



LINES FROM LINDA

by LINDA AYERS TURNER KNORR

Of the many tempting treasures to wish for this Christmas, Santa's sleigh will be filled with an unforgettable brand new gift. For those on his list who love dogs and are passionate about our country's well-being, I've found the perfect present.

Donald Trump may be one of the most contentious presidential picks in the history of the United States, but in a nation polarized by this election, there are some Washington insiders who never cared about the outcome:

"Secret Service dogs are refreshingly nonpartisan," says Maria Goodavage, author of the new book, *SECRET SERVICE DOGS: The Heroes Who Protect the President of the United States*

(with Foreword by former Secret Service agent Clint Hill). "They safeguard presidents, red or blue, with all their heart, simply for their handlers' heartfelt praise and a rubber ball."

Goodavage obtained unprecedented access to the Secret Service's canine program and has the inside track on these exquisitely trained dogs and the incredible bonds they share with their handlers. Goodavage, has appeared on "Today" and "The Daily Show" for her bestselling books on military dogs: *Soldier Dogs*; *The Untold Story of America's Canine Heroes* and *Top Dog*; *The Story of Marine Hero Lucca*.

Dogs are an integral part of the Secret Service's protection for the Commander in Chief and the vice president,



Kim K. and her explosives sniffer Astra at work at a conference where the President will be speaking. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



ABOVE: Secret Service dogs have been protecting presidents for 40 years. (Photo courtesy of the Reagan Library)

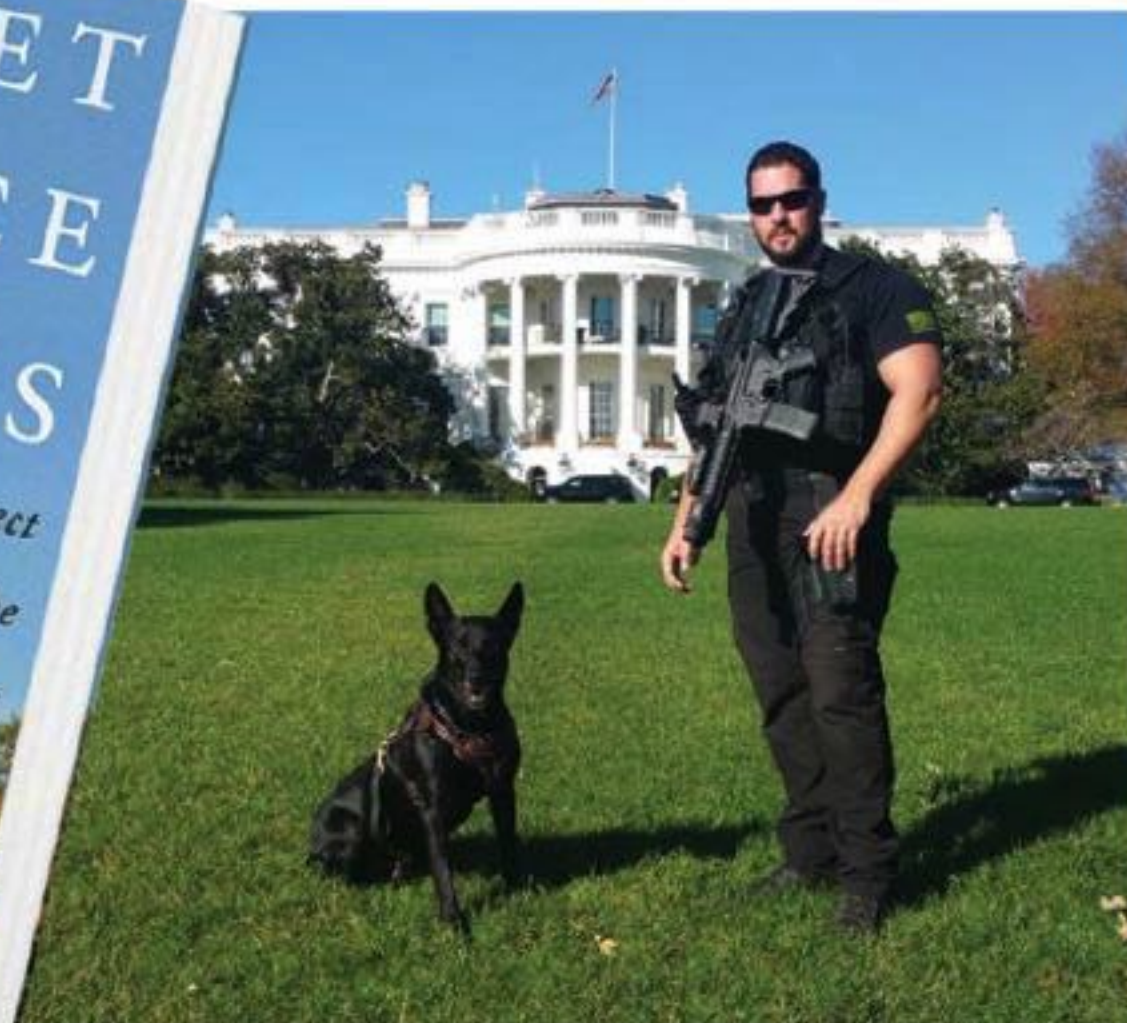
LEFT: Hurricane at White House. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)

