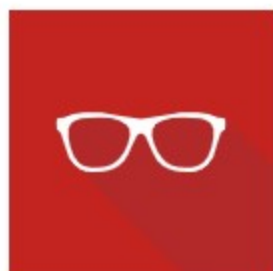




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# Smoky The Wonder Dog

**THE READ**

12:00 AM EST

October 19, 2007

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Story:  
Peter Jedick

*How a 4-pound Yorkshire terrier, small enough to fit into a GI's helmet, became a Cleveland soldier's best friend during World War II, cheered up countless wounded military men, attracted publicity for her then-rare breed and proved her bravery in a*

*Smoky, come. Come on, girl." Cpl. Bill Wynne was lying on his belly next to an airstrip on the Philippine Islands, hollering into a dark culvert. He strained to hear any sound from his 4-pound Yorkshire terrier, who was on the toughest assignment of her World War II combat career.*

*It was February 1945. The American forces had landed at Lingayen Gulf, but they feared a Japanese counterattack like the one three months earlier, after they had taken Leyte Gulf. They urgently needed to string a communication wire from Wynne's photo-reconnaissance unit back to headquarters in case they needed to call up reinforcements.*

*They had to string the wires under the airfield, but if they tore up the runway, 40 war planes would have to be moved from their sheltered area, leaving them exposed to an enemy air strike.*









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*So Sgt. Bob Gapp asked Wynne, a 22-year-old Army Air Force corporal from Cleveland, if he could use Smoky, the squadron's mascot and Wynne's best friend for the past year, to pull a feeder line under the airfield.*

*The 7-inch-tall dog would only have an inch clearance through the 70-foot long pipe, with sand leaking in at the connections between each 4-foot section. Wynne worried that Smoky would become trapped in the sand. Still, he tied a string to her collar and left her with Gapp at one end of the culvert. He ran across the runway to the culvert's other end and called out to Smoky through the pipe.*

*At first Smoky hesitated, but Wynne coaxed her until she slipped inside. "When she was about 10 feet inside the pipe, the string got caught," Wynne remembers. "I called and pleaded with her to keep going."*

*"The line's moving again," Gapp hollered across the airstrip to Wynne.*

*From inside the pipe, Wynne heard a faint whimpering sound. Then two amber eyes appeared in the darkness. Smoky bolted through a cloud of dust into Wynne's arms, the string still attached to her collar.*

*"Atta girl, atta girl!" he shouted. "She made it!"*

*The signal section grabbed the line and strung three thick cables through the culvert. Sgt. Gapp awarded the dog a steak dinner. Smoky, already famous for entertaining injured servicemen, was on her way to becoming one of World War II's canine heroes.*

*Yorkshire terrier admirers say Smoky has an important place in the history of the breed. "Smoky was the dog that brought an unexpected interest to the then obscure Yorkshire Terrier breed*

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*with news stories from the far Pacific Theatre in 1945," wrote Joan Gordon, a breed historian for the Yorkshire Terrier Club of America, in a 2001 issue of Popular Dog. In fact, Yorkies were so rare then that when Smoky appeared in an armed forces publication, she was probably the first Yorkie most GIs had ever seen.*

*Since the war, Smoky's tale has been told in more than 50 books and numerous magazine articles. Animal Planet has produced two episodes about her. A PBS station in New Mexico is working on a chronicle of Smoky's adventures based on Wynne's 1996 book, "Yorkie Doodle Dandy."*

*Best-selling novelist Amy Tan calls it her favorite dog book. "You have to admire Bill's ability to train Smoky," says Tan, herself a Yorkie owner. "What a great trust between them — to go into that tunnel for him, it was simply amazing."*

*On Veterans Day 2005, the Cleveland Metroparks dedicated a memorial to Smoky and "dogs of all wars" in the Rocky River Reservation, just south of the Detroit Avenue Bridge on Valley Parkway. It's a bronze statue of Smoky sitting in Wynne's World War II helmet.*

