



The Next Generation of Working Dogs



All of Annie's puppies have gone to their new homes, and now the hard work begins. Starting a new puppy will take you at least one year and maybe up to two years before they get certified as a working dog.

The Importance of Training

Scent in Water Conditions



Our world is now facing drastic changes to our water levels, shifting water ways and higher tides are eroding burials located in the banks or cliffs around water. The problem is how to find them before they get washed away.

Water can complicate how scent flows or where it appears. At a training exercise teeth were placed in a shallow creek. Finding human remains that are submerged in water takes training as the scent is carried with the flow of the water. Asha, above, finds the teeth and alerts. Echo, pictured below, alerts at the source.

We believe strongly that you must train for the real world.

~Adela~



Menlo Park Fire Protection District (MPFPD) Training Site

The Institute for Canine Forensics is fortunate to have teamed with the MPFPD many years ago. This has given us, and our sister organization, the Canine Specialized Search Team, many opportunities that we otherwise wouldn't have had access to.

Among these opportunities are access to an agility site where our dogs learn confidence on various types of equipment, ladders, crawl spaces, uncomfortable moving objects, etc., some of which we may encounter as we work in the field. There are buildings that the fire department uses for burn training. If you have ever stepped into any type of burned structure, you will understand the huge scent picture that this presents. Add to that, they are very dark inside. Doors and windows can be opened to create different scent patterns. There are rubble piles for our dogs to traverse, again building their confidence on different surfaces. And there are a lot of other buildings and open spaces for us to set up problems. When there are classes going on, we can expose our dogs to all the sights and sounds of a disaster scene, along with socializing with firefighters in their gear.

Thank you Menlo Park Fire Protection District for your continued support.

~ Lynne Engelbert ~



What the Heck is This?

At a recent training utilizing the MPFPD burn buildings Lynne set up a test / efficacy signoff problem for Jasper and me. Training for unique and difficult conditions helps the dogs solve scent puzzles and also teaches them to be confident in different scenarios. This was a blind problem for Jasper and me, and was set up as a challenge. I had no knowledge where sources were placed or how many. Another challenge was that it was in a fire training burn-building, in the dark. I only used the flashlight on my phone to help me not trip. As I entered another section of the dark burn-building, Jasper had already gone into a room where the door was only open a few inches. I tried to push the door open so I could enter, but it was blocked and I could not get in. As I looked down I saw Jasper's tail. He was alerting on the other side of the door. The importance of this experience became clear. Ours dogs need to be confident enough to work in the dark, and alert and wait for their handler, even when a door bumps into them. By the way, we passed with a 100%.

Even though dark, and burned buildings are not the normal locations where we work, it teaches the dogs how to work scent in buildings and drive to source. Scent tends to pool in buildings. It also moves with the air currents through cracks or doors and window openings.

~Adela~

The Importance of Teeth



Above - Niku, a pup-in-training, has located and alerted on a single tooth.

When identifying a person is important, for example a cold case missing person or a historical figure, teeth might be the only remains left where DNA can be collected. Dogs have to learn to work slowly enough to pick up the fragile scent. If they work too fast they may miss the tooth.

One of our bi-annual sign-offs is finding 10 teeth in 15 minutes in a 6 x 6-yard area, and one of our favorite places to do this is a mosaic tile floor at one of the locations we train. The teeth "disappear" as soon as they are placed on the surface. The dogs cannot do it visually, but must use their noses to locate each tooth.

~Adela~

Kincade Fire Cremains Recovery Operation

For the past several months the Cremains Recovery Team (CRT), formerly organized by ICF, has been exploring the possibility of teaming with Team Rubicon (TR), an international disaster response organization. The CRT's mission of providing a service to people who have lost the previously cremated remains of their loved ones in the numerous wildfires that strike California on a regular basis seemed to be a perfect fit within Team Rubicon's mission. <https://teamrubiconusa.org/mission/>

On December 20 we got a call from TR, requesting a small team to work the aftermath of the Kincade Fire in Sonoma County, CA. We sent two handlers, Adela Morris with Jasper and Jett and Lynne Engelbert (liaison to TR) with Piper. Four archaeologists, Alex and Risa DeGeorgey with Alta Archaeological Consulting, and Mathew Neal and Brian Mischke with the Anthropological Studies Center at SSU.

We worked one site where there were six sets of cremains in the burned-out home. Two had already been recovered with the urns relatively intact. The remaining four were lost in the ashes of the home. The dogs worked the home, getting the archaeologists into the area where the scent of cremains was strongest. The archaeologists went to work, excavating their way into the area until homogeneous piles of cremains were evident. The cremains have tiny bits of bone and sometimes tooth fragments, whereas the construction debris does not. All four sets of cremains were recovered and returned to a grateful homeowner. The three full sets contained the metal identification tags that are placed when the individual arrives at the mortuary or crematorium. These tags contain the name of the mortuary/crematorium and a specific number assigned

to the deceased.

While there were no cremains at another site, the homeowners asked if it was possible for the dogs to locate a “lost” grave from the early 1970's. It's what we do, so the answer was “yes”. The homeowners indicated a small plateau where they thought the burial might be. When asked if there had been a marker, they said they had never seen one. Jasper, Jett and Piper worked the area, alerting on exactly the same spot, right at the only large rock on the plateau. Possibly the marker? The homeowners were thrilled. They are going to be rebuilding the home and want to make sure the grave is protected.

~ Lynne Engelbert ~



Jasper, Jett and Piper worked the location of the area where they believed the child's burial was. They all

alerted at the same location.

Please feel free to pass our newsletter along to anyone who might be interested.

Check out our past issues on
our website -

[CLICK HERE](#)



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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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