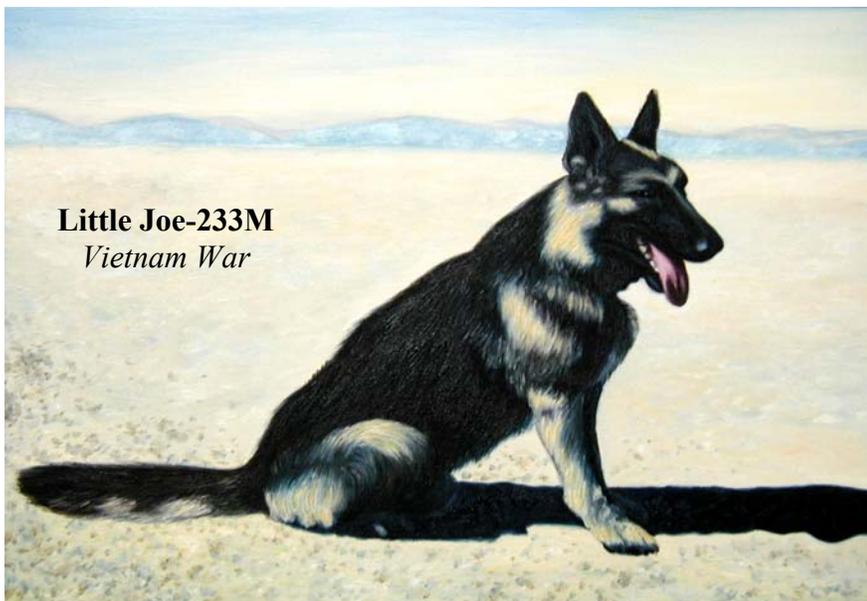
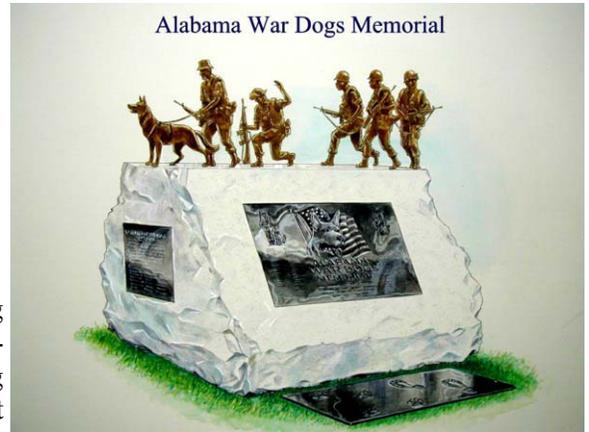


Little Joe, Recipient of the Greater Birmingham Humane Society Auxiliary's 2006 Olivia Bearden Award

The Alabama War Dogs Memorial Foundation is please to announce that Little Joe, its mascot, was the 2006 recipient of the Olivia Bearden Award. Little Joe was a scout dog in Vietnam, a soldier, serial # 233M, a hero. He died February 22, 1970 saving the life of Wade Franks, an Alabamian, his handler and members of the combat patrol they lead that day. The award was accepted on Little Joe's behalf by C. Wade Franks.

The figures on the Alabama War Dogs Memorial represent a war dog team on point; the depicted dog (Little Joe) is catching scent, the dog-handler is behind the dog watching for the alert-the silent life saving signal-followed by the kneeling slack man whose job it is to protect the dog-team and pass the word along to the troops coming up behind. The six figure scene is titled "The Alert" and portrays an actual combat patrol led by the Alabamian war dog team of Little Joe and his handler Charles "Wade" Franks...their story:



"We pick up the combat patrol climbing a heavily vegetated and rugged mountain trail in the Northern part of South Vietnam in Thua Thien Province near the Laotian border, an area known as The A Shau. It's Monday afternoon Feb 22, 1970 just after 4 PM. Charles Franks of Huntsville, AL, was handling Little Joe-a German Shepherd; together they formed one of the best dog teams in Nam. Little Joe and Wade were leading-walking point; they were part of the five man point element of a U.S. Rifle Company comprising over 100 men. The unit was moving up through dense foliage along a jagged jungle trail that snaked up a precipitous mountain side to the top of the ridge where they planned to set up a night defensive perimeter. As Wade and

Little Joe drew closer to the top of the ridge, Wade noticed that the trail emptied into a large clearing of open terrain, before disappearing again back into dense smothering vegetation. Experience told Wade this clearing is a good place for an ambush; just then, before entering the clearing Little Joe stopped and "alerted" –similar to the pose you see on the Monument. Wade, in a concerned whisper, hissed "Hold it" to the slack man who raised his hand to signal the patrol behind him to pause; in a split second Wade yelled "Get down" as he himself dove off the trail into the underbrush. At that moment enemy soldiers located about 40 meters in front of Little Joe and Wade realized that the American Unit was not going to walk into the kill zone. With their ambush blown, the jungle spit-forth machinegun and AK-47 automatic weapons fire from concealed positions around the clearing. The enemy started to pour it on, sweeping the clearing and down the trail with knee to waist high fire. Wade and those in the forward position were taking rounds, he caught a glance of Little Joe to his front; during other firefights Little Joe had always crawled back to his handler even if wounded, but not this time. Today was different; for some reason, perhaps he was already mortally wounded, Little Joe stormed toward the enemy in a hail of bullets and disappeared. The firefight went on for over an hour. It was almost dark before the American unit drove the enemy off. Wade finally found Little Joe laying on the ground in the middle of an enemy position; it had taken five rounds to kill him, but in sacrificing his life that day he saved many more lives, including Wade's."



Little Joe & Wade Franks

Contact: John O'Malley 205-995-8495

Visit www.awdm.org to learn more about the Alabama War Dogs Memorial and/or make a donation