

**Submitted by:
Nemo's War Dog Heroes Association**

United States Air Force Sentry Dog - Nemo A534 Honored at Lackland AFB, Texas



Nemo's kennel pad, November 3, 2003
(Photo courtesy of Ernest Childers, Jr.)

In 2003, a group of old Military Working Dog handlers were in San Antonio, Texas for a Vietnam Security Police Association reunion. As part of this reunion, we took a tour of the DOD kennels at Lackland AFB. Most of us in the group had received our Sentry Dog and Patrol Dog training at this location. When we arrived at the kennels, many of us were anxious to see Nemo's kennel. Nemo was retired to this location after receiving wounds in the 1966 attack on Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam. When we located the kennel, we found ourselves staring at what was left; a barren, eroding pad with crumbling raised borders around the perimeter. Absolutely nothing was left to mark the significance of the kennel. Very few of the military personnel that accompanied us were even aware of the significance of this old pad.

A group of the old handlers decided, then and there, to reveal the history of the site and honor Nemo's legacy in a befitting fashion. The group's primary and most immediate concern was to restore Nemo's kennel to its original condition. After several meetings with the 37th Squadron commander, Lt Colonel Robert Roth and Lt Thomas

McGillicuddy of the 341st Training Squadron, we received permission for the project. With that accomplished, we formed the “Nemo’s War Dog Heroes Association” and began assembling our goals and acquiring the seed money needed to get the project out of the planning stage. While awaiting approval, the fencing and roofing of the kennel, Nemo’s doghouse and kennel sign were reproduced to replicate the original condition as closely as possible.

During one of our many trips to Lackland, Lt. McGillicuddy stated that he knew someone we would be very interested in meeting. He introduced us to Marine Sgt Chris Willingham, one of the instructors for a new training program called Specialized Search Dogs (SSD). Sgt. Willingham relayed that, as a means to build pride in his team, he had assigned his troops the task of researching their Military Working Dog heritage. They not only took the “ball”, but they ran with it! The Marines and Army researched the history of their respective K-9 branches, and SSgt Mike Long was assigned Nemo. A week later one representative from each branch gave a presentation on what they had learned. During his research, SSgt Mike Long discovered that Nemo was an Air Force Sentry dog credited with stopping the infiltrated Viet Cong assault on Ton Son Nhut AB in December of 1966, and had spent the last five years of his life on Lackland Air Force Base.

With the selection of Nemo as their hero, further research revealed his empty concrete pad. Immediate and prompt work began to develop a plan to raise funds for a dedication and memorial stone for Nemo. The memorial stone was to give the war hero his due respect and to let former dog handlers know his sacrifices were not forgotten. It should be noted that to raise these funds they held car washing events, as well as using their own personal funds. Motivation and dedication quickly became the plan of action!

Since, the old dogs were working on basically the same restoration project for Nemo’s kennel and his story; we joined forces with the SSD team and agreed to make it a joint effort. Hence, we have a committee made up of old and young handlers who have the same objectives, to recognize, honor, and maintain the history of War Dog Heroes.

On September 23, 2005, several of the old dog handlers who had visited the site initially were invited to the graduation of SSD, Team II and the dedication ceremony of Nemo’s memorial headstone. With the installment of the stone, the groundwork has been laid for Nemo’s War Dog Heroes Association to complete the memorial. Our intention is to restore the kennel to the condition of 1967-1968 by using photographs of its original condition. The efforts of today’s handlers, young and old, will bring the project to completion and put in place the path for the continued recognition of all War Dog Heroes.

Well done SSD, Team II: Instructors U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Chris Willingham and Mr. Orlando Nunez, team members, A.F. SSgt. Mike Long (Class Leader), U.S. Army Sgt. Danyel Claire; U.S. Marine Corps Sgt. Mark Corrado, CPL Tim Johnson, LCPL Josh Hays, LCPL Brett Hamm, and LCPL Mike Evans.



Nemo's Memorial Stone
(Photo courtesy of Ernest Childers, Jr.)

Updates will follow as the project progresses.