



DOG TALK

The official **unofficial** newsletter for FEMA dog handlers

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How To Say Goodbye

Saying goodbye is never an easy thing to do. Recently Nebraska Task Force 1 has had to say goodbye to one of its oldest and dearest members, Ditto.

Everywhere I go across the country I always hear some sort of story about Ditto and Elaine. The stories range from inspiring, to the consequences when dogs got too close to Ditto. Despite all of the different stories, they all ended in how good Ditto was at her job. Watching her in action was what got me interested in search work. She seemed so fluent and sure of herself. I wanted a dog just like her; smart, good nose, confident, and light on the feet. Of course I went out and got a dog that is big, clumsy, uncoordinated, and only uses his brain as a last resort. Hey, to each his own.

I have a lot of respect for Ditto and owe a lot to Elaine. I have recently certified with my dog and could not have done it without her guidance. Elaine and Ditto have given me so much of their time that



I will forever be grateful. There is a saying that I have remembered for years it says, "When you are good you tell other people, when you are great, other people tell you". Well I am telling Elaine and Ditto that they are great and Ditto will be sorely missed. As good as Ditto was at finding things, I have no doubt that she will find her way home. Sometimes I struggle with what to say to a friend for comfort during a loss. A lot of words come to mind, but none seem to do justice. I do not like goodbye, so instead I will say Thank you

Kyle Tjelmeland
NE-TF1

K9 DITTO, THE DOG FROM FLYOVER COUNTRY

Elaine Sawtell

In the early years of CSS school, Chuck Mills always cautioned the instructors not to tell “My Dog” stories. Instead, we attempted to couch our training advice in terms of a more generic dog. I’m not sure whether it’s Chuck admonition or the fact that it’s difficult to condense a life of 14 years into a few words that makes it hard to write about my partner, K9 Ditto.

She was unique in lots of ways. Part of it had to do with timing, some with her aptitude for the job, and some with circumstances.

There could hardly be a more generic USAR dog than the one born in a hollow tree on a farm in Missouri in early 1991. Her mother was an Australian Cattle Dog named Annie, and her father was the lanky Doberman across the road, named Kenworth.

Thumbing through the paper I saw the ad. “Free puppies. Blue Heeler/Doberman cross.” With no particular goal in mind, but a love of both breeds, I drug a friend down a dusty farm road to see these “Blubermans.” I sized up the pups left, two girls, as alike as peas in a pod, decided on the one with more white on her face, and off we went.

By 1992 we were a wilderness SAR team with Missouri Search & Rescue K9, operational in wilderness, day and night, evidence search, and cadaver, land and water.

In May of 1992 we attended a seminar on disaster search put on by Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs in Salt Lake City. The FEMA USAR task forces were relatively new, and there was no written canine search standard; but we learned the principles of disaster search. Ditto’s ease at getting around the rubble and her willingness to learn a new alert for a different environment – bark instead of recall/refind – made her a natural for this new endeavor.

MoSAR K9 trained disaster search skills for local response. We gave no thought to the possibility of joining a FEMA USAR task force. But in May of 1993, while attending a state disaster conference, we met John Huff, TFL from Lincoln, Nebraska, who signed us up with NETF1. Ditto retired from NETF1 in 2003. She was also a member of MOTF1 from its inception in 1995 until 1998.

We attended the second CSS school held at Camp Attebury, IN, in the fall of 1993. Excited newbies, we stepped out of the van at Attebury and Ditto was immediately attacked by Ed Stewart’s black shepherd Izzy. That and a similar experience as a 4-month-old pup (with another black shepherd), plus a nervous handler, gave Ditto a rather untouchable reputation nationwide. Oh, she had a few canine friends: Ann Wichmann’s Jenner, Annie St. John’s Colter and Chip, Pat Kaynaroglu’s Cody. But for the most part, she preferred humans to canines.

