

DOG TALK

The official *unofficial* newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

April 2001

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Istanbul, Turkey - March 17-18, 2001

I have always considered it an honor to be a member of the evaluator cadre at a FEMA test, but never more so than the evaluation conducted March 17-18 in Istanbul, Turkey, under FEMA Type II guidelines. Pat Hawn, Teresa MacPherson and I were privileged to see the accomplishments of dog and handler teams that have overcome seemingly impossible odds in a few short months. All but one of the testing teams began training at the CSS School sponsored by International Emergency Response K9 in Istanbul in early September 2000. Instructors were Pat Hawn, Hakan Kaynaroglu, LaFond and Keith Davis.

Seven teams tested; five passed. Two were Istanbul police Officers with German shepherd patrol dogs. Hercul (Hercules) came to the school knowing how to bite but not bark. The second police handler did not have a dog at the school. One team was a member of the AKUT, Turkey's volunteer SAR group. Cengiz and Jenny, his German Shepherd, had been training since March 2000. However, Jenny was hit by a car five weeks before the test and suffered severe back injuries. Two were Ankara firefighters. Osman's Doberman, Alex, came to the school with no bark. Then there was Liz, a small Pointer mix, maybe 18 inches tall, rescued from the streets of Ankara by her firefighter partner, Teoman. At the school she was skinny and shy and hid between her handler's legs. At the test she performed all elements confidently and searched with intensity and efficiency, finishing the rubble portion in six minutes. Some things that stand out:

** Test nerves are universal. The language barrier could not disguise the sweaty palms and nervous questions of handlers.

** The all-male Doberman who pulled his handler everywhere to check and cover every blade of grass but was a perfect gentleman when Teresa returned him to Osman on the aggression test and who completed the rubble portion of the test in 3-1/2 minutes.

** The bark alert. All six teams who passed the alert barrel did so with focus and commitment to the victim -- not even looking back when the 30 seconds was completed and handlers let out ear-splitting YEE-HAAAAS (sounding vaguely like Keith Davis with a Turkish twang.)

** The old women in scarves and long coats who stopped to watch the bark alert element and began cheering and clapping for each successful dog when they figured out the sequence.

** The confidence and teamwork with which each dog completed the agility; but, in particular, Jenny, the German Shepherd still recovering from her injuries, lacking muscle tone but overflowing with heart, who pulled herself up the ladder.

** The direction and control. When has the course been set up in a structure constructed 700 years ago, in the Byzantine period? Walls of layered rock "seven humans high" surrounded what is now a soccer field but was once used to house elephants.

PAGE 1

None of the dogs had practiced or trained here. Six teams successfully completed the course in well under the three-minute limit. Some got confused and went off course. But what stands out most was the attention they gave their handlers, not running perfect robotic patterns but confidently working through any confusion and following handler directions. Every dog flew top speed off of second base and did a true emergency stop at pitcher's mound.

** Then there was the realism of the rubble. A shoe factory, which had once been the livelihood of local residents in a busy neighborhood of shops and high-rise apartments, now became a place to test dog and handler in saving lives. No stable rubble pile here where the teams had trained and practiced countless times; this building was brought down on Friday. The AKUT heavy equipment operators, safety officers, along with IC Hakan and the evaluator cadre, worked until 10 p.m. Friday night to stabilize the dangerous and difficult pile and find safe victim locations.

** The victims. On Saturday they stayed five hours buried in barrels under concrete -- five hours. We talked to one the next day. Through a translator, he told us of working 15 days at the epicenter of the Izmet quake, of seeing what the people trapped were feeling. As he lay in the barrel he re-lived the quake and the fear. He could have radioed and gotten out. But he stayed because, in his words, he knew the seriousness of the task the dogs and handlers were asked to perform and knew that what he was experiencing would make him a real victim for the dogs.

** The teamwork of each handler letting his dog do the search work and initiate the alert, the care given by each handler after a find and before restarting, the pure joy after the second alert and pinpoint.

