

# SERGEANT STUBBY

The amazing story of a unique  
American hero.

BY MARK RAY

As World War I's final battle began in 1918, a young American spotted a German soldier on the battlefield. The German might have been a spy, or he might have simply been lost. Either way, he ran from the American, who chased him and — at least, according to one report — jumped up and took a bite out of his bottom.

The American, you see, was a dog. His name was Stubby, and his capture of that German soldier was just one reason he became a hero and a legend. In the years to come, Stubby led military parades, met three U.S. presidents and received many medals, including one presented by General of the Armies John J. Pershing.



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This month, Stubby is the main character in a new animated movie, *Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero*, which stars Logan Lerman (Percy Jackson in the Percy Jackson movies) and Helena Bonham Carter (Bellatrix Lestrange in the Harry Potter movies).



Not bad for a mutt without a tail.

### FROM STRAY TO SOLDIER

In the summer of 1917, a hungry brownish terrier mix wandered onto the athletic fields at Yale University. Members of the American Expeditionary Force were there training for war. The dog, which the soldiers named Stubby, found plenty to eat, and he also found Pvt. Robert Conroy. The soldier would become his lifelong companion.

When the 102nd Infantry Regiment left for France that fall, Conroy snuck Stubby aboard his ship, hiding him in a coal bin until they were far out at sea. An officer discovered Stubby after the regiment landed in France, but the dog charmed him with his best trick: He sat up on his hind legs and, like any good soldier, gave a salute. From then on, Stubby was the unit's official mascot.

But Stubby was more than a mascot. After battles, he joined the search for wounded soldiers. Sometimes he barked to alert

### MILITARY WORKING DOGS TODAY

Today, hundreds of military working dogs help U.S. forces around the world guard bases, track enemy soldiers and sniff out explosives. All of them are trained at Joint Base San Antonio–Lackland in Texas by the 341st Training Squadron. One-year-old dogs — typically German shepherds, Belgian Malinois and Labrador retrievers — go through 120 days of training, followed by another 60 days with assigned handlers.

Through the Military Working Dog Breeding Program, civilian families in nearby communities help raise Belgian Malinois puppies until they are ready for training. These families often become the dogs' permanent owners after they retire from service.

medical teams; sometimes he comforted dying men.

In March 1918, Stubby survived a poisonous gas attack. From then on, he was always on alert, often barking a warning to his human comrades. He once woke up a soldier who had slept through the alarm bells and was in serious danger. That soldier, Sgt. John J. Curtin, later wrote a poem praising Stubby as “the joy and pride of our company.”



Stubby was also the joy and pride of the French towns that the Americans helped liberate. In July 1918, after the Battle of Château-Thierry, local women made a jacket for him out of leather. Conroy later decorated it with

many of his own medals — and with the Iron Cross worn by the German soldier Stubby had captured.

### POST-WAR MASCOT

After the war, when Conroy started studying law at Georgetown University, Stubby became the football team's mascot. During halftime shows, he would chase footballs as enthusiastically as he had chased the enemy.

Stubby died in 1926, but his story lives on. His stuffed body is a popular feature of the Price of Freedom Exhibit at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. (He stands near Cher Ami, a carrier pigeon

that delivered important messages during the war.) At Kansas City's National World War I Museum and Memorial, a plaque sums up his life in just a few words: “Sergeant Stubby. Hero Dog of WWI. A Brave Stray.” ✦



### STUBBY ON SCREEN

*Sgt. Stubby: An American Hero* follows Stubby and his master from the training grounds at Yale University to the battlefields of France and back. Along the way, it explores the true meaning of dedication and loyalty and what it means to be a hero.

Like Stubby himself, the movie focuses on helping others. Special screenings across the country will benefit animal welfare groups, including organizations that match rescue dogs with military veterans. Learn more at [go.boyslife.org/stubbymovie](http://go.boyslife.org/stubbymovie)



### FOR MORE INFO

*Stubby the War Dog: The True Story of World War I's Bravest Dog*  
by Ann Bausum.  
[go.boyslife.org/bravestubby](http://go.boyslife.org/bravestubby)

*Stubby the Dog Soldier: World War I Hero*  
by Blake Hoena.  
[go.boyslife.org/herostubby](http://go.boyslife.org/herostubby)

Price of Freedom Exhibit  
[go.boyslife.org/freedom](http://go.boyslife.org/freedom)