

The Cover Story

War Dog Fund Program in World War II

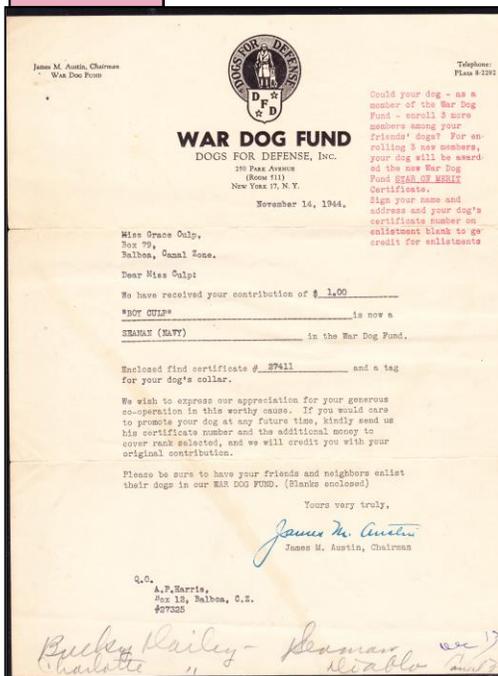
by Phil Fettig

Many of us grew up watching Lassie & Rin-tin-tin perform heroic deeds saving Timmy and chasing down evil doers on television. The truth is, animals, including dogs, have aided the development of mankind and society for thousands of years. Stamp collecting has played a part in illustrating how these working dogs have contributed. An appropriate example for stamp collectors would be Scott 4547 honoring Owney the Postal Dog (**Figure A1 on Front Cover**). Owney deserves a story by himself, but that will have to wait for another day. The United States issued a set of four Dogs at Work stamps in 2012 (Scott 2604-07). We are probably most familiar with a guide dog helping the sight impaired. Unfortunately, we are also used to seeing rescue dogs at scenes of disasters trying to find survivors or victims. The use of therapy dogs has been increasing and they are helping numerous people recover from both physical and mental problems. Examples of the stamps honoring these three types can be seen in **Figure A2 on Front Cover**. (Note: This set of stamps appears to include law enforcement working dogs in with the military as most of the training and uses are the same.)

The last stamp in this set (**Figure A3 on Front Cover**) shows a military dog which brings us to the subject of this article. Evidence of dogs being used in warfare can be found as far back as 700 BC. The following deals with one example of how dogs were obtained for the U.S. Military at the start of World War II.

The United States was ill-prepared in many aspects to fight WWII. One of these shortcomings was in the use of dogs as guards or even combat. Dog handlers in Europe and Asia were far more advanced in the use of animals. Early in 1942, a group of civilian individuals with positions of authority and/or experience with dogs helped to form an organization called "Dogs for Defense." They included members of the American Kennel Club, Professional Dog Handler's Association and other groups. The initial drive was to influence the public to donate their dog to the military for training and use. Two problems emerged from this effort. The first was, while large numbers of dogs were donated, almost half of them were determined to not be suitable for service. The other area of concern was the high cost of caring for the animals. The Dogs for Defense group established an alternative effort named the "War Dog Fund." This concept provided the patriotic animal lover the opportunity to enlist their dog in the War Dog Fund by making a donation. This allowed a dog,

Figure A5



otherwise not qualified to perform as a Military Dog, to serve in an honorary manner and help fund the war effort.

One of the reasons I used to love bidding in Michael Rogers, Inc. auctions was the large boxes of collection remainders I would win. Some were crammed full of odd but interesting items. In one such box I found two sets of documents concerning the enlistment of "Boy Culp", a dog belonging to Miss Grace Culp of Balboa, Canal Zone.

