



Photo courtesy Library of Congress  
American troops at Manila, Philippines

### Dogs' Journey From Iowa to the Philippines

“Nearly a thousand men were falling over each other in their efforts to reach the rail and ‘feed the fish.’” Pvt. Joseph Ignacious Markey, wrote in 1900 about the 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Volunteers, Company M, from Red Oak, Iowa.

The Iowa soldiers were on their way to the Philippines during the Spanish American War in November 1898. Their bout with seasickness lasted about three days. Accompanying the troops on the *SS Pennsylvania* were two dogs they had adopted before they left Iowa. There are no reports about how the dogs, Dewey and Bob Evans, handled the first days at sea; however, it’s a safe bet this was the first sea voyage for the canines.

Bob and Dewey (presumably named for two military men, Rear Admiral Robley (Bob) Evans and Commodore George Dewey) were acquired by the 51<sup>st</sup> while they were stationed at Camp McKinley at the state fairgrounds in Des Moines. The 51<sup>st</sup> had gotten Bob from the 49<sup>th</sup> Iowa Infantry Volunteers. And Dewey had been given as a puppy to the 51<sup>st</sup> by a local barber and veteran of the Civil War.

The soldiers knew little about the pedigree of the dogs, but they soon learned that the dogs were loyal mascots. Dewey had spent his entire life in the service of his country in Company M. It was well known that Dewey could pick out an “M boy” out of a regiment of

men. And if one of the M boys was away for any length of time, Dewey welcomed him back with wild enthusiasm. “He never forgot an M boy,” Pvt. Markey wrote.

Bob, a “handsome fox terrier,” eagerly befriended the men of the 51<sup>st</sup> but was a very sociable dog and often spent time visiting other regiments. And, while Bob liked the soldiers, he frequently picked fights with other dogs. Despite this, he had a “rare friend” in Dewey, who he treated like a big brother.

On Sunday, June 5, the two dogs boarded a train from Camp McKinley with the soldiers of the 51<sup>st</sup>. They had received orders to report to San Francisco. On their way to the West Coast they stopped for a short visit in Red Oak, where “the whole town” and “surrounding country” was at the depot to greet the boys.

Arriving in California on the morning of June 10, the Iowa boys were impressed with the scenery and warm welcomes they had received at each stop along the way. Settling in to life at Camp Merritt, the men began training for their departure to the Philippines.

Dewey reported to “first call” every morning and watched as each soldier took his place in ranks. Each evening Dewey took his place beside the commanding officer until roll call was completed. He marched “very stately” beside the captain as he inspected the troops. And he stood at attention as the band played the “Star Spangled Banner.” As the men broke rank and returned to their quarters for the evening, Dewey followed barking loudly at their heels.

When a regiment from Tennessee arrived, the 51<sup>st</sup> band welcomed them to Camp Merritt. The Civil War was still fresh in the minds of some, but the Iowa boys put past differences behind and welcomed the Tennessee soldiers heartily. But Bob wasn’t as forgiving. He got into a scuffle with the Tennessee boys’ bull dog, which was twice the size of Bob. Although Bob ended up at the hospital with his wounds, the men of the 51<sup>st</sup> learned that he had killed his opponent.

By the end of the year the 51<sup>st</sup> Iowa, along with Bob and Dewey, were in the Philippines, having arrived on the *SS Pennsylvania* on Monday, December 5. The Iowa boys and Bob and Dewey settled in to camp life. Neither the soldiers nor the dogs cared much for the military-issued canned meat. The dogs preferred salmon. When food was scarce the soldiers made sure Bob and Dewey had something to eat. “We would beg, borrow, and steal food for them,” Pvt. Markey wrote. “They always had something to eat even if their human friends had to go hungry.”

The dogs followed the boys of the 51<sup>st</sup> into battle. Dewey was a much better soldier than Bob. At some point, Dewey became lame but it didn’t prevent him from keeping up in marches. Sometimes he would be missing at the end of a long day of marching, and the soldiers would fear he was gone. Then he would show up “looking desperately worn and hungry.”

Dewey was a “terror” on the firing line. According to Pvt. Markey, the bullets made Dewey angry; and when the firing began, he got in front and tried to catch the smoke. However, Bob always got a “bad case of cold feet” when the bullets started flying. It was a signal for him to head back to the wagon train.

Dewey and Bob—two dogs with very different personalities. But to the boys of the 51<sup>st</sup> Infantry Volunteers, they were “very dear” fellow soldiers. Dogs and men shared a special bond that grew even closer in a strange land in a time of war.

Read Pvt. Markey’s complete book at: <https://archive.org> Enter Joseph Ignacious Markey in the search field.

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