



CAP

2-4-3

Greg "Doc" Lutes & John Taft
The Dog Handler

NOTE: this story, and the reunion that resulted, was ultimately featured as a television documentary on *The Learning Channel*.

There are a few gaps here because I did not receive copies of all the correspondence between Fred Dorr and Greg Lutes. However, we have enough information posted for you to follow this exciting story.

"CAPVet"

Henry Fred Dorr wrote:

Hello,

My name is Fred Dorr. I was a USMC Scout Dog handler in 1969 Vietnam. I know that a lot of our dogs went to CAP Units, but I find no mention of them any where in your sites. I would like to know if you have any stories or names of dog handlers that you could pass along to me.

THANKS.
Fred Dorr
k9usmc@tisd.net

Date: Wed, 24 Dec 1997 21:29:50 -0500
From: Tim Duffie <timd@one.net>

Henry,

Thanks for the note. I don't have anything re Dog Handlers on the web page yet.....but would love to get some stories. Perhaps some of the 150+ Marines/Corpsmen on the CAP List will be able to help.

Thanks for the note,

Tim Duffie
CAPVet

Subject: Re: Scout Dogs
Date: Thu, 25 Dec 1997 14:29:11 EST
From: CUIH <CUIH@aol.com>
To: timd@one.net

Tim:

Could you provide me with the complete e-mail address for the K9usmc. I am having a hard time trying to locate that website. Or is that just his e-mail address? The reason is that we had a dog handler (booby trap dog) that walked his master over a booby trapped 105 round. It didn't hurt the dog, but it cost the dog handler both his legs. I worked my ass off trying to keep him alive. He was alive when I put him on the "Dust-Off" [MedEvac Helicopter]. I just thought that maybe somebody from that website might remember his name and the outcome. I've often wondered. I guess that's the lot of a combat corpsman, wondering about his patients even after all these years.

Merry Christmas, Tim, to you and yours, and many joyous seasons ahead.

Semper Fi
Greg Lutes

Subject: Re: Scout Dog
Date: Fri, 26 Dec 1997 16:58:30 EST
From: CUIITH <CUIITH@aol.com>
To: k9usmc@tisd.net
CC: Timd@one.net

Fred:

It happened in May or June of 1970. I was with Cap 2-4-3. We were located east of Hoi An, between Som Pho (2) and An My. We had a bad treeline that was honeycombed with booby traps. The Grid Coordinates were 169589, within a couple of hundred meters. I don't know what his dog's name was. He stayed with us overnight. Had his dog chained around his waist. The dog did not particularly care for the Vietnamese.

I remember him very well because the next morning, before we moved out to the treeline, he came to me and told me that if he got hit, and the dog got hit, do not give the dog morphine. He also told me that if he got hit and the dog refused to go on the chopper, to kill the dog. He had that look in his eyes, and I thought something was going to happen.

Anyway, we moved out to the treeline. We were spread out on line about 50 meters to the treeline. He went in with his dog. He had just got into a clearing with the dog in front when a large explosion knocked some of us to the ground. I caught some scrapnel. I screamed at the Marines to cover me. When I got to him, I saw that he was badly wounded. Both his lower legs were just hanging by a shred of muscles and tendons. I believe he had abdominal wounds. He was awake and alert the whole time I worked on him. I had tourniqueted him, had Marines cut bamboo for me to splint what was left of his legs. I was talking to him the whole time. I kept him from knowing how badly he was wounded. He complained that he couldn't see. I washed out his eyes. I couldn't give him morphine because he had a chest wound and was starting to go into shock.

The "Dust Off" finally showed up. The dog had no visible injuries. As the Marines carried him to the chopper, I was able to carry the dog to his master on the chopper. I never knew if he survived. Still don't. I tried my best to keep him alive. At least he was alive when we put him on the chopper.

I have thought about him, along with many others, over the years. If you know of him, could you please give me his name. He has (had?) balls that had to be carried in a wheel barrel, if you know what I mean.

Semper Fi, Marine
Greg "Doc" Lutes

P.S.: I believe the booby trap was "command detonated".

Subject: Dog Handlers
Date: Sat, 27 Dec 1997 20:09:47 EST
From: CUIITH <CUIITH@aol.com>
To: Timd@one.net

Dammit, Tim, thank God for you and your Website. I was able to talk to Fred Dorr and found out that the dog handler is alive and well living in Merrick N.Y. His name is Cpl. John Taft, and his dog was "King". When Fred mentioned the dog's name, I knew it was him.

Fred told me that John is one of the officers of his association, helps other disabled Vets and has a good outlook on life. What Fred wants to do is have me show up at their next reunion and surprise John. He is going to try to contact John's wife to see if that is a good idea. If she agrees, then I will be going to San Diego for their reunion in November of 98. I'll keep you informed of what transpires.

Thanks, Tim, for the best Christmas present I've had in years.

Semper Fi
Greg

Subject: John Taft
Date: Sun, 28 Dec 1997 07:45:41 EST
From: CUIH <CUIH@aol.com>
To: Sharp@maui.com
CC: kc308@juno.com, Timd@one.net

Gary and Dick:

Gary, you called in the "Dust Off" on this one. Dick, do you recall this? You were there during that time frame. It was a month after I got hit at the "Orchard". I had been back about a week from the hospital. Joe should remember it. It was Stever and a couple of Marines that cut the bamboo for me. Lt. "Skipper" Johnson was out there that day with us.

If I remember right, didn't we go back a couple of days later with a bull-dozer from the Marine Engineers and bulldoze that damn treeline down? We did go back with a couple of CAP units, besides CAP Ba, and ran into some more booby traps. I knew we blew a couple in place.

