DOG HEROES®
SKYDIVING DOGS
by Meish Goldish

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A Daring Dive

In July 2013, a team of **paratroopers** glanced out the small windows of an airplane. Each soldier wore a special backpack with a parachute tucked inside. As the plane soared more than 1,000 feet (305 m) in the air, the soldiers lined up near a door in the side of the plane. Each paratrooper waited for his chance to jump out and **skydive** to the ground.

The paratroopers prepare to parachute from their plane.

The paratroopers are members of the Air Force of Colombia, a country in South America. The team is trained to swoop down from the skies to find bombs and battle terrorists.

One team member, **Officer** Jorge Herrera, however, was carrying more than just his parachute pack. He also had a furry, four-legged passenger strapped to his chest. Jany, a specially trained **military** dog, was about to leap out of the aircraft with Officer Herrera!

Officer Jorge Herrera and Jany, a type of dog called a Belgian Malinois (mal-uhn-WAH), get ready to leap.

Parachuting to Work

When the airplane reached the **drop zone**, Officer Herrera leaped out with Jany. The dog had skydived dozens of times before and showed no sign of fear. After **free-falling** for a few seconds, Officer Herrara tugged a **rip cord** to open their parachute. Then the dog and her **handler** safely floated to the ground.

Officer Herrera and Jany seconds before jumping

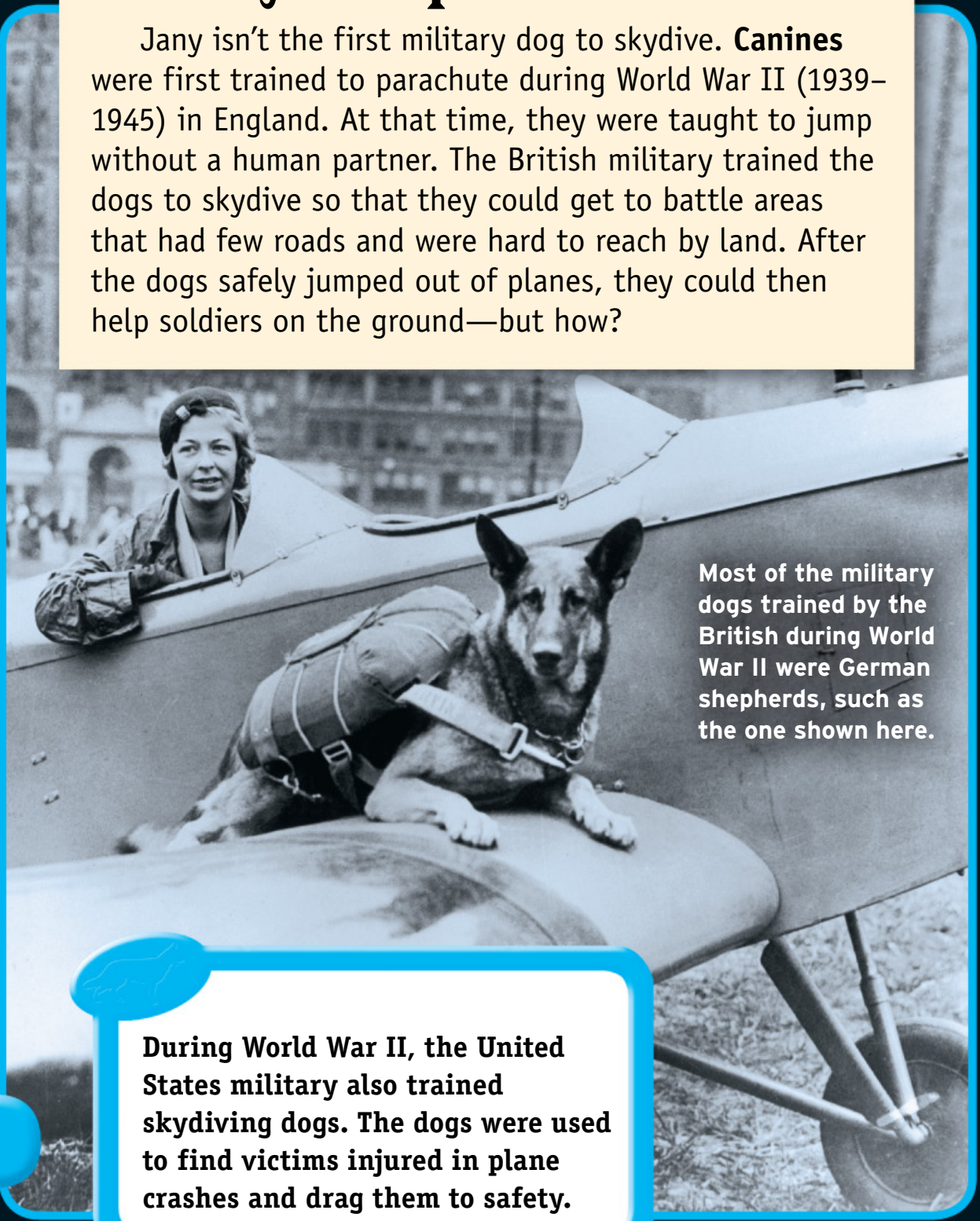
Belgian Malinois, like Jany, are often used by military forces. They are smart, tough, and can smell up to 100 times better than a person!