FEMA adopted a national canine standard in 1994, based on the tried and true California standard. At Santa Rosa in May 1995, Ditto was the first canine from outside CA to be allowed to take the Type 1 test, but only after a lengthy discussion by the CA SAR Dog Confederation in Jim and Annie Lerum’s front yard. She passed – six victims, no false alerts. Isn’t that the way it’s supposed to be done? K9 Jenner quickly followed, certifying

Type 1 in August 1995; and the first FEMA USAR canine standard became truly national in scope. Ditto last recertified Type 1 in Indiana in April 2001.

Ditto's FEMA deployments include:

- 1995 - Oklahoma City, with CATF5 (Orange County)
- 1995 - Hurricane Opal with NETF1
- 1996 - Atlanta Olympics with AZTF1 (Phoenix FD)
- 1998 - Kansas Grain Elevator Explosion with NETF1
- 1999 - Oklahoma City tornadoes (cadaver dogs only)
- 2001 - World Trade Center, with NETF1
- 2002 - Salt Lake City Olympics with NETF1
- 2003 - Columbia Shuttle crew recovery (cadaver dogs only)

Flexibility has since gone out of the USAR system, but I believe our deployment with different task forces, both to a working disaster and pre-position standby, demonstrates that a qualified canine team can work smoothly with knowledgeable people on different task forces.

The two FEMA cadaver deployments cry out for the need for someone -- FEMA, DMORT - to develop a national response capability for cadaver dogs. But I've been on that soapbox before.

An unexpected highlight of Ditto's search career was when we were asked to accompany the Vermont National Guard to Germany and the Republic of Macedonia to participate in a Partnership for Peace exercise in August/September 1997. The request from Macedonia was for a dog who had been at Oklahoma City. The purpose was to demonstrate how civilian agencies can work with the military in disaster response. In addition to the Vermont NG, we worked with the US Army 212th MASH unit from Weisbaden, Germany, in that unique circumstance.

That is the "tool" part of my search partner. In training or reality, she lived up to the 212th MASH motto – Skilled and Resolute.

Now for the "My Dog." She was my dog for one-quarter of my life. Because of her I have friends, close friends, from California to Massachusetts and Washington to Florida. She helped me care for a premature grandson. She went with me to a nursing home for five years, where she was known, not as a world-class search dog, but simply as "Bob's Dog." She gave me that quiet support and companionship that only a canine can give when I lost three beloved dogs, moved twice, lost a loved and respected husband, and my son-in-law went to war. For the last year and a half, I have been her caregiver, giving back to her for all that she has given me. We have never been closer.

On September 3rd the same friend that traveled that dusty road with me 14 years ago confirmed what I already knew – it was time to say goodbye. God gave us 14 years and 5 months together, and He gave strength and peace at the end.

Many of you have been down the same road. It is the final bond we share with each other and our canine partners.

BAILEE

R.Beth's Bailee's Irish Cream
2/26/92 - 8/18/05

Bailee was certified with Rocky Mountain Rescue Dogs, Inc. in wilderness, tracking, avalanche, water, cadaver and evidence search. She was Utah Task Force 1's first FEMA Type II certified dog in disaster search in 1995. She was also certified with another handler in RDI in all aspects of search, including FEMA's disaster certification.

Bailee participated in 96 searches in which she had 10 finds and 3 assists. We responded to the Northridge, CA earthquake with AZ TF1 in 1994, the Salt Lake tornado in August 1999, and the flash flood of Antelope Canyon, AZ. She managed to locate the body of an avalanche victim who was buried in 20 feet of snow in the Utah mountains in 1995.

Bailee's last search was at the age of 10 ½ for two 14 year old boys overdue from a hike in the foothills of Bountiful, UT. Even though it was very hot and dry, she managed to pick up the boys tracks and led us to their location. Bailee died 8/18/05 from complications due to age.

Evaluators and Task Force Canine Coordinators

IMPORTANT DATES!!!!!!