Figure A6.1

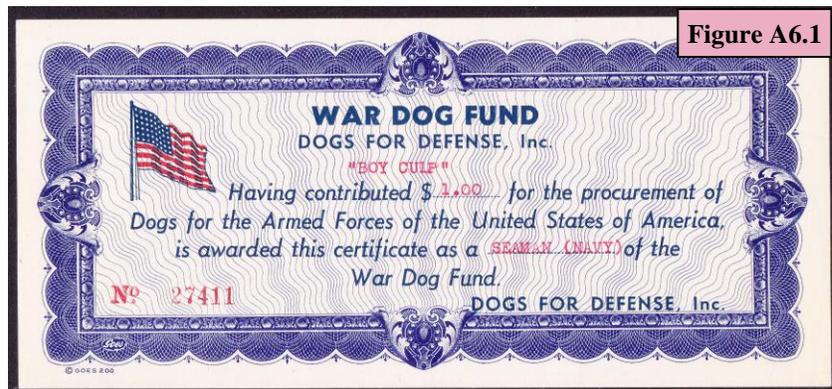




Figure A6.2

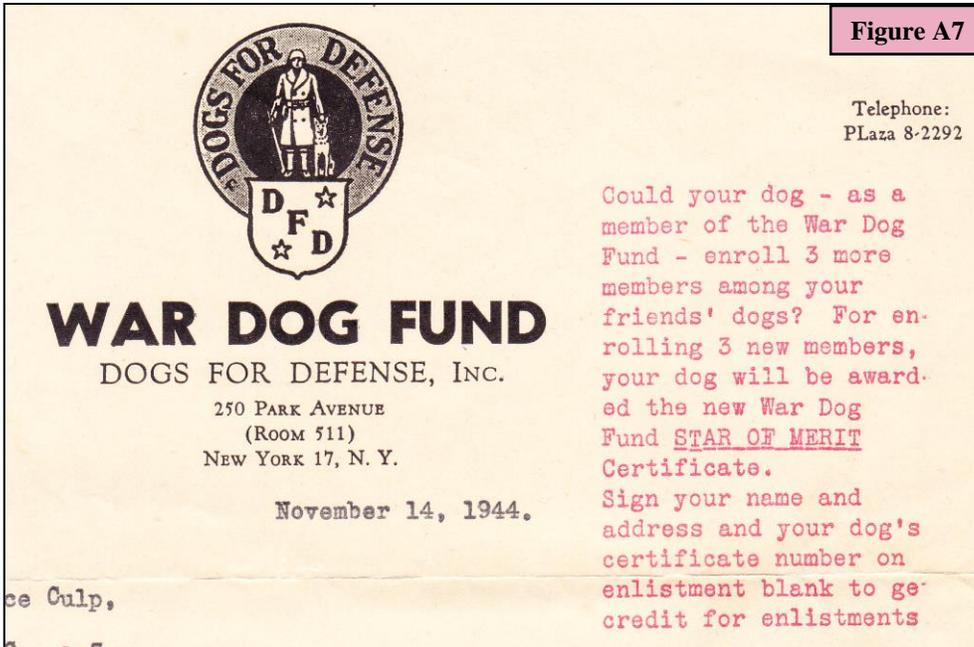


Figure A7

Figure A4 on Front Cover shows the censored envelope sent from New York City to Balboa containing Boy Culp's documents. Figure A8 shows the back of the envelope with the censor markings. It carries three 10 cent stamps from the Prexie series, Scott 815. The fee for this airmail item was 15 cents per half ounce. The letter to Miss Culp (Figure A5) explains that her dog was "promoted to a Navy Seaman and encloses a beautiful engraved certificate (Figure A6.1) and a collar tag. Figure A6.2 shows the back of this gorgeous engraving. The letter also has a stamped red ink message (Figure A7) that explains that if her dog could enroll three new

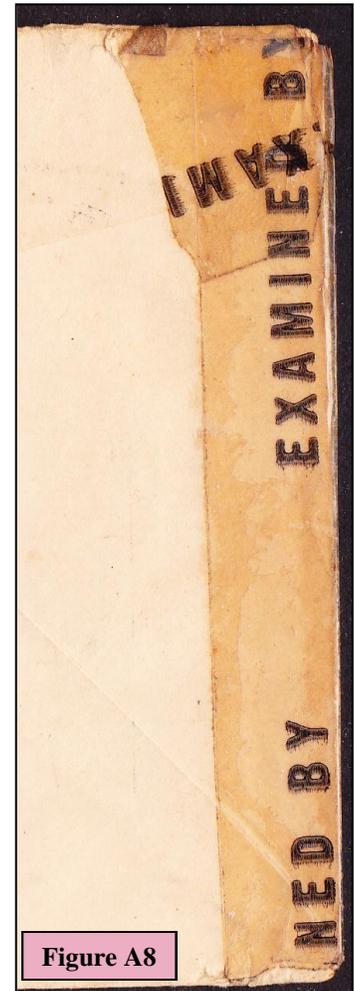


Figure A8

members for the War Dog Fund, he could receive a Certificate of Merit. Blank enlistment forms were enclosed to use for referrals to process. The collar tag and forms, which contributed to the double rate fee, were not included in the material that I received in the auction lot. Various names were written in pencil on the bottom of the letter and back of the envelope. This led me to believe Miss Culp was attempting to find new recruits. (Note: When I was a Navy Recruiter in the 1970s, a new recruit could earn a promotion prior to leaving for recruit training. All they had to do was bring me three friends who would enlist prior to my recruit leaving for boot camp.)

This item, along with the one I previously listed on eBay, generated a large number of views and bids. It is one of those interesting lots that covers more than one area of interest. In this case collectors of Canal Zone, censored covers, air mail covers, World War II and dog topicals might want to add this to their collection. I have often said that dealers are lucky as we get to "collect" everything. However, we also have to learn to let it go!