

FROM CHAPTER 5 EMBEDDED WITH HUMANS—ANIMALS IN THE HUMAN WORLD

ANIMALS AT WORK—“DOGS OF WAR: MILITARY WORKING DOGS”

This was one of the most difficult sections of the book for me to research and write. I value peace, and I am especially sensitized to the horrors of war. Yet, my temperament leans toward anger, and I am not shy about speaking up in the face of injustice. I do not mind a good fight, for a good cause, but I fight my own battles, and if someone takes on my fight, I stay with them. Perhaps that is what upset me the most about animals, again primarily dogs, used as weaponry. They fight for us in our wars, never knowing how expendable they are. The military has a history of considering a dog as a “tool,” and that offends my sense of justice. I have very strong (remember that anger) feelings about the sacrifices military men and women make, particularly during a war, but in recent history our country has not had a draft and the men and women who constitute our courageous armed forces choose to enter the military. Dogs have no such option. All are drafted and serve with their hearts and total commitment.

From the beginning of the relationship, dogs joined forces with humans and fought to defend common interests, mainly food and territory. The earliest reference to a dog used in battle mentions a type of Mastiff, in Tibet during the Stone Age. All the famous—and infamous—military leaders around the world used dogs. In America, Benjamin Franklin is considered the first person to suggest using dogs in war. Dogs were later used during the Civil War as messengers, regimental mascots, and sentries. The Spanish American War found them primarily in the role of scout. The British were the first to use dogs in World War I and shared their expertise with America for World

War II and the Vietnam War. In spite of their contributions, “success in battle [was] seldom shared with the animals involved.”¹

The Red Cross taught dogs to find wounded soldiers and ignore the dead. They were taught not to bark and carried supplies to the wounded, bringing back helmets to alert rescuers of survivors.

...The first combat dog was Chips, a German shepherd, Husky, Collie mix breed, who earned the Distinguished Service Cross, the Purple Heart, and the Silver Star during World War II, all of which were revoked because he was a dog. Chips was discharged after serving three years in the Army, but he died after only four months as a civilian. ... Dogs continued to serve, with 1,500 in Korea and 4,000 in Vietnam. ...

Dogs were in Vietnam before the involvement of American fighting troops, serving as guards or sentries for the Army of the Republic of Vietnam as early as 1960, without benefit of veterinarians or capable handlers in Vietnam. ...

As the U.S. began to withdraw from the Vietnam war, the military decided to leave the dogs behind and “most American dogs were condemned to permanent exile and eventual death in a foreign land.” Unlike other wars where dogs were “demilitarized” and returned to U.S. shores, the military made a cost-effective decision for the handling of *equipment*—you do not need it, leave it behind. Amidst the protests of soldiers and the whining confusion of the dogs, thousands of dogs were abandoned, left to fend for themselves, or turned over to the Vietnamese for disposition.

David Keeton, a handler and member of the Vietnam Dog Handler’s Association, self-published a book to honor his dogs. In his second book, *King “Moo”—War Dog*, a frank and heartfelt account of his 18-month partnership with a K-9 soldier (whose serial number was M-0-0), Keeton talked about how he saved Moo from abandonment, but after the dog was dipped in

malathion and survived quarantine to enter the U.S., Moo died of cancer two years later. King Moo had exposed to Agent Orange.