# Awards of Animal Valor

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## I. INTRODUCTION:

To begin, I honor our Quest Club tradition of extending my thanks to the program committee for assigning to me the topic of Animal Awards of Valor. As often is the case with Quest papers, once research began, I found it a challenge to limit the scope of my paper. I also found it overlapped conceptually a bit with my last paper, EO Wilson: The Meaning of Human Existence.

At the outset it's prudent to reveal my biases, which I have worked with diligence to limit or at least restrain in this paper. Those of you who know me likely are aware that I am an advocate for animals. My love of animals is lifelong, having had my dog, Lady, as my best friend during a somewhat challenging childhood.

As an adult, my passion for animals…dogs in particular…resulted in me becoming an animal welfare advocate and volunteer. I began in the 1990s with a small non-profit Golden Retriever rescue organization. These are mine over the last 35 years. The boy in the center was rescued from a South Korean dog meat farm and the young hooligan in your lower left corner is now nicknamed "Bonecrusher" as he was the cause of my recently broken knee and wrist, which caused the postponement of this paper. My volunteer work continues to the present day with Humane Fort Wayne and GRRACE.

Our path today traveling towards a discussion of Animal Awards for Valor will begin with what I hope you'll find a most interesting discussion of how animals, in this case dogs as the first domesticated species, became intertwined with us in the first place. From there we'll look at their roles in our lives today and our roles in theirs, then move to examine the awards we humans bestow upon them when we determine they ably serve our needs.

## II. DOGS AND HUMANS---THE LONG AND WINDING ROAD

*"Sometime toward the end of the last Ice Age, a gray wolf gingerly approached a human encampment. Those first tentative steps set his species on the path to a dramatic transformation: By at least 5,000 years ago, those wolves had become dogs, and neither they nor their human companions would ever be the same*."
--David Grimm, How Dogs Tracked their Humans Across the Ancient World, Science, 10/29/2020

The intertwined history of dogs and humans is long and winding, with many key elements still unclear and open to debate by scientists. Dogs are unique among our domesticated animals.

We know that the dog was the first domesticated species to co-exist with nomadic humans, predating the beginnings of settled agriculture by thousands of years. The quest to learn when, where, and how domestication occurred has proved a formidable challenge.

Scientists know why humans developed other domesticated species such as sheep, cattle, and chickens (to have food sources to be had close at hand) or horses (for assistance in transportation, farming, and hauling). But it is not known how or even *if* humans intentionally domesticated dogs or what purpose the domestication may have served. More perplexing is why, when they were not food sources or significant transportation or labor assistive animals, dogs were the *first* species to be domesticated.

Many studies have been conducted over the last thirty years in an attempt to provide answers to these questions, though most of these undertakings had serious shortcomings. Those focusing solely on genetic differences between modern dogs and gray wolves concluded that dogs were domesticated approximately 135,000 years ago. Another analysis which examined DNA of 1,500 modern dogs concluded that dogs were domesticated in China less than 16,300 years ago. More recently, a study using newer scientific techniques of analyzing mitochondrial genomes of ancient European and American dogs and wolves, along with those of their modern equivalents, opined dogs originated in Europe between 19,000 and 32,000 years ago.

Hoping to provide decisive answers to questions surrounding domestication, evolutionary biologist Gregor Larson of the University of Oxford, along with paleogenomicist Pontus Skoglund, began a multi-disciplinary dog domestication project about a decade ago. As Larson explained: “You can’t solve this problem by using modern animals alone as windows to the past.” He noted that because people have moved and interbred dogs through the centuries, their genetic heritage has been blurred sufficiently that it is not informative. Regional DNA signatures have been largely lost.

In Larson’s project, scientists used two techniques of significance. The first is a thorough analysis of thousands of samples of DNA from both modern and ancient dogs and wolves from across the globe. The second is a newer technique for bone measurement called *geometric morphometrics*, which allows scientists to accurately quantify various physical traits in each species, including snout length, teeth size and skull shape.