Upcoming conference calls:

- 1) Evaluators/Shadow Evaluators—
Telecons are set for December 8th, noon, EST and December 14th, 9:00 P.M.
Sign up and attend one of them to ensure that you remain on the rotation roster.
Notify TMac786@aol.com.

- 2) Canine Coordinators—
Telecon set for November 30th, 2:00 P.M. EST.
All canine coordinators are invited to attend for an information-sharing telecon, including discussion of roles and responsibilities, update on 2006 evaluation process, and a question and answer session. Please attend and share successes and lessons-learned in the management of your canine program.

Each canine coordinator as designated by the Program Managers at the August TFL meeting will be notified with the details.



From the Editor

Only one more month of hurricane season.... Hopefully the worst is over. Whether we were deployed or not, (and many, many of us were) we are ready to take a break for a while!! Thanks to everyone who went and worked, and to everyone who stayed home and worried about us. Thanks to the FEMA US&R Program for giving us a chance to actually *do something* and to make this program successful.

Also thanks to everyone who tested and/or evaluated in Indianapolis in between hurricanes! Great job.

Ask the Subcommittee

Ask the Subcommittee is a new feature in Dogtalk to address any questions you may have regarding FEMA canine certification. Forward any questions to Amccurdy@clarian.org

Q & A's in conjunction with minutes from telecon 10-20-05

Q: How does the payment for the post mission vet check work? The directive doesn't specify—

A: The Directive states "Post-mission medical screening for any US&R canine deployed to and operated in the Louisiana or Mississippi operational areas is a fully reimbursable cost related to the deployment." This means a Task Force can pay the costs related to these screenings, and then claim reimbursement for them in their Hurricane Katrina reimbursement claim.

Q: Will the Premier Collar being sold on disasterdog.org be allowed at FEMA canine evaluations?

A: No—its considered a training collar as it can give a correction

Q: When will certificates be issued?

A: All past due certificates thru June 05 have been issued. They were hand-delivered to the TFLs at the August meeting In NV. Any requests for missing (or corrected) certificates need to go through the Task Force.

Q: Will Type I's need to pass an FSA to test and recert?

A: Yes, beginning 1-1-06, the FSA will be the qualifying pre-test for certification. It's only once every three years and it will keep us training the basics. Due to manpower and site shortages, a Type I pretest is still not required, but certainly encouraged. An FSA is suggested to be good for six months, but a Task Force can require one at any time.

Q: Does the FSA score sheet need to accompany the application for certification?

A: No, just check the box on the app, as we do now for a pre-test.

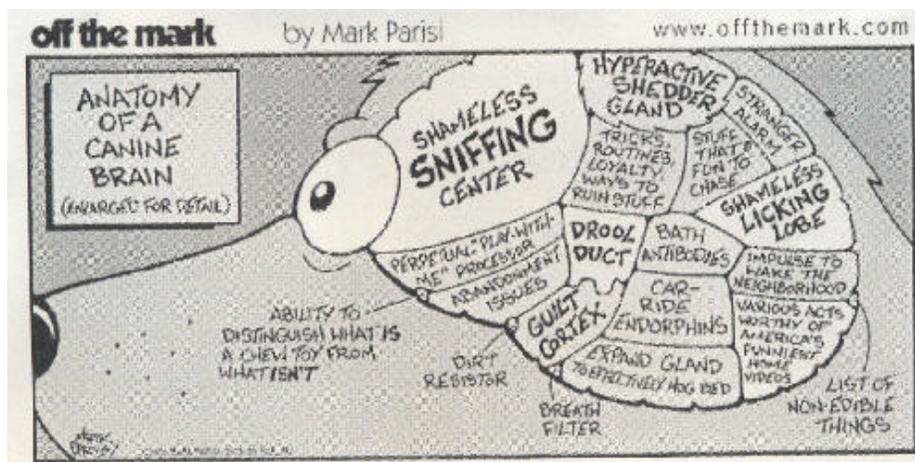
Q: After 1-1-06, if you fail a re-cert, will you lose your certification?