After landing, Jany quickly got to work. She is trained to use her keen sense of smell to find hidden **explosives** and terrorists carrying bombs or other weapons. Jany's superb skydiving and sniffing skills make her one of the most valued members of the team!

After jumping out of the plane, Jany and Officer Herrera sail through the air.

Early Jumpers

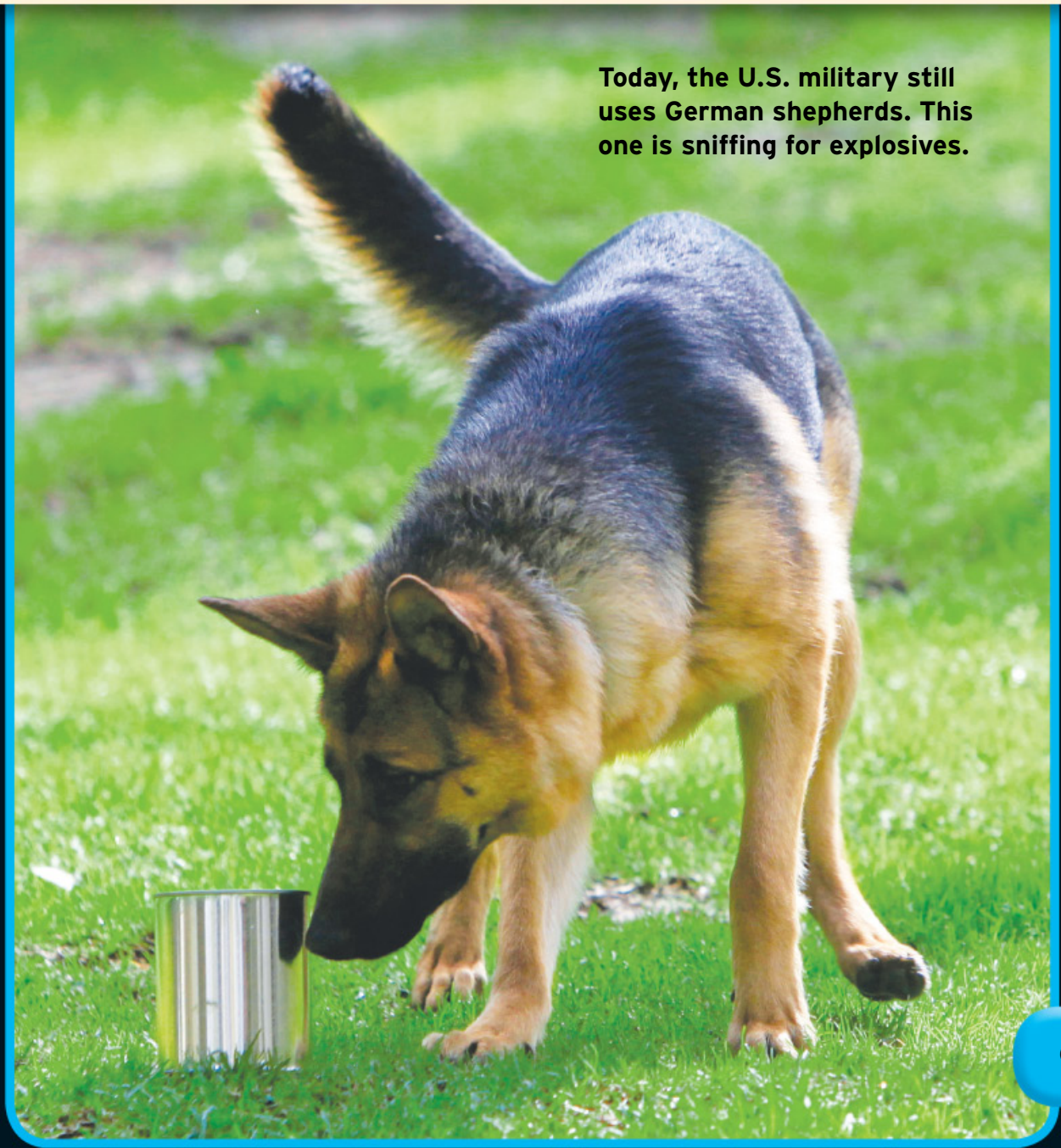
Jany isn't the first military dog to skydive. **Canines** were first trained to parachute during World War II (1939–1945) in England. At that time, they were taught to jump without a human partner. The British military trained the dogs to skydive so that they could get to battle areas that had few roads and were hard to reach by land. After the dogs safely jumped out of planes, they could then help soldiers on the ground—but how?



Most of the military dogs trained by the British during World War II were German shepherds, such as the one shown here.

During World War II, the United States military also trained skydiving dogs. The dogs were used to find victims injured in plane crashes and drag them to safety.

Military dogs are trained to squeeze into tight spaces and use their noses to sniff out hidden bombs. They can also use their powerful sense of smell to **detect** enemy soldiers waiting in **ambush**. Because canines work quickly and quietly, they can also approach enemy targets without getting noticed.



Today, the U.S. military still uses German shepherds. This one is sniffing for explosives.

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