Morphometrics is the quantitative study of the biological shape, shape variation, and covariation of shape with other factors. A practical introduction to the concept published by the University of Chicago advises that application of these techniques benefits any research field which depends upon “comparative morphology” including evolutionary biology and many other scientific fields. It further notes that geometric morphometrics is powerful because information can be derived from the data regarding a spatial relationship among landmarks.

Landmarks are defined as points of correspondence on each specimen (here, dogs and wolves) that match between and within the populations being studied.

Landmark characteristics vary significantly between the wolf and the dog. The hope of Larson and his fellow researchers was to craft a more detailed and certain picture of dog domestication than past efforts had provided.

After collecting DNA and analyzing physical traits via geometric morphometrics, Larson and his colleagues were able to add 27 dog genomes to the five which were already known. Once the genomes were identified, they then were compared with the genomes of humans living in the same areas at the same time as the dogs in hopes of identifying co-location of the two species.

## A. Locations of Humans and Dogs

Larson's data comparison revealed that by 11,000 years ago, there were five distinct dog lineages: in northern Europe, Siberia, the Americas, the Near East, and New Guinea. This evidence led the researchers to conclude that domestication must have occurred well before this time, as so much species diversification had occurred. Such a conclusion is supported by existing archaeological evidence, which has found dog remains dating to at least 15,000 to 16,000 years ago in Germany.

## B. Theories about Domestication

### 1. When, Where, and How

Larson's project reiterated that numerous studies have shown dog domestication occurred during the Pleistocene Era, which ended approximately 11,700 years ago. In addition, it asserted that the specific wolf population from which modern dogs derived is now extinct and that both genetic and archaeological evidence collected from modern and ancient dogs shows that domestication took place in Eurasia.

The earliest remains of a dog (generally accepted by scientists) were unearthed at the archaeological site of Bonn-Oberkassel, Germany and date to approximately 15,000 years ago. Multiple scientific factors can serve as markers of domestication, including morphological markers such as snout, skull and teeth, genetic analysis, inferences about diet, and other factors. The Bonn-Oberkassel dog had both physical and genetic traits which distinguished it from wolves. Its co-burial with humans at the site and evidence that it appeared to have been cared for after suffering an illness also led scientists to conclude that it was a domesticated creature. Thus, Larson and his colleagues opined that domesticated dogs co-located with humans at least 15,000 years ago in central Europe.

Although more proof is needed, they believe that other dogs may have been present during the Pleistocene in Siberia. Meanwhile, in the Americas, archaeological remains of dogs appear to be dated to approximately 10,000 years ago, after the close of the Pleistocene Era.

Genetic data gathered in the Larson project determined that "all dogs represent a genetically homogenous group that possesses varying degrees of ancestry from three major ancestral lineages: a western Eurasian lineage (mostly found in European, Indian, and African dogs); an east Asian lineage (e.g., dingoes); and an Arctic lineage (e.g., huskies and ancient American dogs). A recent study of dozens of ancient dog genomes suggests that these lineages were all established by at least 11,000 years ago."

The data further suggest that dogs likely were domesticated by the time humans crossed into the Americas via the Bering Strait.

## 2. Migration

New archaeological sites, as well as advancements made in genomic science, have allowed researchers to hone their understanding of the origins of the first people to reach the Americas. As Larson's study details:

> Genomic evidence indicates that Native American ancestry can be traced to a population that is currently estimated to have diverged from an East Asian ancestor approximately 30,000 years ago. . .Around 24,000 years ago that population then split into at least two groups. One identified as Ancient Paleosiberians appears to have remained in far northeast Asia, while the other group became the basal branch of Native Americans.
>
> From the time of the Last Glacial Maximum [approximately 23,000 to 19,000 years ago], the basal branch of Native Americans appears to have been isolated in northeast Asia, where they remained before departing for the Americas.

