



GAME CHANGERS

BY DR. CARMEN L. BATTAGLIA

**ORGANIZATIONAL MEMORY,
BREEDERS, DOGS
AND PATRIOTISM**

**ALL HAVE BEEN LINKED TO
MAN'S BEST FRIEND**

There are three reasons to explain why dogs are considered man's best friend. They begin with our need for protection, companionship and hunting assistance. History shows that two events helped make this bond stronger. The first occurred in 1942 during World War II with a program called "Dogs for Defense" which involved thousands of citizens who donated their dogs to the war effort. The second occurred in 2016 when the US Senate held hearings about the security of the infrastructure using bomb detection and patrol dogs. Both events memorialized the importance of canines for their many uses and services.

Over the years the jobs given dogs have increased from work on the farm and in the city, to the military and police for security, protection, detection, service work, and search and rescue assignments. These needs expanded the importance of the canine and more complicated uses asked of them. Each solidified their role as man's best friend. The realization that they are multi-skilled and flexible was clearly documented during World War II, which led to saving the lives of thousands of soldiers. Their heroic deeds prompted citizens to donate their dogs to help the war effort. A second occurrence happened following the 2016 Hearings of the US Senate which focused on the security of the infrastructure using working dogs and our dependence on European breeders who provided them.

Citizen Involvement

On December 7, 1941, Japan attacked Pearl Harbor and drew the United States into the war. At that time the US was the only

major power without a formal military working dog program. Alene Erlanger, who later founded Dogs for Defense, had pushed for the use of American dogs during WWI, but her request to the Congress failed to pass. The rationale given was that America's dogs could not be trained effectively to go to war and public support would be nonexistent. [1] However, Erlanger was determined. She continually reminded the military that other countries had used dogs during times of war. Her tenacious strategy involved enlisting help from other prominent figures in the dog world. Determined to help the country, she founded the Dogs for Defense in January of 1942. On March 13, 1942, the Army named Dogs for Defense the authorized agency for canine recruitment and training. The program was met with overwhelming success. [3] Citizens, armed with their filled-out questionnaires, donated their animals to serve. [4] Estimations regarding the number of dogs enlisted during World War II are unknown, however, Fairfax Downey gives a total of 25,000 dogs, which was the accepted number, but others said it was from 50,000-300,000. [5] The dogs obtained were from civilian donations, did not have breed or sex requirements. Every state set up a recruitment branch with a recruitment officer to help facilitate donations for the Dogs for Defense effort.

Patriotism and love of country pushed owners to donate their dogs. Military historian Fairfax Downey wrote that: "Givers of dogs received a certificate expressing the gratitude of the United States Government. Recognition that they had performed an act of patriotism meant a sacrifice of something cherished." [6] The act of donating a beloved pet that allowed the donors to feel their loyalty and

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love of country was a powerful motivator in time of war.

Training and reception centers were established throughout the United States. The Quartermaster Corps operated six War Dog Training and Reception Centers: Front Royal, Virginia; Fort Robinson, Nebraska; San Carlos, California; Cat Island, Mississippi; Camp Lejeune, North Carolina; and Camp Rimini, in Helena, Montana. Dogs and men were trained by following the instructions found in *Technical Manual 10-396: War Dogs* or the *TM 10-396*, published in July of 1943. Training took between 6 to 8 weeks before dog teams were shipped to their destinations.



Dogs for Defense

Public Relations

It was during World War II that the American Kennel Club and its many dog shows were asked to help by highlighting the Dogs for Defense program. Dog show clubs quickly responded and began to encourage owners and breeders to donate a dog. A newspaper article published by the *Santa Cruz Sentinel* on March 1942 highlighted a local American Kennel Club dog show that urged donors to buy “Dogs for Defense” bonds. The article explained that the organization already had received “\$50,000,000 worth of national publicity”. Editor’s quickly realized that advertising for dog donations was important. The attitude taken by the newspapers soon changed when they realized that they could make the difference between success and failure. Soon every newspaper and every American Kennel Club dog show became involved [11]. Editors believed that if they could show their readers how the dogs were trained and to what purpose these dogs were serving, they would be more inclined to donate their animals and also purchase war bonds to support Dogs for Defense.