** The Istanbul police handler who wept inconsolably, convinced that his poor search strategy kept his dog from finding the second victim on Saturday.

* * * *

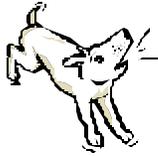
On Day One each team was brought to the rubble site in an AKUT pick-up truck with siren blaring. The legendary Turkish traffic never slackened, shopkeepers went about their business, neighborhood residents gathered on the street to watch or hung out apartment windows. Children called and whistled to the dogs, often yelling the dog's name over and over once they heard the handler say it. And, of course, the ever-present street dogs barked at the intruders. The test area was approximately 45 by 50 yards (yards, not feet), and the victims were widely placed. Scouting conditions turned out to be difficult. Although each victim was found and alerts made, no team found both victims. Some teams learned hard lessons in search strategy. The test was called because of darkness six minutes into the last team's time.

Day Two, new holes were created, new safety factors dealt with. Because of the solid performance by all six teams in elements one through four on the previous day and because of the unique, realistic rubble setting, the evaluators decided to conduct only the rubble portion, as permitted in the FEMA standard.

Handlers and evaluators held hands in a circle and prayed for God's blessing and care. Five of the testing teams found and alerted on both victims in times ranging from 3-1/2 to 12 minutes. The dogs were consistent in their victim loyalty. They covered the pile, somehow hearing their handler's voice amidst the confusion. The alerts were strong, none precipitated by the handler.

Living in the memory of 40,000 lost lives and the ever present quake threat must impart a seriousness to the task to both dog and handler that we who have not experienced that reality cannot duplicate.

--Submitted by Elaine Sawtell, Nebraska Task Force 1



KUDOS TO.....

DOGTALK is pleased to announce that the following Canine Search Teams have recently gained certification as FEMA US&R Type I or Type II Canine Search Specialists:

Lancaster, CA Results - February 2001

Type I Re-Certified: Steve Swaney & "Sherman" (CA-OES), Jeff Place & "Zach" (CA-OES) and Seth Peacock & "Pupdog"(CA-OES)

Type II Certified: Brian Marshall & "Ross" (CA-OES) and Marc Valentine & "Val" (CA-OES)

ROSTER of students and instructors at the February 2001 Canine Search Specialist Course in Texas:

Pat Gilliland	Susan Martinez	David Brownell	Janet Linker
JoAnn Reitz	Stan Irwin	Reeny Shannon	Mark Marsolais
Tony Sirgedas	Ken Larsen	John Kollman	Bob Deeds
Deborah Goodman	Keith Davis	Carla Collins	Steve Rochford
LaFond Davis	Shirley Hammond	Scott Baxter	Jim Yeager
Annie Desmond	Bruce Speer	Blake Wallis	Susann Brown
Denise Corliss	Tom Shannon		

UPCOMING TESTS

April 20-22, 2001 Indianapolis, Indiana – Type I and Type II **FULL**

May 4-6, 2001 Miami, Florida – Type II

Interested handlers should contact Pat Selts at 305-273-4100 ex:59, or via pager 305-880-5788. Fax applications to 305-273-4123. Hotel will be the Ramada Limited on Kendall drive. 305-595-6000. Rooms are blocked under Florida Task Force one. No charge for test.

June 1-3, 2001 Fairfax, Virginia – Type II

The completed application should be faxed to Garrett Dyer at 703.246.9173. Questions concerning the process may also be addressed to Garrett by either calling him at 703.246.4833, or email at garrettdyer@vatf1.org. Closing for the application process will be 25 May 2001. No applications will be accepted after that date.