*Bill Wynne bought Smoky from a motor pool sergeant in New Guinea in March 1944. When he first saw her, she was cold, sick, wet and tied to a truck tire. But she jumped up and down at the sight of him.*

*"She had a gold-colored head and legs and a gray-blue body," Wynne recalls. "She wasn't much bigger than my GI boots and I didn't have a clue as to what breed she was."*

*The sergeant said another soldier had rescued Smoky from a foxhole deep in the jungle, then gave her away because he didn't like dogs. Yorkshire terriers were such an unfamiliar breed back then, Wynne assumed that she was some type of Japanese dog*

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*abandoned by enemy soldiers.*

*Wynne had been looking for a dog to help ease the rigors of jungle isolation. He'd already spent two months of his year in the service in primitive campsites.*

*Wynne's thoughts flashed back to his youth in Cleveland, to the two years he spent in Parmadale Orphanage when his mother could not afford to take care of him. A dog named Rags had kept him company in those tough times.*

*"I offered the sergeant two pounds Australian for her," Wynne recalled. "He needed it for a poker game."*

*The sergeant had called her Smokums, and her gray and brown fur reminded Wynne of Cleveland's industrial smoke. So he shortened her name to Smoky.*

*Wynne was an aerial photographer in the Army Air Forces 26th Photo Recon Squadron, later known as "The Spies in the Sky." They flew over and mapped South Pacific islands, scouting for the American fighting forces island-hopping toward Japan, estimating troop strength. Wynne, now 85, had taken a photography course as a senior at Cleveland's West Tech high school. "Otherwise I would have been in the infantry."*

*At first, Smoky was a pleasant diversion for Wynne. In the armed forces, there is a lot of down time, even during a war.*

*"While the other guys played poker or saw the same movie for the third time, I taught Smoky tricks," Wynne says.*

*Wynne had little formal dog training experience. Just before he was drafted in January 1943, he'd taken his puppy, Toby, to the Cleveland All Breed Training School's obedience classes. They*

*were held on Public Square to help supply dogs for the war effort.*

*But Smoky, the little Yorkie, was a much quicker student than Toby, a shepherd-Doberman mix.*

*"She learned to play dead and sing the first two days I had her," Wynne recalls. "She would respond either to my voice or to hand signals. She had a great eagerness to please."*

*Smoky was a bundle of energy, but small enough to fit into Wynne's duffel bag. She quickly adapted to his life in the war zone, flying on 12 combat missions with him and following him into the darkroom when he printed photographs.*

*"Bill was very protective of her," recalls Don Esmond, 82, of Mayfield Heights, one of 14 Clevelanders who served in Wynne's photo squadron.*

*"I still don't know how he took her ashore when we invaded Luzon," Esmond says. "It was 3 a.m., we were dropped off 100 yards from the beach and the water was up to our necks. I had enough trouble just keeping my gun dry."*

*"Don was shorter than me," Wynne responds. "I carried my barracks bag on one shoulder, my rolled-up cot on my other shoulder and my rifle in my hands. Smoky sat on the cot."*

*Smoky was a constant source of amusement for Wynne and his fellow troops as they slogged across the Far Pacific, through New Guinea, Biak Island, the Philippines, Okinawa and Korea. She proved to be a tough little dog, fighting off the jungle's heat while sharing Wynne's C rations, powdered milk and dehydrated potatoes. Smoky dodged the many diseases, such as malaria, dysentery and jaundice, that infected the American soldiers.*

*Wynne was not so lucky. He came down with dengue fever in July 1944 while assigned to Nadzab, New Guinea. After three days in a tent hospital, a few of Wynne's friends brought Smoky to visit him.*

