



## Funerary Customs

Show me the manner in which a nation cares for its dead, and I will measure with mathematical exactness the tender mercies of its people, their respect for the laws of the land and their loyalty to high ideals.

William Gladstone, British Prime Minister, 1809–1898



Rhea alerts on a pile of rocks archaeologist believe to be a pioneer burial. Since this rock formation is in a location where they do not want to disturb it they are using combined knowledge to make the determination. Layering different kind of techniques, in this case a known pioneer route including wagon tracks, historic records, archaeologists and historical human remains detection dogs.

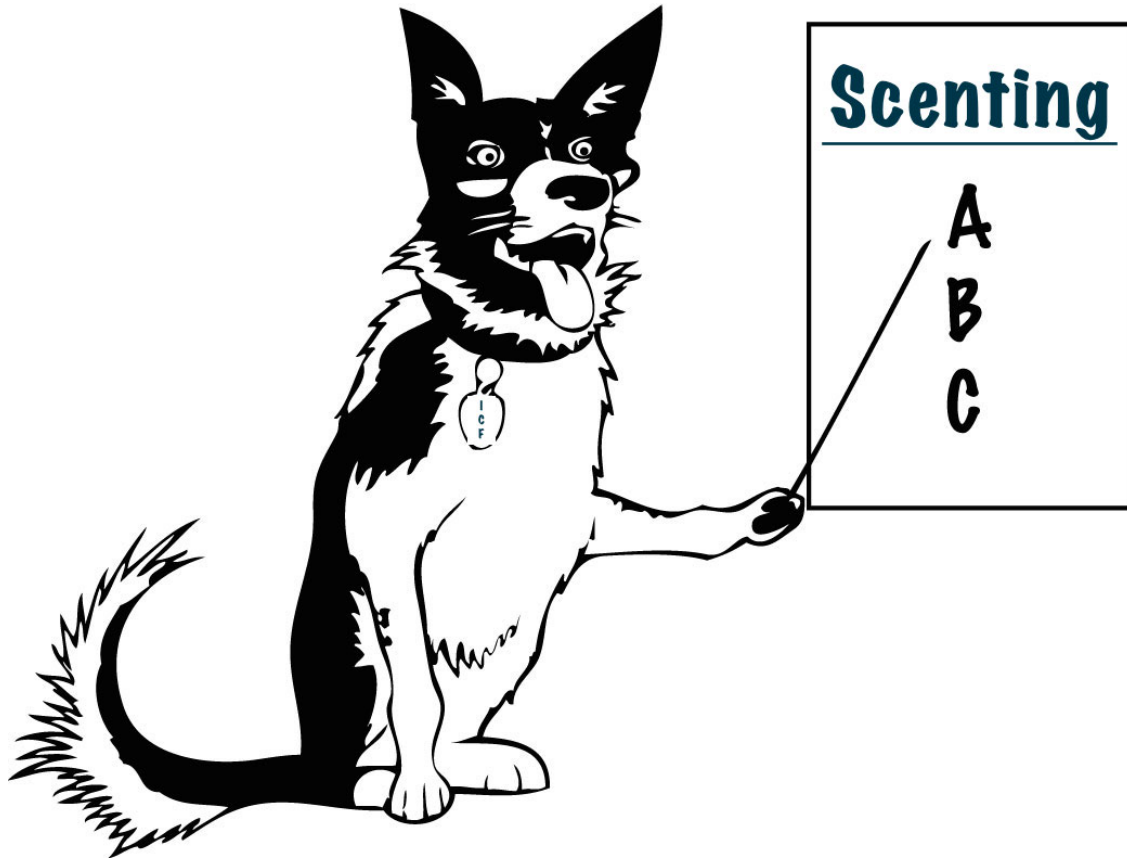
## Types of Cemeteries

Early immigrants from Europe brought their burial customs with them to this country. Church yards were the common location to bury the dead: but only members of the church in good standing could be buried there. This excluded minorities, slaves, convicts or other people the church deemed not worthy to be buried in the church yard. Potters fields and outsiders cemeteries were developed to fill the demand.

As explores and pioneers migrated through the country they did not have the option of using established cemeteries. Burials needed to be made while traveling in what ever terrain they were in. They did not have the luxury of time or modern digging tools. Burials were commonly made by using depressions in the ground and then filling then in with rocks. After the pioneers established camps, homesteads and towns we start to see family plots and company town cemeteries. As cities start to grow we see established cemeteries that are organized by the city.

We are commonly asked to help identify rock piles that archaeologists have identified as possible burials. Our dogs add an additional layer of information to help solve questions.