One Marine followed me into the treeline when I was working on John. I yelled at him to get his dumb ass out of there for I was busy enough. I felt real bad about that afterwards for all he was doing was covering my sorry ass. I am just trying to jog my memory a little. Help me out if you recall this one.

Dick, the copy of the map and the grid coordinates of some of our sites sure came in handy. Was able to pin-point the area that John Taft got hit in and was able to relay that to Fred Dorr. He appreciated the hell out of that. If you got a scanner could you scan it and send it to: k9usmc@tisd.com? Of all the dog handlers that got blown away or wounded, we were one of the few to provide the exact location (within a couple of hundred meters) of where one of his team members got hit.

Tim, is there any way that I could find out what ever happened to Lt. "Skipper" Johnson? He was a tall man with a bushy mustache. He carried a Swedish-K. He was our CO of CACO 2-4 during that period. As I recall, he was a damn excellent Marine Officer that really cared for his CAP Marines. I know for a fact that he took it really hard when one of his Marines got blown away or wounded. More so than other Marine Officers I ran into.

Ok Marines, it's time to kick "Ole Doc" in the head and loosen some of his brain cells.

Hey Radio Guy, how's the weather in Maui? I ain't going to ask Dick. The snow's probably up to his balls by now.

Semper Fi

Greg

Subject: Re: John Taft
Date: Mon, 29 Dec 1997 14:34:52 -1000
From: Gary Sharp <sharp@maui.com>
Organization: Maui Research & Tech. Center (MRTC)
To: CUIH <CUIH@aol.com>
CC: Sharp@maui.com, kc308@juno.com, Timd@one.net

Aloha Doc,

Yeah, I remember that tree line incident. I believe they were called DB1 and DB2. Also, two left over VC were killed (I'm pretty sure) during the clearing. One by the Dozer's blade, the Lt. shot the other one. These were the "Phantom Bloopers" that like to fire M-79 rounds into CAP Ba. I think you guys got 'em at least 4 times. They just kept replacing them.

I'll check my fitness reports for Lt. Johnson's name, etc. Maybe I still have it somewhere in my stuff.

The weather here is so cold I had to put on a shirt! It dropped to 70⁰. I'm going to move to a tropical Island in the South Pacific if this cold weather keeps up!

Take care,

Gary

Subject: John Taft
Date: Mon, 29 Dec 1997 23:36:04 EST
From: CUIH <CUIH@aol.com>
Organization: AOL (<http://www.aol.com>)
To: Timd@one.net
CC: kc308@juno.com, sharp@maui.com

Tim:

Just got off of the phone with John Taft. Fred had second thoughts and had decided to tell John. I am a little emotional right now. John is doing fine. He's been the National Director of the Dog Handlers Association and has belonged to many other associations over the years and has collected numerous awards for his work.

John filled me in on what he remembers. His dog's name was "Fido" not "King". Pronounced Feeedo. He says he remembers feeling a trip line just before the explosion. He says he remembers some ARVN troops with us. I told him that (they) were our PF's. He remembers the "Dust Off" crew chief unhooking and helping put the dog on the chopper once we got him there. The "Dust Off" took him to "Charlie Med" and from there to the Hospital Ship. From there he started his long transition and healing eventually arriving at home. He's married and has 4 grand-children.

He had served in Nam in 66 with the dog handlers and had worked with a lot of the CAC units before his second tour. In fact he stated that after six months in country they asked him if he wanted to volunteer for the CAC units. He told them no for we were too f*****g crazy.

He wants to see me at the reunion which I will be attending. I told him that I live in Anaheim, home of Disneyland. He stated that he's never been to Disneyland...while he's out here I am going to take him to Disneyland.

He wanted to thank me for saving his life. I tried to tell him that it wasn't just me. It was a joint effort. From the radio call, "Dust-Off", the Hospital Ship. And a lot had to do with him being in excellent shape and having a strong will.

I had told him a little about you and your website. It would be fine with him if you wanted to go ahead and link all to your site.

I told him what we did to the treeline a few days after he was hit. Gary's e-mail to me jogged some brain cells loose.

I apologize for being a little "scatter-brained" right now. Tim, thanks to you and your website, I found Dick Clark who I thought died at the "Alamo" and John, who I have wondered about for all these years. I don't know how to thank you.

Semper Fi

Greg

Subject: Dog Handler/Command Chronology, 2nd CAG

Date: Tue, 20 Jan 1998 22:31:31 EST

From: CUIH

To: k9usmc@tisd.net

CC: timd@one.net, CMcma48831@aol.com

Fred:

I just received a copy of the 2nd CAG Command Chronology from periods 1 May 70 to 30 Jun 70 from the Marine Corps Historical Center in D.C. Couldn't get more than 2 months without having to pay \$25.00 an hour. I don't have a scanner so I will just type it as it is. This report was submitted by D. R. Christiansen, Col. CO of 2nd CAG to CMC and CG, FMF Pacific:

10 May 70

A USMC dog handler of an attached 3rd MP Battalion Scout Dog Team, working as the point element of a CAP 2-4-3 patrol, accidentally detonated a 105 mm HE round along a trail rigged with an unknown type firing device at BT 167588, 1.5 km NE of Hieu Nhon District Headquarters. The dog handler was WIA from the exploding SFD(surprise Firing Device). The handler and his uninjured dog were medevaced by helicopter to NSA Hospital. A search of the area for further SFD's was nonproductive.

RESULTS: 1 3rd MP BN USMC WIA(E) accompanied by his dog.

Well I was a couple of hundred meters off. Fred, I thought you might want to know this. It gives the exact location that John was hit. I just got this report in the mail today.

Semper Fi

Greg "Doc" Lutes