



Always Faithful: A Memoir of the Marine Dogs of WWII

William W. Putney

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Twenty-three-year-old Bill Putney enlisted in the Marines in 1943 in search of military glory. Instead, Putney, a licensed veterinarian, was relegated to the Dog Corps.

Putney became the Commanding Officer of the 3rd War Dog Platoon, and later the chief veterinarian and C.O. of the War Dog Training School at Camp Lejeune, North Carolina. At Lejeune Putney helped train America's dogs for war in the Pacific. He later led them into combat in the invasion of Guam in 1944, the first liberation of American soil in World War II.

Always Faithful is the story of the dogs that fought in Guam and across the islands of the Pacific, a celebration of the four-legged soldiers that Putney both commanded and followed. It is a tale of immense courage, but also of incredible sacrifice.

On Guam, as on islands such as Iwo Jima and Okinawa, the Japanese were infamously tenacious, refusing to surrender as long as there was a hole left to crawl into. Rooting out the enemy was an awful, painstaking job. To this task, Putney's dogs were well suited. Used for scouting, attack, carrying messages, detecting mines, and also as guards, the war dogs were so well trained that they could locate nonmetallic mines that had been buried for months deep underground; their hearing was so precise they could detect enemy trip wires by listening to them "sing" in the breeze.

Their record in action was perfect. More than 550 patrols on the island of Guam were led by dogs; not one patrol was ambushed. But for this success, the dogs, always out in front, paid a terrible price. Although Putney worked feverishly as veterinarian and C.O. to keep the dogs alive, many were lost.

After the war, Putney returned home only to discover that the dogs he had served with were being put to sleep. These dogs were ex-household pets, recruited from civilians with the promise that they would someday be returned. Outraged, Putney fought for the dogs' right to go home. He won, and headed the overwhelmingly successful program to "detrain" the dogs so they could return to their families. Alas, quickly learned, the lesson was quickly forgotten. The dogs of Korea and Vietnam did not come home. Then, in the final days of his administration, President Clinton signed into law a bill that allows military handlers to bring home the dogs with which they work. Once again, Putney was at the front of the charge.

For anyone who has ever read *Old Yeller*, or the books of Jack London, here is a real-life story, never before told, that beats any fiction. At once wistful tribute and stirring adventure, *Always Faithful* describes what may be the greatest man-dog effort of all time. It will both astound and move you.

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