



Fort Benning Military Dog Memorial

Dedicated May 10, 2003







USAF Pedestal Dedication Ceremony

Speaker Carl Adams
May 10, 2003



" Colonel Clark, Jessie Mendez, Richard Deggins, John Gerrero, Ernie Alaia, members of the military, civilian K9 units, fellow veterans, ladies and gentlemen, it is an honor and a privilege to be here today. I thank you for the opportunity to speak to you.

In early 1967, in a valley in Ninh Thuan Province, I listened the Armed Forces Radio Network on my Sony AM transistor radio. As the first rays of sunlight began to stretch across the horizon, the disc-jockey's familiar words, "Good-morning Vietnam!" signaled the end of another night on the perimeter of Phan Rang AB Air Base. I remember listening to songs by groups like the Beatles, The Association, and the Mama's and the Papa's. As I thought about what to say to you today, one song by the English rock group, The Byrds, came to mind. The lyrics proclaimed:

*"To everything there is a season
and a time for every purpose under heaven.
A time to build up, a time to break down,
A time to dance, a time to mourn,
A time to cast away stones,
a time to gather together."*

More than thirty-five years later, the message in that song has come to pass. We have met here at Sacrifice Field to unveil the stones that have been gathered. The season and time has come to remember and to honor.

We remember that there was a time when some of us were so close to hell we had to look over our shoulder to see the devil. We remember that there was a time when some of us lost our dogs in battle. There was a time when all of us had to say goodbye. We remember that there was a time when we were soldiers, sailors, airmen, and marines. We cannot forget that there will always be a time when we are K9.

Through it all, blistering heat, stifling humidity, choking dust, endless rains, enemy small arms, mortar and rocket fire, hours of boredom and moments of sheer terror, one thing remained constant. One thing remained as sure as the sun coming up in the morning, our dog at the end of the leash. The dog that drank our last drop of water, ate from our helmet, huddled with us underneath our poncho in the monsoon, the dog that listened to the same letter from home read over and over again and always seemed interested, and ate the cookies mom sent. The dog that was the best friend some of us will ever know. The dog that saved our lives.

Regardless of our dog's specialty, Tracker, Mine and Booby-trap, Water, Scout, or Sentry, they shared some things in common. First, they were always in front. No one was closer to the enemy than K9 when the dogs of war were deployed.

Secondly, our dogs were not pets. They were more than partners. We trusted our lives and the lives of our fellow servicemen to their ability to do their job. If you ask a veteran dog handler if he ever met a hero, the first name he'll mention is a name like, King, Duke, Mingo, Kiser, Nemo or Laddie, his dog's name. For me, the name is Andy. The

name he'll never mention is his own. That's the way we see it, and that's the way we would like historians to write it.

We were not Boy Scouts. We were part of a team trained for war. Filled with youthful confidence in ourselves, our training and our K9 team-mate, we probed the night, the jungle trails and the waterways in search of the enemy. That was our job and when it was over, the final message read, "Mission accomplished". K9 never failed.

Lastly, and most importantly, the majority of our dogs did not come home.

There were others there who did not pick up the leash, but are just as much a part of the K9 brotherhood as any handler. They are the veterinarians and vet-techs who worked so hard with so little to keep our dogs in the best shape possible. When our dogs were sick, they nursed them back to health. When they were hurt, they treated their wounds. And when nothing more could be done, they took away the pain. We will always be grateful for what they did.

*"A Time of war, a time of peace.
A time of love, a time of hate.
A time you may embrace.
A time to refrain from embracing
To everything – Turn, turn, turn"*

Contrary to what Hollywood would lead you to believe, there is no glamour to war. There is no glamour to what we dog handlers were sent to do. There is no glamour, but there is honor and there is pride. There is honor in serving your country, there is honor in doing your duty, and there is pride in being a member of an organization composed of volunteers. There is honor and pride in the uniform we wore. There is honor and pride in being a member of the United States Military. There is honor and pride in being a military dog handler. There is honor and pride behind the memorials we dedicate today.

The K9 teams in Southeast Asia are credited with saving what some estimate to be in excess of 10,000 lives. If the estimates are anywhere near accurate, the Vietnam Veterans Memorial Wall in Washington DC would be at least 100 feet longer than it is today, had it not been for the deployment of K9. There is honor and pride in that.

It is fitting that some of what took place in the dead of night and in the shadows of a jungle canopy is remembered on a bright sun-filled afternoon. Times have changed.

The war is long over and the sun looks down on a new generation of American fighting men and women who have already ensured that freedom will prevail. As juxtaposed, as sunlight is to moonlight, so are the jungles, distant perimeters, rice paddies, and landing zones of Vietnam and Thailand to the peace and tranquility of this parade ground. The only thing that remains constant is the brotherhood of the veterans assembled here today. We were brothers then, and we are brothers now. Regardless of branch of service, regardless of the type of dog we handled, we are brothers.

Brothers born in a combat zone, raised on C-rations, separated by chance and reunited by choice. The name "K9" makes it so.

It is our hope that there will be a time. Long after we are gone, when a young soldier will come to this spot and look at the image of the K9 team stepping into harms way, to read the names of those who fell, to look upon the name of Robert W. Hartsock and know that one of us received our nation's highest honor, and to see the pedestals erected to honor K9 units that span all the branches of our armed services and know that there was a time when honor and pride kept a flame ignited by those who served before us. And know that it is now his time to pick up the leash and know that there was a time....

Know that there was a time when men like "Snuffy", The Dutchmen, Big John, Snakeman, Chicken Killer, Shim-Shim and thousands like them were the first line of defense at our air bases, the first ones down the trail, the first ones across the field, the

first one into the jungle the first one to reach a downed pilot. This is the time to salute them with the stones we have gathered. Stones as solid as their courage and resolve, and as solid as the courage and resolve of the dogs who led us home.

And so we dedicate these pedestals to honor all who were there and to ensure that those who are no longer here are never forgotten. There was a time to fight a war. There will always be a time to remember.

*"To everything – There is a season –
And a time for every purpose under heaven"*

God bless America and the men and women and the K9 teams who protect her.

Thank You."

Carl Adams, Sentry Dog Handler



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