Newspapers continuously ran articles featuring Dogs for Defense. The *Indianapolis Star* published an article about a dog named Towser who joined Dogs for Defense in May 1943. Towser was from New Castle, Indiana and three years old at the time of enlistment. The article mentioned that Towser was joining the service to “avenge the capture by the Japanese of his master, Chief Petty Officer Lawrence Corum of New Castle.” [12] Unlike other dogs who were donated by their owners, Towser joined Dogs for Defense with a motive of revenge. The caption underneath a photo of Towser stated: “Fathers have joined the armed forces to avenge

their sons, and sons to avenge their fathers, but New Castle has a dog which is entering the K-9 forces to avenge his master, now a prisoner of the Japanese.” [13] Towser’s master had been captured following the fall of Corregidor in 1942. The paper stressed that Towser was not shy of military life: “This will not be her first taste of military life... She has flown in airplanes and ridden in army trucks and likes them just fine. [14] Army life suited Towser fine and she was sent to become a regular GI and seek revenge. In the film *Sergeant Mike*, Mike is donated by his young owner to seek revenge for the boy’s father being killed in the Pacific Theater, so it is the boy’s desire for revenge that motivates him to donate his dog. This is unlike Towser who “enlists” for revenge and to bring his master back home.

Mabel Harmer told the story of Chips in her book *Famous Mascots and K-9s*. The story explains, “The soldiers threw themselves upon the sand in order to escape the hail of bullets but not Chips, he attacked an Italian pillbox with total disregard of anything the enemy had. Chips charged the hut and came out with one Italian by the throat and three others holding their hands high above their heads in token of surrender. Chips suffered slight powder burns in the melee but went stealthily on to the next encounter which occurred just a short time later when his keen sense of smell told him that more of the enemy were creeping toward their beach head. He passed the warning on and the soldiers netted another ten prisoners.” [15]

Following the surrender of Japan on August 14, 1945, dogs and handlers were sent back to Fort Robinson, Nebraska, where they were demobilized. Many dog were re-assigned to different jobs. Barring illness or aggressive behavior, the majority of the dogs were returned to their original owners or often adopted by the handlers that they faithfully served.

Using dogs in World War II would not have occurred without the organized efforts of Dogs for Defense and the American Kennel Club. By appealing to America’s patriotic fever in the wake of World War II, dogs were successfully recruited and trained by the thousands for military service. The donation of dogs continued into the Korean and Vietnam wars, but never amassed the amount that occurred during World War II.

Sixty Four Years Later

Following the US Senate Hearings of 2016, the American Kennel Club was again asked to help. The Senate learned that about 80% of the working dogs used to protect America were coming from European breeders and many of them failed when brought to the US. Due to the American Kennel Club’s size and scale, with more than 175,000 breeders, the request for help prompted the AKC Board to establish the AKC Dog Detection Task Force (ADDTF). This new effort was aimed at owners and breeders, and their patriotic love of country. To accomplish the goal of recruiting



hundreds of breeders, the ADDFT established the Patriotic Puppy Program (PPP) which involved breeders who were willing to breed a litter and save one or two pups for the program. By 2022, several breeders had placed dogs with either a Federal or State agency or a service provider. The AKC Reunite organization also helped through its Adopt-A-Cop program with the deployment of more than 150 working dogs to police departments across the US [19]. The ADDTF has recruited more than 70 breeders who are located in 30 states but more are still needed. To make the program more effective, the American Kennel Club provides technical support using experts who specialize in breeding, training, and puppy development. They are also providing webinars and meetings to help breeders. To further this effort, a conference for the Stake Holders is held each year that includes: Federal and State law enforcement agencies, police, breeders, breed clubs, vendors and the national press.



