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The history of sailors and the sea is filled with crusty characters and heroes, but here's a tale of a sea dog whose exploits lifted the spirits folks back home during World War Two. His name was Sinbad.... the dog.

The brawny mixed-breed is only one of two canines to ever be officially enlisted in the U.S. military — he was assigned the rank of K9C, or "Chief Dog," the equivalent of a chief petty officer.

But in his 11 years with the U.S. Coast Guard — including being strafed and helping ram a German submarine — he rose and fell in rank because, like any old salt, Sinbad was inclined to

get rowdy in ports around the globe. In fact, he was the subject of diplomatic incidents in Casablanca and Greenland.

As one sailor explained, "Sinbad is a salty sailor but he's not a good sailor. He'll never rate gold hash marks nor Good Conduct Medals. He's been on report several times and he's raised hell in a number of ports. On a few occasions, he has embarrassed the United States government by creating disturbances in foreign zones.

"Perhaps that's why Coast Guardsmen love Sinbad. He's as bad as the worst of us and as good as the best of us."

Despite brushes with trouble in public relations tours, Sinbad wore the American Defense Service Medal, American Campaign Medal, European-African-Middle Eastern Campaign Medal, Asiatic-Pacific Campaign Medal, World War II Victory Medal and the Navy Occupation Service Medal — all on his dog collar.

Sinbad's story begins in 1937 when Chief Boatswain's Mate A.A. "Blackie" Rother bought him as a gift for his girlfriend. But her apartment didn't allow pets, so Rother took him aboard his ship, the 327-foot cutter USCGC George W. Campbell.

None of the sailors wanted the responsibility of owning the part Rottweiler, part Doberman, but the crew liked the novelty of having him aboard. They solved their dilemma by officially enlisting Sinbad. He wasn't a stray. He was a crewman.

Sinbad "signed" his enlistment papers with a paw print. He was assigned his own service and Red Cross identification numbers, service record and bunk. He was paid according to his rank,

Chief Dog.

As word of Sinbad spread, sailors explained to reporters that he was a true sailor — he had his own general quarters and duty stations and fully demonstrated seamanship skills. Like any sailor, he also drank coffee and beer chasers at far-flung ports of call.

The Campbell was assigned to convoy escort duty in the Atlantic during WWII and publicity photos showed Sinbad wearing a helmet, stationed on barrel of the ship's biggest gun. He was actually kept below decks in combat, assigned to damage control so he could be far away from the sound of the big guns.

The ship's most intense action came when the Campbell's rammed a German Submarine, the U-606. The incident left the cutter severely damaged, flooding and without power. Sinbad and most of the sailors were evacuated while an "essential crew" remained aboard while it was towed to Canada for repairs.

He was considered good luck by the ship's captain, Capt. James Hirschfield, who believed the Campbell could come to no serious harm while Sinbad was on board.

Media attention grew thanks to the presence of the sea dog with the crew in bars in ports of call. A December, 1943 Life magazine article on Sinbad described him as "liberty-rum-chow-hound." He became world famous when a writer, George F. Foley, penned the dog's official biography, "Sinbad of the Coast Guard." Sinbad even went on a book-signing tour.

He was officially discharge in September 1948 and taken ashore at the Barnegat Light Station in New Jersey, where the Coast Guard listed him as being on "inactive duty." He was a popular figure on the seafront there, where another Life magazine article described Sinbad as "an old sea dog who has favorite bars and plenty of girls in every port.

He lived another three years, often seen at Kubel's Bar, quietly looking out to sea.

Sinbad died on December 30, 1951. The famous sea dog was buried beneath a granite monument at the base of the light station's flagpole.

When the Campbell was decommissioned, a new USCGC medium endurance cutter was launched, the USCGC Campbell WMEC-909. There's a statue of Sinbad on the ship's mess deck, where ship superstition holds that any officer below the rank of chief petty officer cannot touch Sinbad's likeness. To show such disrespect to a famous crewman would bring bad luck to the Campbell.