



Mini

Owned, and trained by
Officer Kevin Gleason, NKPD

The Life of a Search and Rescue Labrador

This next story is a tribute to a very special Labrador named Mini, (Dogwood On Line Deposit), November 19, 2003 to January 26, 2009, who was sadly lost to lymphoma. Mini can be seen on the club's web page on dogs at work. Mini was a very unique Labrador, one who could have been shown in the ring, but was selected to serve as a narcotics

detection K-9 for the North Kingstown Police Dept. Mini was featured front cover and feature story 4Q ILR 05' and 2nd Q 06'. Mini's first breeding with Tony and Martha Emilio's Tonmar's Oliver Twist produced Rudi, (Dogwood Insured Deposit) who shows all the same qualities that Mini possessed. Rudi is owned and trained by Lieutenant Michel LeClair, NKFD. Rudi also trains with the RI State Police, who has just been certified on the 40-acre wilderness test, and hopes to go onto disaster certification next year. Rudi has been called on two assignments for body searches, but thankfully these were false calls. Rudi continues to train, and lives with Lieutenant Michael LeClair's family and a wonderful work/pet dog companion. Rudi spends his time at the fire station as an employee, working on little drills and happily greeting newcomers. North Kingstown is the only fire department in the state that has search and rescue dogs, and will be employed on special area assignments. Rudi works with a German Short-Haired Pointer named Greta who is getting up in age.



Rudi

Owned, and trained by
Lieutenant Michel LeClair, NKFD

We thought this would be a unique time to thank all those involved with Mini and Rudi and wish Lieutenant Michael LeClair blessed success. We have lost a very special dog and good friend, but thankfully Mini's legacy of the modern work dog lives on in Rudi. We are happy for them both.

Below is a description from Lieutenant Michael LeClair of what the process of search and rescue involves.

The search vest serves several purposes. First and foremost is visibility, making it easier to spot him at a distance through the trees, since he works off-leash. The vest also has reflective material for working at night, and it also has a place to attach a light stick for night work as well. For the dog it serves as a cue. He only wears it when he is working. He knows that he is searching and not just going on a nature hike. He really shows a distinct attitude difference when he wears it.

Now, disaster work is a whole different story. We cannot have him wear ANYTHING, as it is too dangerous. The risks of having him get caught on something are just too great. For a cue, just like wilderness, I use a quick-release buckle collar. The sound of the buckle releasing, the search command (dig 'em up), and the collar falling away all tell him that it is time to get busy.

The certification for disaster is also much more extensive. The scent source is the same, but the environment is much more difficult. The certification actually takes all day, with a max of 12 dogs per evaluation. The test has 5 separate parts:

1. Obedience - This has several sub-parts. There are 2 aggression tests, one for humans and another for canine interaction. For the long-down all of the dogs are in a line 5 feet apart and placed in the down position off-lead. The handlers are directed to an area out of sight. The dogs must remain in that position for 5 minutes before the handlers return. There is an off-lead healing test. The dog must heal under complete control of the handler through a milling crowd. And the last obedience test is the emergency stop. The dog is called to the handler and then must immediately stop on command, and remain there until recalled again.
2. Agility - The dog must negotiate a right angle tunnel, walk across an uneven, wobbly surface, climb an 8-foot ladder at an angle of 45 degrees, walk across an 8-foot elevated plank, and negotiate a teeter tot-ter.
3. Bark Alert - This is just an alert test not a search test. A subject is placed in a barrel in an open area with nothing else around. The dog is sent and once the dog has indicated scent and begins to bark at the barrel, he must remain there barking continuously for a minimum of 30 seconds. (This is the longest 30 seconds you can imagine)
4. Direction and Control - There are 4 bases set up like a baseball diamond 25 yards apart. Very similar to casting in retriever trials. We have 3 minutes to complete a given pattern.

All of the previously mentioned elements must be passed successfully in order to move on to the rubble search. If you don't pass one of the others, your done for the day and we'll see you next time.

5. Rubble search - The rubble pile is an average height of 10 feet and is 5000 square feet in area. There are 2 subjects placed in the pile and they are COMPLETELY inaccessible. You have 15 minutes to find both subjects. The first subject must be located independently and out of sight of the handler. Once the dog is sent the handler must remain at the starting point until the dog has alerted on the first subject. As the handler approaches, the dog must continue to alert and the handler must accurately indicate the location of the subject based on the dogs alert. For the second subject the handler and the dog must work together. The handler then has complete access to the entire pile. Again the handler must accurately indicate the location of the subject based on the dogs alert.

If you get past this you have completed the Type II Basic certification. Once this is passed you can then take the Type I advanced when it is next available.

The Type I Advanced, is just a search test. Two rubble piles up to 4 subjects in any one pile with a max of 6 subjects for the test. The time limit is 20 minutes each pile. There are also food, live animal, and human remains distractions placed throughout each pile. You must find all subjects within the time limits with NO false alerts. Most people find the Type I easier. It's less stressful because the rules are more relaxed. You have more freedom to do your own thing.

Below is the comments made by Trooper Scott R. Carlsten #185, Rhode Island State Police, Canine Unit.



Mike chose a very wise search strategy, which involved first checking a foot path in the center of the search area then starting at one corner of his search and searching diagonally in an "X" pattern. Mike took care in preparing himself and partner Rudi for the possible rigors of the search. Mike is very proficient with both GPS and Map and compass Navigation techniques, which he displayed during this search while implementing his search strategy. Rudi was very motivated and showed good focus throughout the search, ignoring several animal distractions in the area. Rudi located the subject quickly and showed great enthusiasm while closing in on the subject. Mike recognized and verbalized Rudi's alert and gave good positive reinforcement to his dog upon completing the task. Mike took care in checking on the victim's status. This team works well with each other and they are a great asset to the Rhode Island State Task Force II Search and Rescue Unit. (Quote printed with the permission of RI State Police.)

In closing we wish to ask for prayers for this team as they prepare for their disaster certification coming up this spring in New Jersey, and for the safety of both Rudi and Lieutenant LeClair. Also a special thank you to; Trooper Scott R. Carlsten and Corporal Matthew Zarella- RI State Police, Lieutenant Michael LeClair-NKFD and Bob St. Martin-Search Dogs Northeast, for making contributions to this article.

For any further reading you can visit the news page and gallery of www.dogwoodlabradors.com

To watch 9-11 tribute

www.dogwoodlabradors.com/k9tribute.swf

Courtesy of Search Dogs Northeast

To download shockwave video file:

<http://get.adobe.com/flashplayer/completion/0/>

Very Sincerely,

Debra Scott
Dogwood Labradors