PAWS PROTECT THE PRESIDENT





Maria Goodavage, Author
(© Laura Altair Hanson)



Marshall and Hurricane at the White House.
(Courtesy of Maria Goodavage)

as well as for members of the First Family, the vice president's family and often visiting heads of state from other countries. And they're completely non-partisan, protecting Republicans and Democrats equally.

While Maria Goodavage was a reporter working for "USA Today", her traveling companion was an Airedale Terrier that loved car rides. Maria loved taking him on assignments. During pre-internet time, finding pet friendly accommodations was a real challenge. Maria decided to solve the problem. So in 1992, Maria wrote *The Dog Lover's Companion to the Bay Area*. The book sparked a national series. She went on to write *The Dog Lover's Companion in California* in 1995, and her publisher hired experts in their geographical areas to write other books in the series.

Maria wrote seven editions of the book over the years. The last one was published in 2011 and then she found an interest in writing about military dogs.

Maria, you've written about military dogs for your last two New York Times bestsellers. The military can be hard to gain access to, but what about the United States Secret Service, where you had unprecedented access?

"It was definitely harder! It took about nine months for the Secret Service to agree to work with me on this project. At the time, there were sweeping changes going on within the agency, and even after everything settled down, approval had to percolate up through various departments."



Maria and Hurricane.



Presidential protectors come in all shapes and sizes. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



It's not all glamour for these dogs. Desi had to wear the equivalent of a flower pot for a while to protect a wound. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



Hurricane and Marshall hug on the White House north lawn near where apprehension took place. (Photo by Maria Goodavage)

What surprised you the most in the course of your research for the book?

"I was surprised and impressed by how integral Secret Service dogs are to the many circles of protection for the president. Explosives detection dogs precede presidents everywhere they go. Floppy-eared dogs sniff for explosives on people outside the White House fence. Tactical dogs protect the president and First Family on the White House side of the fence. The dogs go anywhere they're needed, and sometimes that means around-the-world trips."

Do the dogs travel a lot?

"Secret Service dogs are definitely the frequent fliers of the canine world! Explosives detection dogs go on more than 200 flights during their careers. In presidential campaign years they average about 36 flights."

So the Secret Service dogs protected Clinton and Trump? Did they get to choose?

"When presidential candidates are approved for Secret Service protection,

dogs factor into their security teams. Fortunately, the canines are nonpartisan and protect Democrats and Republicans with equal gusto. They've been safeguarding presidents from both parties for 40 years. What they care about is getting their handlers' enthusiastic praise for a job well done."

The stories of the bonds between the handlers and the dogs are remarkable. What do you think is the key to forming these bonds between humans and canines?

"Dogs and their handlers train intensively together, they work long shifts all over the globe, and their core mission of presidential protection is obviously of extraordinary importance. As one tactical dog handler told me, 'What's really on our shoulders is almost unbearable to think about.' Unlike military dogs, Secret Service dogs live with their handlers, so they're together almost 24/7, which can be a huge stress buster. Many handlers think of their dogs as their kids, or their best pals. I love that every handler I interviewed knew unequivocally that his or her dog was the best dog in the world."



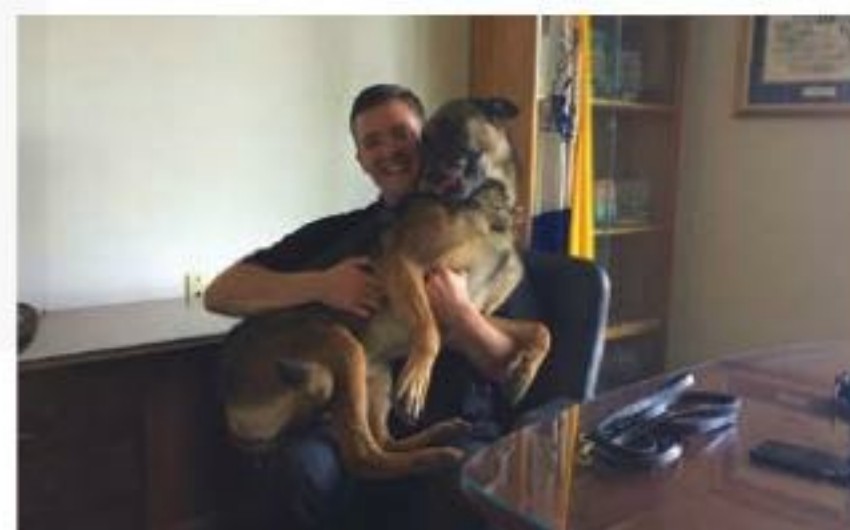
The dogs of the US Secret Service travel the world to protect the president. Here, Noisy seems to be enjoying a flower factory in Colombia.