September 22-23,2001 Salt Lake City, Utah Type II, tentatively scheduled

Page 3

CALIFORNIA TESTS: (all tests are Type I and II)

May 19 –20, 2001 (CATF-3 – Silicon Valley)

Applications due by April 17, 2001 (with \$25.00 application fee)

August 18 – 19, 2001 (CATF-4 – Oakland)
Applications due by July 17, 2001 (with \$25.00 application fee)

November 17 – 18, 2001 (CATF-5 – Orange County)
Applications due by October 16, 2001 (with \$25.00 application fee)

For information on California tests, contact: Lynne Engelbert
FAX (650) 604-7051 or (650) 604-0994
Work - (650) 604-3112
Home - (408) 257-1784

The National Certification List of FEMA Certified Disaster Canine Search Teams is provided by Lynne Engelbert. (Lynne's e-mail: lengelbert@mail.arc.nasa.gov) It's attached below as an EXCEL spreadsheet.



5.0NatK9Cert4=01.xls

Meet the Readers:

John Sweet

I came to Columbia, Missouri in the fall of 1996 from Fairbanks, Alaska where I was born and spent my entire life. What a culture shock!! I am by profession a Real Estate Appraiser, and currently work for the Missouri Department of Transportation in acquiring property for road right-of-ways.

After a couple of years I found myself becoming a couch potato since I did not play golf and was not into attending football games. (I had only participated in snow football, which was not really a good spectator sport). So I decided to get involved with canine search and rescue. I jumped onto the web and tried to locate a wilderness team around my area. I received no information on a wilderness search group, but was informed that Columbia had a FEMA Urban Search and Rescue Task Force. So I checked it out. Up to this point I was unaware of Urban Search and Rescue and did not have any information on them. But I'm always open to something new. I got in touch with Missouri Task Force No. 1 and started attending their canine training sessions. At this time I did not have a dog, so I naturally became the victim for the team. I had brought my black Labrador retriever (Tina) down with us from Alaska, but my wife was not happy to have black hair shedding on our new light colored carpet, so something had to give, and I knew it wasn't going to be the wife or new house. My wife's father and stepmother had just lost their dog of many years and given their age, I knew a young untrained puppy was not the answer. So I decided that two situations could be solved with one swift shift of the dog leash. I gave Tina to my In-laws which made them and my wife was happy. (got to keep those In-laws happy, you know)

So here I was training with a canine search group with no dog and this was during the fall and winter when there was no abundance of yellow lab litters. A yellow lab was the preferred choice as I was partial to Labradors due to having trained Tina in retrieving and ski-joring, and the whatever dog I got had to also be a house dog and be suitable to my wife and 8 year old daughter. Previous to Tina, I had only trained Samoyed. I knew that a black or chocolate was out due to the carpet color, so yellow it was.

I began a search on the web for upcoming litters in and around my area. With lack of anything immediate (who wants to wait for a dog?) I began checking areas further and further away. I traveled even 350 miles one Saturday checking out different kennels as far away as 100 miles. Page 4

My telephone bills were starting to get rather large and I was getting somewhat frustrated. But I persevered and found a nice female in Mexico, Mo. that spring. Needless to say, that after I found "Sadie" the newspapers were full of yellow lab pups.

During the search period for Sadie, I also became introduced to "clicker" training. I found a much faster learning curve with Sadie than I had with the typical training methods I had used with Tina. A positive

reinforcement goes so much farther than a negative reinforcement. Sade and I worked on the typical training aspects, obedience, agility, directability etc. I felt she was progressing well with all aspects except that she was showing lack of confidence on the rubble pile. As like most handlers, I hoped she would work through this problem and things would be great. We continued to work, but after a while I did not feel that she was going to get over this hump in the immediate future, if at all, so I "bit the bullet" and acknowledged that perhaps Sadie was not going to be an Urban Search dog. I did not want to give up on her for searching as she loved to find people and did that aspect well. During our Urban training seasons I became aware of a wilderness team further south, about 60 miles from Columbia. I contacted them and Sadie and I became members of Missouri K-9 Search and Rescue, Inc. Sadie is progressing well with wilderness, and loves to be searching in the woods. I joined NASAR and received a SAR TECH II designation. Looking forward to finding out more about NASAR's recent canine certification program.