A: Yes, until you pass your recert.

Q: If I take a Type II before the end of the year and fail, do I lose my Type I status (which is still good for a year). And if I pass the Type II, am I dually certified—keeping my Type II for a year if I fail my Type I recert?

A: HUH?

(Seriously, whenever you test, you are determining your status at that time—if you test early and fail, you lose your certification. If you take a Type II and fail, you lose everything and would have to start over. It's not justifiable to retain an advanced status if the first step to that point can't be passed.)



☆☆☆☆ Kudos to.....☆☆☆☆

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

☆☆ Dayton, OH Results – August, 2005

Type II Certified: Sam Balsam & Daros (MD-TF1), Robert Milner, III & Zeke (TN-TF1), Charles Smith & Buck (TN-TF1), Robert Covington & Rain (TN-TF1) and Mary Flood & Sage (UT-TF1)

☆☆ Indianapolis, IN Results – September, 2005

Type I Certified: Gail McCarthy & Bacco (MA-TF1), Kathleen Baska & Calvary (MO-TF1), Jenni Good & Taboo (IN-TF1), Karen Meadows & Ace (VA-TF2), Linda Morgan & Marko (VA-TF1) and Cyndi Smith & DD (IN-TF1)

Type II Certified: Connie Millard & Spider (MO-TF1), Brenda Sullivan & Chet (IN-TF1), Kevin Racette & Uber (MA-TF1), Doree Donovan & Gyp (NM-TF1), Lori Tocke & Win (VA-TF2), Kyle Tjelmeland & Reggie (NE-TF1), Sara Winger & Sammy (MA-TF1), Jane Servais & Embers (MD-TF1), Laura Huggins & Frankie (MD-TF1), Christina Ridge & Doc (IN-TF1), Cathy Farrell & Blade (TX-TF1), Ann Wichmann & Merlyn (CO-TF1), Ricky Hutcheson & Louie Louie (TN-TF1), Elidora Chamberlain & Katy (MO-TF1), Jeremy Leming & Greif (IN-TF1), Jennifer McKay & Rogue (VA-TF2), Julie Padelford-Jansen & Lilly (FL-TF2), Pat Kaynaroglu & Riva (CO-TF1), Pam Zachritz & Daisy (IN-TF1), Elizabeth Baumgartner & Arnold (UT-TF1) and Daisy Soto & Splash (FL-TF2)

Incident Commander or Hosting Task Force Leader input and comments

From the Indianapolis Test After Action Report:

As the host Task Force Leader and Training Coordinator I was very pleased on how well the weekend went. I feel that the evaluation was a true measuring stick on how far the Canine program has come. Most of all the dogs were ready for the test that shows that Task Forces are sending teams that are capable of passing the evaluation of the first try.

The hard work that these Canine Specialists are putting into their team shows with the high percentage that passed this evaluation. I understand from working with my own canine teams that many hours are spent on various training activities to pass the evaluation. With 27 of the 38 canines that were tested passed this evaluation shows that we are putting quality teams out there search for victims of natural or man-made disasters.

Evaluations would not be successful if team personnel did not volunteer their time and efforts in supporting the evaluations. It goes without saying that each evaluation is also a success by each canine team participating in the process. Though a few did not pass this evaluation, it certainly gives them a measuring stick on what they need to work on. Many of these teams will pass in upcoming evaluations.

As the Training Coordinator and TFL for Indiana I have been involved in two evaluations in the past 3 years. I have enjoyed them both even though they are a lot of work for the host team. I truly see the dedication that each handler gives to their canine partner and I cheer for all to be successful.

It would be an honor to host another canine evaluation in the future. If I can be of any assistance in the canine program please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Thomas R. Neal
Training Coordinator
Task Force Leader
Indiana Task Force 1

Please forward any news, scheduled events, letters to the editor, or other info you want disseminated via **DOGTALK**, the underground canine newsletter to Anne McCurdy: amccurdy@clarian.org