoulders...it was then that I realized he was a lot bigger than Fritz. So, there we were, staring at each other eye to eye as I slowly put the choke chain over his head (he didn't attack or bite me!). Although my knees were shaking badly, he let me muzzle him and somehow I got him to the truck and loaded on with the other dog handlers to go out into the field.

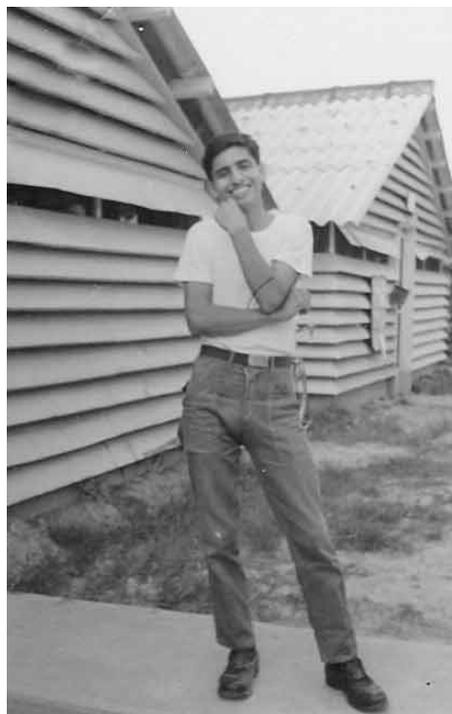
Everyone started to laugh, "Hey, Carrillo, why'd they give you a horse instead of a dog? Kinda big for you, ain't he?" To make things worse, the first thing Dusty did was try to fight with the first dog he came close to...that was all I needed a big, mean, nasty dog that loves to fight.

There's a lot more to that story, but suffice it to say that Dusty and I got used to each other in the two and a half weeks we had together at Lackland. I took him back to Cannon AFB and we worked together for a year until I volunteered him and me for Vietnam. So, at the end of summer, 1965 Dusty and I were back at Lackland AFB, together with about 100 USAF dog handlers and some Army dog handlers to get training for Vietnam.

After a few weeks training, we USAF dog handlers and our dogs were loaded onto several C-130s and off we went to Vietnam. None of us knew anything about the country or where we were going once we got there. When we landed in Tan Son Knut Air Base, they began to separate us and Dusty and I were separated from some buddies that I thought we would be with and we were sent to Bien Hoa.

I have so many stories about Dusty, but I thought the most important one is the one that tells how he got to Vietnam. We were together for a total of two years. What I know him is that he was donated to the Army by a family from Silver City, New Mexico that raised German Sheperds. I know that he served in the Army for over a year before I got him (his number, 770E, is an Army number). I know that he had a tremendous heart and was a brave warrior. I know that he saved me several times and that he was my friend and I loved him. And, I know that it broke my heart when I had to leave him behind in Vietnam.

Photo Below: A young Frank Carrillo.



Below Information by Samuel R. Ball, (Dusty's last handler)

"I was an Airman First Class upon arriving at Bien Hoa during April 68. Spent first thirty days in "Security" until had a chance to volunteer for the K-9 Section. My first rocket attack on May 5, 68 caught me on flight line guarding F-100s and a 122MM rocket landed between a row of A/C and a fuel bladder that was near me. Went looking for another job after that and literally went from pan to fire. Wasn't formally trained but went through a couple of weeks of OJT (On-the-job training) with my assigned dog "Dusty", brand 770E. We worked together for about eight months before he was put down due to calcium deposits on his spine. I just couldn't work him anymore as it was painful for him to get on and off trucks and walk for long periods. Held him in my arms at the Vet Clinic on LBJ as the shot was given. Spent the last couple of months working as night kennel master. Cleaned stalls, CQ duties and fed dogs after they returned to kennels at daybreak."



Photo Above Dusty # 770E, By this time a more permanent kennels had been built. Dusty # 770E had three handlers while at Bien Hoa, Frank Carrillo, Robert Foiles, and Sam Ball.

Photo Courtesy of Sam Ball

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