So now I was without an urban dog, and luckily my wife said I could get another dog. Whew, didn't really want to spend my remaining life being a victim. Again, the dog had to fit in with the home setting, and I wanted a dog with a higher activity level than I had found in my Labradors. My wife has a favorite spot in her heart for German Short Hair Retrievers, so what do you think I ended up with? Yup, your right. Am I a glutton for punishment or what? Ruby is her name. A great looking gray and tan female GSH Retriever with no lack of enthusiasm and a nose that doesn't stop sniffing. I wish I had half of her energy. How in the world did I ever think I had enough energy for two dogs? What's even crazier is that my wife started a no kill animal shelter out of our house, using foster homes for the animals to be adopted, (check out, www.htsanctuary.com) so we seem to always have another dog around to keep Sadie and Ruby in a frenzied state of affairs. I decided to train Ruby slightly different than Sadie. With Sadie, I had worked with her almost daily as a puppy. I decided to slow down with Ruby and let her get by her puppy stage and ease into the different aspects. She is working great on the agility and shows no lack of confidence. (Hmm, I wonder if I can do a Vulcan Mind Meld with Sadie and pass on some of the confidence) She doesn't want to sit still for very long and will have to work on her obedience. Being a bird dog, she is really inquisitive on anything that moves. I need to build up her bark barrel alert time, as she starts out good, but then wants to go onto more interesting things like sniffing everywhere. This past six months I have spent more time working with Sadie as I needed to get her changed over from a stay and bark alert to a recall/refind, but as the weather improves, I will be spending more time with Ruby. Recently built a bark barrel to augment my Ensler Box. Now I need a victim close by. I had been using the boy across the street, but he moved. Drat. Most of the other Urban handlers get together during the day in the middle of the week, but I work in Jefferson City, Mo, which is a 40 minute commute from Columbia, and am not able to make it. But we will get over this obstacle and progress. This is one aspect of SAR training I find frustrating. You must have a victim to find, and the victim must be well trained so you don't screw up the alert. Training a bird retriever was easier, all you needed were dummies, (plenty of them hanging around). The only real other down side is the lack of chance for deployment given the large amount of time invested in training. I find wilderness training has a much higher chance of deployment (I have had the opportunity to participate in a number of lost persons or Alzheimer searches). Also you aren't deployable until your dog is certified, so that may be a rather long period of time, if ever. So I am also cross training as a communications specialist for the team.

The pluses are many. It is such a joy to watch a dog work. I sometimes think I should have been a professional dog trainer. Next life maybe. I also really enjoy meeting and training with other dog lovers, and you must be a dog lover to go through all of the trials and tribulations that we do during training. There are negatives as with any endeavor, being they governmental agencies or private groups or individuals. Ego's, personalities, clicks, and a multitude of other situations seem to jump up and affect everyone. I try not to let these get in the way of what I am doing. To often people dwell on the little things, and miss the big picture. I do find that a lack of communications is alive and well, and that little things tend to get big real quick and can affect everyone real quick and sometimes adversely.

Page 5

I look forward to training with other teams in the near future and traveling to other rubble piles. Hopefully, with fingers and paws crossed we will be able to get certified, if not oh well, it will be fun and interesting.

My 3-year-old black Lab, Kita, and I have been participating in disaster search training with Northwest Disaster Search Dogs in the Seattle area since 1998. We were certified as a Type II team with FEMA WA-TF1 in 1999, but have not yet been deployed. If all goes well and rubble gods are with us, we are hoping to take the Type I test this year. We have just begun training in cadaver work and are enjoying this new challenge. I am also revisiting my youthful college days by going back to school to get my veterinary technician license. Since I am now 20+ years older than the last time I was in school, I am much more stressed out about my grades and a lot less stressed about where I am going to be on Friday nights (at home catching up on my e-mail). Kita can usually be found studying for her doctorate in the quantum mechanics of tennis ball retrieval or studying the insides of her eyelids for holes.