During the period of isolation in northeast Asia, this group is believed to have split into two distinctive populations known as Ancient Beringians and Ancestral Native Americans. Both groups reached Alaska, but the Ancient Beringians have not been found south of Alaska.

The Ancestral Native Americans, however, reached North America south of the continental ice sheets. Archaeological evidence appears to support the hypothesis that the Ancestral Native Americans reached the Americas to the south by traveling along the Pacific Ocean, as interior areas were not yet free of continental ice sheets.

The Larson study moves from a discussion of the movements of ancestral humans to an overlay discussion of the movement of domesticated dogs into the Americas. It opines that, as the Americas were one of the last areas of the globe to be settled by humans, it is very possible that humans brought their canine companions along with them as they migrated. The co-migration may have been of assistance to the human travelers though just how so remains undetermined.

When studying the DNA of ancient dogs found in various geographic regions of the Americas, Larson learned that all ancient American dogs outside of the Artic region belong to the same genetic lineage which coalesces with an ancient Siberian dog lineage of about 16,400 years ago. This information allowed his study to assert that the timing of the split in the Siberian and American dog lineages closely parallels the divergence between Ancient Beringians and Ancestral Native Americans. It also suggests that dogs were domesticated prior to the time of this divergence and suggests the major human and dog lineages in the Americas evolved and dispersed contemporaneously. They have co-existed with us and helped transform our world ever since.

## Today's Human-Dog Relationships

Moving forward to the present day, we know that a strong human-animal bond remains. As humans have created more complex, technological societies, pets, particularly dogs, have remained by our side. In the United States today, nearly 70% (85 million) of households include a pet. Nearly 4 million dogs and cats are adopted from animal shelters and rescues each year. And Americans spend nearly $100 billion dollars each year on their pets and pet products. We love our pets!

In addition to living lives as beloved pets, we find animals (again, largely dogs) performing myriad tasks for humans. In addition to wartime roles, which we will visit shortly, dogs play a pivotal role in our world. Dogs help with disaster rescues by sniffing out survivors, by traversing terrain inhospitable to humans. Dogs also provide comfort, visiting hospitals, nursing homes, and other living facilities. They assist in community grief counseling after tragedies from mass shootings to weather events. And their services allow differently abled humans to live and work in situations they otherwise would be unable to navigate.

Dogs have continued to show their capacity to co-evolve with humans and remain capable of moving to meet our needs in order to retain the relationship.

What of we humans, then? We have evolved over the millennia, as well. Our cities have grown larger, our societies more complex. As our world, and our lives, have changed, we have found new ways to benefit from our relationship with dogs.

For example, the beagles you see in the lower left corner are bred and live their lives in laboratories. The photo details did not include what chemical was being tested in this photo, but most likely it is a drug, cleaning agent, or beauty product, all which are routinely tested on laboratory animals.

About 200 years ago, humans began to breed dogs for specific characteristics. Initially, breeds were created for skills and traits to perform specific tasks---hunting, following scents, killing rodents, herding and protecting livestock, etc. Over the years, though, demand, profitability, and lack of regulation of dog breeding led to puppy mills, which are large scale breeding operations where dogs typically live the entirety of their existence in wire cages in order to maximize use of kennel space. Indiana, particularly Northeast Indiana, is home to many large-scale puppy mill operations.

The other photos in this group are (upper left corner) a dog bred for fighting, (in the center) dogs in cages at a breeding facilities, (upper right corner) on a truck bound for Asian meat markets and, in the lower right corner, my Oliver prior to being rescued from the dog meat farm in South Korea.

So, dogs and other animals have provided and continue to provide us with emotional and physical support, to undertake tasks which humans either cannot do or do not wish to do, and perform tasks we ask of them even at the risk of their own lives and their own comfort.

## III. ANIMAL AWARDS FOR VALOR

We've now reached our discussion of Animal Awards for Valor. Before we examine some of the most prestigious awards in Europe and the United States, along with some of the most significant monuments erected to honor the service of fallen animals, a brief foray into the concept of valor is warranted.

