

SEAL Dog

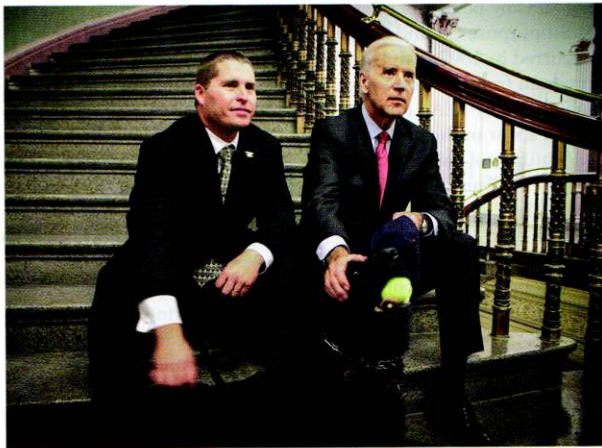
BY MARK FRENCH

In 2007 the Navy SEAL Special Forces started its own unique canine program, “Naval Special Warfare Dogs,” and decorated veteran Trevor Maroshek was one of the pioneers. This is the story of two American heroes – “Trevor Maroshek” and “Chopper” his purebred German Shepherd Dog. The Smithsonian Channel has devoted an entire episode to this story and entitled it “Seal Dog.”

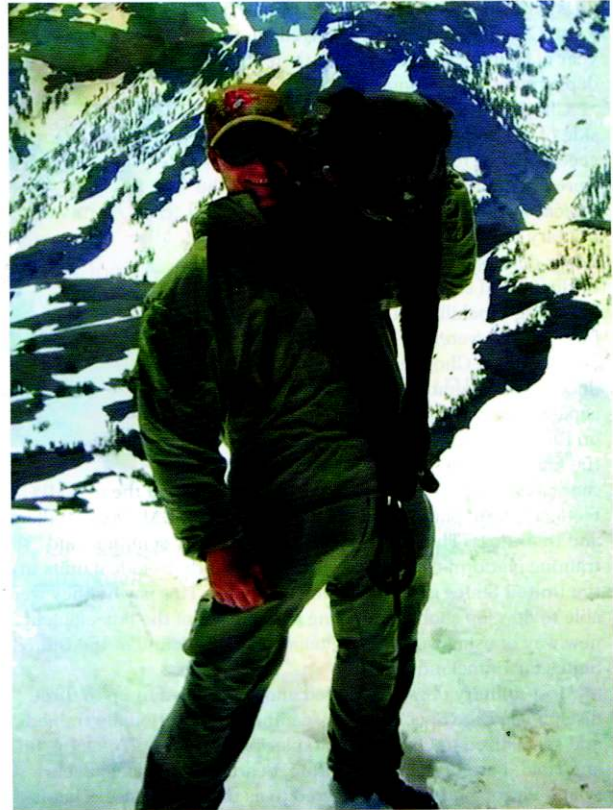
Growing up as a young man, Trevor had the “bad boy” personality of pushing the envelope and flirting on the edge of dangerous things. As a teenager Trevor was a self-described absolute punk. “The kind of person many parents would not want their kids to hang out with.” After the terrorist attack of 9/11, everything changed for Trevor and after much soul searching he enlisted in the United States Navy in 2003 in the Special Forces Sea Air and Land (SEAL) program. Navy SEALs are considered among the most elite military forces in the world.

To qualify for the SEAL program, applicants must first pass Basic Underwater Demolition Seal training known as (BUDS). Perhaps the most grueling military training in the world with a washout rate of 70%, Trevor described this gladiator school as 10% physical and 90% mental.

Two weeks before graduation, Trevor was injured in the line of duty breaking up a fight at a bar. Trevor was knocked out, hospitalized and remained unconscious for several days. From that altercation he received a Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI) – a double brain contusion and basil skull fracture. After months of grueling therapy and a miraculous recovery, he later completed his training and received his Trident pin and officially became a Navy SEAL and a member of SEAL Team 7.



Trevor’s first deployment was in 2005 in Iraq. Within eight months of that deployment, his Humvee was blown up by a roadside bomb and received a second Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). After that recovery he was later deployed to the Philippines. Wanting to try something different, Trevor applied for the new Special Forces Canine Program. In 2007, there were fewer than 10 dogs in the program. He was given the choice from three breeds, a Dutch Shepherd, a Belgian Malinois, or a German Shepherd Dog weighing more than 100 pounds. This completely black German Shepherd “Chopper” was the scariest dog he had ever seen. Chopper



with a bite strength of 900 pounds per square inch, was the dog he chose as his partner.