Chips, the War Dog

The next conference of the Stake Holders will be held on August 23-25, 2022 in Durham, NC. This year's theme is bringing together key stakeholders to improve availability of high-quality, American-bred, raised, and trained dogs to protect our national and public security. The speakers will focus on presenting practical information for breeders, puppy-raisers, trainers, and buyers by providing real, actionable resources that improve participants' opportunities to work together for a successful future. More information is available by contacting Melissa Ferrell: Program Manager, Melissa.Ferrell@akc.org · (919) 816-3577.

History has demonstrated that man's best friend has more than earned this prestigious title. The canines of today continue to be one of man's most trusted and valuable resources as they respond to the ever expanding demands given them.

References:

- [1] Fairfax Downey, *Dogs for Defense: American Dogs in the Second World War 1941-1945* (New York: Trustees of Dogs for Defense, 1955), 3.
- [2] Ibid, 16.
- [3] Ibid, 18-21.
- [4] Ibid, 24. The questionnaire required owners to list their animal's breed, sex, shoulder height, call name, sex, and American Kennel Club registration number and name if applicable. It also allowed for information regarding health, temperament and whether the dog was fearful of loud noises such as guns or

storms. The questionnaire also made note that owners were not to receive their animals back unless it was deemed unfit for service, however a provision was made in a later questionnaire if the owners would like their animals back following the end of the war effort.

- [5] Fairfax Downey, 22. Downey's number of 25,000 seems to be correct but higher references also exist. A figure of 300,00 dogs is given by James W. English's *The Rin Tin Tin Story* (New York: Dodd, Mead, & Company, 1949), 171.
- [6] Fairfax Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 24.
- [7] Harry I. Caesar, forward in Ruth Adams *Knight's Valiant Comrades: A Story of Our Dogs in War* (Garden City: The Country Life Press, 1943), viii.
- [8] War Writers Bureau Collection, Box 142, Folder "All Out for Davey"
- [9] Ibid, "All Out for Davey"
- [10] Ibid, "All Out for Davey"
- [11] Santa Cruz Sentinel, "Santa Cruz Dog Show Goes Patriotic," March 31, 1942, 4.
- [12] The Indianapolis Star, "Towser Joins Dogs for Defense to Avenge Master's Capture by Japs" (May 16, 1943), 37.
- [13] Ibid, 37.
- [14] Ibid, 37. It is unknown why the article switches between male and female genders to refer to Towser, but Towser will be referred to as a girl.
- [15] Mabel K. Harmer, *Famous Mascots and K-9s* (no publication information or date is given), 67.
- [16] <http://americanhistory.si.edu/blog/dogs-defense>
- [17] For younger readers who are interested in Chips's story see: Nancy M. West, *Chips, A Hometown Hero: Based on the True Life Adventures of the World War Two K9 Hero* (New York: Off Lead Publications, 2008) and *Chips the War Dog* (Walt Disney Company, VHS). There is a children's novel based on a Yorkshire Terrier named Smoky written by Jacky Donovan but the dog never received the same media coverage as Chips did.
- [18] Fairfax Downey, *Dogs for Defense*, 73.
- [19] Battaglia, Carmen. 2022. *The Difference Makers Are Here – Adopt-A-Cop, A Bold Step. The Canine Chronicle*, Ocala, FL. Pg. 250 - 252.

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

Carmen L. Battaglia holds a Ph.D. and Master's Degree from Florida State University. He is an author of many articles, several books, an AKC Director, judge and researcher. He is a well-known lecturer and leader in the promotion of breeding better dogs. Dr. Battaglia is also a popular guest on TV and radio talk shows including several appearances on Animal Planet. His seminars on breeding better dogs, selecting sires and choosing puppies have been well-received by breed clubs. Those interested in learning more about his writings and seminars should visit the website <http://www.breedingbetterdogs.com>.

Hannah E. Palsa, PhD student, Kansas State University, focused on Dogs for Defense program and the K9 Corps of World War II. hepalsa@ksu.edu or on Twitter <https://twitter.com/HannahPalsa>