*Some of the nurses borrowed Smoky while Wynne rested, using her to entertain the injured soldiers in the other tent wards. Smoky had just claimed a bit of fame, winning first prize in a Yank Down Under Magazine mascot contest. The July 14, 1944, issue of the magazine, which covered American armed forces south of the equator, named her the best mascot in the Southwest Pacific. Smoky was photographed sitting in Wynne's helmet — the same photo used in 2005 as a model for her memorial sculpture.*

*Wynne was granted two weeks' recuperative leave in Australia, so he took Smoky with him. They visited Army and Navy hospitals in Brisbane to cheer up soldiers starved for entertainment.*

*"GIs in wheelchairs would follow us from ward to ward," Wynne recalls. "Some would ask to hold her; others [asked] what I fed her." One of the Animal Planet episodes credited Smoky as a forerunner in the field of animal therapy.*

*By this time, Wynne had taught Smoky a repertoire of tricks. She could jump hurdles, ride a scooter and even climb a ladder and walk a tightrope, blindfolded.*

*Her fame spread as stateside newspapers ran stories of her hospital visits, along with the helmet picture. Later, her Philippine airfield escapade was reported in a 91st Photo Recon newsletter, though the details were kept sketchy for security reasons. In summer 1945, Wynne, with Smoky at his side, was interviewed for an American Red Cross radio show broadcast back home on more than 100 stations. By the time World War II ended in August 1945, Smoky was a bona fide war hero.*

*Cpl. Bill Wynne was discharged from the Army Air Forces in November 1945. But it was his dog, Smoky, who received the bigger homecoming.*

*On Dec. 7, The Cleveland Press detailed Smoky's underground heroics for the first time. Four pictures of Smoky were plastered on the front page of its home edition. TINY DOG HOME FROM THE WAR drew more ink than the death sentence of Japanese Gen. Tomoyuki Yamashita.*

*"The Press photographers tied two pieces of string to some chairs, and Smoky walked the tight rope for them," Wynne laughs. "I formed a hoop with my arms and she jumped through it."*

*Wynne and Smoky joined the Cleveland Police Department's Christmas show in neighborhoods with high delinquency rates. They performed for local companies, fraternal organizations, at the Crile Veterans Hospital, in the Al Sirat Grotto Circus and, in summer 1946, as opening act for the Traveling Zoo Wagon, the Cleveland Zoo's tour of city playgrounds. "We had 16 animals and attracted record crowds, but Smoky was the real star," Wynne recalls.*

*Wynne married Margie Roberts, his high school sweetheart, on Sept. 28, 1946. For their honeymoon, they drove Route 66 out to Los Angeles. Smoky came along.*

*"Margie was always a bit jealous of Smoky," Wynne says. "Margie didn't like Smoky, because Smoky didn't like her. They both knew it: She was a one-man dog."*

*While in Los Angeles, Wynne spotted an ad in Dog World, a magazine for breeders: Rennie Renfro, the handler of Daisy, star dog of the "Blondie" movies, was looking for an assistant dog trainer.*

*"It was my dream job, so we decided to combine business with pleasure," Wynne says. Renfro hired Wynne to work on five films. The newlyweds rented part of a house in Studio City.*

*Wynne helped stage dog scenes with Jimmy Stewart, Fred MacMurray and Claudette Colbert. "Warner Brothers wrote a dog part in almost all their films because Rin Tin Tin had saved the company from bankruptcy during the Depression," he explains. His first solo gig was training a dog named Butch for a scene with Ronald Reagan in "Night Unto Night."*

*"I stood in a doorway chatting with the future president while they set up the mechanics for the dog scene," Wynne remembers. "All I can say is that he was very nice."*

*Smoky slept in Wynne's car in the studio parking lot so she wouldn't distract the dogs on the set. One evening, she came close to becoming a movie star herself: Wynne noticed the wife of movie producer Owen Krump looking at Smoky, who did a few simple tricks that delighted her.*

*"You should put this dog in one of your movies," she told her husband.*

*"We'll put her in my next picture," Krump promised Wynne.*

*But Wynne could not wait for Smoky's big break. He was broke, barely earning enough money for gas and food. Margie hated Hollywood and disliked having to share their bathroom and refrigerator with other boarders.*