Only one percent of dogs in the Special Forces program can qualify for these elite teams. These dogs are the best of the best. They are proven dogs, selectively bred for their working and instinct qualities. Today only Belgian Malinois and German Shepherd Dogs are used in the Navy SEAL Special Forces. These dogs are extremely fit and motivated and have an extreme desire to work. Additional traits for the program include a dog’s mental stability, endurance, structural efficiencies, scent ability, courage and trainability. They must be able to accomplish such extraordinary feats as the ability to parachute out of a plane, rappel down a rope with their handler from a helicopter, or enter a mission by raft or boat by water. They must be able to enter a combat zone and function as a force multiplier. These dogs are considered equipment, but their handlers and the soldiers they protect consider these dogs their fellow soldiers and friends.

In comparing the two breeds, Belgian Malinois tend to have a higher drive, are smaller and lighter, more agile, and can withstand hotter temperatures. German Shepherds tend to have a more stable temperament, are stronger, more powerful and heavier. Often canine handlers must carry their dogs, in addition to their equipment and weapons, up and down mountains cliffs, buildings and ladders. Trevor did not mind the extra weight or worry about carrying an extra 30+ pounds.

Chopper was born July 13, 2005, and was imported from

the Czech Republic for a purchase price of \$13,000. Chopper was already an IPO/ Schutzhund titled dog trained in tracking, obedience, bite work and protection. At 2 years of age Chopper became one of the first Multipurpose Canines (MPC) Seal Tactical dogs implemented in the SEAL assault platform. Chopper and Trevor received another year of training together before their actual deployment on missions.

Chopper is a multi-purpose canine. Outside of the combat zone, Trevor and Chopper accomplished techniques of training that were uncommon and very different from the typical working dogs seen in conventional military units and police departments. These newly developed training techniques have introduced and established a fantastic, efficient lifesaving capability on and off the battlefield, for operators/veterans of all walks of life.

In training Chopper and Trevor introduced and integrated the MPC dog teams capabilities to the SEAL Teams and Platoons on the west coast, and on the east coast with the East coast MPC teams (who started at the same time). They participated and established the first MPC tactical assault platform based pilot course of SEAL Dog Handlers and their dogs. They attended a plethora of dog seminars and training platforms, including working with other tactical units in the United States and international experts. This is why they were able to develop such an amazing and outside of the box efficient new way of using working dog teams in combat and in the United States for Homeland Security.

Most military dogs are trained and specialized in up to three disciplines. Elite Special Forces canines are additionally trained and specialized in Obedience, Explosion Detection, Tracking, Bite and Hold, Laser Target Acquisition, Search and Rescue, Security and Patrol, and what is referred to as the sixth sense. That is the dog's ability to sense and alert his handler when something is wrong. Trained dogs can search a much larger area in less time with a greater degree of accuracy than other methods. Dogs often search ahead of minesweepers in desert temperatures approaching 120 degrees. Military dogs usually undergo gastropexy. This is a surgical procedure when the lining of the stomach is stitched to the abdominal wall to prevent fatal stomach twisting in cases of bloat.

The SEAL Dog elite canine gear and special equipment includes a bullet-proof vest, a camera, microphone, GPS, and



night vision goggles worth more than \$20,000. They operate with surgical precision and have other awesome attributes that remain secret by virtue of tactics. SEAL dogs are force multipliers.

A well-trained SEAL dog is more precise than humans, machines or the latest technology. "The capability they (Military Working Dogs) bring to the fight cannot be replicated by man or machine. By all measures of performance their yield outperforms any asset we have in our inventory. Our Army (and Military) would be remiss if we failed to invest more in this incredibly valuable resource." – General David H. Petraeus.

Chopper and Trevor had the honor of being part of developing MPC by being the original plank owners of the Navy SEAL Multi-purpose Canine program in the SEAL community. This occurred in 2007 with two other dog teams. They built the program from the ground up. Because of Chopper's accomplishments, (Navy SEAL dog teams) the SEAL MPC program is the tip of the spear in the dog world. The program has taken the lead on capabilities of canines worldwide, in military and law enforcement due to their amazing successful accomplishments on the battlefield. They developed standard operating procedures that are the staples of training to develop the most efficient working dog teams in the world.

Chopper and Trevor successfully served combat tours in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2009 on a deployment during a mission, Chopper's actions proved the worth of MPC Seal Dog teams in combat theatres. The most meaningful accomplishment and goal achieved their team is that there were no casualties on their watch on any mission they took part. They got everyone home safely to their families. Chopper saved many operators due to the full spectrum of his capabilities, including his calm demeanor, steadfast resolve, big heart, bravery and ferocious surgical actions and capabilities in combat. Trevor attributes this to the phenomenal temperament of superior German Shepherds. He believes German Shepherd Dogs are the best breed of dogs in the world.

Chopper sniffed out an ambush and neutralized several Taliban fighters who were in the process of advancing an explosive attack on Navy SEAL Operators, including Trevor. His actions enabled soldiers to come home safely to their families and loved ones. Chopper won the hearts and minds of the teams he worked with, providing good morale on deployment, and in training while on



SEAL DOG, on P. 10

active duty. On their watch, no one was killed or blown up by IEDs. Chopper knew when to be a loving, playful pet and when it was time to be a warrior. When he wore his military tactical harness vest and equipment, Chopper knew it was time to work and be a soldier.