### A. What is Valor?

Valor often is described as "boldness or determination in facing great danger, especially in battle; heroic courage; bravery". Merriam Webster defines valor as "strength of mind or spirit that allows a person to encounter danger with firmness; personal courage".

Through the millennia, humankind has rewarded valor: of leaders, of soldiers, and, more recently, of animals. Today, valorous conduct of soldiers remains rewarded by medals. In fact, the Air Force medal of honor is graced with a single word: Valor. In America and worldwide, many civilian organizations present awards for valor which is most often measured by physical

courage. And, as we'll discuss in a moment, many awards and monuments have been created to honor the valor of animals.

What of these animals? Do these non-humans truly possess courage, bravery, valor?

## 1. Plato's *Laches*

There is in humankind a long history of believing animals capable of courage or valor. Think of considering courageous humans to be "lion-hearted," for example. But are they?

For an interesting discussion, we turn to Plato's *Laches*. In *Laches*, Lysimachus and Melesias believe their own educations limited and seek to ensure their own sons, Thucydides and Aristides, are better instructed in the art of fighting than they were by their own fathers. They seek the opinions of Nicias (an Athenian politician and general during the Peloponnesian War) and Laches (an Athenian general and associate of Socrates). Upon consultation, Laches immediately suggests that the two fathers also solicit the opinion and advice of Socrates.

The discussion led by Socrates begins with virtue, then proceeds to courage. During the ensuing debate, Socrates opines in response to Nicias "I think that he who assents to your doctrine, that courage is the knowledge of the grounds of fear and hope, cannot allow that any wild beast is courageous, unless he admits that a lion, or a leopard, or perhaps a boar, or any other animal, has such a degree of wisdom that he knows things which but a few human beings ever know by reason of their difficulty."

Nicias replies: "I do not call animals which have no fear of dangers, because they are ignorant of them, courageous, but only fearless and senseless. Do you imagine that I should call little children courageous, which fear no dangers because they know none?" Nicias and Socrates distinguish courage, which they determine is recognizing the risk but proceeding because something morally important is at stake, from fearlessness.

## 2. Courageous Animals?

Are they correct? Is courage a moral virtue? If so, doesn't courage logically require understanding why an action is morally valuable and acting upon that understanding?

If this is our definition of courage, of valorous action, are animals capable of it? Or do humans train animals to perform dangerous tasks then label them courageous implying that they understand and accept the risks?

Would "brave" animals behave as they do if they had the same foresight as humans regarding potential danger? Animals do instinctively protect their offspring and their homes. Is this courage? Or is it genetic predisposition to ensure survival of the species, as articulated by E.O.

Wilson? If they could conduct a risk assessment of the tasks we ask of them, would they continue?

These questions cannot be answered. We cannot know fully what each understands or what motivates him/her. We have used them to further our goals, nonetheless.

## B. History of Dogs and Other Species in War

Throughout human history, animals have been conscripted in furtherance of both conquest and defense of territory and peoples. For at least 5,000 years, horses have played a pivotal role in warfare. Warriors and soldiers rode horses into battle and used them to move heavy supplies and weaponry such as cannon.

Many species of animals have been used by humans in warfare, including mules, dogs, pigeons, camels and even elephants.

### 1. World War I

#### a. Horses and Mules

Stepping Into the 20th century, horses and mules were used extensively in World War I. Early in the war, Great Britain's armed forces faced severe shortages of both steeds and draught animals. Importation of horses from abroad proved insufficient, compelling the British Army to conscript privately owned horses (which often were pets rather than work horses).

The horses began their service as transportation. However, as battles shifted to protracted, trench warfare, most were repurposed to move supplies and munitions. Many were wounded from artillery shelling and shrapnel.

Weather also proved a formidable enemy, as France and Belgium experienced inclement weather. While the mud often trapped horses, the bitter cold proved even worse as many of the conscripted horses were unaccustomed to nights spent in the elements.

