



California is Burning Again



Our hearts go out to all the communities and people that have been devastated and or compromised by the many fires that are currently going on in California. This picture was taken by my neighbor, it's overlooking the mountains west of our houses towards Butano looking to the ocean. Some of our handlers were

evacuated and more were on evacuation warning alert. All of us are, safe but not necessarily allowed home yet.

Some of our handlers who also work with the Santa Clara Office of the Sheriff are preparing to respond, looking for victims of the fire. When the fire area is open and cooled off we expect many of our handlers to once again to be requested to look for cremains of previously deceased loved ones whose cremains got left in the fire when the family had to evacuate.

And it's only August, at least two more months of fire season left.

~Adela~

Buildings Have Wind Currents and Breathe



Not our favorite locations to search.

Barbara and Asha search under a historic building that was built on a known cultural site. To determine if there were burials under the building we searched on our hands and knees in the crawl space, as well as searching the vents and cracks around the foundation.

When we have a structure we are searching we check the wind currents inside and outside the building. Buildings breathe and the wind currents change

depending on the time of the year, air and ground temperatures. We use fine powder and puff it at vents and cracks to see which direction the air current is flowing. If you have the wind coming out of the vents from the basement then you have a good chance for the dogs to pick up the scent from the outside. But if the powder sucks into the vent, you have to search the inside spaces.

The wind current "breathing" phenomena is also seen in mine shafts, pipes, wells and caves. We test these locations if we encounter them on our survey. By observing which way the powder flows, we know if our dogs have a chance of sampling the inside air from the outside. We continue to check the air currents during our search as they change during the day.



At a training we tested the scent conditions, or wind direction in a building to see where the scent would be the strongest. This is a small tooth near a vent just inside the building. Jasper was able to find the scent easier from outside than inside because of the scent being pulled outside.



The above picture is actually from several years ago in Nevada. We were requested to search the opening of a mine for a murder victim who had been missing for 2 years. An informant witnessed the murder and reported that the body was dumped in an old mine shaft and then many loads of rock and gravel were dumped on top. I had a long conversation with the client before we agreed on doing this search; I was very clear we did not search mines or go into mine shafts. He assured me the mine was horizontal and not vertical. Well guess what? A back hoe had been used to create a path to the vertical shaft. In front of me you can see my 2 orange chalk marks so I could test the direction of the wind currents in the mine. As you can see it was breathing out. (notice I am on a safety line and my dog is in a harness attached to a line).



This is my view as I kneel on the edge, I could see the vertical shaft that went down 60 feet. The good news was the dogs alerted near the entrance and also on the soil the backhoe had removed from the opening. A week later a trained team entered the mine shaft and recovered the remains of the victim.

~Adela~



What is an Indian Marker Tree? What purpose did they serve? How were they made?

How did native people navigate the wilderness before there was MapQuest, Google Earth or Rand McNally? Many tribes used what are being called Indian Marker Trees and sometimes uniquely piled rocks to help guide them to hunting and gathering spots. Indian Marker Trees were also used to mark sacred land, burial grounds, trails to move to warmer climate in the winter months and the trails that lead to places for trading with other native tribes. It is also believed that some of these uniquely shaped trees were used for praying to the ancestors and animal spirits. These trees are a man-made map created from manipulating nature.

It can be hard to tell the difference between a culturally modified tree and a tree that may have been damaged due to disease or from natural causes such as lightning or another tree falling across it. Most marker trees were created by tying a weight, like a rock, around a sapling and bracing the bottom of the

sapling with another "Y" shaped branch causing it to point horizontally. This method is also called a thong. Sometimes multiple saplings were tied together and a rock would be tied in the saplings to create unique hole shapes.

We know that even though these hard wood treasures may look improbable, scientists are able to bore samples from these trees without damaging them. They can tell many things by examining these samples such as the age of the tree, any disease or even if it has survived a fire or drought.

We have been fortunate to have been shown a few marker trees while surveying for graves and also discovering a few while hiking or training.

Donna Randolph
Eastern Representative



Historians were told that this man made mark along the LoLo trail was a marker for the trade route, a well known trail for natives and fur trappers in Montana, also known as the Lewis and Clark Trail. We walked part of the historic, maybe prehistoric, trail to help identify where LoLo was buried.



We found this tree in a known native area in Bedford, Indiana. The hole was clearly man made long ago but we don't know by whom.



This tree is in Franklinton North Carolina. We found this tree while training near a historic cemetery. Was it a marker tree?



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We are happy to talk with you about your project and
how our dogs might help locate human remains or burials.
Call, email, or check out our website.

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