*Their three-month marriage was strained. "She was alone all day while I was surrounded by beautiful starlets," Wynne remembers.*

*"I learned at Parmadale that family is more important than*



*anything." So Wynne applied for a job back in Cleveland, as a flight photographer with the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics (NACA), the precursor to the NASA Glenn Research Center.*

*"I learned after I was hired that the personnel manager picked me out of 20 candidates because I told him my hobby was dog training," Wynne laughs. "He wanted me and Smoky to work with the NACA volunteer choir that visited nursing homes and veteran hospitals."*

*Wynne's new job paid \$3,000 a year, just enough to start raising a family. "We decided to return to Cleveland, but it was a decision that haunted me for a long time," he says. Their first child was born nine months later.*

*Wynne tested deicing equipment that would be used on airplanes for the next 50 years and invented a valuable camera-timing device for recording plane crashes. Yet he couldn't shake his love for show business. So he and Smoky toured Ohio, starring in nightclub acts and animal shows.*

*"They performed everywhere and anywhere," remembers his cousin, Bill Adler, who sometimes helped Wynne with his props. "Smoky would walk across the stage on a drum while the band played the beer-barrel polka. The kids would howl, and after the show they all wanted to pet her."*

*In 1948, Bill and Smoky appeared on one of WEWS's earliest programs, "The Polka Review." Smoky chose her small-screen live debut for one of her few onstage accidents.*

*"I saw her start to squat, so I kneeled down and told her to pray," Wynne laughs. "She put her paws on my leg and her nose between her paws. She did her business and the audience did not see a thing."*

*Two years later, Bill and Smoky became a regular feature on WXEL's children's show, "Castles in the Air." For 42 weeks Wynne dressed up like a hobo, and "Mr. Pokie and His Dog Smoky" came down from the Dog Star and did tricks. "I was paid \$15 for each show and used the money to buy a 10-inch television for our family," Wynne says. He went on to WNBK, where he hosted a popular Sunday morning show, "How to Train Your Dog, with Bill Wynne and Smoky."*

*The Plain Dealer hired Wynne as a photographer in 1953, and the next year, new owners at WNBK cancelled his dog training show. After 10 years, Smoky became simply a pet, entertaining Bill and Margie's nine children instead of strangers.*

*On Feb. 21, 1957, Smoky died in her sleep at the Wynnes' home in Parma Heights. The Plain Dealer reported her death the next day. The family was still mourning when they received a call from a nurse at the Crile Veterans Hospital who read Smoky's obit.*

*"This may sound strange," Grace Heidenreich said, "but I lost a female Yorkshire terrier at a USO show when I was serving at a field hospital in New Guinea in 1944."*

*Today Yorkshire terriers are the second most popular breed in America, behind only Labrador retrievers. But in 1945, only 92 Yorkie puppies were registered in the entire United States, and even fewer in Australia, where Heidenreich had purchased her dog.*

*So the chances of Smoky being the dog Heidenreich lost were excellent. Wynne thought he finally solved the puzzle that bothered him for years: How did that amazing little dog end up lost in a jungle foxhole?*

*"I have some pictures of her if you'd like to see them," Heidenreich*

"That would be great," Wynne said. "Where do you live?"

"Two blocks away from you," she answered.

Ten thousand miles and more than a decade later, Smoky's two best friends discovered that they were neighbors.

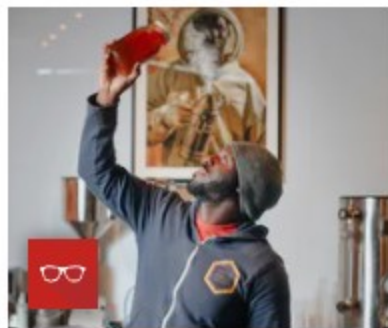
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