Finally, as front-line workers, horses often were exposed to one of WWI's deadliest weapons: poison gas. The RSPCA worked with the Army Veterinary Corps to provide care for injured horses and treated over 1,000,000 injured and sick horses during the course of the war.

Mules had been conscripted during World War I, and were used to haul supplies and equipment, as well as serve as transport for humans in areas with rugged terrain.

During World War I, the British government purchased over 200,000 mules to be used pack animals and to haul ammunition and armaments. As with horses, the inclement weather of

France and Belgium resulted in deaths, as well as much suffering. In total, approximately eight million horses and thousands of mules and donkeys died during WWI.

### b. Dogs

Dogs were not spared the agony of WWI. While electronic communication did exist, lines often were damaged by fighting. Dogs were used to convey messages often, as they were less of a target than a soldier and could travel more quickly.

To acclimate dogs to the ghastly front-line conditions, they were exposed during training to explosions. British and German trainers fed their dogs just once per day. Immediately prior to receiving food, the dogs were forced to endure the nearby explosion of a hand grenade. Those too traumatized by the explosion to eat went hungry for the next twenty-four hours. Those who ate even after exposure to explosions were rewarded with work at the front lines.

In addition to conveying messages, dogs guarded rations, ran telephone lines between trenches, and were used as sentries to alert soldiers of attempted nighttime enemy raids. And, because front lines conditions often were filthy with leftover rations and other waste, rats were an ongoing problem. Dogs, particularly foxhounds and other smaller breeds, were trained as "ratters", dogs who preyed upon rats for their troops.

Finally, dogs were used during both World Wars as weapons. From the time they were weaned from their mothers, selected dogs were fed inside or next to tanks. Once the association was made between food and tanks, the dogs were deprived of food, loaded with explosives, then released in a combat zone where they would approach enemy tanks looking for food. Once within range to cause substantial damage to the enemy tanks, the dogs were detonated. Camels and donkeys also were used for such attacks.

### c. Pigeons

Pigeons were used extensively during World War I. Thousands of birds were used to deliver vital messages to and from the front lines. With electronic communication on the battlefield still in its infancy, it was often the message delivery of a pigeon which resulted in the delivery of key information for battle or the saving of lives of servicemen.

## 3. World War II

Less than three decades after the conclusion of "The War to End All Wars", the globe was again engulfed in conflict. Although World War II is often thought of as the first fully mechanized war, using tanks, aircraft carriers and planes, as well as sophisticated weaponry, all sides of the conflict again turned to animals for support in battle, both in Europe and in the Pacific theater.

### a. Mules

In World War II, mules were enlisted to carry ammunition and field guns, particularly in areas where topography was too steep or rocky for motorized vehicles to travel. Mules had performed well during World War I and American and British military, as well as German forces, again used mules for this conflict. Mules were used frequently in rugged areas such as the mountainous areas of Italy and the rainforests of many islands in the Pacific theater of the war.

In the mountains of Italy, mules not only brought munitions and weaponry to soldiers, but took wounded soldiers from the front lines back to field hospitals for medical care. In the Pacific, mules were used by American forces for similar purposes. As mules were not a native species in the landscape and often brayed, they could provide location data to the Japanese. To prevent discovery of American troops, veterinarians routinely performed surgeries to sever the animals' vocal cords.

### b. Dogs and Horses

The use of horses in warfare during World War II was less widespread than during World War I, largely due to the significant mechanization which occurred during the intervening time. Jeeps, transport trucks, and other advancements all coalesced to reduce the use of horses in wartime. Still, horses and especially mules were used for patrolling and for hauling ammunition and supplies in areas with rugged terrain.

Dogs again played a vital role in the war efforts of all combatants in WWII. It is estimated that 20,000 dogs were deployed along with the Army, Marines, and Coast Guard. In addition to the roles undertaken in WWI, dogs added to their skills the recovery of downed pilots. Thousands of dogs perished in combat in both Europe and the Pacific.