# Historic Human Remains Detection



## Certification Process

We are asked many times how our certification process works. Our certification process is unique and specifically designed for dogs working historic and prehistoric burials. In 2001 ICF realized the need to have a training standard for the unique work we were doing. No guidelines or certification existed at that time for dogs doing old burials. We looked at certifications from other canine disciplines (human remains, live human search and drug search) from across the country and consulted with forensic anthropologists and archaeologists to develop a certification process that fit what we do.

The process consists of completing the initial basic skills checklist:

- Obedience, agility skills,
- Temperament soundness
- Demonstration of scent work
- Handler skills

Depending on how old the dog is when you start the skill check list can take up to a year to complete.

Followed by the certification test:

- Double blind field test
- Observed by outside evaluator
- Must pass by at least a 75% efficacy

Teams passing the certification test are then on a yearly schedule of maintenance. Each team shows their progress to an evaluator every six months to ensure teams are on track. In essence, this is a continuous recertification process. Teams must pass the following skills.

- Advanced problem set up by an evaluator to review each dog/handler team
- Efficacy problems: the handler doesn't know the number of sources placed
- Maintain at least a 75% overall efficacy
- Locating teeth
- Working historic cemeteries
- Adding negatives to ensure dogs only alert on human scent
- Working around pin flags

We review our certification process every year and make changes to keep it challenging. We have recently added a problem that all dogs must pass called Pin Flag Problem. We are frequently asked if our dogs alert on flags that are placed in the field by the construction crew, archaeologists, GPR or other dog handlers. This sign off ensures the dogs will work around many flags and only alerts on human remains scent.

~Adela~

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Last month's newsletter had a teaser picture at the end ... the "Blur of Activity"! Here's what that was all about.

## **Meet Niku, My New Secondhand Dog**

Each of us has our preference as to starting with puppies or young dogs that are a bit older (10-20 months). My personal preference is for the latter, but you have to be very careful and testing is a must. I've been on my search for about a year.

Here's what we look for in an older dog:

- Nerve Strength (how does the dog react to loud noises, uncomfortable surfaces, etc.)
- Prey drive (given a rag on a string, will he chase and catch it)
- Hunt drive (if you hide a toy, will he go looking for it until he finds it)
- Tenacity (will the dog continue to look for something and not just give up)
- Memory (if you hide the toy they were playing with, will they go look where they saw you hide it)
- Are they interested in the scent source
- Sociable around people
- Sociable around other dogs

In May I learned about a 7-month old Border Collie X pup whose owner was looking to re-home him. According to Madeleine, Niku's former owner, he was very intelligent, very busy and needed a job. Adela, Kris and I made

arrangements to test him at the Menlo Fire US&R training site one Sunday. We looked for all the above characteristics as we “interviewed” him.

We first met the boy, watching for his reaction to the three of us as we did our meet and greet. He was very excited and had no problem with coming up to each of us. While he is food-driven, he was very interested in the toys we presented to him, and willing to explore and check out the new surroundings. He was no submissive little pup.

When we took him to the agility site he at first refused to walk across an open grate ... okay, we went around instead. He was completely willing to go up onto most of the agility equipment we offered, the moving plank was no problem, nor was the big chunk of metal. He did draw the line at the old metal mattress springs ... not unexpected, that requires a bit of training. Climbing a little ladder was a challenge because dogs don't naturally know how to place their back feet. He is learning as we continue to train.

We walked through the dark, smelly burn-training buildings with the loud clanging metal doors. Again, no problem. Likewise climbing up and down the metal stairs that you can see through. He was willing to play tug with us as we walked around the various elements.

When presented with a human bone, he immediately went to check it out. When he learned that treats would “rain from the heavens” if he sniffed it, he kept going back, even when it had been moved to a different area.

Walking with Piper, on leash, she was immediately greeted with friendly play bows and appropriate behavior. Within a few feet we were able to drop the leashes and the dogs ran and played with each other as we headed to the rubble pile to see what Niku would do there. Piper ran up on the rubble and Niku followed close behind her. There was a little caution on his part, but his willingness to go up was a good sign. When we returned to the cars, we introduced him to Jett and they became instant friends.

We ended our interview with having Annie, Kris' Malinois, run across the grate that Niku had first refused to cross. Without even thinking, he followed her right across and back again. That was the end of that issue.

Our first stop was to my veterinarian, Dr. Bowden, for a thorough check-up before I made my final commitment to taking Niku. He was very polite, shaking hands with Dr. B and passed his physical with flying colors.

Two months later and Niku is doing really well in his training. He is doing hidden problems and loves his job. I can't wait to see how he continues to proceed.

>Lynne Engelbert<

**P.S.**

The 4<sup>th</sup> of July was no problem, the fireworks in and around our neighborhood never fazed him. Yay!



The first attempt to cross the grate-covered bridge Niku said "NO". After watching Annie, Kris's dog, he decided he could follow her over the bridge.



Niku's training is going very well. He is being exposed to many different kinds of search areas.

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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.

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