

# Our American Dog Hero

The American Pit Bull Terrier was the most popular family dog during the first part of the 20th century. Petey of the Little Rascals was a Pit Bull. Helen Keller owned a Pit Bull. These dogs were once America's icon dogs.

In recent history the wrong people have exploited this breed's extreme loyalty and eagerness to please. Take a second look at the breed that has so much to say to us about its strengths and qualities as well as who we are as a nation of doglovers.



"Jonny Justice" (above) is one of the fifty-three Pit Bulls seized from Michael Vick's property in April 2007. He is also one of the thirteen that were rescued by Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pitbulls (BAD RAP).

## "Aren't Pit Bulls mean and vicious?"

Like any breed of dog, a healthy pit bull that is properly raised will remain loving and friendly. In the past 20 years, we've seen some sad examples of poorly bred and badly treated dogs that are the byproducts of irresponsible "backyard breeders" and cruel and abusive homes.

## "Don't Pit Bulls turn on their owners?"

No. Dogs that bite people are typically troubled individuals, and they represent every breed. In general, biting dogs have been damaged by improper handling, abuse and/or damaged genetics. The good news is, these types of personalities offer warning signs well in advance of biting, however many ignore or misinterpret their dog's troubling behaviors. To reduce dog bites, communities should invest in bite prevention education efforts.



**Pit bull is NOT a breed. It's a generic term often used to describe all dogs with similar traits and characteristics often known by the public as "pit bulls."**



**"In a recent study of 122 dog breeds by the American Temperament Testing Society (ATTS), pit bulls achieved a passing rate of 83.9%. That's as good or better than Beagles .... 78.2%, and Golden Retrievers ... 83.2%."**  
— BAD RAP

Sources: Bay Area Doglovers Responsible About Pitbulls, Pit Bull Rescue Central, and The Truth About Pit Bulls

## SERGEANT STUBBY

He was America's first canine hero gaining this distinction during military service in France during World War I.

Little is known about the scrawny stray puppy, a brown and white American pit bull terrier, until mobilization of Connecticut National Guard units for deployment to Europe at the start of World War I. He simply wandered into their encampment at Yale University in 1916 attaching himself to Private John Conroy. The men were enamored by the animal and he soon became the Official mascot.

The unit became the 102nd Infantry Regiment and shipped out for France aboard the troop ship S.S. Minnesota and with them the bull terrier, now known as Stubby, because of his short tail, having been smuggled on the ship in Private Conroy's overcoat.

The young pit bull was oblivious to the noise of battle and quickly began to prove his mettle. For eighteen months, Stubby carried messages under fire, stood sentry duty and helped paramedics find the wounded in "no man's land." He gave early warning of deadly gas attacks and then a little gas mask fashioned by the men of the 102nd was affixed. He found and help capture a German spy who was mapping a layout of the Allied trenches.

He received the honorary rank of Sergeant for his actions. When seriously wounded by shrapnel, he was sent to the Red Cross hospital for surgery. Once recovered, he was given the Purple Heart and promptly returned to his regiment for duty. After the battle for the French village of Domremy, news of the little dog's heroism became known to the townspeople. The women prepared a hand-sewn chamois coat decorated with Allied flags and his name stitched in gold thread. The coat became his recognized trademark, becoming a depository for his service chevrons, medals, pins and buttons which he wore at parades for the rest of his life.



In 1921, Conroy along with Stubby, headed to Georgetown to enroll in law school. The dog became a practicing Hoya serving several terms as mascot to the football team. Between halves, the dog would nudge a football around the field with his nose, to the delight of the crowd. His performance is deemed the inspiration which started elaborate half time shows at football games across the country. Stubby spent his final years with John Conroy, his acknowledged master, who had rescued him so many years ago. Upon his death on April 4 in the arms of John, from symptoms of a very old dog, the remains were preserved with technical assistance from the Smithsonian Institution. *Written by Donald Greyfield*



## Pit Bull Attacks Baby! (with Sloppy Kisses)

Levi and Jennifer couldn't imagine their family without "Sinew," a 65-pound, plus Pit Bull. They also have Mocha (a Jack Russell), Tilly (a Chihuahua), Katelyn (a Lab), Chewkinew (a Lab/Pit mix), and Cassy the cat.

Neither Levi nor Jennifer were worried about introducing their new baby to their animal family, especially Sinew, "[When Sinew first met Ryleigh], he calmly approached her, took a few sniffs, and gave her one of his wonderful sloppy kisses. Then he just laid his head down," said Levi.

Levi encourages people not to believe the misconceptions about the breed. "I hope that people who don't like Pit Bulls will take the chance to meet one. Sinew is the ideal pet for old or young people. He is house-trained, sleeps inside, and would do anything for a loving touch ... There are a lot of people who ask if I would fight him. It irritates me to know that they would want to make this loving dog dangerous." Sinew agreed by licking Levi in the face.

Editor's Note: Only one dog acted aggressively during the interview, Tilly, the Chihuahua.