Kita is my second Lab, but first SAR dog. Since she is one of those ball-crazy, Kong-crazy, barking fool type dogs, she has been a handful for me with obedience training and agility control, but we are slowly making progress (or maybe she's just getting older). My animal training background has generally involved animals of a much greater size (as in elephants and sea lions), since I was a zookeeper prior to having kids. (Actually I think I still am a zookeeper....) Never having lived with any of the animals I trained previously, it was quite an eye-opener to have such a driven dog in my hands. I've come to appreciate how lucky I am to have experienced and supportive teammates training with me to help us over the rough spots.

What I most enjoy about training with Kita is watching her work on the rubble. It still seems almost miraculous to me that she can zero in on a scent source so quickly, and each time I am reminded of the abilities that animals have that we cannot really imagine having for ourselves. (And actually, I probably wouldn't want to be able to smell most of what's around me!) The worst part of training is standing around in the cold rain at a Saturday morning training when I could be home in a warm bed, but Kita's enthusiasm to "Go Search", the camaraderie of our group at NDS, and the chance that we may someday be able to save a life makes it all worthwhile.

JUST ASKING...

What is the policy for testing canines that are in heat?

Unfortunately, a bitch in heat is very distracting to the other dogs, so it has been the policy NOT to allow them to test (or to go on a deployment). A female in heat will not perform at her best, and she would certainly be a distraction to many of the other dogs.

INDIANA TEST UPDATE

Type I testing Fri-Sun, April 20-22, 2001 22 teams signed up
Hanson Harding Street Quarry, 4200 S. Harding, Indianapolis, IN

Type II testing Sat-Sun, April 21-22, 2001 16 teams signed up (two full-day tests only)
"Salt Mine", 3002 S. Ritter, Indianapolis, IN

For all test participants:

Orientation/Dinner meeting, Friday, April 20, 2001 7:00 pm
Franklin Township Fire HQ, 6231 S. Arlington Ave

FEMA K9 Sub-Committee Report

In the first quarter 2001, the Subcommittee met six times via conference calls. We concentrated on the CSST course and a Budget Proposal to FEMA. We are in the process of updating and standardizing the

course, and, ultimately, trying to get FEMA funding for them. Everything always comes down to the green stuff. In the meantime, life goes on and courses somehow happen. We dog handlers are a creative and tenacious lot! Kudos to Texas Task Force who overcame the odds and hosted a successful course in February.

Our Budget Proposal includes a long-range plan of action for screening teams, training, evaluations, education and advanced level continuing education. That's all we want! The plan also addresses the Resource Pool concept to ensure the deployment of certified teams for any and all missions.

The following evaluators have been approved:

Type II

Rose Keller (PATF1)

Garrett Dyer (VATF1)

Teresa MacPherson (VATF1)

Mike Marks (FLTF1)

Debra Tosch (CA)

Steve Swaney (CA)

Type I, II and Lead

Rory Rehbeck (CA)

A subcommittee "opinion"—

Agility—always a volatile test issue. Should we standardize the equipment? To what extent? Our opinion is...(we are ducking our heads from the line of fire now)...that to restrict ourselves by further standardization is not feasible or desirable, given that there is no "standard" disaster. We will continue to police ourselves in this area and use common sense, keeping in mind the spirit of the exercise.

See most of you soon in Indiana, in some capacity (some in multiple capacities)! Thanks, Anne, for somehow finding the time to put on tests, in addition to getting out DOGTALK which is becoming more *official* all the time!

Teresa MacPherson
Secretary, Canine Subcommittee
4-3-01

WILD WEEKEND in INDIANA

March 24-25 turned out to be the training weekend of all training weekends! Thirty-four handlers from 9 different task forces showed up at the Hanson quarry on Indy's South-side. It was a great chance to see old friends again and to get better acquainted with new ones. Saturday evening brought out 24 of the adventurous ones... we won't bring up that karaoke incident...

Thanks to everyone for putting up with me in the front-end loader all day Saturday. Your dogs were GREAT around that distraction! Look forward to seeing you all SOON.....

Anne

Please forward any news, scheduled events, letters to the editor, or other info you want disseminated via **DOG TALK**, the underground canine newsletter to Anne Trout AtROUT@clarian.com or via fax (317) 929-7549.