In addition to working with troops, many dogs served as mascots for military units during the war. Many of these dogs were homeless local animals rescued by soldiers. The National Archives and Records Administration's Still Picture Branch holds hundreds of photographs of dogs, horses, and even cats, which were taken mostly by government photographers covering the war. Here are a few.

## 4. Present Day

During the conflicts of the post-World War II era, Korea, Vietnam, Afghanistan, Iraq, and elsewhere, animals (dogs, in particular) have continued to play a vital role in military conflict. Dogs are trained to search for mines and IEDs, patrol airfields, intercept enemy combatants, and rescue personnel in inhospitable areas.

## C. Awards and Monuments for Animal Valor

After World War II, awards and memorials or monuments arose to honor the valor and gallantry of animals who contributed to the successes of their countries' battles. The following are some of the most prestigious awards and most visited memorials/monuments in the United States and Europe.

### 1. PDSA Dickin Medal

In Great Britain, the highest honor for animals is the Dickin Medal, which is described as "the animal equivalent of the Victoria Cross". The award was created by and is named for Maria Dickin. Dickin founded a veterinary charity, the People's Dispensary for Sick Animals in 1917 to provide care for ill or injured animals of those living in poverty. The PDSA remains Great Britain's leading veterinary charity and provides more than one million free veterinary visits each year.

In 1943, Marie Dickin created the Dickin Medal to honor "outstanding acts of bravery by animals serving with the Armed Forces or Civil Defense units." Internationally, the Dickin Medal is recognized as the preeminent award given to animals serving in military conflicts or civil service.

Winners of the award have included pigeons, dogs, horses, and other species.

### 2. Animals in War Memorial Monument

One of the most moving tributes to animals serving in and lost to war is found in Hyde Park in London. Designed by English sculptor David Backhouse, it was completed in 2004 and is 58 feet tall and over 55 feet wide. The Animals in War nonprofit, which constructed and maintains the monument, provides a history:

> The British, Commonwealth, and Allied forces enlisted many millions of animals to serve and often die alongside their armies. These animals were chosen for a variety of their natural instincts and vast numbers were killed, often suffering agonizing deaths from wounds, starvation, thirst, exhaustion, disease, and exposure… This memorial is a fitting and lasting tribute to them all.

The photos assembled here show the Animals in War monument. It is quite large, featuring both cast bronze sculptures and a Portland stone curved wall. The wall is the "symbolic arena of war, emblazoned with images of various struggling animals, along with two heavily laden

bronze mules progressing up the stairs of the monument, and a bronze horse and bronze dog beyond it looking into the distance."

The memorial has a number of inscriptions. The front main heading is Animals in War. Below the heading is the inscription "This monument is dedicated to all the animals that served and died alongside British and allied forces in wars and campaigns throughout time." And, perhaps the most important part of the inscription lies just to the right: "They had no choice."

### 3. Animals in War and Peace Medal of Bravery

The Animals in War and Peace Medal of Bravery was established in the United States in 2019 to honor American animals serving both in war and peace. Founders Robin Hutton and Mari Lou Livingood crafted the award to parallel the Dickin Medal awarded by the PDSA in Great Britain.

The initial recipients of this award were recognized in November 2019, at a ceremony on Capitol Hill in Washington, D.C., where the founders, members of Congress, and others attended what they called an historic and overdue event.

### 4. American Monuments

Many monuments exist to honor the work of military service dogs in the United States. A sampling of those most widely known and visited:

**The Military Working Dog Teams National Monument**, dedicated in 2013, is located on Joint Base San Antonio Lackland in Texas. It is a 3,000 square foot granite plaza with a large granite pedestal, a granite history wall, benches and a water fountain. On the pedestal are dogs and handlers representing each branch of military service's military working dog program since WWII. The inscription reads "Guardians of America's Freedom." Breeds represented among the statues are Doberman Pinscher, German Shepherd, Labrador Retriever, and Belgian Malinois. The granite wall provides a history of the Military Working Dog program as well as images of teams in all wars and conflicts since WWII.

