



REMEMBERING OUR CANINE HEROES THIS HERITAGE DAY

There is kind of heritage that transcends cultures, creeds, and beliefs. It's a heritage that bubbles up as nostalgia from when you were a child, and you first fell in love with the stories of your animal heroes.

Some stories were fables, some were fiction, and yet other were true tales burnt into the memory of our country. Celebrating Heritage Day with a good South Africa story doesn't get better than the adventures of our country's legendary dogs, Jock of the Bushveld and Navy Veteran Just Nuisance.

Jock of the Bushveldt

First published in 1907, Jock of the Bushveld is a collection of true stories that author, Percy Fitzpatrick told his four children about his travels in the old Transvaal with Jock, his Staffordshire Bull Terrier. Although not the strongest in his litter at birth, Jock grew into a brave and fiercely loyal companion that accompanied Percy on several adventures.

Perhaps their most memorable adventure was during a hunting expedition.

Percy had just shot a kudu bull and, undeterred by its massive size, Jock tried to take the Kudu down. In an epic battle between the two animals, Jock's immense courage, and his loyalty to Percy, earned him a spot among legends.

The book is a truly unforgettable tale of the emotional bond that we can develop with our pets and that they develop with us. On a deeper level, Jock's story also shows us how our dogs can form part of our family and, therefore, are key characters in our own life stories.

This particular story has been told for over a hundred years and is a fond part of the childhood memories of millions of South Africans.

Just Nuisance

Born 1 April 1937, Just Nuisance got his name by loitering his way into the hearts of the servicemen at Simon's Town Naval Base. The Great Dane would often curl up on top of the gangplank of docked Royal Navy ships, making it very difficult for anyone to get past.

Just Nuisance also made a habit of hopping the train, either with sailors on shore leave or by himself.



A bronze statue of Just Nuisance stands in Jubilee Square, in picturesque Simonstown; make sure to stop by for a look!



Eventually the railway company threatened to put him down. Word reached the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Navy, who enlisted Just Nuisance to issue him with a free pass for train travel.

As a fully-fledged member of the Royal Navy, his misconducts soon stacked up - going AWOL, sleeping in the Petty Officer's dormitory, losing his collar, and, of course, taking the train without his free pass.

Just Nuisance also sired 5 beautiful puppies who were auctioned off for quite a sum by the Mayor of Cape Town to raise funds for the war.

On 1 January 1944, after almost 5 years of service, Just Nuisance was discharged from the navy. With deteriorating health after a car accident, the navy took the decision to put him down. On 1 April, the day of his seventh birthday, Just Nuisance was transported to the naval grounds one last time. Here, at the naval hospital, he was gently put down by the surgeon.

The following day he was buried by his fellow sailors with full honours, as a canine legend known the world over.

So, while you're having a braai this Heritage Day, cheers to our history and to the pups whose stories have become legends.

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