As a combat team Chopper and Trevor found hundreds of IEDs and massive enemy weapons/explosive caches. They neutralized many Al Qaeda and Taliban enemy personnel hidden and postured to ambush patrols, set Incendiary Explosive Devices (IEDs), and attempt other lethal insurgent behavior. It would be remiss to not mention there is a special price, a bonus bounty for killing a military dog and/or its handler.

Chopper is the Original Gangster in MPC and holds the title on the West Coast, perhaps worldwide for his spectacular lifesaving actions. In yet another incident in a camp, had Chopper not been there, Trevor would be dead along with possibly 30-40 American SEALs. Chopper has been permanently retired as a decorated MPC FROG DOG who has saved countless lives of Navy SEALs and coalition forces in multiple theaters in extreme combat environments and missions.

Four tours of combat service and duty began to take its toll on Trevor. He developed Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) in addition to his Traumatic Brain Injuries (TBIs). When Trevor retired from military service, he began experiencing insomnia, numbness, cold sweats, tremors, and anxiety, panic attacks, day dreams and nervousness. It was then Trevor sought out help and was referred to the National Intrepid Center for Excellence (NICO), at Walter Reed National Military Medical Center in Bethesda, MD, for treatment. It was there Trevor realized he needed a Therapy Dog.

A lesser known fact is that military dogs also can develop PTSD. At the Daniel E. Holland Military Working Dog Hospital at Lackland Air Force Base in San Antonio, TX the top expert in the country for Canine PTSD is Dr. Walter F. Burghardt Jr., Chief of Behavioral Medicine. Approximately 50% of dogs can be rehabil-

itated with medications and therapy and can return to duty. The others are adopted out, usually to their handlers and families. Trevor was later able to adopt Chopper. Chopper was his first and only working dog and Trevor was his only owner/handler in the Navy SEAL MPC world. Chopper is enjoying his retirement in civilian life as a surfer and is now Trevor's service dog, but he is more than that. "He is my best friend, my partner and my soul mate. I love him like I love my family and especially as a team guy warrior poet hero. Chopper has the kindest soul and the bravest heart I have ever seen. The best thing for me for my PTSD is not medications, it is my dog."

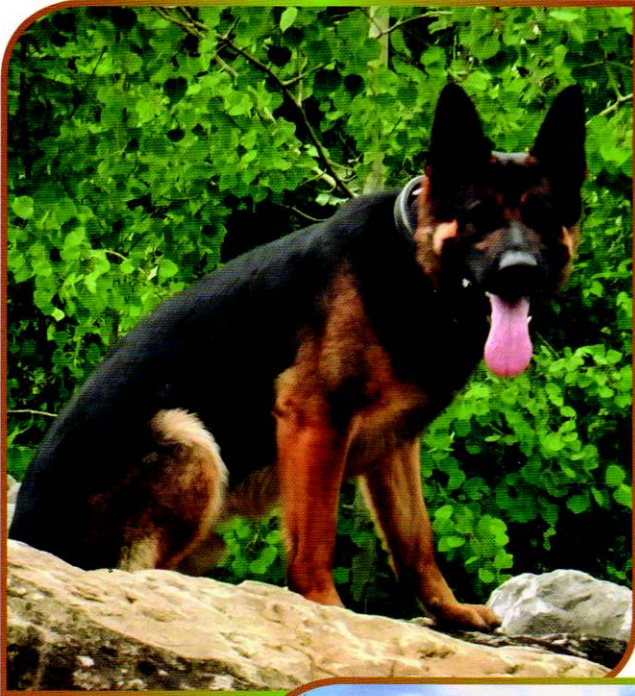
In retirement, Chopper now serves as a Therapy Dog, helping wounded and disabled veterans and their families. Chopper and Trevor proudly represent and uphold the Honorable NAVY SEAL CREED, on and off the battlefield.

SEAL Dog Foundation

Trevor Maroshek founded the SEAL Dog Foundation. It is our life's honor and goal to bring that companionship, love and support to all veterans and their families by providing the best dogs possible for America's wounded heroes. A progressive interactive training pipeline training veteran service dog teams, funds for fallen heroes, winning the hearts and minds with media supporting veterans, visiting hospitals, and directly impacting veterans who suffer from TBI, PTSD, and any disabilities where we can lend a PAW, and emotional support through our capabilities, the SEAL Dog way!

A Non-Profit Organization - The SEAL Dog Foundation has now mapped a solid progressive way forward for disabled veterans and their families proving that well-bred German Shepherds are the best Service Dogs and companions for the entire family. There is a great need for quality well-bred service dogs trained as Therapy Dogs and Emotional Support Dogs. Visit www.sealdogfoundation.com for more information and please consider donating. - Thank You!





Jethro
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HERO DOGS

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