The most meaningful aspect of this monument is the fountain, titled "Not Forgotten Fountain." It's a bronze sculpture which depicts a Vietnam War dog handler pouring water from his canteen into his helmet to quench his dog's thirst. The fountain, and the entire monument, were envisioned and conceived by Vietnam veteran John Burnham.

Burnham served as a dog handler from 1966-1968 and was heartbroken when his and other military dogs were left behind in country when troops withdrew. Though it is estimated that they saved at least 10,000 soldiers' lives during the course of the war, 2,000 of the more than 4,000 dogs who served in Vietnam were euthanized in Vietnam. In fact, only 204 dogs made

the return trip to the United States. Burnham is an author of works detailing this travesty and has worked to ensure recognition for the dogs left behind.

**The Washington DC Service and Sacrifice Memorial** is the only monument to military service dogs located on federal ground in our nation's capital. A bronze sculpture, it resides at the US Navy Memorial near the Visitors Center. The sculpture was commissioned by the US War Dogs Association to honor US Navy Special Forces personnel and Military Working Dogs serving the United States.

This memorial features one man, Petty Officer John Douangdara, lead dog handler for Navy SEAL Team 6, and his war dog Bart. Both John and Bart were lost when their helicopter was shot down over Afghanistan in 2011.

**The Alabama Service Dog Memorial**, located in Mobile, Alabama at the USS Alabama Memorial Park, was dedicated in 2008 and honors service dogs who have served US war efforts around the globe. The memorial, created from granite, marble, and bronze, depicts a military service dog with his handler and other soldiers. The back of the memorial lists all military service dogs whose handlers hailed from Alabama. The front of the memorial has both boot prints from a soldier's boots and paw prints from a military service dog, along with this inscription:

"This monument is dedicated … for all to bear witness in remembrance to these faithful war dogs and their Alabama handlers. Those who leave this place should remember the deeds and sacrifices of these four-legged soldiers."

And finally, the **Fort Bragg Memorial** which is located at the US Army Airborne and Special Operations Museum on the grounds of Fort Bragg was dedicated in July 2013. It is the only memorial erected to honor those dogs serving Special Forces. The statue is a Belgian Malinois and the base upon which it rests contains the names of more than 50 canines who lost their lives serving United States Special Forces.

The inscription, titled Constant Vigilance, reads: "The bond between a SOF handler & his K9 is eternal. Trusting each other in a nameless language. Here we honor our SOF K9s that have paid the ultimate price."

These awards and memorials are the small tokens of appreciation humans provide to canines and other creatures for their service and sacrifice. Though, of course, the animals…even those who survived injuries and were allowed to return to their home country at the conclusion of their military service…have no understanding of our displays of gratitude and honor. Humans provide these acknowledgements for themselves. Perhaps to celebrate the bravery of these animal warriors. But, perhaps also as an attempt to convince ourselves that setting an

unwitting creature on a path of destruction and likely death while undertaking tasks in which we humans do not wish to participate, is honorable rather than reprehensible.

## IV. CONCLUSION

So, the human-animal relationship is both long-lived and remarkably complex. The domestication of canines, and other species, forever changed both the trajectory of humankind and the course of life on our planet.

As Gregor Larson notes: “Dogs were the first species to enter into a mutualistic relationship with us. It was a key shift in the evolution of our species…it is amazing how much everything began to change after that.

For the vast majority of our species’ history, we travelled alone and made a tiny impression on the earth’s ecology. Now there are 8 billion of us and we depend on a range of domestic plants and animals for the maintenance of our huge global population. Imagine what society would be like if we had not formed mutually interdependent relationships with so many other domestic plants and animals. And it all started with dogs.”

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