



Hero of a dozen scrapes, Navy mascot Black Dog used up more lives than a cat in his tour of duty.

The sailors realized Black Dog was destined to get into trouble again and again, so they started a hospital fund to assure his future medical expenses.

Black Dog proved his need of hospitalization immediately when he ran under a propeller and had the tip of his tail neatly clipped off. But he never did learn to show proper respect for the lethal blades.

In August, 1951, Black Dog went with his squadron to Glynco, Ga. By this time he was getting along in years by dog standards. He looked much the same except that he had begun to lose some of his teeth. As a result, he often ended up second best in fights.

ONE NIGHT while the ground party was waiting for a blimp to land, Black Dog, who had run out in front of everyone to the spot where the ship would set down, started barking and yelping furiously. When the men couldn't quiet him, the chief in charge ran over to put him off the field. Black Dog had spotted a six-foot water moccasin and was about to do battle. It was all the chief could do to call him off before he got bitten. The snake was killed, and there wasn't a sailor in the party who wasn't grateful to Black Dog. They knew that one of them would probably have been bitten if it hadn't been for him.

Not too long afterward, the men at Glynco had an opportunity to pay him back in spectacular fashion.

One night the squadron got orders to move their airships out of the path of an approaching hurricane. From one of the departing ships, a pilot happened to shine a spotlight on the ground below. He saw Black Dog dangling head down from the

end of a mooring line, a complete hitch taken around one leg. He radioed the base for permission to return and save him, and the commanding officer agreed.

Miraculously, Black Dog was alive after flying from the end of a rope for an hour. He spent two months in the hospital and thereafter was restricted to a hangar during airship operations.

When he died a natural death in 1957, the men felt the loss so much that they donated a stone to rest on his grave beside the main door of the hangar. The stone's legend says that Black Dog lived 18 years, equivalent to 126 years for a man. He had won the respect of hard-boiled sailors, but his life had by no means been an easy one.

When his old squadron was decommissioned in 1959, his skipper decided that his stone should be shipped to Lakehurst where the only remaining airships of the Navy are based. It's mounted there along with a picture of the mongrel. The cement pedestal under the stone has a brass plaque engraved with the following inscription:

Though Black Dog's remains be interred at Glynco, Georgia, his headstone is placed on his old quarterdeck to perpetuate his memory in lighter-than-air.

On Nov. 18, 1959, Comdr. F. N. Klein of Fleet Airship Wing I rededicated Black Dog's headstone in an unveiling ceremony before personnel of the last two airship squadrons.

Seldom has such recognition been given to a dog. But no one who knew him will ever deny that he deserved it.

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