US Secret Service dogs are the frequent fliers of the canine world. (Photo of Astra courtesy of Kim K.)



The love between handler and dog is deep and like no other. (Photo courtesy of "Stew")



Bomb sniffing dog Rex thinks he's a lapdog when with handler Jon M. (Photo courtesy Maria Goodavage)



ABOVE: "Floppy ear" dogs sniff for explosives on people outside the White House fence. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage) RIGHT: The friendship between dog and handler is deep. (Photo courtesy of Larry C.)

What kinds of dogs work in the Secret Service?

"Mostly Belgian Malinois, and exclusively Malinois, for tactical work. There are still plenty of German Shepherds among the explosives detection dogs. The dogs who sniff the crowds outside the White House fence—a.k.a. the 'friendly dogs'—are mostly Labrador Retrievers, but there's also a Springer Spaniel and a very interesting mix in a scruffy character named Roadee. I featured him in the book and I still laugh every time I think of him."

Do the tactical dogs of the Emergency Response Team tend to always be aggressive?

"Not at all. Some of the best ERT dogs are the ones with the biggest 'off' switches. They can be giving it their all to safeguard a protectee and the team, but when the job is done, they want nothing more than a belly rub. Hurricane, the central dog in my book, is known for his incredible 'on-off' switch."

Is there anything you discovered that is helpful to regular folks who are training dogs as pets?

"Believe in your dog! He or she has a tremendous capacity for learning—much greater than you may realize."

How does a new president coming into the White House affect the Secret Service's work with their dogs?

"Unlike a new president's effect on humans, a new president in the White House doesn't have a direct impact on Secret Service dogs. The dogs are rarely near the president, so they don't need to get used to a new protectee."

Are there any changes the dogs face with a new President?

"They do often do face one change: The switching of presidential pets. As the scent of the old First Dog fades away, they may find themselves encountering the scent of a new First Dog. And sometimes the dog himself. Former president George W. Bush's dog Barney



"Friendly Dog" Dyson on the job at the White House. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



"Friendly Dogs" walk among the crowds outside the White House fence to sniff for explosives on people. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



Dyson, a "Friendly Dog", tries on his new Doggles®. (Photo courtesy of Nate C)



"Friendly Dog" Roadee at work in front of the White House. (Photo courtesy of Maria Goodavage)



"Friendly Dog" Roadee is a big character. Here he gives the stink eye to the photographer. (Photo courtesy of Josh B.)



ERT tactical canine teams train for almost anything. (Photo courtesy of "Stew")

would sometimes break away and make a mad dash for a Secret Service dog. Luckily for Barney, fast-acting Secret Service handlers prevented potential disaster. At this point, Donald Trump doesn't have a dog, so it will be one less thing for Secret Service dog handlers to have to be concerned with while working at the White House."

Your Labrador puppy Gus has a special background—what can you tell us about that?

"Gus is a Kory Wiens and Cooper memorial puppy—a living memorial to a fallen soldier and his dog. He was born on New Year's Eve last year, and given to me nine weeks later by the father of Army dog handler Kory Wiens, who was killed by an IED along with his yellow lab, Cooper, in Iraq in 2007. I didn't have the fortune of knowing Kory, but he was an important part of my book *Top Dog*. His father and I kept in touch after our interviews. I was very moved when he offered me a pup from the memorial litter. Our dear yellow Lab, Jake, had passed away in January of 2015, and I was finally thinking about adopting another Lab, so the timing was excellent—except for getting a lively puppy a month before the deadline for this latest book!"

"You Better watch out, you better be good, Santa Claus is coming to town"—have you sent him your wish list yet? Santa will come to our house but most of all my family will be celebrating the birth of a babe born in a manger in Bethlehem long ago. Wise men still follow him. ■

Merry Christmas & Happy Hanukkah!



Protecting the president is serious business, and both dogs and handlers thrive on it. (Photo courtesy of the US Secret Service)



Secret Service dogs and handlers train extremely hard together. (Photo courtesy of the US Secret Service)



When they retired, they get to be spoiled. Retired dog Reik with adoptive handler Leth O. (Photo courtesy of Leth O.)



Secret Service dogs are cool and they know it. (Photo courtesy of Jon M.)



Secret Service dogs get spoiled when they retire. (Photo by Leth O.)



Holidays with the family can mean dress-up time for some of the sniffer dogs, who go along with the merriment. (Photo courtesy of Jorge P.)